

# Palos of the Dog Star Pack

J. U. Giesy

The background of the lower half of the page is a teal color. It features a complex, abstract pattern of purple geometric shapes. This pattern consists of various horizontal and vertical lines of different lengths, some of which are connected at right angles to form a grid-like structure. Interspersed among these lines are several solid purple triangles, some pointing upwards and some pointing downwards. The overall effect is a dense, layered composition of simple shapes.

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This is only an excerpt from the novel.

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**PALOS OF THE DOG  
STAR PACK**

**by J. U. Giesy**



## 1. OUT OF THE STORM

It was a miserable night which brought me first in touch with Jason Croft. There was a rain and enough wind to send it in gusty dashes against the windows. It was the sort of a night when I always felt glad to cast off coat and shoes, don a robe and slippers, and sit down with the curtains drawn, a lighted pipe, and the soft glow of a lamp falling across the pages of my book. I am, I admit, always strangely susceptible to the shut-in sense of comfort afforded by a pipe, the steady yellow of a light, and the magic of printed lines at a time of elemental turmoil and stress.

It was with a feeling little short of positive annoyance that I heard the door-bell ring. Indeed, I confess, I was tempted to ignore it altogether at first. But as it rang again, and was followed by a rapid tattoo of rapping, as of fists pounded against the door itself, I rose, laid aside my book, and stepped into the hall.

First switching on a porch-light, I opened the outer door, to reveal the figure of an old woman, somewhat stooping, her head covered by a shawl, which sloped wetly from her head to either shoulder, and was caught and held beneath her chin by one bony hand.

"Doctor," she began in a tone of almost frantic excitement. "Dr. Murray—come quick!"

Perhaps I may as well introduce myself here as anywhere else. I am Dr. George Murray, still, as at the time of which I write, in charge of the State Mental Hospital in a Western State. The institution was not then very large, and since taking my position at the head of its staff I had found myself with considerable time for my study along the lines of human psychology and the various powers and aberrations of the mind.

Also, I may as well confess, as a first step toward a better understanding of my part in what followed, that for years before coming to the asylum I had delved more or less deeply into such studies, seeking to learn what I might concerning both the normal and the abnormal manifestations of mental force.

There is good reading and highly entertaining, I assure you, in the various philosophies dealing with life, religion, and the several beliefs regarding the soul

of man. I was therefore fairly conversant not only with the Occidental creeds, but with those of the Oriental races as well. And I knew that certain of the Eastern sects had advanced in their knowledge far beyond our Western world. I had even endeavored to make their knowledge mine, so far as I could, in certain lines at least, and had from time to time applied some of that knowledge to the treatment of cases in the institution of which I was the head.

But I was not thinking of anything like that as I looked at the shawl-wrapped face of the little bent woman, wrinkled and wry enough to have been a very part of the storm which beat about her and blew back the skirts of my lounging-robe and chilled my ankles. I lived in a residence detached from the asylum buildings proper, but none the less a part of the institution; and, as a matter of fact, my sole thought was a feeling of surprise that any one should have come here to find me, and despite the woman's manifest state of anxiety and haste, a decided reluctance to go with her quickly or otherwise on such a night.

I rather temporized: "But, my dear woman, surely there are other doctors for you to call. I am really not in general practice. I am connected with the asylum—" "And that is the very reason I always said I would come for you if anything happened to Mr. Jason," she cut in.

"Whom?" I inquired, interested in spite of myself at this plainly premeditated demand for my service.

"Mr. Jason Croft, sir," she returned. "He's dead maybe—I dunno. But he's been that way for a week."

"Dead?" I exclaimed in almost an involuntary fashion, startled by her words.

"Dead, or asleep. I don't know which."

Clearly there was something here I wasn't getting into fully, and my interest aroused. The whole affair seemed to be taking on an atmosphere of the peculiar, and it was equally clear that the gusty doorway was no place to talk. "Come in," I said. "What is your name?"

"Goss," said she, without making any move to enter. "I'm house-keeper for Mr. Jason, but I'll not be comin' in unless you say you'll go."

"Then come in without any more delay," I replied, making up my mind. I knew Croft in a way—by sight at least. He was a big fellow with light hair and a splendid physique, who had been pointed out to me shortly after my arrival.

Once I had even got close enough to the man to look into his eyes. They were gray, and held a peculiar something in their gaze which had arrested my attention at once. Jason Croft had the eyes of a mystic—of a student of those very things I myself had studied more or less.

They were the eyes of one who saw deeper than the mere objective surface of life, and the old woman's words at the last had waked up my interest in no uncertain degree. I had decided I would go with her to Croft's house, which was not very far down the street, and see, if I might, for myself just what had occurred to send her rushing to me through the night.

I gave her a seat, said I would get on my shoes and coat, and went back into the room I had left some moments before. There I dressed quickly for my venture into the storm, adding a raincoat to my other attire, and was back in the hall inside five minutes at most.



We set out at once, emerging into the wind-driven rain, my long raincoat flapping about my legs and the little old woman tottering along at my side. And what with the rain, the wind, and the unexpected summons, I found myself in a rather strange frame of mind. The whole thing seemed more like some story I had read than a happening of real life, particularly so as my companion kept pace with me and uttered no sound save at times a rather rasping sort of breath. The whole thing became an almost eery experience as we hastened down the storm-swept street.

Then we turned in at a gate and went up toward the large house I knew to be Croft's, and the little old woman unlocked a heavy front door and led me into a hall. It was a most unusual hall, too, its walls draped with rare tapestries and rugs, its floor covered with other rugs such as I had never seen outside private collections, lighted by a hammered brass lantern through the pierced sides of which the rays of an electric light shone forth.

Across the hall she scuttered, still in evident haste, and flung open a door to permit me to enter a room which was plainly a study. It was lined with cases of books, furnished richly yet plainly with chairs, a heavy desk, and a broad couch, on which I saw in one swift glance the stretched-out body of Croft himself.

He lay wholly relaxed, like one sunk in heavy sleep, his eyelids closed, his arms

and hands dropped limply at his sides, but no visible sign of respiration animating his deep full chest.

Toward him the little woman gestured with a hand, and stood watching, still with her wet shawl about her head and shoulders, while I approached and bent over the man.

I touched his face and found it cold. My fingers sought his pulse and failed to find it at all. But his body was limp as I lifted an arm and dropped it. There was no rigor, yet there was no evidence of decay, such as must follow once rigor has passed away. I had brought instruments with me as a matter of course. I took them from my pocket and listened for some sound from the heart. I thought I found the barest flutter, but I wasn't sure. I tested the tension of the eyeball under the closed lids and found it firm. I straightened and turned to face the little old woman.

