

m a g a z i n e o f  
**HORROR**

**The Bizarre and The Unusual**

*Volume 3*

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*Number 1*

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*Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor*

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# Valley Of The Lost

by Robert E. Howard

(author of *Skulls in the Stars*, *Rattle of Bones*)

Those veteran readers who bought the January 1933 issue of STRANGE TALES in the autumn of 1932 will remember that, among the stories announced for the subsequent issue was *Valley of the Lost*, by Robert E. Howard. Alas, the Clayton line went under, and there never was another issue of Clayton's STRANGE TALES under the editorship of Harry Bates. The next year, when we read *Valley of the Worm*, by Robert E. Howard, in WEIRD TALES (February 1934), we thought that this, of course, was the story that had originally been announced for ST. And there matters rested until last year, when we received a retyped mss. from Glenn Lord, with the title of *King of the Lost People*, by Robert E. Howard — a story which had not been published previously — and a note to the effect that this was the story that would have appeared in the Clayton magazine.

We read it and wrote to Mr. Lord that it did, indeed, read like a Howard mss., and that the earlier title could fit it; but knowing how skillfully an ingenious imitator can simulate another author's style, we wanted to see that old, yellow mss. from which Mr. Lord said he had made this transcript; we owed it both to our readers and ourselves to examine the original. Mr. Lord graciously loaned us the original, which we compared word-for-word with the transcript; and having seen other original mss. of Howard's we were convinced that this was genuine.

Now on the title page of this original (which also bore the title, *Kink of the Lost People*) was a mark which indicated that another, smaller paper had been attached to it for a long time. Mr. Lord also included a rejection slip from ASTOUNDING STORIES, dated late 1933, wherein Desmond Hall (assistant editor for Street & Smith at the time that they first revived the title), regretfully returned the mss. *Valley of the Lost*, inasmuch as he felt that it was more of a weird tale than science fiction, and the comment received from readers on the first issues of the revived ASTOUNDING (which mingled weird and science fiction, as did the first few issues of the original Clayton ASTOUNDING STORIES OF SUPER-SCIENCE in 1930) did not approve of the weird and supernatural material.

The mystery deepens. Had Howard revised *Valley of the Lost*, putting a new title upon it, with a science-fiction touch for the S & S ASTOUNDING STORIES? Had *King of the Lost People* been the original title, changed to *Valley of the Lost* by Harry Bates? (In which case, was there no revision at all?) If this were the same story, revised or not, title changed or not, why did Hall refer to *Valley of the Lost* as being enclosed with this rejection slip? (There is no reference to *King of the Lost People*.) A possible solution of the difficulty could be this: Desmond Hall was also assistant editor of the Clayton STRANGE TALES. If the story he rejected in 1933 was the same one (either completely or essentially) that had been accepted for STRANGE TALES, whether Howard or Bates had changed the title, then it is possible that he still thought of it as *Valley of the Lost*, and so referred to it in his rejection slip.

Mr. Lord, and L. Sprague de Camp, think that this is that same story. And since STRANGE TALES did use some science-fiction-like material, such as Frank Belknap Long's *In the Lair of the Space-Monsters* (October 1932) the tale might have had that touch from the very beginning. My own conclusion is to pass: this *could* be that long-lost Howard tale, but I am not 100% convinced; I still hold the suspicion that *Valley of the Lost* became *Valley of the Worm* in 1934. In any event, this is a typical Howard story of the later period, when he was beginning to move toward science fiction of the Burroughs variety, as he did in the novel *Almuric*, presently available as an Ace Book. (F305).

JIM BRILL licked his parched lips, staring about him with bloodshot eyes. Behind him lay the sand, blown in curving ridges and long ripples; before him rose the stark outlines of the nameless mountains which were his goal. The sun hung above the western horizon, dull

gold in the evil of dust which turned the sky a sickly yellow and lent its taste to the very air he breathed.

Yet he was thankful for it; but for the sand storm, he would have shared the fate which had overtaken his guides and servants.

The attack had come at dawn. From behind a bare ridge which had concealed their approach, a swarm of squat riders on shaggy horses had rushed the camp, howling like devils, shooting and slashing. In the midst of the fight the storm had brought blinding clouds of dust rolling over the desert, and through it Jim Brill had fled, knowing that he alone remained alive of the expedition which had toiled so far on its strange quest.

Now, after a grind that had taxed to the uttermost the powers of himself and his steed, he saw nothing of his pursuers, though the dust which still hung over the desert limited the range of his vision considerably.

He had been the only white man in the expedition. His previous experiences with Mongol bandits told him that they would not let him escape if they could help it.

Brill's equipment consisted of the .45 at his hip, a canteen with a few drops of water remaining in it, and the weary horse which drooped under his weight after the long flight.

Mindful of this, the man swung down from the saddle and plodded on, leading the animal. He scanned the rugged slopes ahead of him without hope. Sure death awaited him in the desert; what the mountains held, he could not know. No man knew what lay in this

unexplored region. If any white man had ever entered it, he had never come out alive to tell what he had found.

