

# UNDER THE MOONS OF MARS

## BY EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

**R**ELATIVE to Captain Carter's strange story a few words concerning this remarkable personality are not out of place.

At the time of his demise, John Carter was a man of uncertain age and vast experiences, honorable and abounding with true fellowship. He stood a good two inches over six feet, was broad of shoulder and narrow of hip, with the carriage of the trained fighting man. His features were regular and clear-cut, his eyes steel gray, reflecting a strong and loyal character. He was a Southerner of the highest type. He had enlisted at the outbreak of the war, fought through the four years, and had been honorably discharged. Then for more than a decade he was gone from the sight of his fellows. When he returned he had changed, there was a kind of wistful longing and hopeless misery in his eyes, and he would sit for hours at night, staring up into the starlit heavens.

His death occurred upon a winter's night. He was discovered by the watchman of his little place on the Hudson, full length in the snow, his arms outstretched above his head toward the edge of the bluff. Death had come to him upon the spot where curious villagers had so often, on other nights, seen him standing rigid—his arms raised in supplication to the skies.

—Editor's Note.

### CHAPTER I In the Mountains

I AM a very old man; how old, I do not know. Possibly I am a hundred, possibly more; but I cannot tell, because I have never used any other man, nor do I remember my childhood. So far as I can recollect, I have always been a man, a man of about 20. I appear today as I did 40 years and more ago, and yet I feel that I cannot go on living forever; that some day I shall die the real death from which there is no return.

I do not know why I should fear death. I who have died twice and am still alive, yet I have the same horror of it as you who have never died, and it is because of this terror of death, I believe, that I am so convinced of my mortality.

I have never told this story, nor shall I until this manuscript is after I have passed over for eternity.

I know that the average mind will not believe what it cannot grasp, and I do not purpose being pilloried by the public, the pulpit and the press and held up as a liar, when I am but telling the simple truths, which some day science will substantiate.

My name is John Carter.

At the close of the Civil War I found myself possessed of several hundred thousand dollars, Confederate, and a captain's commission in the cavalry arm of an army which no longer existed; the servant of a cause which had vanished.

Masterless, penniless and with my only means of livelihood—fighting—gone, I determined to work my way to the Southwest and attempt to retrieve my fallen fortunes in a search for gold.

I spent nearly a year prospecting in company with another Confederate officer, Captain James K. Powell, of Richmond. We were extremely fortunate, as late in the winter of 1865-1866, after many hardships and privations, we located the most remarkable gold-bearing quartz vein that our wildest dreams had ever pictured.

Our equipment being crude, we decided that one of us must return to civilization, purchase the necessary machinery and return with a sufficient force of men properly to work the mine.

Powell was familiar with the country, as well as with the mechanical requirements of mining, and we determined that he should make the trip, while I held down our claim against it being jumped by some wandering prospector.

On March 2, 1867, Powell and I packed his provisions on two of our burros, and, bidding me good-by, he mounted his horse and started down the mountain side toward the valley, which led the first stage of his journey.

The morning, like nearly all Arizona mornings, was clear and beautiful. I could see him and his train of animals making their way down toward the valley, and for hours I would catch occasional glimpses of them as they topped a "hog-back" or came out upon a level plain.

My last sight of them was about 11 o'clock in the afternoon, as they entered the shadows of the range on the opposite side of the valley.

Some half hour later I happened to glance casually across the valley and was much surprised to note three little dots in about the same place I had last seen Powell and his train.

I am not given to needless worrying, but the more I tried to convince myself that all was well with Powell, and that the dots I had seen on the mountain were antelopes or wild horses, the less I was able to assure myself.

Since we had entered the territory we had not seen a hostile Indian, and we had, therefore, become careless and were wont to ridicule the stories of the great numbers of these vicious marauders that haunted their trails, taking their lives and torture of every white party which fell into their merciless clutches.

Finally, however, I could no longer endure the suspense, and, arising myself with two revolvers and a carbine, I strapped two belts of cartridges about me, and, catching my horse, started down the trail.

Thinking rapidly until, darkness shutting down, I was forced to await the rising of the moon, and given an opportunity to speculate on the question of the wisdom of my chase.

