

CLASSICS TO GO

# AMAZING

STORIES  
VOLUME 19



GARDNER F. FOX

# **Amazing Stories**

**Volume 19**

**Gardner F. Fox**

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# The Man the Sun-Gods Made

**They called him a god and worshipped him.  
He neither ate nor drank, nor breathed the  
wild free air, yet he was mighty beyond  
belief. But grief bowed those superbly-muscled  
shoulders, for he knew he was human.**

Tyr stood on the warm white sands and stretched. The hot yellow rays of the sun played across his ribbed chest and the muscles in his long legs and thick arms. Tyr smiled. It was good to be alive, even if he was a god.

He wondered when they would come to worship him again, sending the bittersweet keening of the *suota*-horns out across the silver deserts and blue lakes of Lyallar. He hoped it would be soon, for he had, despite himself, grown to like sitting on the ruby throne. From where he stood, looking across the groined vastness of the Lord Chamber, he could see the upturned faces of his people. Even the rat-face of Otho he liked at moments like those, for the wondrously beautiful face of Fay smiled red-lipped at him. Tyr gave many gifts to Fay from the treasures that the Lyallar heaped upon him. And always it seemed she was eager for more, her brown eyes flickering like those of a greedy child.

Tyr spread his arms, feeling millions of tiny nerve-ends in his skin open to drink in the energy pouring from the titanic orb of fire in the heavens that was sun to the planet Lyallar. Tyr

ate no food, and breathed no air. All that he needed for his existence he got from the sun.

As the energy flooded into him, making him tingle in every fibre of his being, Tyr felt again the effect of that energy on his brain. It was as though the power he fed on was so great that it opened the deeper spaces of his mind so that any problem was no problem at all—while the moment lasted.

He had found the stone tower in a moment like that. Seen it at first miles away, standing lone and stark on the silver sand. Built of brownish rock, round as the bole of a tree, it was something new to him who had explored all the strange places of this planet. Tyr had run to it, testing his swift feet. He could have distanced a dozen cheetahs, one after another, could Tyr. He was more than swift. He was inhuman.

The lock was easy to break with all that energy flooding him. He merely took it in his big hands and his muscles writhed and bulged, and the flaky red metal of the lock snapped. With the flat of a hand he pushed open the door and went within. It was dim and cool inside, and at first Tyr did not like it.

There were queer objects all about him, some of glass, some of metal. Here were curves and cones and vibrating rods of the thickness of a man's little finger. And books! Even the libraries of the Trylla contained no books such as these. He lifted one down and browsed, and found that his mind was understanding it, knowing what those terms and symbols meant, without thinking. His mind frightened Tyr at times. It was almost not a part of him. It was as though all the men and women who had been his forebears had left a little something of themselves in his makeup, so that their knowledge and experience could guide their descendant.

Many hours Tyr spent in that odd place. It was a change from the deserts and the ruby throne. Gradually, through the years, he found that he was amassing an education from the books and the glass and metal objects—

*Suu-ohhh-taaaa!*

The clarion notes rang sweet and clear. They brought Tyr erect, the peculiar ring chained to his neck bouncing on his chest. He looked toward the dim horizon, where stood Yawarta, city of the ruby throne.

This was the call to the god of the Lyallar. Tyr ran easily, like a perfect machine that never tired. Across the white sands, and through the eerie forest in which all the trees resembled frost-flakes, silver-white in the sun. Deep in the heart of the forest lay an azure pool, its blueness contrasting startlingly with the silver of the forest.

The towers of Yawarta were slim and dark beyond the grassy fields. Like drops of blood on a satin pillow they brooded, reminding the Tryllan race that they were slaves to the *ardth* who dwelt far beyond the nearest star.

A girl was standing before a golden door set flush with the hillside.

"Fay!"

"Speak not, on your life!" she whimpered.

They stood silent, breathing softly. Tyr heard the voices then, harsh voices, where the Tryllans spoke in musical syllables.

"The *ardth*! They have returned?"

"Yes. They swear to kill you, Tyr. They are hunting you now, along the tunnels to the door."

Tyr bent and swung the girl high on his chest, grinning.  
"They will never catch Tyr."

Tyr began to run. His legs blurred with the speed of his motion. He stepped out along the grassy slope, and down it, and then was running free on the plains. He heard Fay's gasp as she grew aware of his pace. She buried her head against his shoulder to breathe, and her yellow hair whipped and stung his face as the wind tossed it.