The horse snorted suddenly and threw up its head, pulling back on the rein. Brill swore wearily and tried to quiet it. Its eyes rolled and its haunches quivered. Uneasily he looked about him. They were entering the narrow mouth of a canyon, the rocky floor of which sloped upward. The sides were steep, broken by jutting ledges. On one of these ledges, that overhung the canyon mouth, *something* moved, scuttled behind a boulder. Brill had a vague impression of something bulky and hairy that moved in a manner which suggested neither man nor beast.

He swung wide of that ledge, hugging the opposite wall. When they were even with it, the horse shied and snorted, but quieted after they had passed on. Whatever the animal feared was crouching up there among the boulders.

Brill was meditating on that matter as he went on up the canyon when it was swept out of his mind by a sound that galvanized him — the drum of hoofs! He wheeled, the fear of a trapped wolf clutching him. Over the sands, heading for the canyon mouth, raced a cluster of riders — ten squat figures in wolf skins, flogging their horses and brandishing their sabers in

exultation. The storm had not thrown them off his track. Now they had seen him, and they gave tongue stridently.

Brill let go the reins and dropped behind a rock, drawing his .45. They did not pull their rifles from the boots beneath their knees. They knew their prey was trapped, and their lust for slaughter with cold steel overcame their caution.

BRILL SIGHTED across the crest of the boulder at the foremost horseman. He mechanically judged the distance, intending to shoot just as the man came even with the overhanging ledge, under which his course was taking him. But that shot was never fired.

Just as the Mongol swept under the ledge, some sound or instinct caused him to look upward. As he did so, his yellow face went ashy; with a scream he threw up his arms. And simultaneously something black and hairy shot from the ledge and struck full on his breast, knocking him from his horse.

The men behind yelled in dismay and jerked their mounts back on their haunches; above their clamor rose a scream of mortal agony. The horses wheeled and bolted, neighing shrilly.

The fallen Mongol writhed on the canyon floor, pinned beneath a shape that was like the figment of a nightmare. Brill

glared at it, frozen with amazement. It was a spider, beyond the maddest dreams of spiders.

It was like a tarantula, with a gross body bristling with stiff hairs, and crouching black legs; but it was fully as big as a hog. Beneath it the shrieks of the Mongol ceased in a bubbling gurgle and his straining limbs went limp.

The other desert men had halted outside the canyon mouth, and one lifted a rifle and fired at the thing, but obviously his nerves were badly shaken. The bullet splatted harmlessly on a rock. As if disturbed by the sound, the monster turned in their direction, and with wild yells, the Mongols wheeled away and raced off across the sands in ignominious flight.

Brill watched them dwindle to black dots in the dust, then he rose gingerly from behind his rock. His horse had bolted away up the canyon. Twilight was approaching, and he was alone in the gorge with that hairy monstrosity which crouched like a black ogre over the man it had killed.

He hoped to steal away up the canyon without molestation; but the moment he rose into full view, the monster abandoned its prey and scuttled toward him at appalling speed.

Sweating with candid fright, Brill sighted at the oncoming black buk and pulled the trig-

ger. The impact of the big bullet knocked the thing sidewise, but it righted itself and came on, its eyes gleaming redly among its black bristles. Again and again the gun cracked, waking the echoes among the cliffs, before the monster tumbled over, working its hairy legs vainly. Then from all sides sounded a sinister rustling, and Brill shivered as he saw a grisly horde swarm down into the canyon. They seemed to emerge from every cranny, all converging on the stricken bulk quivering on the gorge floor. None were so large as it, but all were big enough and horrible enough to make a man doubt his sanity.

THEY ignored Brill, and fell on their mangled king as wolves fall on the wounded pack-leader. The giant was hidden in a writhing, working mass of black and gray-banded bodies, and Brill hurried up the canyon before they could finish their grisly repast and turn their attention to him.

He went up into the mountains because he dared not go down the gorge past that working hill of death; because only death by thirst lay in the desert beyond the canyon; and because it was to find these hills that he had plunged into the Gobi in the first place. Jim Brill was looking for a man; a man whom he hated more than any-

one else on earth, yet for whom he was ready to risk his life.

IT WAS CERTAINLY not love for Richard Barlow, eminent scientist and explorer, which had sent Brill on his quest; he had his own reasons and they were sufficient. Following dim clues and cryptic hints dropped by natives, he had concluded that the man he sought, if he still lived, was to be found in the mysterious hills which stood in an unmapped region of the Gobi. And he believed that these were the hills for which he had sought.

He emerged from the canyon into a wild tangle of cliffs and ravines. There was no vegetation, no water; the ridges rose grim and stark and black in the dusk about him. He thought of the great spiders, and strained his ears for the stealthy rustle of hairy legs, but the land lay desolate as the earth before man's creation. The rising moon carved out black shadows of turreted cliffs, and showed him a dim path winding dizzily upward — a man-made trail that betokened human habitation somewhere.