About 9 o'clock the moon was sufficiently bright for me to proceed, and I had no difficulty in following the trail until about midnight, when the moon was low where Powell had expected to camp. I came upon the spot unexpectedly, finding it entirely deserted, with no signs of having been recently occupied.

I noted that the tracks of the pursuing horsemen, for such I was convinced they must be, continued after Powell with only a brief stop at the hole for water, and always at the same rate of speed as his.

It was positive now that the trail was an Apache and that they wished to capture Powell alive for the Spanish treasure of the torture, and I judged my horse onward, hoping against hope that I would catch up with the red rascals before they attacked him.

Further speculation was suddenly cut short by the faint report of two shots far ahead of me. I knew that Powell would need me now, if ever, and I spurred my horse to his utmost speed.

I had hoped for perhaps a mile or more without hearing further sounds, when the trail suddenly debouched on to a small, open plateau near the summit of the pass.

I had passed through a narrow, overhanging gorge just before entering upon this tableland, and there were probably half a thousand red warriors clustered round some object near the center of the camp. Their attention was so wholly riveted to this point of interest that they did not notice me.

I was, of course, positive that Powell was the center of attraction, and within an instant from the moment the scene broke over my view I had whipped out

my revolver and was charging down upon the entire army of warriors, shooting and whooping at the top of my lungs.

Single-handed, I could not have pursued better tactics, for the red men, convinced by sudden surprise that not less than a regiment of regulars was upon them, turned and fled in every direction for their horses, arrows and rifles.

Under the clear rays of the Arizona moon lay Powell, his body fairly bristling with the hostile arrows of the braves.

He was already dead surely; yet I would have saved his body from mutilation at the hands of the Apaches as quickly as I would have saved the man himself from death.

Riding close to him I reached from the saddle, and grasping his cartridge-belt, drew him up across the withers of my mount.

To return by the way I had come would have been more hazardous than to continue across the plateau, so, putting spurs to my poor beast, I made a dash for the opening to the pass, which I could distinguish on the far side of the tableland.

The Indians had by this time discovered the puny numerical strength of the rescuing regiment, and I was being showered with imprecations, arrows and rifle balls.

The fact that it is difficult to aim anything but imprecations accurately by moonlight, that they were upset by the sudden and unexpected manner of my advent, and that I was a rather rapidly moving target saved me from the various deadly projectiles of the enemy and permitted me to reach the shadows of the surrounding peaks before an orderly pursuit could be organized.

My horse was traveling virtually unguided, as I knew that I had probably lost knowledge of the exact location of the trail to the pass than he, and thus it happened that he entered a defile which led to the summit of the range and not to the pass which I had hoped would carry me to the valley and to safety.

My first knowledge that I was on the wrong trail came when I heard the yells of the savages suddenly grow fainter and far to my left. I knew then that they had passed to the left of the jagged rock formation at the edge of the plateau, to the right of which my horse had borne me and the body of Powell.

I drew rein on a little level promontory overlooking the trail below and to my left, and saw my pursuers disappearing round the point of a neighboring peak.

I knew the Indians would soon discover that they were on the wrong trail, and that the search for me would be renewed in the right direction as soon as they located my trail.

I pushed ahead, however, for perhaps a hundred yards, when a sharp turn to the right brought me to the mouth of a large cave. The opening was about four feet in height and three to four feet wide, and at this opening the trail ended.

It was now morning, and, with the customary lack of dawn—which is a startling characteristic of Arizona—it had become daylight almost without my realizing it.

Dismounting, I laid Powell upon the ground; but the most painstaking examination failed to reveal the faintest spark of life. I forced water from my canteen between his cold lips, bathed his face and rubbed his hands, working over him continuously for the better part of an hour in the face of the fact that I knew him to be dead.

I was very fond of Powell; he was a thorough man in every respect; a polished gentleman, a staunch and true friend, and it was with deepest grief that I finally gave up.

Leaving the body where it lay on the ledge, I crept into the cave to reconnoiter.

I found a large chamber, possibly a hundred feet in diameter, and 30 or 40 feet in height; a smooth and well-worn floor, and many other evidences that the cave had at some remote period been inhabited. The back of the cave was so lost in dense shadow that I could not distinguish whether there were openings into other apartments or not.