"Dead, sir?" she asked in a sibilant whisper. Her eyes were wide in their sockets. They stared into mine.

I shook my head. "He doesn't appear to be dead," I replied. "See here, Mrs. Goss, what did you mean by saying he ought to have been back three days ago? What do you mean by back?"

She fingered at her lips with one bony hand. "Why—awake, sir," she said at last.

"Then why didn't you say so?" I snapped. "Why use the word back?"

"Because, sir," she faltered, "that's what he says when he wakes up. 'Well, Mary, I'm back.' I—I guess I just said it because he does, doctor. I—was worrit when he didn't come back—when he didn't wake up, to-night, an' it took to rainin'. I reckon maybe it was th' storm scared me, sir."

Her words had, however, given me a clue. "He's been like this before, then?"

"Yes, sir. But never more than four days without telling me he would. Th' first time was months ago—but it's been gettin' oftener and oftener, till now all his sleeps are like this. He told me not to be scared—an' to—to never bother about him—to—to just let him alone; but—I guess I was scared to-night, when it begun to storm an' him layin' there like that. It was like havin' a corpse in the house."

I began to gain a fuller appreciation of the situation. I myself had seen people in



a cataleptic condition, had even induced the state in subjects myself, and it appeared to me that Jason Croft was in a similar state, no matter how induced.

"What does your employer do?" I asked.

"He studies, sir—just studies things like that." Mrs. Goss gestured at the cases of books. "He don't have to work, you know. His uncle left him rich."

I followed her arm as she swept it about the glass-fronted cases. I brought my glances back to the desk in the center of the room, between the woman and myself as we stood. Upon it I spied another volume lying open. It was unlike any book I had ever seen, yellowed with age; in fact not a book at all, but a series of parchment pages tied together with bits of silken cord.

I took the thing up and found the open pages covered with marginal notes in English, although the original was plainly in Sanskrit, an ancient language I had seen before, but was wholly unable to read. The notations, however, threw some light into my mind, and as I read them I forgot the storm, the little old woman—everything save what I read and the bearing it held on the man behind me on the couch. I felt sure they had been written by his own hand, and they bore on the subject of astral projection—the ability of the soul to separate itself, or be separated, from the physical body and return to its fleshy husk again at will.

I finished the open pages and turned to others. The notations were still present wherever I looked. At last I turned to the very front and found that the manuscript was by Ahmid, an occult adept of Hindustan, who lived somewhere in the second or third century of the Christian era.

With a strange sensation I laid down the silk-bound pages. They were very, very old. Over a thousand years had come and passed since they were written by the dead Ahmid's hand. Yet I had held them to-night, and I felt sure Jason Croft had held them often—read them and understood them, and that the condition in which I found him this night was in some way subtly connected with their store of ancient lore. And suddenly I sensed the storm and the little old woman and the silent body of the man at my back again, with a feeling of something uncanny in the whole affair.



"You can do nothing for him?" the woman broke my introspection.

I looked up and into her eyes, dark and bright and questioning as she stood still clutching her damp shawl.

"I'm not so sure of that," I said. "But—Mr. Croft's condition is rather—peculiar. Whatever I do will require quiet—that I am alone with him for some time. I think if I can be left here with him for possibly an hour, I can bring him back."

I paused abruptly. I had used the woman's former words almost. And I saw she noticed the fact, for a slight smile gathered on her faded lips. She nodded. "You'll bring him back," she said. "Mind you, doctor, th' trouble is with Mr. Jason's head, I've been thinking. 'Twas for that I've been telling myself I would come for you, if he forgot to come back some time, like I've been afraid he would."

"You did quite right," I agreed. "But—the trouble is not with Mr. Croft's mind. In fact, Mrs. Goss, I believe he is a very learned man. How long have you known him, may I ask?"

"Ever since he was a boy, except when he was travelin'," she returned.

"He has traveled?" I took her up.

"Yes, sir, a lot. Me an' my husband kept up th' place while he was gone."

"I see," I said. "And now if you will let me try what I can do."

"Yes, sir. I'll set out in th' hall," she agreed, and turned in her rapid putter from the room.

Left alone, I took a chair, dragged it to the side of the couch, and studied my man.

So far as I could judge, he was at least six feet tall, and correspondingly built. His hair was heavy, almost tawny, and, as I knew, his eyes were gray. The whole contour of his head and features showed what appeared to me remarkable intelligence and strength, the nose finely chiseled, the mouth well formed and firm, the chin unmistakably strong. That Croft was an unusual character I felt more and more as I sat there. His very condition, which, from what I had learned from the little old woman and his own notation on the margins of Ahmid's writings, I believed self-induced, would certainly indicate that.

But my own years of study had taught me no little of hypnosis, suggestion, and the various phases of the subconscious mind. I had developed no little power

with various patients, or "subjects," as a hypnotist calls them, who from time to time had submitted themselves to my control. Wherefore I felt that I knew about what to do to waken the sleeping objective mind of the man on the couch. I had asked for an hour, and the time had been granted. It behooved me to get to work.

I began. I concentrated my mind to the exclusion of all else upon my task, sending a mental call to the soul of Jason Croft, wherever it might be, commanding it to return to the body it had temporarily quitted of its own volition, and once more animate it to a conscious life. I forgot the strangeness of the situation, the rattle of the rain against the glass panes of the room. And after a time I began speaking to the form beside which I sat, as to a conscious person, firmly repeating over and over my demand for the presence of Jason Croft—demanding it, nor letting myself doubt for a single instant that the demand would be given heed in time.

It was a nerve-racking task. In the end it came to seem that I sat there and struggled against some intangible, invisible force which resisted all my efforts. I look back now on the time spent there that night as an ordeal such as I never desire to again attempt. But I did not desist. I had asked for an hour, because when I asked I never dreamed the thing I had attempted, the thing which is yet to be related, concerning the weird, yet true narrative, as I fully believe, of Jason Croft.

I had then no conception of how far his venturesome spirit had plumbed the universe. If I thought of him at all, it was merely as some experimenter who might have need of help, rather than as an adept of adepts, who had transcended all human accomplishments in his line of research and thought.

In my own blindness I had fancied that his overlong period in his cataleptic trance might even be due to some inability on his part to reanimate his own body, after leaving it where it lay. I thought of myself as possibly aiding him in the task by what I would do in the time for which I had asked.

