

The Dark Pyramid

By William Hope Hodgson

Now in two hours more I was come clear down out of the Gorge, and stood in that Country; and for all that I did feel fresh troubled and bewildered, yet was I rejoiceful, as you may believe, in the surprising light and splendour of that sudden Land.

And before that I had come down out of the great Gorge, I had stood high within the mouth thereof, and lookt well out over the mighty Country. And I had counted seven and twenty great volcanoes, and this doth not take heed of two monstrous ranges of fire-hills that burned afar off, something unto my right. Neither doth it take account of an hundred thousand lesser places of fire.

And truly it did seem a very land of fire and water. For there was a small fire-hill stood within a sea, as it did seem no more than a little mile from that place where I did stand. And maybe a score to the back of it, spread all about. And here shall I do proper to tell concerning the seas. For there were of these, that I did count at that time, three that were small, and a mighty sea that went onward for ever into the red light of the fire-hills, so that it was gone utterly out of my sight, and did show no ending.

And there rose up out of the seas, islands; and on the islands, volcanoes. But in other parts the fire-hills did come upward straightly from the sea. And over the near sea, as it did seem, there lay a plentitude of steam, as that the sea did boil at whiles and in diverse places.

And there did seem to me, as it were within the red atmosphere of that place, as that there were a muttering thunder, low and constant, shaking the air, now from that distance and now from this, and this did I judge to be the voices of the fire-hills, speaking with the fire that lived in them.

And you shall conceive how utter new was all this unto me; for there was in that Country a constant Voice of the Energy of Life, so that the World-Noise of this our Age was even there again, and with a keen and undoubted apparentness; and the more so, some ways, than now.

And here shall I set down more closely the things that were ready to my gaze.

And first, that it did much attract me, there was a huge and blackened mountain unto the left of the mouth of the Gorge, and the mountain did go upward into the night, maybe fifteen and maybe twenty miles. And there was a mighty peaked volcano that grew out from the side of the mountain so high up as five miles, as I did guess that height; and this was upon the far side. And above this there was a second, maybe nine or ten great miles up in the blackness of the night that hung afar upward. And, as that this were not great wonder enough, there did burn and glow two other mighty fire-hills, at an utter height, upon the left crest of that black mountain; and these were upward so monstrous a way, as that they did seem to make strange and smouldering suns within the night. And truly, as you shall perceive, this was a wondrous thing.

And below these upward fire-hills there rose up from the earth vast mountains of ash and burned stuff, that had been cast forth by these perched volcanoes, and had poured downward unto the earth throughout Eternity, and so to build grey and sombre monuments unto the dreadful glory of Time.

And to my right there was always sea and sea and the red blazing of the fire-hills; but unto my left, there were mighty forests, and there rose upward here and in that place, as that they were

beyond the great woods, monstrous fire-hills. And so do you take from me something of that first impressing upon my brain and sense.

And after that I had come down out of the mouth of the great Gorge, as I did tell a little while gone, I came upon a pause; for, surely, which way was the way proper unto my search. And I lookt about for a great while, and afterward did climb back into the Gorge, and called myself foolish, that I had not thought to map my way ere I came down.

And when I was come up into the Gorge again, lo! I saw that there was but one way that I should go; for truly, as I have said, there was only the seas unto my right; but unto the left, where the shores did meet the seas, there seemed, so far as mine eyes did tell to me, a clear way for a space. And mayhap, when I had come so far, I should even find a further way to go forward. And so did I descend again unto the Country of the Seas, as I did ever call that red-shining country of water and fire.

And by, that I was come again from the height of the Gorge, it was four and twenty hours since that I did last sleep; so that I was fain that I should put into some nook, and come to slumber, as you shall well believe.

And I found me a neat and proper place, where three great trees grew about a little basin of rock that was very dry and warm. And here, after that I had eat three of the tablets, and drunk some of the water--the while that my belly did yearn, as ever, for proper eating-stuff--I made my bed in the little basin of the rock, and lay me down, and did begin to think awhile upon Naani; but was gone over to sleep before that I was aware.

And lo! I was suddenly awake, and did find that I swam in a hot water; and a mercy, I did think, was it that I was not drowned as I did sleep. And I gat me to my feet, and the basin was full of water, hot and steaming, and pungent to the taste, as well I did know. And I perceived now that the water poured in from a smoothed slit upon the far side, and did come with a strange gurgling and bubbling, so that I conceived some deep well to boil, and thus to drive upward this water into the basin; and glad was I that it did not boil as it came forth.

And surely, now that I was upon the dry land, and did consider, I did quickly suppose that the water had poured forth at seasons into the basin for an eternity of time, and afterward did go back by fissures in the bottom of the basin; and this to happen, as I soon did find, a little beyond the length of every hour; and, indeed the basin to empty slow as I did watch.