I was continuing my examination I commenced to feel a pleasant drowsiness creeping over me, which, attributed to the fatigue of my long and strenuous ride and the reaction from the excitement of the fight and the pursuit.

I lay down, and, as I lay, I found myself in my present location, as I knew that one man could defend the trail to the cave against an army.

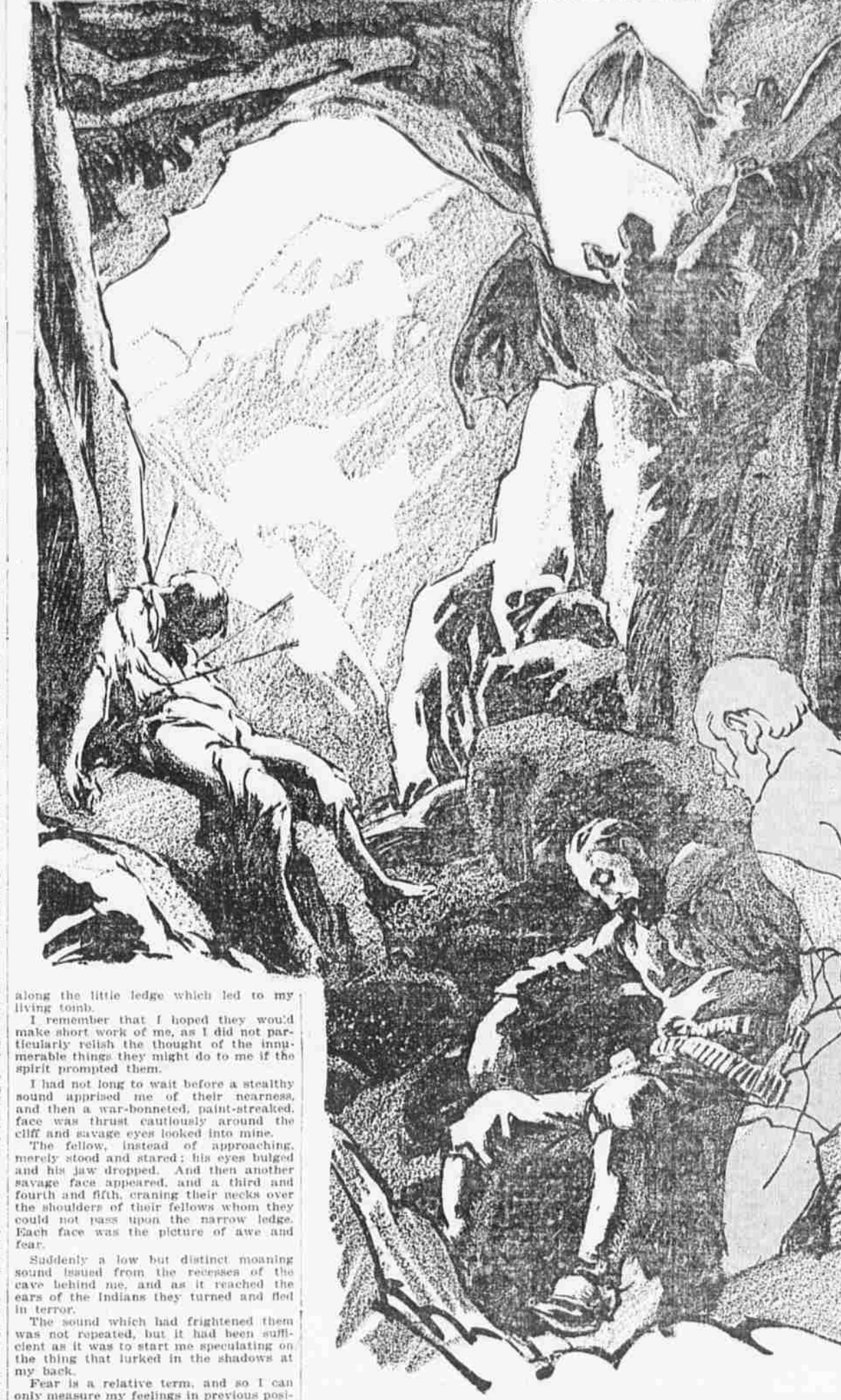
I soon became so drowsy that I could scarcely resist the strong desire to throw myself on the floor of the cave for a few moments' rest, but I knew that this would never do, as it would mean certain death at the hands of my red friends, who might be upon me at any moment.