For four hours Tyr ran, not needing to breathe. When he swung the girl down, he was as composed as though he had moved ten feet. Fay stared up at him with warm brown eyes.

"Truly you are a god, Tyr. Only a god could run without effort."

"No god. Only—only—"

He halted. He had no word to describe himself. Neither did the Trylla, except "god." So god he had become, unwillingly; yet he was dimly aware that he was unique among men, that he stood alone.

"We are far from the Old Ones, the *ardth*, here," he said. "It would be easy to dwell here on the deserts until they have left."

Fay stirred restlessly, saying, "I do not want to stay on the deserts. They are bare places. No people, no laughter."

"I don't blame you. There must be something I can do."

He rubbed his hands on the soft white fur that clasped his hips. A hot anger was beating up inside him, making his nostrils flare. The Old Ones! They had come back to Lyallar, where Tyr ruled! The masters of planets and the far reaches of space had come back. He was one, and the *ardth* were many. Individually, nothing could ever defeat him. But one against a race! He shook his head.

"You could fight them, Tyr. You are a god. What can the Old Ones do to you? There is no way of killing you. Sometimes

an assassin has tried, while you sat on the ruby throne. But no one has ever succeeded."

That was true. Yet he did not tell her that his own uncanny speed saved him. There was no sense in testing fate, by letting a weapon strike him. He had a subtle knowledge that he might be immune to certain types of missiles, but he was not sure.

"You could walk into Yawarta and slay them all, Tyr," the girl said softly, watching him carefully with her brown eyes. "Then we could go back to the old days. You could give me that emerald necklace I want."

Tyr wondered at the greed in the brown eyes. It disturbed him. But it did not disturb him as much as the thoughts of the Old Ones. Thought of them brought a yearning for battle that rose red and mist-like inside his great chest. How to tell of that hotness within him, where his guts ought to be, but were not, that made his heart pump with fury? Yet, despite his rage, he was alert and careful as a stalking cat. He could not tell this to Fay; she wanted him to walk unarmed into Yawarta and blast the *ardth* with some sort of supernatural power.

He walked around on the white sand, brooding at his moving feet. He looked into his mind for the words, stumbling and halting.

"Fay, the Trylla have made of me a god. Now I know I am no god. I am not such a god as the legends of the Tryllan cults tell of, at any rate. I am only a man. A human being, who is something of a freak."

There was a patient smile on the girl's red mouth. She shook her head and the soft yellow hair tumbled around her bare shoulders.

"We have spoken of this before, Tyr. Always you say that you are not a god, and then you turn around and do what only a



god can do."

Tyr sighed. "Maybe I am a god. Maybe I expect a god to be too much. But that is not exactly the point. It is this: the Trylla call me god, no matter what I call myself. Therefore I must act like a god, for their sake."

Fay nodded, brown eyes fastened on him.

Tyr said slowly, "A god would not let oppressors molest his people, would he, Fay?"

"That is just what I have said. You must go into Yawarta and slay and slay—"

"No. No, I do not think that is what a god would do."

Fay frowned slightly. She kicked at a lump of sand and watched it fly apart. She ran a finger into her thick yellow hair and twirled it.

"Of course you may be right," she said tartly. "I am not versed in the way of gods."

"Nor am I," scowled Tyr. "But, in the heart of me, something says there is another way. That, if I can convince the *ardth* that I could defeat them, smash them in some way—then what would be the triumph of a god."

"That might take a long time. I would like very much to have that emerald necklace. Otho said it was worn by Queen Yatha-sath two thousand years ago. Please, Tyr?"

She came close to him, perfumed warmth and soft white skin. Her mouth was very red. But Tyr looked away, frowning.

"The Old Ones derive their powers from a thing called science," he said slowly. "It says so in a book in the Tower. If I could learn that science, I might defeat them with their own weapons. But that would take a long time. Many years."

He stared up into the sun and smiled gently, feeling its hot rays lave his chest and arms and thighs. Like bubbles of air surging up through water, he felt the dormant strength of his muscles. He had strength. A strong man can fight with his hands and with his legs. He would fight.

He turned sharply to Fay and asked, "What is the Barrow that the Trylla often mention? Where is it?"

"The Barrow is the pride of the Trylla. Without it there would be no hope."

"Yes, yes. I know. But what *is* it?"