He followed it; it wound up between sheer cliffs to a notch that showed a square of star-flecked sky. When he reached this he halted, panting from his exertions, and grunted with surprise. A heavy chain was stretched across the notch. With

his hands resting on it, he gazed through the pass. It was narrow and beyond it a long slope fell away into a valley where water gleamed in the moonlight among dense droves of trees. And something else gleamed among the trees — towers and walls, apparently of white marble.

Then the native tales were true, and there was a city among these hills. But what manner of men dwelt there? Even as the thought crossed his mind, something moved in the shadow of the cliffs. He caught a glimpse of a tall black figure with a curiously misshapen head, from which blazed eyes like balls of bale-fire. A choking cry escaped his lips. No human ever had eyes like that.

Gripping the chain to steady himself, he snatched at his revolver. And in that instant the universe burst around him, showering the sky with red sparks which were instantly quenched in the blackness of utter oblivion.

WHEN JIM BRILL regained his senses, his first impression was that he was lying on something soft and yielding to his rugged frame. There floated before him the soft pale oval of a face with dark, oblique eyes. A voice spoke somewhere, a familiar voice, but framed in an unfamiliar accent, and the face vanished. And then Jim Brill

was fully conscious, and staring about him.

He lay on a satin divan in a chamber whose ceiling was a fretted dome. Satin hangings, worked with gilt dragons, adorned the walls, and thick carpets littered the floor.

This he saw in a sweeping glance, before his whole attention was riveted on the figure which sat before him. This was a heavily-built man, whose incongruous robe of watered silk did not conceal the muscularity of his frame. A velvet cap was on his head, and from under this gleamed cold gray eyes, matching the rugged hardness of his features. It was the aggressive jut of the jaw that woke recognition in Brill.

"Barlow!"

He sat up, gripping the edge of the divan glaring at the other as at one risen from the dead.

"Yes, it's I." The man's voice was sardonic. "Fancy *you* dropping in on me like this."

"I was hunting you, blast you!" bristled Brill; yes, this was Barlow, all right, with his gift of putting Brill's teeth on edge.

"Hunting me?" The surprise in Barlow's tone was genuine.

"Oh, it wasn't through any love of you," growled Brill. "I wasn't losing any sleep over you."

"Why, then?"

"Great Judas, man, can't you guess?" exclaimed Brill irritably. "Gloria . . ."

"Oh!" Barlow's expression was strange, as if he had just had recalled to his mind something he had forgotten. "So my wife sent you?"

"Naturally. She waited four years. Nobody knew whether you were alive or dead. You'd simply vanished into inner Mongolia. No word ever came back. Gloria came to me, because she knew no one else to come to. She financed the expedition, and here I am."

"And disgusted to find me alive," bantered Barlow. Brill merely grunted; he was far too straight-forward for hypocrisy.

"What happened to me?" he demanded. "What was that devil-thing I glimpsed just before I went out?"

"Just one of my servants in a robe and hood, with phosphorescent eyes painted on it. A little trick to discourage our superstitious neighbors, the Mongols. This faithful servant knocked you out by merely doing as I have taught him to do. He's one of the guards of the pass. He pushed a little handle and sent some electricity shooting along the chain you were leaning against. If he hadn't seen you were white, you'd be dead now."

BRILL GLANCED at his hand. He knew nothing about electricity, but he had a vague idea that a shock hard enough to knock him senseless would

be enough to burn his hand off.

"No burns on you," Barlow assured him. "You've seen men knocked cold by lightning without being burnt, haven't you? Same principle. I can control electricity as easily as I write my name. I know more about it than any other man in the world."

"Modest as usual," grunted Brill.

Barlow smiled with contemptuous tolerance. He had changed subtly in four years. There was more poise about him, a greater air of superiority. And there was a dim difference in his face: in his complexion, in the shape of his eyes — Brill could not place it, but it was there, somewhere. And his voice sounded almost unfamiliar at times.

"What is this dump, anyway?" Brill offered a strong contrast, in his dust-stained shirt, breeches and boots, to the exotic chamber and the figure in the embroidered silk. Brill was as tall and heavy as Barlow, a broad-shouldered, thick-chested man, with muscular arms and a nervous energy that could fire him to the quickness of a big cat.

"This is the city of Khor," said Barlow, as if that explained everything.

"Khor's a myth," grunted Brill. "I've heard the Mongols spinning their lies about it . . ."

Barlow smiled coldly. "You are in the position of the farm-



er who looked at a giraffe and refused to admit its existence. Khor exists and you are at this instant lying in its royal palace."

"Then where's the king?" demanded Brill sarcastically.

Barlow bowed with mock modesty, then folded his hands in his lap and looked at Brill with eyes that glinted between slitted lids. Brill was aware of a vague uneasiness. There was something wrong with his appearance.

"You mean you're the boss of this city?" he asked incredulously.