But the hour ran away, and another, and still the body over which I worked lay as it had lain at first, nor gave any sign of any effect of my concentrated will. It had been close to ten when I came to the house. It was three in the morning when I gained my first reward.

And when it came, it was so sudden that I actually started back in my chair and sat clutching its carved arms, and staring in something almost like horror, I think, at first at the body which had lifted itself to a sitting posture on the couch.

And I know that when the man said, "So you are the one who called me back?" I actually gasped before I answered:

"Yes."

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Croft fastened his eyes upon me in a steady regard. "You are Dr. Murray, from the Mental Hospital, are you not?" he went on.

"Ye-es," I stammered again. Mrs. Goss had said his sleep was like having a corpse about the house. I found myself thinking this was nearly a though a corpse should rise up and speak.

But he nodded, with the barest smile on his lips. "Only one acquainted with the nature of my condition could have roused me," he said. "However, you were engaging in a dangerous undertaking, friend."

"Dangerous for you, you mean," I rejoined. "Do you know you have lain cataleptic for something like a week?"

"Yes." He nodded again. "But I was occupied on a most important mission."

"Occupied!" I exclaimed. "You mean you were engaged in some undertaking while you lay there?" I pointed to the couch where he sat.

"Yes." Once more he smiled.

Well, the man was sane. In fact, it seemed to me in those first few moments that he was far saner than I, far less excited, far less affected by the whole business from the first to the last. In fact, he seemed quite calm and a trifle amused, while I was admittedly upset. And my very knowledge gained by years of study told me he was sane, that his was a perfectly balanced brain. There was nothing about him to even hint at anything else, save his extraordinary words. In the end I continued with a question:

"Where?"

"On the planet Palos, one of the Dog Star pack—a star in the system of the sun Sirius," he replied.

"And you mean you have just returned from—there?" I faltered over the last

word badly. My brain seemed slightly dazed at the astounding statement he had made—that I—I had called him from a planet beyond the ken of the naked eye, known only to those who studied the heavens with powerful glasses—farther away than any star of our own earthly system of planets. The thing made my senses reel.

And he seemed to sense my emotions, because he went on in a softly modulated tone: "Do not think me in any way similar to those unfortunates under your charge. As an alienist you must know the truth of that, just as you knew that my trancelike sleep was wholly self-induced."

"I gathered that from the volume on your desk," I explained.

He glanced toward Ahmid's work. "You read the Sanskrit?" he inquired.

I shook my head. "No, I read the marginal notes."

"I see. Who called you here?"

I explained.

Croft frowned. "I cannot blame her; she is a faithful soul," he remarked. "I can comprehend her worry. I have explained to her as fully as I dared, but—she does not understand, and I remained away longer than I really intended, to tell the truth. However, now that you can reassure her, I must ask you to excuse me, doctor, for a while. Come to me in about twelve hours and I will be here to meet you and explain in part at least." He stretched himself out once more on the couch.

"Wait!" I cried. "What are you going to do?"

"I am going back to Palos," he told me with a smile.

"But—will your body stand the strain?" I questioned, beginning to doubt his sanity after all.

He met my objection with another smile. "I have studied that well before I began these little excursions of mine. Meet me at, say, four o'clock this afternoon." He appeared to relax, sighed softly, and sank again into his trance.

I sprang up and stood looking down upon him. I hardly knew what to do. I began pacing the floor. Finally I gave my attention to the books in the cases which lined the room. They comprised the most wonderful collection of works on the

occult ever gathered within four walls. They helped me to make up my mind in the end. I decided to take Jason Croft at his word and keep the engagement for the coming afternoon.

I went to the study door and set it open. The little old woman sat huddled on a chair. At first I thought she slept, but almost at once I found her bright eyes upon me, and she started to her feet.

"He came back—I—I heard him speaking," she began in a husky whisper. "He—is he all right?"

"All right," I replied. "But he is asleep again now and has promised to see me this afternoon at four. In the meantime do not attempt to disturb him in any way, Mrs. Goss."

She nodded. Suddenly she seemed wholly satisfied. "I won't, sir," she gave her promise. "I was worrit—worrit—that was all."

"You need not worry any more," I sought to reassure her. "I fancy Mr. Croft is able to take care of himself."

And, oddly enough, I found myself believing my own words as I went down the steps and turned toward my own home to get what sleep I could—since, to tell the truth, I felt utterly exhausted after my efforts to call Jason Croft back from—the planet of a distant sun.



## 2. A COUNTRY IN THE CLOUDS

And yet when I woke in the morning and went about my duties at the asylum, I confess the events of the night before seemed rather unreal. I began to half fancy myself the victim of some sort of hoax. I did not doubt that Croft had been up to some psychic experiment when his old servant, Mrs. Goss, had become alarmed and brought me into the situation. But—I felt inclined to believe that after I had waked him from his self-induced trance he had deliberately turned the conversation into a channel which would give me a mental jolt before he had calmly gone back to sleep.

I knew something of the occult, of course, but I was hardly ready to credit the rather lurid statement he had made. Before noon I was smiling at myself, and determining to keep my appointment with him for the afternoon, and show him from the start that I was not so complete a fool as I had seemed.

Hence it was with a resolve not to be swept off my feet by any unusual fabrication of his devising that I approached his house at about three o'clock and turned in from the street to his porch.

He sat there, in a wicker chair, smoking an excellent cigar. No doubt but he had recovered completely from the state in which I had beheld him first. He rose as I mounted the steps and put out a hand. "Ah, Dr. Murray," he greeted me with a smile. "I have been waiting your coming. Let me offer you a chair and a smoke while we talk."

We shook hands, and then I sat down and lighted the mate of the cigar Croft held between his strong, even teeth. Then, as I threw away the match, I looked straight into his eyes. And, believe me or not, it was as though the man read my thoughts.

He shook his head. "I really told you the truth, Murray, you know," he said.

"About—Palos?" I smiled.

He nodded. "Yes, I was really there, and—I went back after we had our talk."

"Rather quick work," I remarked, and puffed out some smoke. "Have you figured out how long it takes even light to reach the earth from that distant star,

Mr. Croft?"

"Light?" He half-knit his brows, then suddenly laughed without sound. "Oh, I see—you refer to the equation of time?"

"Well, yes. The distance is considerable, as you must admit."

He shook his head. "How long does it take you to think of Palos—of Sirius?" he asked.

"Not long," I replied.