"It is the hidden place where all the wartime secrets of the race are stored. When the last invasion of the Old Ones took place, nearly a hundred years ago, all the accumulated knowledge of the conquered Tryllans was locked away lest the Old Ones destroy it."

"Could you find the Barrow?"

Fay shuddered. Tyr looked at her, saw her fingers move through her yellow hair, watched with gentle smile as white teeth nibbled at red lip. He put out his big hands and held her arms.

"It is for the Trylla that I ask."

"I—I know. I can find the Barrow." Her chin lifted defiantly. "Of what use are old legends if they make those who hear them weaklings and cowards? Better to—to die bravely than to hole up like the *tabbug* at the first cry of the hunting-cat!"

Tyr grinned at her, wondering if she believed in her own words. She was so lovely, so childishly greedy for pretty things, so—he frowned at the idea—so unconsciously selfish, wrapped in her own interests, that abstract terms like bravery and cowardice seemed alien to her tongue. Her brown eyes flirted up at him from under their long lashes, and caught his warm grin.

She muttered sullenly, "The Barrow is five days' journey from the Desert of the Dead, and that lies two days' travelling from here."

"So near?"

"Much of the journey is across terrible deserts, and the rest is over insurmountable mountain barriers. The Barrow is atop the tallest mountain on all the planet."

"That makes it so much harder for the Old Ones to find it," Tyr said.

"The Old Ones can fly. The Trylla must walk. Our monorails run only in the cities. Oh, Tyr, the only way you can win is to go into the chambers of Yawarta and destroy the leading *ardth*. You can do it no other way!"

"If Harl the Ancient still lives," Tyr dreamed, "he could help me fight. He was the greatest of the Tryllan warriors. There are rumors he does live, in the Barrow. That is why I must find it. I need Harl."

The girl nibbled at her red mouth sullenly, saying, "I don't see why you don't do as I say. In that way, you'd get to power faster. We wouldn't have to share the glory with Harl."

"The *ardth* aren't bowling pins to fall at the sway of an arm, Fay. They are dangerous men. Wise men with enough savagery in their blood to make them vicious."

Tyr knew he could never hope to walk into the secret chambers of the *ardth* alive. He knew his limitations. He was human, after a fashion. He bled when cut, and he ached when bruised. And the *ardth*—

The *ardth* were a strange race. They were nomads who swept across the trails of the stars in great vessels that spanned a bridge of space from planet to planet. Never happy for long, they were eaten by a cancerous unrest that

drove them on and on, to the outermost rims of the galaxies, hunting always.

They had home planets, too, but they were seldom at home. Instead they chose to lock themselves in ships of metal and fling themselves out between the suns. Instead of green grass and trees, their windows looked on blackness relieved only by twinkling dots that were stars, and steadily glowing pinpricks that were unexplored planets.

Five hundred years ago they had come to Lyallar. The Tryllans, then a great race, had fought them bitterly and had driven them off. Three hundred years later, they came again; this time they came for war. That war lasted seventy-two years and, at its end, the Tryllans were a broken race. And that time the Old Ones stayed, or, rather, their cities stayed—and the Glow.

No one really knew what the Glow was. It made the Old Ones powerful, and was as closely guarded by them as was the Barrow by the Trylla. Without the Glow, the *ardth* were naught. They hid the Glow deep in their biggest city, that they named Mart.

"If we could go to Mart and find this Glow," said Tyr abruptly, out of his deep thought.

Fay laughed bitterly, "The Barrow one can find by rolling downhill, compared to finding the Glow and using it."

Tyr grunted. It was hard, being a god.

Sometimes he wished he were like other men, for then he would have no people to protect, no Old Ones to battle for a race that looked to him for guidance. Often he had thought that the Old Ones might be gods, but he knew that none of them could do what he could do.

His godship prodded him into saying, "Let us find the Barrow, and Harl."

"Harl is old, very old," replied the girl. "He is so old that he must be a doddering gaffer now."

"But his brain would be young," Tyr argued. "And it is the brain that is trained in war from which I seek aid."

The girl sat on a rock and undid a sandal and shook sand from it. She shrugged petulantly and fastened her sandal. "Must we go now? It is almost night."

Tyr looked at the sun low on the horizon. Tyr did not like to travel by night. He preferred the hot day, when the sunrays beat with insistent heat about his tanned chest and shoulders. But there was need for hurry. The Old Ones did not stop for darkness, and neither would he.