Now, being much wetted, I stript off mine armour, having before this dipt out mine effects from the hot pool, and so did come down to the naked flesh, and I found a place where the rock was hot, and here I did spread my garments. And whilst that they came to dryness, I gat me into the hot pool, and had a very pleasant bathing, and did have no great fear of any dangerous thing; for, as it did seem, I had surely left all such behind, within the Night Lands. Yet did I have the Diskos upon the pool edge to my hand; for I had no proper assurance in this matter. Yet, as it did prove, there were many monstrous beasts in that Country; but never did I feel the nearness and horrid power of any Evil Force; for these, as I do conceive, were congregate and gathered about the Mighty Pyramid, being attracted thereto by the great spiritual essence of so wondrous a multitude of humans gotten so close in one spot, even as sharks do come after the ship that hath bullocks within. Yet, how that the Evil Powers were given entrance unto this State of our Life, I have no sure knowing; yet have I put forward certain thoughts on this matter in an earlier place; and more than such thinkings is surely vanity; for there is no certainty in my Reasoning concerning the thing.

Now, presently was my clothing dry; yet before this, I had come out from that bath, which truly was nigh all gone backward into the earth. And I dressed me again, and got my armour

upon me, and afterward was I in a more lightsome state of the mind; and yet very ready to come again unto my sleep. And this I did, and had six hours more beside the pool; and once was wakened somewhat by the grunting and bubbling noise of the water, that was made as the pool did fill time and again.

And when the six hours were gone, I waked very well fitted in my senses and feelings to go forward again through that red-lighted Country; and this I did, after that I had eat and drunk.

Now all that day I went forward at a great pace; and the nameless woods were unto my left, and the shores of the seas unto my right. And oft did I find that the trees grew even into the water, so that oft did I go forward among the trees, and a very wonderful thing was this to me, that never had known before in all my life, until I was come into that Country, how that a glad and wild mystery doth live among forest trees. For there was no such strange wildness among the groves of the Underground Fields; though a solemn beauty in plenty. And the scent of the woods was sweet unto my spirit, as you shall wot.

Now all the time that I did go, there was the shore unto my right; but alway to my left, and around me oft-times as I did say, the great forests. And as I did go, lo! there was life in all those darksome woods, and living eyes did peer out odd whiles upon me, and afterward go backward into the dark; so that I wotted not whether to fear, or to have no heed of trouble. Yet naught did come anigh to me, to make any hurt.

And thrice in that day did I come to little fire-hills that burnt redly, and sent out fire and noise, so that I heard their trouble each time through the forest, before that I was come to them. And about each was there a deadness and desolation, where the fire had killed the big trees; yet, as I did observe, the quick life of little plants did grow more nigh, as that they were born and lived between the times of the fire-bursts. And this I do take it that you perceive.

And in that one day I past thirty and seven boiling springs; but whether they boiled truly, I do have no knowledge; only that they sent out a great steam oft-times; and some did make a strong roaring noise; so that to hear them afar off in the forests was to think odd times that some wild beast roared strangely.

Now, when the eighteenth hour was come, I sat me down, as I had done upon the sixth and the twelfth hours, and eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, which here did fizz very rich and quick.

And afterward I lay down to my slumber, for I was greatly wearied. And I had chosen a place against a great rock, which was so that no creature might come upon me from behind. And I came easy upon sleep; but yet I did fix it upon me that I slumber only with the body; for I did know, by the shining of the eyes in the darksome woods, that strange creatures abode in the mighty forests.

And ere I was gone over to sleep, I thought upon Naani, as I had done much all that day, as though her spirit did hover near unto mine, and did strive pitiful to speak with me. And this I set out to you, that you shall know how it did seem unto me in my thoughts and fancyings. And as I lay there, I put a blessing upon her, and a determination into my heart that I make a more desperate speed of my going, if that might be; so that I come the sooner to that strange, and unknown place in the dead world where did stand the lesser Refuge. And I was then asleep in a moment.

And lo! sudden I was awake. And lovely was the brightness of that Country, that did show me in a moment my danger, and did not keep me suspend in fearful Doubt, as did the grey darkness and strange shadows and lights of the Night Land. For I saw, on the instant that I got me to mine elbow, how that certain things did crouch within the borders of the trees, no more than a score

paces off. And I perceived in a moment that my spirit had been given knowledge, and had wakened me. And I stared, the while that I did grip the Diskos; and I saw that there were six squat men that were humpt at the neck and shoulder; and they did crouch all there in a row, and were something hid by the shadows; and I perceived that they watched me; and the eyes of the men did shine like the eyes of beasts; and so shall you know somewhat of the strange terror that came upon me. Yet had I the Diskos and mine armour; and though my heart did shake a little, yet was my spirit assured to conquer.