"And of this valley. Oh, it was not difficult. The people are grossly superstitious. I brought a whole laboratory on camels. My electrical devices alone convinced them that I was a mighty magician. I was the power behind the throne of their king, old Khitai Khan, until he was killed in a Mongol raid. Then I stepped into his shoes without any trouble; he had no heirs. I'm not only the big sorcerer of Khor; I'm Ak Khan, the White King."

"Who are these people?"

"A mixed race, Mongolian and Turkish, originally, with a strain of Chinese. Did you ever hear of Genghis Khan?"

"Who hasn't?" snapped Brill impatiently.

"Well, as you know, he conquered most of Asia in the early thirteenth century. He destroyed many cities, but he also

built a few. This was his pleasure city, and was erected by skilled Persian architects. He filled it with slaves, both men and women. When he died, the world forgot about Khor, far up in these isolated mountains. The descendants of those slaves have lived on here ever since, under their own *khans*, raising their food in the valley, getting other things they wanted from the few Mongol traders who visited the hills."

He clapped his hands. "I was forgetting. You'll be hungry."

Brill's eyes widened as a slender silk-clad figure glided lithely into the chamber. "Then she wasn't a dream," he muttered.

"Scarcely!" Barlow laughed. "The Mongols stole her from a Chinese caravan, and sold her to me. Her name is Lala Tzu."

CHINESE WOMEN held no attraction for Brill, but this girl was undeniably beautiful. Her oblique eyes glowed with a soft fire, her features were delicately molded, and her slender body was a marvel of suppleness.

"Dancing girl," decided Brill, as he set to work ravenously on the food and wine she set before him. From the corner of his eye, he saw her pass a slender arm about Barlow's shoulder and whisper some soft endearment into his ear. The man shrugged away from her with a show of impatience, and mo-

tioned her out of the room. Her slender shoulders drooped as if from a rebuke as she obeyed.

"Feel like seeing the city?" Barlow asked abruptly. Brill rose with a snort of disgust that such a question should be deemed necessary.

But as they left the chamber he realized that he had lain senseless for hours. Outside it was full daylight. Barlow led him through a series of hallways and out into a small open court, surrounded on three sides by galleries letting on to the palace, and on the third by a low wall. Over this wall Brill looked down into the city, in the midst of which the palace stood on a low hill. It was much like other Oriental towns, with market squares, open stalls with goods displayed, and flat-topped houses. The main differences were in the unusual cleanliness and the richness of the buildings. The houses were of marble instead of mud, and the streets were paved with the same material.

"Quarries of marble in these hills," grunted Barlow, as if reading Brill's thoughts. "Made them clean things up after I got to be *khan*. Didn't want plagues breeding in filth."

Brill had a good view of the valley, which was walled in by sheer cliffs. Besides the pass through which he had been brought, and up to which a sort of natural ramp led, there was

no break in the massive palisades. A stream flowed through the valley, and the vegetation which crowded its banks was relieving after the barren monotony of the outer desert. Gardens, with small huts, checkered the valley floor, and sheep and cattle grazed up to the very wall of the city, which was of no great extent, though rather densely populated.

THE inhabitants moved indolently through the streets in their silk garments. Their skins were yellowish, their faces round and flat, their slanted eyes dreamy. They seemed to Brill the remnants of a race which had fulfilled their destiny and now waited drowsily for death.

Barlow's servants were of a different breed, lean, dark-skinned men from Tonkin, who seldom spoke but looked quick and dangerous as cats. Barlow said he had brought them with him to Khor.

"I suppose you're wondering why I came here in the first place," Barlow remarked. "Well, I was always cramped in America. Fools with their stupid laws were always interfering. I heard of this place and it sounded ideal for my purposes. It is. I've gone beyond the wildest dreams of western scientists. Nobody interferes with me. Here human life means nothing; the will of the ruler everything."

Brill scowled at the implica-

tion. "You mean you experiment with human subjects?"

"Why not? These servants of mine live only to do my bidding, and the Khoranese consider me a priest of Erlik, the god they have worshipped since time immemorial. The subjects I demand of them are no more than offerings to the god, according to their way of thinking. I only sacrifice them to the cause of science."

"To the cause of the devil!" growled Brill, revolted. "Don't pull that stuff with me. You care nothing about the progress of humanity. All you've ever considered has been your own ambitions."

BARLOW LAUGHED without resentment. "At any rate, my will is the only law there is in Khor — a fact you'll do well to remember. If I occasionally use one of these fat fools in an experiment from which he fails to recover, I also protect them. They used to suffer from the raids of the Mongols before I came. The only way into the valley is through that pass, but even so, the raiders often cut their way through and devastated everything outside the city walls. Sooner or later, they'd have destroyed the city itself.

"I barred the pass with that electric chain, and have done other things that scared the Mongols so badly they seldom venture into the hills. I have a

machine in a dome of this palace, for instance, that any world power would pay a fortune for if they knew it."

"Those big spiders . . ." began Brill.