He leaned back in his seat. "Murray," he went on, staring straight before him, "time is but the measure of consciousness. Outside the atmospheric envelopes of the planets—outside the limit of, well—say—human thought—time ceases to exist. And—if between the planets there is no time beyond the depths of their surrounding atmosphere—how long will it take to go from here to there?"

I stared. His statement was startling, at least.

"You mean that time is a mental conception?" I managed at last.

"Time is a mental measure of a span of eternity," he said slowly. "Past planetary atmospheres, eternity alone exists. In eternity there is no time. Hence, I cannot use what *is not*, either in going to or returning from that planet I have named. You admit you can think instantly of Palos. I allege that I can *think* myself, carry my astral consciousness instantly to Palos. Do you see?"

I saw what he meant, of course, and I indicated as much by a nod. "But," I objected, "you told me you had to return to Palos. Now you tell me you had projected your astral body to that star. What could you do there in the astral state?"

He smiled. "Very little. I know. I have passed through that stage. As a matter of fact, I have a body there now."

"You have what—" As I remember, I came half out of my chair, and then sank back. The thing hit me as nothing else in my whole life had done before. His calm avowal was unbelievable on its face—impossible—a man with a double corporeal existence on two separate planets at one and the same time.

"A body—a living, breathing body," he repeated his declaration. "Oh, man, I know it overthrows all human conceptions of life, but—last night you asked me



a question concerning *this* body of mine—and I told you I knew what I was doing. And I know you must have studied some of the teachings of the higher cult—the esoteric philosophies, if you will. And therefore you must have read of the ability of a spirit to dispossess a body of its original spiritual tenant and occupy its place—"

"Obsession," I interrupted. "You are practicing that—up there?"

"No. I've gone farther than that. I took this body when its original occupant was done with it," he said. "Murray—wait—let me explain. I'm a physician like yourself."

"You?" I exclaimed, none too politely, I fear, in the face of this additional surprise.

Croft's lips twitched. He seemed to understand and yet be slightly amused. "Yes. That's why I was able to assure you I knew how long the body I occupy now could endure a cataleptic condition last night. I am a graduate of Rush, and I fancy, fully qualified to speak concerning the body's needs. And—" he paused a moment, then resumed:

"Frankly, Murray, I find myself confronted by what I think I may call the strangest position a man was ever called upon to face. Last night I recognized in you one who had probably far from a minor understanding of mental and spiritual forces. Your ability to force my return at a time when I was otherwise engaged showed me your understanding. For that very reason I asked you to return to me here to-day. I would like to talk to you—a brother physician; to tell you a story—my story, provided you would care to hear it. Most men would call me insane. Something tells me you, who devote your time to the care of the insane, will not."

He paused and sat once more staring across the sunlit landscape which, after the storm of the night before, was glowing and fresh. After a time he turned his eyes and looked into mine with something almost an appeal, in his glance. In response, I nodded and settled myself in my chair.



"I'm not going to deny a natural curiosity, Dr. Croft," I said, since, to tell the absolute truth, I was anxious to get at the inward facts under-lying the entire

peculiar affair.

"Then," he said in an almost eager fashion, "I shall tell you—the whole thing, I think. Murray, when Shakespeare wrote into one of his characters' mouth the statement that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of, he told the truth. Mankind in the main is like a crowd storming the doors of a showhouse sold out to capacity and unable to accommodate any one else. Mankind is the crowd in the lobby, shut out from the real sights back of the veiling doors which bar their perception of what goes on within. Mankind stands only on the fringe of life, does not dream of the truth. Only here and there is there one who *knows*. It was one such who first directed my mind toward the truth."

"Murray"—he paused and once more fastened me with his gaze—"I am going to tell that truth to you.... But first—in order that you may understand, and believe if you can, I shall tell you something of myself."

That telling took a long time; hours, the rest of the afternoon, and most of the following night. It was a strange tale, an unbelievably strange story. And yet, in view of what happened inside that same week, I am not sure, after all, but it was the truth, just as Croft alleged. What, when all is said, do any of us know beyond the round of our own human life? What do we know of those things which may lie outside the scope of our mental vision? There must be things in heaven and earth not dreamt of in the philosophy of *Horatio*. Here is the tale.

Jason Croft was born in New Jersey, but brought West at an early age by his parents, who had become converts to a certain faith. Right there, it seems to me, may have been laid the foundation of Croft's interest in the occult in later life, since that faith contains possibly a greater number of parallels to occult teachings than any of the Occidental creeds. Of course, in all religions there is the germ of truth. Were it not, they would be dead dogmas rather than living sects. But in this church, which has grown strong in the Western States, I think there is a closer approach to the Eastern theory of soul and spiritual life.

Be that as it may, Croft grew to manhood in the very state and town where I was now employed, and in the home on the porch of which we sat. He elected medicine as a career. He went to Chicago and put in his first three years. The second year his mother died, and a year later his father. He returned on each occasion, and went back to his studies after the obsequies were done. In his fourth year he met a man named Gatua Kahaun, destined, as it seems, to change

the entire course of his life.

Gatua Kahaun was a Hindu, a member of an Eastern brotherhood, come to the United States to study the religions of the West. One can see how naturally he took up with Croft, who had been raised in one of those religions.

The two became friends. From what Croft told me, the Hindu was a man of marked attainments, well versed in the Oriental creeds. When Croft came West after his graduation, Gatua Kahaun was his companion and stopped at his home, which had been kept up by Mrs. Goss and her husband, then still alive. The two lived there together for some weeks, and the Hindu taught Croft the rudiments at least of the occult philosophy of life.

Then, with little warning, Croft was assigned on a mission to Australia by his church. He got a letter from "Box B," as he told me, smiling, knowing I would understand. The church of which he was a member has a custom of sending their members about the world as missionaries of their faith, to spread its doctrines and win converts to their ranks. Croft went, though even then he had begun to see the similarity between his own lifelong creed and the scheme of things held before him by Gatua Kahaun.

For over two years he did not see the Hindu, though he kept up his studies of the occult, to which he seemed inclined by a natural bent. Then, just as he was nearly finished with his "mission," what should happen but that, walking the streets of Melbourne, he bumped into Gatua Kahaun.

The two men renewed their acquaintance at once. Gatua Kahaun taught Croft Hindustani and the mysteries of the Sanskrit tongue. When Croft's mission was finished he prevailed upon him to visit India before returning home.