Now I gat me to my feet, and had the Diskos ready within my hand; and behold! I could not see the Humped Men, for they were gone from that place; yet never did I see them go, though I had kept my gaze very steadfast upon that part where they did hide. And, as you shall understand, I was near ready to believe that there had been nothing there within the border of the wood; yet truly I knew that the men with the humps had been there, as I had seen.

Now, I looked presently, and found that I had slept five hours; and I eat two of the tablets, as I did stand there, watchful; and afterward drank some of the water; and so was ready to go forward again; for I was grown very anxious to be gone from that place; and did have no knowledge but that those strangely humpt Men were but a little way off, among the trees, and might come upon me in a moment; or, further, that they did go to call an army of other humped men to my destruction.

And after that I was ready, and had my gear secure upon me, I set off at a great stride, and did hold the Diskos very handy, and lookt this way and lookt that way, and all the while made onward with speed; for, truly, I was grown so lean and hard that it did seem to me that I had power to out-pace those men or aught else of their kind.

And all that day, through thirty great hours did I go forward, at that stride, and did always watch; and at every sixth hour, I eat two of the tablets and drank a little of the water, and went onward again.

And so did I hope that I was lost from those Humped Men. Yet, though I did hope, my faith was not this wise; for twice and thrice did it come to me that there went things through the woods to my left all that day, and did keep always to a level with my speed; yet were always hid. And, as you shall believe, this did be a very shaking thing to my heart, and did make my hope of but little account.

Now, because that I had no faith to company my hope, I was not easy to have slumber, until that I was come to a place proper and safe. And so, as I have told, I went onward through thirty great hours; and, in truth, in all that while I did find nowhere that did seem to fit my need.

And lo! about the end of the thirtieth hour, I perceived that there was water ahead, besides the water of the sea that was ever to my right. And I thought, maybe, that the sea did go inward at that part of the land; but it was otherwise; for when I was gotten to that place, I found that a river came into the sea, and did come out of all the country that lay unto my left.

And in the mouth of this river, there was a small island; and surely I did look across to the island, and think it a refuge from the Humped Men that did surely play dog upon my going. Yet, truly, this was but an idle thought, and my need was that I should come to some way to cross over the river, that I go forward beside the great sea, which did stretch onward, as it did seem for ever, before me upon the far side.

And I knew not how to go across; for I had no power to swim, and had I swum, there were surely monsters in that great and warm-flowing river, as you shall believe.

And I went upward of the river-bank, that I might come to some place where the river did narrow; and surely I had been like to walk a mighty distance to this purpose, but that I came soon

to a second river that did enter the first, not a mile above the shore of the sea; so that, as you do perceive, there was the sea to one side of me, and this second river unto the other, and the first river before me; and thus was I sorely perplexed, as any had been truly that was in a like trouble.

Yet, as it did chance, the need to go forward, and the danger of the Humped Men, put wit into me, so that I lookt about for a tree that was fallen. And there were many, yet great, so that I was much wearied and something strained of the spirit, before that I gat two little trees unto the water.

Now, when this was done, I made me a rough pole of a young tree-plant; and afterward, I lashed the two trees together with my belts and straps, and so had somewhat of a raft.

And you shall picture that, all the time as I did go about this business, I was very heedful lest the Humped Men should come upon me, ere that I was gone free upon the water. And this constant heeding did double the labour of my work, as you shall perceive; yet, in the end, it was done, and I ready to adventure over the river.

And so I did push off with the pole, and I pusht and paddled maybe the half of an hour, for, indeed it was all a clumsy contriving, and mayhap I the more so in my labours. Yet, presently, I was come so far over, that I drew nigh to the island; and it did seem a wise and proper thing that I should have my slumber there, and afterward go onward to the farther shore. And this I did; and after that I had eat and drunk, as ever, I lay down to sleep.

And by this time it was three and thirty hours since last I did slumber; so that I was bitterly awearied.

And I had a great and restful sleep; for, truly, the island did seem a very safe place; and, in verity, I came to no harm, though I was as a dead man for nine great hours; and so shall you perceive my weariness.

And when I was come proper awake, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water; and afterward made an end of my voyage, and then did take back my belts and straps from binding the trees, and so forward again upon my way, and no more fearful of the Humped Men; for, surely, I did think I had left them all upon the far shore of the river; though afterward I minded me that they might grow likewise upon the two sides; but yet was I only discovered by those upon the one, as you do know.

And all that day I went very swift, and past many strange matters and did coast upon wonders oft. And at the sixth and the twelfth hours did I eat and drink, as ever; and between the eighth and the fourteenth hours did I come past two mighty fire-hills, that made all the Country to tremble with their noise. And four times did monstrous creatures pass by me; but I was swift hid, and came to no harm.