With an effort I started toward the opening of the cave, only to feel drunkenly now thoroughly awake, as though turned to stone.

It was then, for the first time, that I noticed a slight vapor filling the cave. It was extremely tenuous and only noticeable against the opening, which led to daylight. There also came to my nostrils a faintly pungent odor, and I could only assume that I had been overcome by some poisonous gas, but why I should retain my mental faculties and yet be unable to move I could not fathom.

I lay facing the opening of the cave, and I could see the short stretch of trail which lay between the cave and the turn of the cliff. The noise of the approaching horses had ceased, and I judged the braves were creeping stealthily upon me.

Suddenly and unawares as I was, I had



I looked first at my lifeless clay there upon the floor of the cave, and then down at myself in utter bewilderment; for there I lay clothed, and yet here I stood, but naked as at the minute of my birth.

### CHAPTER III On a Strange Planet

I KNEW that I was on Mars; not once did I question either my sanity or my wakefulness. I was not asleep, no need for pinching here; my inner consciousness told me as plainly that I was upon Mars as your conscious mind tells you that you are upon earth. You do not question the fact; neither did I.

I found myself lying prone upon a bed of yellowish, mosslike vegetation which stretched round me in all directions for interminable miles. I seemed to be lying in a deep circular basin, along the outer verge of which I could distinguish the irregularities of low hills.

It was midday, the sun was shining full upon me, and the heat of it was rather intense upon my body, yet no greater than would have been true under similar conditions on an Arizona desert.

Here and there were slight outcroppings of quartz-bearing rock which glistened in the sunlight; and a little to my left, perhaps 100 yards, appeared a low, walled inclosure about four feet in height.

No water, nor any other vegetation than the moss was in evidence; and as I was suffering slightly from thirst I determined to do a little exploring.

Springing to my feet, I received my first Martian surprise, for the effort, which on earth would have brought me standing upright, carried me into the Martian air to the height of about three yards. I alighted softly upon the ground, however, without appreciable shock or jar.

Now commenced a series of evolutions which even though I had known which way I found that I must learn to walk all over again, as the muscular exertion which carried me easily and safely upon earth played strange antics with me upon Mars.

Instead of progressing in a sane and dignified manner, my attempts to walk resulted in a variety of hops which took me clear of the ground a couple of feet at each step and landed me sprawling upon my face or back at the end of each second or third hop.

My muscles, perfectly attuned and accustomed to the force of gravity on earth, played the mischief with me in attempting for the first time to cope with the lesser attraction and lower air pressure on Mars.

I was determined, however, to explore the low structure, which was the only evidence of habitation in sight, and so I hit upon the unique plan of resorting to first principles in locomotion, creeping. I did fairly well at this, and in a few moments had reached the low, encircling wall of the inclosure.

There appeared to be no door or window upon the side nearest me; but, as the wall was but about four feet high, I cautiously gained my feet and peered over the top upon the strangest sight I had ever been given me to see.

The roof of the inclosure was of solid glass about four or five inches in thickness, and beneath this were several hundred large eggs, perfectly round and snowy white. They were nearly uniform in size, being about two and a half feet in diameter.

Five or six had already hatched, and the grotesque caricatures which sat blinking in the sunlight were enough to cause me to doubt my sanity.

They seemed mostly head, with little scrawny bodies, long necks and six legs, or, as I afterward learned, two legs and two arms, with an intermediary pair of limbs which could be used at will either as arms or legs.

The eggs were set at the extreme sides of their heads, a trifle above the center, and protruded in such a manner that they could be directed either forward or back, and also independently of each other, thus permitting this queer animal to look in any direction, or in two directions at once, without the necessity of turning his head.

The ears, which were slightly above the eyes, and closer together, were small cup-shaped antennae, protruding not more than an inch on these young specimens.

Their noses were but longitudinal slits in the center of their faces, midway between their mouths and ears.

There was no hair on their bodies, which were of a very light yellowish-green color. In the adults, as I was to learn quite soon, this color deepens to an olive green, and is darker in the male than in the female.