"More of my work. They were originally tiny creatures which inhabited caves in the hills. I found a way to make carnivorous monsters out of them. Good watch dogs. The Mongols fear them out of all proportion to their actual ability to do harm. Developing them was a triumph, but I've gone far beyond that now. I am now exploring the profoundest of all mysteries."

"What's that?"

"The human mind; the ego, spirit, soul. Call it what you will. It remains the primary essence of life. Too long men have dabbled in what they called the occult, after the fashion of witch-doctors. It's time the mystery was approached in a scientific manner. I have so approached it."

"Well, listen," said Brill abruptly. "I came a long way to find you, thinking you were a prisoner of a hill tribe. Now I find you master of the tribe, and here of your own free will. You might at least have sent word to Gloria."

"How?" demanded Barlow. "None of my servants could have got through alive, and I couldn't trust a Mongol trader to get a letter outside. Anyway,

when a man is absorbed in his life's work, he can't worry himself about a woman."

"Not even his wife, eh?" sneered Brill, his resentment growing every minute. "Well, now I've found you, I want to know, are you coming back to America with me?"

"Certainly not."

"What shall I tell Gloria?"

"Tell her whatever you choose; you will anyway."

Brill's big fists clenched. The man's attitude was intolerable. But before he could make the savage reply which framed itself on his lips, Barlow said: "I'll show you my latest triumph. You won't understand it, and maybe you won't believe it. But it's too big for me to keep still about. I've got to show it to some white man, even you."

AS BARLOW led the way back through the corridors, Brill saw a slim hand draw aside a hanging, and the face of Lala Tzu was framed in the dark velvet. Her eyes rested meltingly on Barlow, then grew hard and bright with anger as they turned toward Brill. Evidently, the girl resented his presence. Doubtless she understood English and had overheard enough of their conversation to fear that Brill was going to take her master back to America with him.

Barlow halted before an arch-

ed door of lacquered teak on which writhed a golden dragon. An antique lock was manipulated by an equally antique key, and Barlow led Brill into the chamber.

Above it rose a dome inlaid with gold and ivory. The walls, of a strange, softly glistening green stone, were not tapestried. The floor was of the same material. There were no windows, the dome being craftily pierced so as to let in enough light to dimly illuminate the interior. The only furniture was a satin divan.

"This is the meditation chamber of the great *khan*, Genghis," said Barlow. "He alone entered it during his life-time, and after his death, none crossed the threshold until I came. Here he sat and dreamed the dreams induced by wine, opium and *bhang*. Here I first conceived my great discovery.

"Everything leaves its impression on its surroundings, sights, sounds, even thought, for thought is a tangible force, invisible only because on a different plane than visible substance. When a man occupies a room, he leaves the imprints of his personality on that room as surely as his fleshly feet leave their imprints in mud or sand. Wood, steel, stone, all are, in effect, potential camera films and phonographs whereon are imperishably recorded all sounds and scenes that have been in

their vicinity. But, in the case of the man in the room, other people come and go, leaving their impressions, too, and all these different impressions overlap each other and become hopelessly mixed and muddled.

"Naturally, some substances retain impressions longer and more clearly than others, just as mud retains a footprint more clearly than stone. These walls possess that quality to a phenomenal extent. There is no stone like this natural to the earth. I think it came from a meteorite which fell in this valley long ago, and which was sawed up and used for this purpose by the builders of Khor.

"These walls hold the thought-impressions of Genghis Khan, overlaid by no others, except mine, which are so few they scarcely count. They contain, indelibly imprinted, all the thoughts and dreams and ideas that made up the personality of the great conqueror. Imagine these walls as a camera film. On them I shall develop the pictures invisibly recorded by them!"

Brill grunted scornfully. "How? By waving a magic wand?"

"By processes I can no more make you understand than I could make a Congo savage understand television," answered Barlow imperturbably. "I'll tell you this much, that even you may be able to understand:

only a novice needs mechanical contrivances to aid him in psychic experiments. A master dispenses with artificial aids. He no more needs them than an athlete needs crutches, to use an example concrete enough for your low-grade mind to grasp.

"I HAVE DEVELOPED my psychic energy — I use the term for lack of a more explicit one. That energy is the real power of life; the brain itself is but one of its emanations, a machine through which it works. It needs no mechanical devices. Mechanics are but channels for its release. I have discovered how to release its terrific energy naturally.

"I will admit that the experiment I am now about to perform is made possible only by a strange series of circumstances depending, ultimately, upon the marvelous quality of these walls. On this planet some people are psychic; here is an inanimate substance which is definitely psychic."

"But an abstract thought . . ."

"What is any personality but a material appearance embodying myriad abstractions? The universe is a giant chain, with each link inseparably interlocked with every other link. Some of these links we are cognizant of by our external senses, others only through our psychic powers, and then only when these are specially developed.

I merely frame an unseen link into a form recognizable by our external faculties.

"It is merely a matter of transmutation, of reduction to basic principles. Thoughts deal, ultimately, with material things. Emanations of the mentality which leave their impressions on material things, are transmutable into forms recognizable by the external senses. Watch!"