And oft as I did go, were my thoughts upon the dear Maid that I journeyed to save from destruction. Yet, as you must see, always were my thinkings brought sharply unto my going; so that scarce was I ever set off to ponder upon Naani, but that there came some danger or wonder to give me heed to my way. And because of this, as you have learned, I was more put to plan free of the instant trouble and peril of my way, through all that mighty journey, than to have quiet chance for thoughts of love unto mine Own. Yet, truly, was not my journey one whole thought of love unto Naani? And, that peril made oft dumb my brain, was but the truer song unto my Maid.

And at times I was among trees; but oft did go past unnumbered boiling springs and small fire-hills; and oft was the air full of the noise of the little fire-hills, and the roar of the boiling springs; but there came no harm unto me.

And a thousand times did I perceive things that had life; and I made a very cautious way; though with a great speed and cleverness of going that made my heart glad.

And oft did I come to parts where a great life held the trees, and green stuff did flourish exceedingly, and the air rich and full and wondrous sweet; so that I was fain to think how that in some far-off time, it might be that our children's children should come down unto this Country, when the Upper Valley of the Night Land was grown to an utter chill and lacking of air; and here build them a new Refuge, if, indeed any should come clear of the Evil Forces and the Monsters that did live about the Mighty Pyramid in the Night Land. Yet, how should they come clear of those things; so that this is, as you do perceive, no more than a thought that did rise vaguely in me. And yet, again, who shall say what may be?

And onward I did pass, and I do mind me how that I saw the lower fires of that Country to burn very fierce; and this I set to the richness of the air; but yet with no surety of knowledge; and do but tell the same that you shall see the oddments of thought that went oft across my brain, and so have so much knowledge as I, concerning this and that.

Now, a little before the eighteenth hour was come, I came out from among the trees, and the sea was downward of a great cliff unto my right, for I had gone upward for a long and weary hour. And I did see now a thing that made me to be cautious, and yet that did hold my heart to go swiftly to perceive the thing; for it was very strange.

And I went forward quickly, yet with a wise care; and so was come presently more nigh. And I perceived that the thing was, in part, a high rock, very tall and pointed and maybe an hundred feet high; but afterward I did find it to be more. And there was a monstrous great thing upon the top of the rock, that did seem very strange; and I stopt and lookt, and afterward went forward again; and so for a time, until that I was but a little way off. And now I saw that there did seem to be a mighty long rock laid across the topmost part of the upstanding rock, and yet had a very strange and shapely appearance; and did seem upon the underpart to be as that I had lookt before upon it. And upon the upper part, there grew trees and green things, even as these did grow upon odd ledges of the upstanding rock. Yet, for the most, the rock was very stark, as that a blast had blown upon it, and made it bare.

Now, when I had lookt for a while, I bethought me that this should be a safe and proper place for my slumber, if that I had power to come safe to the top. And when I had thought this thing, I began at once to climb up the rock; and I found that the rock was very high; so that in a while I was come a great way off the earth, and yet was not come to the top of the rock. And because that I was awearied, I lookt about for a safe place to mine hand, and lo! there was a shelf of the rock very nigh, that went inward a little to the side.

And I gat me to this ledge, and did eat and drink, and presently I slept, and scarce had thought of Naani in the moment of my slumbering; for a great weariness was upon me, the which I do think to have come by reason that I was not yet proper rested from the task of the day that was gone before that one.

Now I waked very sudden, maybe seven hours after; and I had knowledge within me that my spirit did wot of some nigh danger. And I gat upward from the rock, very quiet, and had the Diskos ready in my hand. And I lookt swift about me in the moment that I did wake; yet did see nothing; for there was naught on the ledge with me.

And I crept to the edge, and lookt downward, and lo! I did see that there came up the rock two Humped Men; and they did climb very swift and silent; and I perceived that they smelled me, and came to destroy me. And I made ready the Diskos to do battle, and ceased not to look downward. And I saw how that the Humped Men did seem to be humpt by reason of their being so monstrous thick and mighty of the neck and the shoulder, as that they had been human bulls. And I saw that they were very strong, and by the speed of their climbing, I knew they were swift;

and so did I make steady my attention and my heart to the saving of my life; for truly I did know that I should be dead in a little, or they.

Now I stepped back a space from the edge of the rock, and had the Diskos very ready; for it was needful that I should kill one of those brute men speedy, that I have no danger that one take me in the back, whilst that I fight with the other.