Further, the heads of the adults are not so out of proportion to their bodies as is true of the young.

The iris of the eyes is blood-red, as in albinos, while the pupil is dark. The eyeball itself is very white, as are the teeth.

These latter add a most ferocious appearance to an otherwise fearsome and terrible countenance, as the lower tusks curve upward to sharp points, which end about where the eyes of earthly humans are located. The whiteness of the teeth

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plidity of legs, is a characteristic feature of the fauna of Mars. The highest type of man and one other animal, the only animal existing on Mars, alone have well-formed nails, and there are absolutely no hoofed animals in existence there.

Behind this first charging demon trailed 10 others, similar in all respects, but, as I learned later, bearing individual characteristics peculiar to themselves, precisely as no two of us are identical, although we are all cast in a similar mold.

This picture, or rather materialized nightmare, which I have described at length, made but one terrible and swift impression on me as I turned to meet it.

Unarmed and naked as I was, the first law of nature manifested itself in the only possible solution of my immediate problem, and that was to get out of the vicinity of the point of the charging spear.

Consequently, I gave a very earthy and at the same time superhuman leap to reach the top of the Martian inclosure, for such I had determined it must be.

My effort was crowned with a success which appalled me no less than it seemed to surprise the Martian warriors, for it carried me fully 30 feet into the air and landed me a hundred feet from my pursuers, and on the opposite side of the inclosure.

I alighted upon the soft moss easily and without mishap, and turning, saw my enemies lined up along the further wall.

Some were surveying me with expressions which I at once interpreted as marked extreme astonishment, and the others were evidently satisfying themselves that I had not molested their young.

They were conversing together in low tones, and gesticulating and pointing toward me.

Their discovery that I had not harmed the little Martians, and that I was unarmed, must have caused them to look upon me with less ferocity; but, as I was to learn later, the thing which weighed most in my favor was my exhibition of burlesque.

While the Martians are immense, their bones are very large and they are muscled only in proportion to the gravitation which they must have been upon Earth. The result is that they are infinitely less agile and less powerful, in proportion to their weight, than an Earth man, and I doubt that there were one of them who could be transplanted to Earth, he could lift his own weight from the ground; in fact, I am sure that he could not do so.

My feat, then, was as marvelous upon Mars as it would have been upon Earth, and from desiring to annihilate me they suddenly looked upon me as a wonderful discovery, to be captured and exhibited among their fellows.

The respite my unexpected agility had given me permitted me to formulate plans for the immediate future and to note more wisely the appearance of the warriors, for I could not disassociate these people in my mind from those other warriors who, only the day before, had been pursuing me.

I noted that each was armed with several other weapons in addition to the huge spear which I have described.

The weapons which caused me to decide against an attempt to escape by flight was what was evidently a rifle of some description, and which, I felt, for some reason, they were peculiarly efficient in handling.

These rifles were of a white metal, stocked with wood, which I learned later was a very light and intensely hard growth which would have been upon Earth, and from desiring to annihilate me they suddenly looked upon me as a wonderful discovery, to be captured and exhibited among their fellows.

The metal of the barrel is an alloy, composed principally of aluminum and steel, which they have learned to temper to a hardness far exceeding that of the steel with which we are familiar.

The weight of the rifle is comparatively little, and with the small caliber explosive radium projectiles which they use, and the great length of the barrel, they are deadly in the extreme, and at ranges which would be unthinkable to us of Earth.

The theoretic effective radius of this weapon is 300 miles, but the best they can do in actual service, when equipped with their wireless finders and sighters, is but a trifle over 100 miles.

This was quite far enough to imbue me with great respect for the Martian firearm, and some telepathic force must have warned me against attempting to escape in broad daylight from under the muzzles of 20 of these death-dealing machines.

The Martians, after conversing for a short time, broke from their position, in direction from which they had come, leaving one of their number alone by the inclosure.

When they had covered perhaps 200 yards they halted, and, turning their mounts toward us, sat watching the warrior by the inclosure.

His was the only one whose spear had so nearly transfixed me, and was evidently the leader of the band, as I had noted that they seemed to have moved to their present position at his direction.