Barlow sank upon the divan and resting his elbows on his knees, dropped his chin in his hands and stared hypnotically at the opposite wall. A peculiar change passed over the atmosphere of the room; the light faded to a twilight gray. The even hue of the green walls altered with interchanging shades, like clouds passing over a dusky sky. Brill stared about uneasily. He saw only the bare, changing walls, the dim gray dome above them, and that cryptic figure sitting statue-like on the divan.

He looked again at the walls. Shadows flowed across them in endless procession; shapeless, nebulous, swiftly they passed. Sometimes a distortion of the dim light lent them the appearance of misshapen human figures. All converged upon the spot on which Barlow's mesmeric gaze was riveted. And at that point the green substance began to glow, to deepen, to take on the appearance of translucency. In its depths there were movement and unrest, a

merging of dim anthropomorphic shapes. As the shadows flowed into it, this amalgamation took on more distinct outlines. Brill smothered a cry. It was as if he looked into a deep green lake, and in its depths, mistily, he saw a human figure, a squat giant in silk robes. The outlines of the garments and body were vague and unstable, but the face stood out more distinctly beneath the velvet skull cap. It was a broad, immobile face with slanted gray eyes, and a wisp of a moustache drooping over wide, thin lips. *It was . . .*

THE CRY escaped Brill in spite of himself. He was on his feet, shaking like a leaf. Abruptly, the image vanished. The shadows faded, leaving the smooth green surface of the walls unclouded. Barlow was watching him cynically.

"Well?" inquired the scientist.

"It's a trick," snapped Brill. "You've got a picture projector hidden somewhere. I've seen Genghis Khan's face on old Chinese coins, and so have you. It wouldn't be hard for you to fake up something." But as he spoke, he was uncomfortably aware of the cold sweat pouring off his skin.

"I didn't expect you to believe it," retorted Barlow, sitting like a silk-clad Buddha. In the dim light the unpleasant change

in his countenance was more noticeable. It almost amounted to a deformity, and still Brill could not place it.

"What you believe matters little," said Barlow placidly. "I know the figure was Genghis Khan. No, not his ghost; not a phantom resurrected from the dead. But the combined total of his thoughts, dreams and memories, which together make up a sum as real and vital as the man himself. It is the man; for what is a man besides the total of his feelings, emotions, sensations and thoughts? Genghis Khan's body has been dust for centuries; but the immortal parts of him slumber in these walls. When they are materialized upon a visible plane, naturally they take on the aspect of the physical man from which they emanated.

"I have sat here for hours and watched the great khan grow more and more distinct until walls and chamber and time seemed to fade, until only he and my own mind seemed the only realities in the universe — until he seemed to flow into and merge with my own ego. I understand his dreams, conceptions, the secret of his power.

To all great conquerors, to Caesar, Alexander, Napoleon, Genghis Khan, nature gave powers not possessed by other men. And I am acquiring the uncanny genius by which Genghis Khan, who was born in a

nomad's horse-hide tent, overthrew armies, kings, cities, empires!"

He had risen to his feet in his excitement, and now strode out into a curtained corridor, closing the lacquered door behind him.

"And what of it?" demanded Brill, who had naturally followed him.

"I, too, will become conqueror! My ego absorbs all the impressions left by his. I shall be emperor of Asia!"

"Bunkum!" snorted Brill. "I'm sick of listening to your pipe dreams. What I want to know is, are you ever coming back to America, and Gloria?"

"No; you are going to bring Gloria to me."

"What!" exclaimed Brill.

"Yes, I've decided. She'll fit very nicely into my schemes. She'll come if I send her a message; she is a dutiful wife."

"Entirely too much so," snarled Brill. "Otherwise, she'd have gotten a divorce long ago. Yes, she'd come. Not because she loves you. Her parents forced her into marrying you when she was only a child, and you've treated her like a dog; but she has an overdeveloped sense of duty. That's why she sent me looking for you. She and I have always loved one another. I hoped I'd find you dead. I'm sorry you're alive. But I'm not going to bring Gloria into this God-forsaken valley. What

about that Chinese girl, Lala Tzu? You have the nerve to . . ."

"Silence!" roared Barlow imperiously. "You shall bring my wife to me!"

"Why, you . . .!" Brill was on his feet, his big fists clenched. But before either could move, a slim figure darted into the scene from behind a hanging. It was Lala Tzu, her beautiful features contorted with fury.

"I heard!" she shrieked at Barlow. "You shall not bring another woman here! You shall not put me aside for a white woman! I will kill . . ."

HIS FACE convulsed with passion, Barlow struck her savagely in the face with his open hand, ripping out a volley of staccato gutturals Brill did not understand. Three lean silent Tonkinese glided into the hallway, laid hands on Lala Tzu and dragged her, kicking and screaming, through a curtained archway. There was the sound of a blow, a shriek of pain, then her passionate sobs dwindled as she was carried away.

Barlow stood posed like an image of imperial Oriental wrath, and Brill glared at him, his hair bristling with incredulous horror.