Then, in a moment it did seem, there came upward of the rock edge, the great and brutish face of the man. And in that moment that I slew him, I did note curiously how that he had large teeth upon each side of the mouth; and was aware that he had come so quiet as a great cat. And in the backward parts of my brain, I bethought that even thus, maybe, was primal man, so that a strange and secondary questioning and wondering did live in that part of me; and I did learn from these scarce conscious reasonings that I was of belief the thing was truly a man; but very crude and dangerous. And surely it is strange that I had all this thought in that little moment; but in verity so it was; though I doubt not but I bettered it with after thoughts, when a while had gone.

Now the first man died ere his great haired breast was come upward over the rock; and he sank back, and sagged and fell dully, and I heard him bodge downward from rock to rock, very lumberesome; and so in a moment was silence.

Then did I look this way and that way of the ledge; for the second Humpt Man was not yet upon me; and I feared that the pause did mean a cunning mischief and strategy. And when a little time had past, and all the while I was ready with the Diskos, and naught did come upward to harm me, I stepped very soft to the edge of the rock-ledge, and looked downward; but there was nowhere any thing to see.

Now, for a little moment, I did think that the brutish man had run off, being feared by the death that I did deal unto the first; yet I put this from me at once; for I did wot that such a creature did not be like to fear in such wise; but was rather set to some horrid cunning of attack, as I did fear, and was somewhere below me among the holes of the great rock.

Then I did think sudden that he might be gone upward, so that he should come down upon my back, and I looked upward of the mighty rock; but did see naught; and afterward I stooped forward a great way beyond the edge, so that I should perceive whether the man did hide beneath. And, behold! he was there below me, and crouched under the rock-shelf, ready to his spring. And in that moment, he made unto me with so mighty a leap as any tiger should give. And he came half over the edge, and gript the Diskos by the handle, in an instant.

And surely I had lost that trusted weapon, or been pulled over and cast into the depth, but that the Diskos did spin, and the Earth-Current did make live the handle--as was intended--save where the "grip" was set. And lo! the man gave loose the handle very swift, for it had burned and shaken the creature sore. And I staggered back, with the effort I had made to withhold the Diskos; and the brutish man came upward again over the rock edge, and leapt at me. Yet he gat me not; for I sprang unto my right, and made a blow with the Diskos, even as I did leap. And the blow came something short; but yet harmed the Humpt Man with a gash upon the belly, very sore and horrid among the great brown hairs of the man. And immediately he sprang after me; but I smote full at the face; so that he leaped back from the strange roar and blaze of the Diskos, and yet was harmed; for he gat not right free of the blow; but did be cut very sore on the mighty and haired arm.

Now, seeing that he was something feared of the weapon, I ran in upon him, and smote again at the face; yet was the man gone out of my reach before that the blow did reach; for, truly, he was quick as a panther. And immediately, he did leap unto the ending of the ledge, where it did join upon the Rock; and he caught the living Rock between his two hands. And truly the Rock

must have been splitten there; for he tore out a monstrous lump, so great near as my body; and did run upon me with the rock above the head of him.

Now, I perceived I should be smashed in a moment, if that I did not slay the man very quick. For so mighty was he, that he did leap this way and that way after me, as though the great rock did cumber him no more than it had been but a light matter.

And you shall perceive that I leapt this way and that way, to avoid the man; and twice did strike him; but yet was feared to brake the Diskos upon the rock, which the man did use as a shield each time that I did make a blow. And all the while, I did act to escape when that the man should cast the rock, as I did conceive at the first to be his intent. Yet, truly, it was as that he had no wotting that a rock may be thrown; for he strave only to come at me with the rock, that he should crush me, as with a monstrous club. And, in verity, what should a man do against so horrid an attack.

And time and oft did I leap now to the right and now to the left, and again in a moment, I did cut the Humpt Man; but the blow was something turned off by the great rock in the hands of the man; yet so strange and mighty was the power of the Diskos, that it shore away a small portion of the rock, and did come to no hurt in itself.

And, surely I had presently failed in wind and limb, because of the leapings and chargings that I did make; and because of the weight of the armour, that was not overmuch, yet to be considered; but that I fainted not, was by reason of the wondrous hardness and leanness that I was grown to, with so constant a journeying and strait living; for the tablets did keep the strength in a man, though, truly, they eased not the yearnings of the belly.

And lo! even the brutish man did grow weary, and the hot breath and body-stink to come from him; and surely who shall wonder, for always he did rush to and fro upon me, with the monstrous rock to crush me. And sudden, I leapt unto the right of the man, thinking within me that I did perceive a chance that I should cut him upon that side; but, truly, he was less awearied than I did know; for he came very sharp upon me, and had me between him and the wall of the Rock; and surely I had no room to make escape, and had died in a moment, but that I made a sudden sham toward the left with the Diskos, as that I should leap that way. And in the same instant, I did go to the right with a strong bounding; and immediately did come in upon the Humpt Man from that side; and I put my fortune of life to the stroke, and stood anigh to the man, and I smote him across the middle part, before that he did wot of my intent. And the blow slew the man very surely, and did nigh cut the mighty creature in twain. And surely he fell, half leaping even as he died, so that the monstrous rock that was in the hands of the brutish man, did crash down almost upon my feet, and I leapt very high that I should escape the thundering of the rock; for in verity, I was near slain in that last moment of the life of the Humpt Man. But yet I lived and came free of death, and did have a relief of happiness about my heart, as you shall believe.