Croft went. Through Gatua's influence he was admitted to the man's own brotherhood. He forgot his former objects and aims in life in the new world of thought which opened up before his mental eyes. He studied and thought. He learned the secrets of the magnetic or enveloping body of the soul, and after a time he became convinced that by constant application to the major purpose the spirit could break the bonds of the material body without going through the change which men call death. He came to believe that beyond the phenomenon of astral projection—the sending of the conscious ego about the earthly sphere—projections might be made beyond the planet, with only the universe to limit the scope of the flight.

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At times he lay staring at the starry vault of the heavens with a vague longing within him to put the thing to the test. And always there was one star which seemed to call him, to beckon to him, to draw his spirit toward it as a magnet may draw a fleck of iron. That was the Dog Star, Sirius, known to astronomers as the sun of another planetary system like our own.

Meantime his studies went on. He learned that matter is the reflex of spirit; that no blade of grass, no chemical atom exists save as the envelope of an essence which cannot and does not die. He came to see that nature is no more than a realm of force, comprising light, heat, magnetism, chemical affinity, aura, essence, and all the imponderables which go to produce the various forms of motion as expressions of the ocean of force, so that motion comes to be no more than force refracted through the various forms of existence, from the lowest to the highest, as a ray of light is split into the seven primary colors by a prism, each being different in itself, yet each but an integral part of the original ray.

He came to comprehend that all stages of existence are but stages and nothing more, and that mind, spirit, is the highest form of life force—the true essence—manifesting through material means, yet independent of them in itself. So only, he argued, was life after death a possible thing. And so, he reasoned further, could the mystery be solved, there was no real reason why the spirit could not be set free to roam and return to the body at will. If that were true, it seemed to him that the spirit could return from such excursions, bringing with it a conscious recollection of the place where it had been.

Then once more he was called home by a thing which seems like no more than a further step in the course of what mortals call fate. His father's brother died. He was a bachelor. He left Croft sufficient wealth to provide for his every need. Croft decided to pursue his studies at home. He had gained all India could give him. Indeed, he had rather startled even Gagua Kahaun by some of the theories he had deduced.

He began work at once. He stocked the library where I had found him the night before, with everything on the subject he could find. And the more he studied, the more firmly did he become convinced that ordinary astral projection was but the first step in developing the spirit's power—that it was akin to the first step of an infant learning to walk, and that, if confidence were forthcoming, if the will to dare the experiment were sufficiently strong—then he could accomplish the

thing of which he dreamed.

He began to experiment, sending his astral consciousness here and there. He centered on that one phase of his knowledge alone. He roamed the earth at will. He perfected his ability to bring back from such excursions a vivid recollection of all he had seen. So at last he was ready for the great experiment. Yet in the end he made it on impulse rather than at any pre-selected time.

He sat one evening on his porch. Over the eastern mountains which hem in the valley the full moon was rising in a blaze of mellow glory. Its rays caught the sleeping surface of a lake which lies near our little city, touching each rippling wavelet until they seemed made of molten silver. The lights of the town itself were like fireflies twinkling amid the trees. The mountains hazed somewhat in a silvery mist, compounded of the moonrays and distance, seemed to him no more than the figments of a fairy tale or a dream.

Everything was quiet. Mrs. Goss, now a widow, had gone to bed, and Croft had simply been enjoying the soft air and a cigar. Suddenly, as the moon appeared to leap free of the mountains, it suggested a thought of a spirit set free and rising above the material shell of existence to his mind.

He sat watching the golden wheel radiant with reflected light, and after a time he asked himself why he should not try the great adventure without a longer delay. He was the last of his race. No one depended upon him. Should he fail, they would merely find his body in the chair. Should he succeed, he would have won his ambition and placed himself in a position to learn of things which had heretofore baffled man.

He decided to try it there and then. Knocking the ash from his cigar, he took one last, long, possibly farewell whiff, and laid it down on the broad arm of his chair. Then summoning all the potent power of his will, he fixed his whole mind upon his purpose and sank into cataleptic sleep.

The moon is dead. In so much science is right. It is lifeless, without moisture, without an atmosphere. Croft won his great experiment, or its first step at least. His body sank to sleep, but his ego leaped into a fuller, wider life.

There was a sensation of airy lightness, as though his sublimated consciousness had dropped material weight. His body sat beneath him in the chair. He could see it. He could see the city and the lake and the mountains and the yellow disk of the moon. He knew he was rising toward the latter swiftly. Then—space was

annihilated in an instant, and he seemed to himself to be standing on the topmost edge of a mighty crater in the full, unobstructed glare of a blinding light.

He sensed that was the sun, which hung like a ball of fire halfway up from the horizon, flinging its rays in a dazzling brilliance against the dead satellite's surface, unprotected by an atmospheric screen. His first sensation was an amazing realization of his own success. Then he gazed about.



To one side was the vast ring of the crater itself, a well of unutterable darkness and unplumbed depth, as yet not opened up to the burning light of the sun. To the other was the downward sweep of the crater's flank, dun, dead, wrinkled, seamed and seared by the stabbing rays which bathed it in pitiless light. And beyond the foot of the crater was a vast irregular plain, lower in the center as though eons past it might have been the bed of some vanished sea. About the plain were the crests of barren mountains, crags, pinnacles, misshapen and weird beyond thought.

Yes, the moon is dead—now. But—there was life upon it once. Croft willed himself down from the lip of the crater to the plain. He moved about it. Indeed it had been a sea. There in the airless blaze, still etched in the lifeless formations, he found an ancient water-line, the mark of the fingers of vanished waters—like a mockery of what had been. And skirting the outline of that long-lost sea, he came to the ruin of a city which had stood upon the shores a myriad years ago. It stood there still—a thing of paved streets, and dead walls, safe in that moistureless world from decay.

Through those dead streets and houses, some of them thrown down by terrific earthquakes which he judged had accompanied the final cooling stages and death of the moon, Croft took his way, pausing now and then to examine some ancient inscriptions cut into the blocks of stone from which the buildings had been reared. In a way they impressed him as similar in many respects to the Asiatic structures of to-day, most of them being windowless on the first story, but built about an inner court, gardens of beauty in the time when the moon supported life.

So far as he could judge from the buildings themselves and frescoes on the walls, done in pigments which still prevailed, the lunarians had been a tiny

people, probably not above an average of four feet in height, but extremely intelligent past any doubt, as shown by the remains of their homes. They had possessed rather large heads in proportion to their slender bodies, as the paintings done on the inside walls led Croft to believe.