"I know now!" the explorer roared. "I've sensed a change in you, from the beginning! Your accent — it's Mongol! Your eyes have begun to slant; there's a copperish cast to your skin.

Those impressions you've raved about — you've absorbed them until they're changing you! *Changing you!* You damned devil — you're changing into a *Mongol!*"

A wild flood of devilish exultation lit Barlow's countenance.

"*Yes!*" he bellowed. "I said I was absorbing the mental emanations of Genghis Khan. *I will be Genghis Khan!* His personality will replace mine, because his is the stronger. Like him, I will conquer the world. I will fight the Mongols no longer, because I am becoming one of them. They will be my people; all Asians will be my people! I will make a gift to the chief of the Mongols and win his friendship. You shall return to America and bring me the little fool I married in a moment of weakness; she is beautiful; she shall be my gift to Togrukh Khan, the Mongol chief . . ."

With a maddened roar Brill drove at him, every nerve of his big muscular body straining with a primitive passion to smash and break and rip. With a guttural snarl, the powerful scientist met him breast to breast.

Brill scarcely felt the blows that rained on his face and body. In a red mist of berserk fury he drove Barlow backward, smashing his iron fists again and again into the hated features of his enemy, until the man crashed over backwards



among the ruins of a table, and Brill fell on him and sank his fingers into Barlow's bull throat. A worrying, wordless mouthing snarled from Brill's lips as he drove all the power of heavy shoulders and corded arms into his strangling hands. Blood from Barlow's torn throat trickled over Brill's fingers; the man's tongue protruded between blue lips; his eyes were glazing.

Men were swarming into the corridor, but Brill, in the fog of his wrath, was scarcely aware of their shouts, or of the hands which tore vainly at his corded forearms. Then a gun butt, swung with desperate force, crashed on his head and the lights went out.

BRILL CAME TO with a clear understanding of all that had occurred, and a fervent desire to renew the combat; but he was bound into a chair, hand and foot. Blood trickled into his eyes from a wound in his scalp. He shook his head to clear his vision, and saw Barlow facing him. Brill grinned wolfishly when he saw the damage he had done to the man's features. He knew that Barlow's nose was broken, and at least one of his ribs cracked. His face looked like a mask of raw beef, and his one good eye blazed fiendishly.

"Get out!" he croaked, choking with passion, and the impassive Tonkinese glided from

the chamber. Twisting his head to stare about, Brill decided that he had been brought to Barlow's laboratory. Scientific appliances of all kinds littered the large room, and huge glass jars contained grisly relics at which Brill did not care to look twice. He glanced back at Barlow, from whom all sanity seemed to have departed.

"You hoped to find me dead," the man was raving, "so you could go back and marry my wife! Well, I'm going to send you back to her. Do you see that thing there? That stuffed ape? Well, that's what you're going to look like within the hour. Laugh, you ignorant fool! Less than a month ago, that ape was a man, as intelligent and well developed as you are. I have discovered a process of degeneration that retrogrades the human into the beast which was his progenitor. I could go still further, and revert him to the protozoa which fathered us all.

"But I will leave you an ape. That specimen died, but you shall live - to prance and gibber in some zoo or circus! . . . You fool, do you realize what I'm saying? You'll be a beast! A filthy, hairy, verminous anthropoid! I'll send you back to my loving wife with my compliments . . ."

It happened so quickly it blurred Brill's sight. From a curtained arch, a lithe, tigerish

figure had sprung, wielding a gleaming shard of steel. He heard the impact of the blow, the man's grunt of agony. Then Barlow, his face a death-mask, took one reeling step and crumpled. His hands, emerging from the wide silk sleeves, worked spasmodically and were still. And Brill shuddered, for those hands were yellow-tinted and the nails were not those of a white man. Barlow's dead features were scarcely recognizable; their aspect was alien and unnatural.

Lala Tzu stood over the man she had killed, grasping her dagger, and staring with a fixed, wide-eyed stare at Brill. He gave back her stare in fascinated dread; this lovely girl was just as likely to kill him as she had killed the man she once had loved. Then he cried out an instinctive warning. Over her shoulder a yellow face peered through parted hangings. One of the Tonkinese servants glared at the body of his master. Lala Tzu cried out shrilly and sprang at him, lifting her dagger, but the face vanished, and in the corridor outside sounded a strident screaming. Lala Tzu stood up uncertainly.

"Cut me loose, girl!" Brill roared, tearing at his bonds. "I'll help you!"

In an instant she had reached him and slashed his cords. Casting about for a weapon, he saw a great Mongol scimitar hang-

ing on the wall. He tore it free just as the Tonkinese rushed in, daggers in their hands. Gripping the ponderous weapon with both hands, he heaved it above his head and flailed right and left. The razor edge sheared through flesh and bone, severing a man's head and shoulder from his body. Another screamed as his arm jumped from his shoulder on a spurting fountain of blood. The others gave back, appalled, then ran shrieking from the chamber. Brill glared after them, sickened at the havoc he had wrought, but fighting mad. Lala Tzu tugged at his arm.