Yet, truly, I was much shaken; and a little weakness took me, so that I was fain to go down upon the rock-shelf, that I have back my strength.

And presently, I was grown steady again, and I took my gear, and did haste down the Rock, and so was come presently to the earth again. And I saw the first of the Humpt Men that I did slay, lying very quiet a little off from the bottom of the Rock; so that I went round upon the other side to avoid the man; for it was no pleasure to mine eyes or to my heart. And, truly, it did trouble me always to make a death.

And when I was come round upon the other, which was the seaward, side of the Rock, I perceived that I was yet shaken; and I remembered that it were wise to eat and drink and rest a little, before that I did go further upon my way.

Now, as I did sit there at the bottom of the Rock, I looked upward at the strange crown thereof; and until that time, I had been taken up with the fight and with gazings this way and that to see whether there came others of the Humped Men to work me an harm.

But now that I was given some ease of the mind and of the body, I saw plainly that I knew the thing that lay upward upon the Rock; for the shape had been something strange and half-known to me even before that moment, as that I had a vague knowledge concerning it; but yet with no surety. And now, truly, I did know in a little instant that the thing was one of the olden flying-ships, the which, as you shall mind, there were certain in the Great Museum of the Mighty Pyramid.

And surely, I was ready to wonder why that I had not seen the thing plain before that moment; yet was this like to be because that there was a shadow upon the other side of the great Rock; but upon this side there was a little fire-hill a way off to the cliff edge, and this did throw a warm light that made a glimmer upon the dull metal of the ship's bottom, which was uncovered to my sight, and was surely of that same deathless grey metal that made the Great Redoubt.

And yet, as you shall believe, even as I said this thing to my mind, that the strange matter upon the top of the Rock was truly one of the olden air-ships, I did feel that I should be proper to doubt; for it was a very wondrous thing to perceive a thing common to man, in that utter strange Country, and after that I was gone so far off from the Mighty Pyramid. Yet, in verity, I did know in my heart that it was indeed that which I did perceive it to be; and I did stand and walk to and fore and look upward constant; for I was very keen that I look well upon it.

And truly, as I did look from this place and from that place, it was scarce a thing for wonder that I had not wotted it to be an air vessel; for there were great trees and abundance of earth and living matters upon the topmost side of the ship; so that none could easy perceive it to be aught save a great and desolate rock that did lie upon the other rock. Yet, truly, it was as I have told; and presently I did make to climb upward of the great Rock, that I should come to the air vessel to enter it. But yet was this not proper; for I had surely no duty save to go forward forever, until that I found the Maid; but yet did I spend a little while to this searching of the ship; and I do but set down that which I did, and with a serious spirit. And truly, as it doth here occur to me, I do be ever seeming a serious young man, as you maybe shall have grown to think; but yet was I to a dread and serious business, and the strain did be too great upon me and the trouble too much prest upon my heart to give me much of laughter, as you do surely perceive, and so you to give me your ear and your understanding. For, indeed, before that I did lose Mirdath my Beautiful One, I was not over-grave; but so young and joyous as any.

Now it took me a great time to go upward of the Rock; for it was so monstrous steep and high. Yet, presently was I come nigh under the bottom of the ship; and here I did perceive that she had been sore battered in that far-off age when she did come upon the Rock; for, surely, as I did perceive, the peak of the Rock was through the bottom of the ship, so that the metal was burst this way and that, and very plain to be seen in some parts; but in other places the earth and growing matters did make a hiding.

And after that I had climbed this way and that way, I perceived that I must come to the topmost part by the plants that did hang over, and grow downward. And after that I had pulled upon them, to know that they were strong to hold me, I went upon them, and was soon to the top of the ship. Yet, truly, I might so well have been upon the earth; for the ship was covered above by the earth and dust of a monstrous age of years; so that I was like to need much time to dig downward unto the ship; and because of this, I considered a little while, and afterward made no more to search her; but did go downward again, that I should come once more to my journey. Yet, as you shall

think, it was with a queer thrilling of the heart, and with strange thoughts upon the end of those that did come, maybe, to a bitter and lonesome dying in that ship of the air, in that far-off time when she did fly.