"Come," he said shortly.

The way was easy, at first. In the red light of the dying sun, they saw the sand before them, each rise and dip moulded into graceful curves by the winds that whipped the barrens night and day. They went lightly, swiftly.

Slowly the stars loomed in the darkening sky above them. And, as is the way with travellers the worlds over, they grew silent and more intimate in unspoken thought. Once or twice Fay's hand brushed Tyr's, and he helped her across the higher dunes.

On a hard swirl of sand, they stood close. Fay whispered, "All those stars, Tyr. You would think the Old Ones would be satisfied with so many. They might leave Lyallar alone!"

Tyr felt surprise at the emotion within him. It was almost a sympathy with the nomad oppressors.

"They have curiosity. I have it myself. I have lived on every desert that Lyallar can boast, yet I am ever searching for a bigger and a hotter one. Maybe the Old Ones are like that."

He looked down at the girl, smiling wistfully at the pale loveliness of her hair, at the warm brown of her eyes. He shivered, watching her. He wanted so much to take Fay and go out into the desert with her, away from everything that smacked of godhood. They could go to the Tower, and live there safely. The *ardth* would not find him there. There would be none to say him yea or nay. If—he was a god!

Tyr sighed and turned from Fay's red mouth and looked out across the unending dunes. An inner voice whispered, *The Trylla need you, Tyr. You are their god, and a god does not run away. When is a god needed more than in time of trouble? You cannot leave them, for they are as children. You must fight.* He nodded in the darkness, grimly.

Side by side they went on through the night. And now they went apart from each other, as though the decision were a final parting. Words were unnecessary. The Trylla needed Tyr.

It was dawn when they saw the others trudging wearily across a far bank of sand. Tyr shouted and waved, summoning them. Dragging deadened limbs they came, in torn clothes and with smears and streaks of dirt on gaunt faces. They stood before him, and in their eyes was the dull glaze of despair and in their voices the sullen acceptance of their fate.

"We fled after seeing the *ardth* ships come."

"They will find us, though. We want just a few more days of freedom."

"All of Yawarta is captive to them. They have made Otho governor, and thrown Zarman, whom you appointed ruler, into the cells."

"And they have sent out commands that you be returned to them at once. They have offered rewards."

Tyr grinned mirthlessly, shaking his tawny head. A return meant torture, possibly death. If the Old Ones thought enough of him, they might feed him to the Glow.

He said, "Fay and I are bound for the Barrow. We will find Harl and call him to lead new armies against the *ardth*. Join with us. We shall win."

"We cannot win ... alone."

They looked at him out of dull eyes in which tiny flames of hope sprang alive and flickered, and then died. They shuffled their feet. They looked tired enough to fall, and the bare soles of several bled red drops into the sands.

"Sleep," said Tyr gently. "You need rest. Dawn is coming up, and I can go on in the sunlight to survey the path before us."

He drew Fay with him, over the crest of a dune. His fingers rose to touch the circlet of dull gold that gleamed from the chain about his neck. Slowly he unfastened it as Fay watched, staring. The ring was a part of him, for he had worn it ever since he could remember. Now he wanted Fay to wear it. It bruised his ribs when he ran, or bounced on his back and against his jaw. But more than that, every Tryllan knew that ring. It would be a symbol of power in Fay's hands.

"Use it well," he said, closing her white fingers about it.

Her brown eyes were wide, looking up at him. Tyr put out his hands and caught her arms above her elbows. He held her like that, just looking at her beauty, for a long moment.

And then he turned and ran swiftly, lest the muffled thunder of his blood should smash the resolutions his brain had welded so firmly.

Sand slipped away in back of him, as wind passes the arrow in its flight. Air was cool on his chest and on the powerful thighs that rippled with muscles as he ran. The sun beat at him, leaving him in its warmth. He grew strong and powerful as the cells of his skin sucked in energy.

Run, Tyr. Run faster and yet faster, that the thoughts teeming in your brain may be left behind. You are a god, and a girl named Fay is not for you. You have only the *ardth*-men, Tyr. They are your enemies, and they must be vanquished!

But how? But how? His brain howled in desperation. They are so many. They know sciences, and they have weapons. You have two bare hands and a strong body, a strange body, a body that frightens you at times, it is so different.