From the same source he became convinced that their social life had been highly developed, and that they had been well versed in the arts of manufacture and commerce, and had at the time when lunar seas persisted maintained a merchant marine.

Through the hours of the lunar day he explored. Not, in fact, until the sun was dropping swiftly below the rim of the mountains beyond the old sea-bed, did he desist. Then lifting his eyes he beheld a luminous crescent, many times larger than the moon appears to us, emitting a soft, green light. He stood and gazed upon it for some moments before he realized fully that he looked upon a sunrise on the earth—that the monster crescent was the earth indeed as seen from her satellite.

Then as realization came upon him he remembered his body—left on the porch of his home in the chair. Suddenly he felt a longing to return, to forsake the forsaken relics of a life which had passed and go back to the full, pulsing tide of life which still flowed on.

Here, then, he was faced by the second step of his experiment. He had consciously reached the moon. Could he return again to the earth? If so, he had proved his theory beyond any further doubt. Fastening his full power upon the endeavor, he willed himself back, and—

He opened his eyes—his physical eyes—and gazed into the early sun of a new day rising over the mountains and turning the world to emerald and gold.

The sound of a caught-in breath fell on his ears. He turned his glance. Mrs. Goss stood beside him.

"Laws, sir, but you was sound asleep!" she exclaimed. "I come to call you to breakfast an' you wasn't in your room, an' when I found you you was sleepin' like th' dead. You must have got up awful early, Mr. Jason."

"I was here before you were moving," Croft said as he rose. He smiled as he spoke. Indeed, he wanted to laugh, to shout. He had done what no mortal had ever accomplished before. The wonders of the universe were his to explore at

will. Yet even so he did not dream of what the future held.





### 3. BEYOND THE MOON

And now the Dog Star called. Croft had proved his ability to project his conscious self beyond earth's attraction and return. And, having proved that, the old lure of the star he had watched when a student in the Indian mountains came back with a double strength. No longer was it an occasional prompting. Rather it was a never-ceasing urge which nagged him night and day.

He yielded at last. But remembering his return from his first experiment, he arranged for the next with due care. In order that Mrs. Goss might not become alarmed by seeing his body entranced, he arranged for her to take a holiday with a married daughter in another part of the state, telling her simply that he himself expected to be absent from his home for an indefinite time and would summon her upon his return.

He knew the woman well enough to be sure she would spread the word of his coming absence, and so felt assured that his body would remain undisturbed during the period of his venture into universal space.

Having seen the old woman depart, he entered the library, drew down all the blinds, and stretched himself on the couch. Fixing his mind on Sirius to the exclusion of everything else, he threw off the bonds of the flesh.

Yet here, as it chanced, even Croft made a well-nigh fatal mistake. It was toward Sirius he had willed himself in his thoughts, and Sirius is a sun. As a result, he realized none too soon that he was floating in the actual nebula surrounding the flaming orb itself.

Directly beneath him, as it appeared, the Dog Star rolled, a mass of electric fire. Mountains of flame ran darting off into space in all directions. Between them the whole surface of the sun boiled and bubbled and seethed like a world-wide cauldron. Not for a moment was there any rest upon that surface toward which he was sinking with incredible speed. Every atom of the monster sun was in motion, ever shifting, ever changing yet always the same. It quivered and billowed and shook. Flames of every conceivable color radiated from it in waves of awful heat. Vast explosions recurred again and again on the ever heaving surface. What seemed unthinkable hurricanes rushed into the voids created by the exploding gases.

In this maelstrom of titanic forces Croft found himself caught. Not even the wonderful force his spirit had attained could overcome the sun's power of repulsion. His progress stayed, he hung above the molten globe beneath him, imprisoned, unable to extricate himself from his position, buffeted, swirled about and swayed by the irresistible forces which warred around him in a never-ceasing tumult such as he had never conceived.

Something like a vague question as to his fate rather than any fear assailed him, something like a blind wonder. The force which held him was one beyond his experience or knowledge. He knew that a true spirit, a pure ego, could not wholly perish, yet now he asked himself what would be the effect of close proximity to such an enormous center of elemental activity upon an ego not wholly sublimated, such as his.

His will power actually faltered, staggered. For the time being he lost his ability to choose his course. He had willed himself here, and here he was, but he found himself unable to will himself back or anywhere else, in fact. The sensation crept through his soul that he was a plaything of fate, a mad ego which had ventured too far, dared too much, sought to learn those things possibly forbidden, hence caught in a net of universal law, woven about him by his own mad thirst for knowledge—a spirit doomed by its own daring to an eternity of something closely approaching the orthodox hell.



Through eons of time, as it seemed to him, he hung above that blazing orb, surrounded by seething gases which dimmed but did not wholly obscure his vision. Then a change began taking place. A great spot of darkness appeared on the pulsing body of the sun. It widened swiftly. About it the fiery elements of molten mass seemed to center their main endeavor. Vast streamers of flaming gas leaped and darted about its spreading center. It stretched and spread.

To Croft's fascinated vision it showed a mighty, funnel-like chasm, reaching down for thousands of miles into the very heart of their solar mass. And suddenly he knew that once more he was sinking, was being drawn down, down, to be engulfed in that terrible throat of the terrifying funnel, swept and sucked down like a bit of driftwood into the maw of a whirlpool, powerless to resist.

Down he sank, down, between walls of living fire which swirled about him with

an inconceivable velocity of revolution. The vapors which closed about him seemed to stifle even his spirit senses. Down, down, how far he had no conception. He had lost all control, all conscious power to judge of time or distance. Yet he was able still to see. And so at last he sensed that the fiery walls were coming swiftly together.

For a wild instant he conceived himself engulfed. Then he knew that he was being thrown out and upward again with terrific force, literally crowded forth with the out-rushing gases between the collapsing walls, and hurled again into space.

Darkness came down, a darkness so deep it seemed a thousand suns might not pierce it through with their rays. Sirius, the great sun, seemed blotted out. He was seized by a sense of falling through that Stygian shroud. In which direction he knew not, or why or how. He knew only that his ego over which he had lost control was swirling in vast spirals down and down through an endless void to an endless fate—that he who had come so confidently forth to explore the universal secrets had become a waif in the uncharted immensity of the eternal universe.

The sensation went on and on. So much he knew. Still he was conscious. The thought came to him that this was his punishment for daring to know. Still conscious, he must be still bound by natural law. Had he broken that law and been cast into utter darkness, to remain forever conscious of his fate? Yet if so, where was he falling, where was he to wander, and for how long? His senses reeled.