"They have gone for guns!" she cried shrilly. "They will shoot us down like dogs! We can not escape from the palace, but there is a place where we can take refuge!"

HE FOLLOWED HER out of the chamber and along a corridor. Behind them the palace was in an uproar, and somewhere sounded a popping like that of many firecrackers. It seemed to come from outside the palace, but the din within was so furious Brill could not be certain. The girl's little feet pattered swiftly along the marble tiles ahead of him, until she came to a winding stair. Up this she went without hesitation. It wound up and up into a lofty dome. Brill's breath came in gasps before he reached

the top. Their pursuers were closer on their heels than he realized. Just as he reached the head of the stair and turned, a howling Tonkinese charged up and around the last turn with such headlong recklessness that he was thrusting a pistol into Brill's face before the American could move. The scimitar fell as the gun cracked; powder burnt Brill's face, and the Oriental's head caved in like an eggshell beneath the shearing blade. The impact of the stroke knocked the body backward down the stair where it demoralized the men storming up it.

Guns spat and bullets spattered against the wall, but Brill and the girl were out of sight around the last bend of the stair, and the natives dared not charge up around it in the teeth of those terrible sword-strokes. As he waited, sweat dripping from his face and both hands gripping the long hilt, Brill heard a sudden uproar beyond the palace walls. Those below heard it, and a sudden silence fell upon the stair. In the hush Brill heard a rising clamor of yells, and the cracking of many rifles. Lala Tzu cried out to him, and he risked his life by whirling and looking where she pointed.

They were under the arch of a lofty dome which was the pinnacle of the palace. On a platform was set what seemed to be a huge telescope, its muz-

zle protruding through a kind of loophole. Looking through a small window beside it, Brill could see the city streets below him, and the walls and the valley beyond. And he saw that doom had fallen on Khor.

Down the ramp that led from the pass swarmed chanting riders, and others raced around the valley, firing huts and shooting cattle in pure wantonness. Several hundreds more were thronged outside the great gate. Swinging a huge log between their horses like a battering ram, some were assailing the portal, while others kept up a withering fire at the defenders on the walls who strove to return their volleys. The Mongols were in the valley at last, despite all Barlow's barriers!

IN THE PALACE below, the clamor burst out afresh, and Brill wheeled toward the stair, sword lifted. But the attack did not come. A strident voice screamed in desperate urgency, and Lala Tzu, listening, turned to Brill.

"They say the Mongols will break down the gate and cut all their throats," she said "They beg you to save them. You, too, are a white magician, they think. They say a Mongol climbed the cliffs and shot the watcher at the pass before he could push the handle and make the chain impassable. They came in such numbers they did not fear

the spiders. They are led by Togrukh Khan, who does not fear the white man's magic. They swear they will obey you if you save them from the Mongols."

"How can I?" he asked helplessly.

"I will show you!" She caught his hand and drew him toward the great machine on the platform. "He always said he would use this if the Mongols reached the wall. See, it is aimed like a gun at the gate. He showed me — hold it so and pull the trigger!"

"Make them swear first they won't harm us," said Brill, and she called to the terrified Khoranese below. There was an answering babble, wild shouts, the sudden sound of heavy blows, then one voice shouting triumphantly.

"What was that?" he demanded nervously.

"The Tonkinese wished to kill us," she answered. "The men of Khor have slain them, and swear to obey you. Fear not. They will keep their word. Haste, the gate begins to buckle!"

It was true. The wretched Khoranese who had been trying to hold the portal scattered screaming. The gate crashed inward and the riders began swarming through, howling like wolves as they saw their helpless prey before them. Brill sighted along the great barrel and pulled the trigger. He ex-

pected some kind of a report, an explosion accompanied by a recoil. There was nothing of the sort. But from the flaring nozzle a long beam of blue light shot to the gate and the horde which thronged it. The result hideous.

For an instant there was a blurring in which nothing was distinct. Then an awful cry arose. The gate was choked with a blackened mass of disintegrated flesh and blackened bone that had been a hundred men and horses. That ray had neither burned nor shattered; by some awful force it had blasted into Eternity all that were crowded in the gate, and had cut a wide swatch through hordes massed outside. An instant the survivors sat stunned, then with mad screams they wheeled and flogged their steeds toward the hills, fighting like madmen to gain the pass. Brill watched, his soul revolted, until Lala Tzu touched his arm. On the stair below rose a paean of exultation.

"The people of Khor give thanks for their deliverance," said Lala Tzu, "and beg you mount the throne of Khitai Khan, which was the throne of Ak Khan, whom you have slain."

"Who I have slain?" grunted Brill. "That's a good one! Well, you tell the people of Khor that I thank them kindly, but all I want is horses and food and canteens of water. I want to get

out of this country while the Mongols are still running in another direction, and I want

to get back to America as quick as I can. Somebody's waiting for me there."