

CHAPTER IV THUVIA

Upon dawn, Thuvia, Princess of Ptarth, notices her abductors now bear the insignia of Helium instead of Dusar, sparking hope Carthoris of Helium means her no harm. Despite her inquiries, the abductors remain secretive about their intentions. Their journey ends at a deserted city on Mars, a relic from a bygone era, now a haunt for the green nomadic tribes. These desolate places were familiar to Thuvia from her previous adventures, yet fear grips her as she is left alone in the plaza, reflecting on the ancient Martian belief that the spirits of Holy Therns inhabit the bodies of the great white apes.

In her solitude, Thuvia notices a lurking presence, which turns out to be Thar Ban, a jed among the hordes of Torquas, riding his mighty thoot. Thar Ban, after a successful raid, seeks refuge and grazing for his thoot within the desolated city. Stealthily, he approaches Thuvia with the intention of capturing her, intrigued by the rarity of seizing a red woman.

Just as Thar Ban seizes Thuvia and attempts to escape, Carthoris's flier appears, descending swiftly in an attempt to rescue Thuvia. The ensuing chaos sees Carthoris fighting fervently against the men of Dusar, whom he initially mistakes for his allies due to their deceptive insignias. Despite his valiant efforts and superior swordsmanship, Carthoris finds himself unable to prevent Thar Ban's escape with Thuvia.

In a daring chase, Carthoris follows on foot after his flier is damaged by a shot from a pursuer. The chase leads him into the treacherous foothills of the mountains of Torquas, where the trail vanishes, leaving no trace. Carthoris's search turns desperate as he encounters a banth tracking the scent of potential prey—possibly Thuvia and Thar Ban. Seizing this glimmer of hope, Carthoris follows the banth, only to be led to a mysterious cave entrance, unexpectedly opening a new chapter in his quest.

Throughout this ordeal, the characters' paths intertwine within the desolate and ghostly remnants of Mars' glorious past, setting the stage for a tale of abduction, intrigue, and the relentless pursuit of a loved one against the backdrop of a civilization's forgotten splendors and dangers.