Something dug into the sand ahead of him and exploded. Tyr swerved like a frightened faun and came to a stop. Something else blew up a little closer to him. Hard granules of sand stung his flesh.

He saw them, then, in the sky. Three sleek aircraft with stubby wings and a long fuselage out of which shot tiny glints of red.

The *ardth*!

Tyr drew his hands down his ribs, lips twisted. By the god that he was supposed to be! He'd show them a race, even if they could fly and he could only run.

The sun was hot and searing. Good! It was his ally, that immense orb. While it shone, they could not catch him.

Tyr ran.

His pace was a blurred thing. His flight was that of the *kala*-bird whistling before the hawk. He swerved and he darted, and he made fools of the men in the shiny things above and behind him. It was an incredible thing that he did, but Tyr



was an incredible being. The rules were not made for him, for who made the rules knew nothing of Tyr. He outran those aircraft.

All day long, while the sun beat upon him, Tyr flew. Vaguely he realized that he was a living, functioning thing of energy—not pure energy, but energy translated into human power.

Yet he was human, and the fliers were machines. He lost them among the rocks, but the aircraft spread in widening circles and one of them found him again. And so Tyr ran on. Once or twice he stumbled, toward the end of the day. The thunder of the jet planes was loud in his ears. They swooped low, casting long shadows before them.

There were no more explosions. Those had stopped once he began his mad race. He thought, 'At least, Fay and the others are safe. I've led the *ardth* a long way from them.' The muscles in his legs were hardening, knotting. They grew heavy and inert.

Tyr staggered.

The planes had landed, and the men were coming for him. The stars-and-bars on their jackets loomed bigger and bigger as he stood and waited. His chest rippled with sweat, and his long arms hung limp on either side of his giant frame.

He could fight and die here, with the moon starting its rise in front of him, and the wilderness of his run behind him. His body was pouring the energy through his system again, and his muscles grew less heavy.

"By Kagan!" swore the first *ardth*-man, staring at him with round eyes over the muzzle of a lifted gun. "Who are you, man? *What* are you?"

"He's their god," rasped another, appraising Tyr with knowing eyes.

"No wonder," grunted the third, holstering his weapon. "A god such as he would find me among his worshippers! They'll never believe us on Rigel-7!"

"Do you yield?" asked the first.

They did not seem so frightening, close up. They were like Tyr. They were men, smaller than he, but men. He could kill them all, here and now, but—

He owned a desire to see more of these *ardth*. Perhaps he could reason with their commander, make some sort of compromise. He would do anything to save the Trylla. Fay and the others were safe. Let them go to the Barrow. He would know where to find them when he escaped from the *ardth*. And he would escape. There was no prison made that could hold Tyr.

He said slowly, "I yield. I will go with you."

Dully, despite all his hopes and plans, he knew himself a complete and total failure as a god.

Her hair was black as the tip of a raven's wing, parted in the middle, and drawn back over tiny ears. She had black eyes and a wide, crimson mouth that kept smiling at him, gently. She stood in the midst of the cloaked *ardth*-men who stared at him as they listened to the voices of the airmen who had captured him.

Tyr grew uncomfortable under her steady gaze. He shifted his feet, feeling silly, looming so big above the smaller pilots. He felt that they all were laughing at him. What a god he was! No wonder they laughed at him secretly. A god who was the protector of his race, allowing capture by three pilots he could have killed with three blows of his big hands.

The eyes and the mockery of the men he did not mind, but the steady eyes of the woman—

Forget her, and look about you, Tyr. This is a room of the Old Ones, with its silver and black-glass windows arching a hundred feet up along the wall, and the hooded eagle design carved into the stone and wood. A highbacked chair stood empty on a rostrum as the man who usually filled it stood with the others, watching him. This was wealth, from the priceless red damask drapes at the windows to the hand-laid tiles beneath his feet.

It was no use. Her dark eyes were too steady.

"A lie," said one of the Old Ones calmly. "No man could do what he did."

"He is no man, sire. He is the one the Trylla worship. He is—Tyr!"

They started at that. The pilot had told his story cleverly. He grinned with self-appreciation as the murmurs and the cries rewarded him. Tyr knew the closer scrutiny of the eyes beneath drawn brows. They ate him up, those eyes. Especially the eyes of the woman.

A lean man with a bald head and iron-grey mustache stepped forward and walked around Tyr, his glittering eyes probing. Shaking his head dubiously, he said, "Katha, you're our biochemical expert. Can it be?"