By degrees, however, he fought back to some measure of control. His very necessity prompted the attempt. And by degrees there came to him a sense of not being any longer alone. In the almost palpable darkness it seemed that other shapes and forms, whose warp and woof was darkness also, floated and writhed about him as he fell.

They thrust against him; they gibbered soundlessly at him. They taunted him as he passed. And yet their very presence helped him in the end. He called his own knowledge to his assistance. He recognized these shapes of terror as those elementals of which occult teaching spoke, things which roamed in the darkness, which had as yet never been able to reach out and gain a soul for themselves.

With understanding came again the power of independent action. Unknowing whither, Croft willed himself out of their midst to some spot unnamed, where he

might gain a spiritual moment of rest—to the nearest bit of matter afloat in the universal void. Abruptly he became aware of the near presence of some solid substance, the sense of falling ended, and he knew that his will had found expression in fact.

Yet wherever it was he had landed, the region was dead. Like the moon, it was wholly devoid of moisture or atmosphere. The presence of solid matter, however, gave him back a still further sense of control. Though he was still enveloped in darkness, he reasoned that if this was a planet and possessed of a sun in its system, its farther side must be bathed in light. Reason also told him that in all probability he was still within the system of Sirius despite the seemingly endless distance he had come.

Exerting his will, he passed over the darkened face and emerged on the other side in the midst of a ghostly light. At once he became conscious of his surroundings, of a valley and encircling lofty mountains. From the sides of the latter came the peculiar light. Examination showed Croft that it was given off by some substance which glowed with a phosphorescence sufficient to cast faint shadows of the rocks which strewed the dead and silent waste.

Not knowing where he was, loath to dare again the void, hardly knowing whether to will himself back to earth or remain and abide the issue of his own adventure, Croft waited, debating the question, until at length the top of a mountain lighted as if from a rising sun. Inside a few moments the valley was bathed in light; he saw the great sun Sirius wheel up the morning sky.

Peace came into his soul. He was still a conscious ego, still a creature in the universe of light. He gazed about. Close to the line of the horizon, and shining with what was plainly reflected light, he saw the vast outlines of another planet he had failed to note until now.

He understood. This was the major planet, surely one of the Dog Star's pack; and he had alighted on one of its moons. All desire to remain there left him. He was tired of dead worlds, of bottomless voids.

As before on the moon itself, he felt a resurgent desire to bathe in an atmosphere of life. By now, fairly himself again, the wish was father to the fact. Summoning his will, he made the final step of his journey, as it was to prove, and found himself standing on a world not so vastly different from his own.



He stood on the side of a mountain in the midst of an almost tropic vegetation. Giant trees were about him, giant ferns sprouted from the soil. But here, as on earth, the color of the leaves was green. Through a break in the forest he gazed across a vast, wide-flung plain through which a mighty river made its way. Its waters glinted in the rays of the rising sun. Its banks were lined with patches of what he knew from their appearance were cultivated fields. Beyond them was a dun track, reminding him of the arid stretches of a desert, reaching out as far as his vision could plumb the distance.

He turned his eyes and followed the course of the river. By stages of swift interest he traced it to a point where it disappeared beneath what seemed the dull red walls of a mighty city. They were huge walls, high and broad, bastioned and towered, flung across the course of the river, which ran on through the city itself, passed beyond a farther wall, and—beyond that again there was the glint of silver and blue in Croft's eyes—the shimmer of a vast body of water—whether lake or ocean he did not know then.

The call of a bird brought his attention back. Life was waking in the mountain forest where he stood. Gay-plumaged creatures, not unlike earthly parrots, were fluttering from tree to tree. The sound of a grunting came toward him. He swung about. His eyes encountered those of other life. A creature such as he had never seen was coming out of a quivering mass of sturdy fern. It had small, beady eyes and a snout like a pig. Two tusks sprouted from its jaws like the tusks of a boar. But the rest of the body, although something like that of a hog, was covered with a long wool-like hair, fine and seemingly almost silken soft.

This, as he was to learn later, was the tabur, an animal still wild on Palos, though domesticated and raised both for its hair, which was woven into fabrics, and for its flesh, which was valued as food. While Croft watched, it began rooting about the foot of a tree on one side of the small glade where he stood. Plainly it was hunting for something to eat.

Once more he turned to the plain and stood lost in something new. Across the dun reaches of the desert, beyond the green region of the river, was moving a long dark string of figures, headed toward the city he had seen. It was like a caravan, Croft thought, in its arrangement, save that the moving objects which he deemed animals of some sort, belonged in no picture of a caravan such as he had ever seen.

Swiftly he willed himself toward them and moved along by their side.

Something like amazement filled his being. These beasts were such creatures as might have peopled the earth in the Silurian age. They were huge, twice the size of an earthly elephant. They moved in a majestic fashion, yet with a surprising speed. Their bodies were covered with a hairless skin, reddish pink in color, wrinkled and warted and plainly extremely thick. It slipped and slid over the muscles beneath it as they swung forward on their four massive legs, each one of which ended in a five-toed foot armed with short heavy claws.

But it was the head and neck and tail of the things which gave Croft pause. The head was more that of a sea-serpent or a monster lizard than anything else. The neck was long and flexible and curved like that of a camel. The tail was heavy where it joined the main spine, but thinned rapidly to a point. And the crest of head and neck, the back of each creature, so far as he could see, was covered with a sort of heavy scale, an armor devised by nature for the thing's protection, as it appeared. Yet he could not see very well, since each Sarpelca, as he was to learn their Palosian name, was loaded heavily with bundles and bales of what might be valuable merchandise.

And on each sat a man. Croft hesitated not at all to give them that title, since they were strikingly like the men of earth in so far as he could see. They had heads and arms and legs and a body, and their faces were white. Their features departed in no particular, so far as he could see, from the faces of earth, save that all were smooth, with no evidence of hair on upper lip or cheek or chin.

They were clad in loose cloak-like garments and a hooded cap or cowl. They sat the Sarpelcas just back of the juncture of the body and neck, and guided the strange-appearing monsters by means of slender reins affixed to two of the fleshy tentacles which sprouted about the beasts' almost snakelike mouths.