And surely, it did seem to me as I went downward of the great Rock, how that the flying-ship had been there for an hundred thousand years; and that mayhaps the sea did live all about the Rock in that Age; and truly this was no improper thing to think, for it was like that the sea had been monstrous high and great in those days; so that the Rock was but a little island in the midst of the sea; and now was the sea gone small from a great sea to lesser seas, and this through an eternity of years. And always, as it doth seem to me, had the ship lain upon the Rock, and lookt quiet and silent over the change and wonder and the lonesomeness of all that Country of Fire and water, for ever.

But how the air-ship did come upon the rock, how shall I know; save, maybe, it doth seem as that she might have flown low over the sea in that olden age, and come hard upon the Rock, because, maybe, there was one to the helm that did steer unwittingly. And again, it shall well be otherwise, and I do but set down mine odd thoughts; and such as they be, they have no especial use, save that they do show to you the different workings of my mind at that time, as I did go downward. And so to set you the more in possession of all that I did have knowledge of.

And presently, I was come again to the earth, and did go forward with a great speed, so that I should waste no more of that day. Yet, oft did I think upon that ship hid there upon the mighty Rock, under the wondrous quiet ashes of eternity.

And I went eighteen hours walking, and in all that time I did see no more of the Humped Men; yet three times was I put in a sudden danger, for there went past me thrice, between the fourteenth and the seventeenth hours, great flying monsters, that were winged very ugly, and did go, as I thought, in a great bounding, rather than that they did fly proper as doth a bird. Yet I suffered no hurt from these; for I was swift to hide between the great boulders that were very plenty in that part; but no trees. For I was gone now past the forests of trees; there being none since that I had gone through a very shallow river, that I came to about the thirteenth hour. And this had I waded, and sounded my path with the staff of the Diskos; but I had kept mine armour upon me, lest there be things, even in water so shallow, that might bite and work harm upon me. But I gat through pretty quick, and had no hurt done me.

Now I had eat, as ever, at the sixth and the twelfth hours; and by that the eighteenth hour was come, I was nigh again unto a forest, that came down to the shore that went alway upon my right; and I to be very sore and wearied, as you shall know; for I had fought very desperate after my waking, and afterward climbed the great Rock, and then again to journey; so that it was, by this, nigh to one and twenty hours since that I did sleep.

And surely, I lookt this way and that way, constant, and did see no place proper to my slumber. But afterward, I considered I did be a fool, to lack such; for truly the trees were plentiful, and I could climb a great one, and strap my body safe, and so have a sure bed for my rest. And I did this thing, and went upward into a great tree, and did tie my body to the tree, with my belts; yet I eat and drank before that I went up the tree.

Now when I was fast upward in the tree, and had made a bed upon a monstrous branch, and had the Diskos ready upon my hip, so that it should not fall but be nigh to my hand, I lay a little while thinking upon Naani; and I went not over to sleep immediately, which was strange; yet mayhaps because that my bed was so uncertain.

And I considered very gravely how that it was a monstrous long while since that I did hear the Master-Word from the dear Maid; and truly I was come a dreadful way from mine home, which

was the Mighty Pyramid; for I had gone onward for ever through five and twenty great days of travel, and was not yet come to any place that did appear like to be that place where the Maid did abide.

And it did seem that I might even wander onward in that great Country of Fire and Water for a time beyond all that I had before gone; and this thought did put a great weight of trouble and weariness upon my heart; for the Maid had been in sore need of me, and I did feel sudden to be all adrift in the wilderness. But before this time, it had seemed as that I surely went aright. And mayhaps your sympathy shall tell you just how I to feel in the heart.

And after that I had lain there very awkward, and thought upon all matters, I minded me that I would try the compass again upon the morrow; but had no great hopes of the machine; yet did be willing to try aught to see where I had gotten to. And truly, as it did come to my mind, if that the compass did point a little as I did wot it was used to point in the Lesser Redoubt, then, in verity, I was surely come something more anigh to that unknown place of the world than I did dare to believe. And this to be plain to you.

Then a little time did pass in which I did wake and sleep, and wake and sleep, a little; but with no surety of sleep; but as that I was very tired of the heart, and did but lie too wearied to come properly to sleep.

And odd whiles I did lie with mine eyes half to open, and did look very dreamful upward among the dark branches of the tree, as they did show black and pretty against the redness of the shining that came from the sea; for there was stood a great and bright-burning fire-hill in that part of the sea that lay off the shore from me. And above the glaring of the fire-hill, there was the deep night that did brood for ever above in a monstrous black gloom of eternity, and did make the red smoke of the volcano to show deep and mighty and thunderous-seeming, afar up in the great dark. And the red and shining smoke did but show the utter hugeness of the night, that had been upon the world through the great ages.

And, in verity, as I did lie there so dreamful, it did come to me afresh how wondrous strange was mine adventure; and how that I did lie warm and alive in a Country of red light and smoking seas. And, truly, as I did remember and consider, there was a great and lost world above me, upward through the dark . . . maybe an hundred and fifty great miles up in the grim night.