The woman with the black hair came toward him, swaying gracefully.

"I must make tests, Space Commander," she said, and Tyr liked the hoarse vibrancy of her voice. It sent tingles down his spine. But maybe that was the black eyes of her that smiled up at him as she asked, "Is it true, what he says?"

"Yes, it's true. I outran their planes. I could have killed them, but I did not choose to."

"Then why didn't you?" she smiled.

"Because I—show me to your commander. I want to treat with him. That is why I suffered capture. I will offer peace for peace. All I ask—"

The lean man with the bald head came around in front of Tyr and stared at him with cold eyes.

"I am Space Commander Ronald Mason," he said flatly. "I am in charge of Expeditionary Space Force to the Fornax Cluster. You will offer peace? But there is no war."

Tyr held the snarl in his throat as he replied, "But there will be war, unless the *ardth* are willing to deal with me for the liberty of the Trylla."

Mason smiled, but Tyr saw the flecks of passion deep in his ice-blue eyes. "The Trylla are a free race."

Tyr said patiently, "The Trylla worship me. They think I am a god. I know, and you know, that I am nothing of the sort. Yet I would help them, if I could. You cannot keep me here, if I seek to escape. I can plunge this planet into the bloodiest war you ever saw. But I do not want to do that. I seek only peace. Peace, and some sort of pride for the Trylla, that they may once again hold up their heads—"

Mason interposed, "A laudable desire. But the Trylla are quite content. Otho tells me they will make no trouble. As for your idle boast of escaping—"

Space Commander Mason gestured and turned away with, "Test him, Katha. See why his responses vary so far from the norm."

Red anger beat up in Tyr in mounting pulsings. He bit into his lip and eased up to the tips of his toes. His muscles writhed. He—

A cool hand touched his forearm. The black eyes were there again, and the red mouth was smiling at him.

"The tests? Please?"

Tyr licked his lips, confused. He looked at the *ardth*, and down at the girl, whose eyes were sapping the mad rage in his heart. He said, "Yes, the tests."

"Follow me."

The room was big and white, and fantastically clean. Chrome and plasticine gleamed and shone under the bluish-white ceiling that diffused soft brightness into every corner. A fluoroscope machine stood against the north wall. On tables were set scalpels and needles and rolls of cotton. Electronic ray-machines, microscopes and cyclotroncancerous peered beyond them. This was the biochemical science of the Old Ones inside four walls.

Katha closed the door behind her and loosed her black cloak. She was garbed in black blouse with a star-and-bar in silver threaded into the material. Tight trousers, white, gave her a streamlined look.

"Be comfortable, please. This will not hurt, what I am about to do."

Tyr watched her roll a big machine out, saw her thrust a needle with a handle into a jar of white liquid. She saw him watching her, and laughed softly.

"You are like a caged animal. You do not like walls, do you?"

"No. I prefer the desert."

"You have spent all your life on the desert?"

"All. Ever since I was small."

She turned from a wad of cotton that she was unrolling to regard him thoughtfully from under long black lashes.

"A boy. What of your parents?"

"I don't remember them, if there were any to remember. The first thing I recall is sand under my feet, and running. The sun was always my friend. I love the sun. It feeds me. I need nothing to exist, other than the sun."

Her left hand was warm where it caught his wrist. The damp cotton was swept across his flesh swiftly.

"I remember a lot of things about my youth. Unconnected things, like the first day I found the blue lake and the silver forest. The day I killed a *panth* with my bare hands. The first night I saw the stars, and recognized them for what they were."

Katha held his hand in hers and said, "I am going to draw blood. It will hurt—a little." As the ruby liquid oozed from his wrist, the woman went on speaking. "And you cannot recall anything beyond that? Only that you were a boy, and that you grew up?"

"Only that. It was many years before I saw another ... human. The Trylla are not desert-dwellers. They like their cities. But I saw a caravan, and came close to examine it, and when the guards saw me, I ran so swiftly they started rumors."

Her mouth smiled in amusement as she walked across the room.

"No wonder. A man who can outrun three aircraft is quite a runner."

"From that began the tales about me. A hunter would shoot and miss. That started my invincibility legend. After many years, during which I found the Tower, they sent a delegation to me, to ask me to be their god, to take the ruby throne."

"How did you learn to speak, if you never knew other men and women?"