That this strange cortege was a caravan Croft was now assured. He decided to follow it to the city and inspect that as well. Wherefore he kept on beside it down the valley, along what he now saw was a well-defined and carefully constructed road, built of stone, cut to a nice approximation, along which the unwieldy procession made good time. The road showed no small knowledge of engineering. It was like the roads of Ancient Rome, Croft thought with quickened interest. It was in a perfect state of preservation and showed signs of recent mending here and there. While he was feeling a quickened interest in this the caravan entered the cultivated region along the river, and Croft gave his attention to the fields.

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The first thing he noted here was the fact that all growth was due to irrigation, carried out by means of ditches and laterals very much as on earth at the present time. Here and there as the caravan passed down the splendid road he found a farmer's hut set in a bower of trees. For the most part they were built of a tan-colored brick, and roofed with a thatching of rushes from the river's bank. He saw the natives working in the fields, strong-bodied men, clad in what seemed a single short-skirted tunic reaching to the knees, with the arms and lower limbs left bare.

One or two stopped work and stood to watch the caravan pass, and Croft noticed that their faces were intelligent, well featured, and their hair for the most part a sort of rich, almost chestnut brown, worn rather long and wholly uncovered or else caught about the brows by a cincture which held a bit of woven fabric draped over the head and down the neck.

Travel began to thicken along the road. The natives seemed heading to the city, to sell the produce of their fields. Croft found himself drawing aside in the press as the caravan overtook the others and crowded past. So real had it become to him that for the time he forgot he was no more than an impalpable, invisible thing these people could not contact or see. Then he remembered and gave his attention to what he might behold once more.

They had just passed a heavy cart drawn by two odd creatures, resembling deer save that they were larger and possessed of hoofs like those of earth-born horses, and instead of antlers sported two little horns not over six inches long. They were in color almost a creamy white, and he fancied them among the most beautiful forms of animal life he had ever beheld. On the cart itself were high-piled crates of some unknown fowl, as he supposed—some edible bird, with the head of a goose, the plumage of a pheasant so far as its brilliant coloring went, long necks and bluish, webbed feet. Past the cart they came upon a band of native women carrying baskets and other burdens, strapped to their shoulders. Croft gave them particular attention, since as yet he had seen only men.

The Palosian females were fit mates, he decided, after he had given them a comprehensive glance. They were strong limbed and deep breasted. These peasant folks at least were simply clad. Like the men, they wore but a single garment, falling just over the bend of the knees and caught together over one shoulder with an embossed metal button, so far as he could tell. The other arm

and shoulder were left wholly bare, as were their feet and legs, save that they wore coarse sandals of wood, strapped by leather thongs about ankle and calf. Their baskets were piled with vegetables and fruit, and they chattered and laughed among themselves as they walked.

And now as the Sarpelcas shuffled past, the highway grew actually packed. Also it drew nearer to the river and the city itself. The caravan thrust its way through a drove of the taburs—the wooly hogs such as Croft had seen on the side of the mountain. The hogsherds, rough, powerful, bronzed fellows, clad in hide aprons belted about their waists and nothing else, stalked beside their charges and exchanged heavy banter with the riders of the Sarpelcas as the caravan passed.

From behind a sound of shouting reached Croft's ears. He glanced around. Down the highway, splitting the throng of early market people, came some sort of conveyance, drawn by four of the beautiful creamy deer-like creatures he had seen before. They were harnessed abreast and had nodding plumes fixed to the head bands of their bridles in front of their horns. These plumes were all of a purple color, and from the way the crowds gave way before the advance of the equipage, Croft deemed that it bore some one of note. Even the captain of the Sarpelca train, noting the advance of the gorgeous team, drew his huge beasts to the side of the road and stood up in his seat-like saddle to face inward as it passed.



The vehicle came on. Croft watched intently as it approached. So nearly as he could tell, it was a four-wheeled conveyance something like an old-time chariot in front, where stood the driver of the cream-white steeds, and behind that protected from the sun by an arched cover draped on each side with a substance not unlike heavy silk. These draperies, too, were purple in shade, and the body and wheels of the carriage seemed fashioned from something like burnished copper, as it glistened brightly in advance.

Then it was upon them, and Croft could look squarely into the shaded depths beneath the cover he now saw to be supported by upright metal rods, save at the back where the body continued straight up in a curve to form the top.

The curtains were drawn back since the morning air was still fresh, and Jason gained a view of those who rode. He gave them one glance and mentally caught



his breath. There were two passengers in the coach—a woman and a man. The latter was plainly past middle age, well built, with a strongly set face and hair somewhat sprinkled with gray. He was clad in a tunic the like of which Croft had never seen, since it seemed woven of gold, etched and embroidered in what appeared stones or jewels of purple, red, and green. This covered his entire body and ended in half sleeves below which his forearms were bare.

He wore a jeweled cap supporting a single spray of purple feathers. From an inch below his knees his legs were encased in what seemed an open-meshed casing of metal, in color not unlike his tunic, jointed at the ankles to allow of motion when he walked. There were no seats proper in the carriage, but rather a broad padded couch upon which both passengers lay.

So much Croft saw, and then, forsaking the caravan, let himself drift along beside the strange conveyance to inspect the girl. In fact, after the first swift glance at the man, he had no eyes save for his companion in the coach.

She was younger than the man, yet strangely like him in a feminine way—more slender, more graceful as she lay at her ease. Her face was a perfect oval, framed in a wealth of golden hair, which, save for a jeweled cincture, fell unrestrained about her shoulders in a silken flood. Her eyes were blue—the purple blue of the pansy—her skin, seen on face and throat and bared left shoulder and arm, a soft, firm white. For she was dressed like the peasant women, save in a richer fashion. Her single robe was white, lustrous in its sheen. It was brodered with a simple jeweled margin at throat and hem and over the breasts with stones of blue and green.

Her girdle was of gold in color, catching her just above the hips with long ends and fringe which fell down the left side of the knee-length skirt. Sandals of the finest imaginable skin were on the soles of her slender pink-nailed feet, bare save for a jewel-studded toe and instep band, and the lacing cords which were twined about each limb as high as the top of the calf. On her left arm she wore a bracelet, just above the wrist, as a single ornament.

Croft gave her one glance which took in every detail of her presence and attire. He quivered as with a chill. Some change as cataclysmic as his experience of the night before above the Dog Star itself took place in his spiritual being. He felt drawn toward this beautiful girl of Palos as he had never in all his life on earth been drawn toward a woman before.

It was as though suddenly he had found something he had lost—as though he

had met one known and forgotten and now once more recognized. Without giving the act the slightest thought of consideration, he willed himself into the coach between the fluttering curtains of purple silk, and crouched down on the padded platform at her feet.



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