Tyr paused. Some of his education he had gotten from the books in the Tower. His other knowledge, and it was vast, he secured from eavesdropping in the narrow alleys of Yawarta.

But he said, "Oh, I just picked it up."

"The tower you mention. What is that?"

"An old building I broke into. It stands by itself on the Desert of the Whipping Wind."

"Can you read?"

"No," he lied.

She was sliding a splinter of glass under a frosted screen, and depressing a button, and bending. Tyr watched, wondering what she sought.

"That is too bad," she murmured. "For if you—you—you—ohh!"

Her face whitened as she stared at him.

"What is it?"

"Your blood ... if it is blood. It is so—so different!"

Katha put out a white hand and deflected a switch on the wall. A section of panelling slid back, disclosing a screen on which stood the three-dimensional images of the black-cloaked men in the throne room.

"Space Commander, I must see you. Already the preliminary test has disclosed revolutionary reactions."

Her voice was excited. It made the bald, lean man jump a little. Tyr saw him stride toward him, loom larger and larger, walk out of the screen and—disappear. A moment later, the laboratory door opened and Mason entered.

"What is it, Katha?" he said coolly.

"His blood. It is not blood that we know, that carries food and oxygen, and the toxics. It is alien. The cell structure is apparently designed to transmit—this is going to sound silly, and I haven't the opportunity of checking my first impressions, to make sure—but the cells appear constructed to transmit pure energy in the form of sheer heat."

"But the tissues, girl! In a normal man the food becomes energy in the tissues. How—?"

"I don't know. Look for yourself."

She stood away from the microscope, gesturing toward it. Space Commander Mason bent to the screen. His right hand raised the electronic power a hundred units. He stood like that for many minutes, frowning, scarcely breathing. When he straightened, he looked at Tyr for a long time, breathing harshly.

He said, "It seems to be a blood that carries nothing but radiating heat pulses. That means he intakes his energy pure. The efficiency rate is perfect. Katha, he isn't a man. Not a man such as we know men."

Katha took Tyr by the arm and led him behind a fluoroscope machine, saying, "Stand here, please." Mason was eyeing him steadily as he walked in front of the screen.

Tyr grinned to himself. They were in for a shock, if this machine did what he thought it did.

The room darkened. A pale green glow came and pulsed. The plate before him seemed to hum softly. The dark blobs of shadow that were the Commander and Katha moved suddenly and grew still. Deadly still.

"The machine is wrong!" croaked Commander Mason.





*"The machine is wrong!" croaked Commander Mason.*

"It was tested yesterday. Commander. Besides, he has a heart, and a blood stream."

*"No stomach! No lungs! No intestines!"* he breathed.

"And in place of them, strange organs that we know nothing of. Commander, let me take him to the home planet for study! What an experience. A mutant that—"

Light grew from the ceiling, slowly. Mason stood beside the switch, staring at Tyr. His eyes were wild, having seen a miracle. He shuddered and drew his cloak tighter about him.

*"A mutant! And what a mutant!"*

Katha said reflectively, "He has organs in place of digestive tracts that are designed for some purpose. But what purpose?"

Tyr slid away from the fluoroscope machine. He flexed his muscles. Long enough now had he rested and played their games with them. Now he was going into action.

"Commander, about my offer—"

"Quiet, man. Quiet! I need to think. A long time ago I knew a man who said—but no! What I am thinking is incredible. It could not be. And yet—and yet—"

Tyr picked up a bar of steel and balanced it lightly in his palms. Slowly his fingers closed around it. Muscles lifted on arms and back. The bar bent into a circle.

"My muscles may be different, too," he said. "About my offer. Is it peace or war? All I want—"

Space Commander Mason moved his right hand swiftly downwards. It came up from beneath his cloak with a gun. He smiled grimly, "You're big and you're powerful as a bullock, and you're *different*. I don't want to test your skin with a shower of light photons, but—"

Katha came up to Tyr. There was a hungry look in her eyes and about her mouth. She whispered, "Be sensible, god of the Trylla! You are a long time dead. Come with me. Later you can meet the Space Commander, when his surprise has worn off."

Across the black sheen of her coiled hair he looked at the bald man and read a pride as great as his own in the blue eyes. Dimly he knew that Commander Mason was possessed of a will of steel and power as great as his own, among his people. Tyr nodded.

"I will come with you."