And this thing did strike me very solemn, as I did lie; and I do trust that you conceive how that there was, in truth, afar above in the eternal and unknown night, the stupendous desolation of the dead world, and the eternal snow and starless dark. And, as I do think, a cold so bitter that it held death to all living that should come anigh to it. Yet, bethink you, if one had lived in that far height of the dead world, and come upon the edge of that mighty valley in which all life that was left of earth, did abide, they should have been like to look downward vaguely into so monstrous a deep that they had seen naught, mayhaps, save a dull and utter strange glowing far downward in the great night, in this place and in that.

And surely, as you shall have seen, I have set the Great Deep of the Valley to be, maybe, an hundred and fifty miles of night; for, as you do mind, it was conceived that the Valley of the Night Land was an hundred miles deep, and mayhap to be more; and I had come from that Place downward of the Mighty Slope, and of the Gorge, a very great way. Yet, in verity, I do believe in my heart this measuring was utter wrong; for I think the deep to have been monstrous, beyond these miles that I do give; yet have I no proving of this belief, and do set it down for no more than it is.

Now, presently, I had ceased from these vague thinkings and half dreamings, and was gone truly to sleep. Yet, nowise did I sleep very strong; but did seem to come anigh to wakefulness,

this time and that. And, as it did chance, this was mayhaps a very good thing for my life; for I did presently come awake more surely, and did turn on the great branch; for there was a noise in the air, that was not the noise of the great fire-hill.

And the noise did grow, very heavy and lumbbersome. And, in a moment, there came seven Humped Men, running among the trees, as that some monstrous thing did pursue. And immediately they were beneath the tree in which I did lie; so that a great fear came upon me, and I loosed the belt from the branch, that I should be free to fight.

And, directly upon this, I saw that the men did leap upward into the tree, beneath me; but not as that they did wot of me or make to come at me; but as that they did pay a great heed to some creature or happening that was far off among the trees. And surely, the noise did seem to come from that part, and did grow loud and mighty, and the Humped Men did all crouch very silent, and did make no noise or motion one to the other; but were quiet upon the lower branches.

And, as I did look now more to my ease, I perceived that they had each a great stone, and bloody, that did seem as that it were split to a certain sharpness, even as a stone doth break very natural. And they carried the stone under this arm or under that arm, so that they had their hands free to all matters.

And, alway the noise did come the more anigh, and I saw that a Humped Man did come running from among the trees, and did run beneath that place where the seven Humped Men did be on the branches. But they made no sign to the man, to save him; yet truly it was very plain that some monster pursued the man.

And immediately I saw how this thing was; for the Humped Man upon the ground, did not run so fast as might be; and I conceived that he did act to make some creature to come after him, to pass under the men within the tree. And surely this thing did prove to be; for there came very quick, a great and ugly thing, that had an ugly way of putting down the feet, and did have seven feet to each side, which was very strange; and the back was as that it were horny, and the belly of the thing did seem to brush heavy upon the earth, and it grunted, as it went, and shook the earth with the weight of it; so that a monstrous noise came from it, upon so hasty a journey. And I did wot that it was not such a thing as did properly pursue after matters of food; but did rather eat of that which did need little haste, but a monstrous strength, to gain. And that it did so make after the man, was in truth because that it had been wounded and made fierce; for, indeed, there came blood from the creature from great wounds upon the back; but how these were made, I could not know in that instant.

And it did go under the tree in which I was hid; and in that moment when it past under the tree, the seven Humped Men did leap out of the branches, and did catch to the brute by the great horns of the spine; and I saw that the wounds were in the joints of the spine, as was plain when the back did work, with the going of the creature. And the seven Humped Men took the sharp stones from under their arms, and did strike very brutal in the wounds that were in the joints of the spine; and the creature roared and cried, and went onward into the trees at a great speed; and in all the time that it ran, the Humped Men ceased not to strike with the stones.

And sudden, when it was gone a distance off, it did roll very swift over upon the back, first to the right, as that it would go that way; so that the Humped Men did leap off upon the other side. And immediately the creature rolled to that side; and there ran clear of the brute only four of the Humped Men; so that I knew that three were slain. And afterwards, they that lived, ran beyond the beast, and gat up into a second tree, and the one that was chased, did entice the creature to follow, and so did tease it once more to pass beneath the other men; and they very swiftly again to the back of the creature; and so from my sight, striking with the great stones, and the beast

bellowing very loud and piteous. And how many of the Humped Men there were to the beginning of that strange hunting, I know not; but surely there were few that lived to the end.

And surely there were such things as this thing in the beginning of the world, and again was it thus in the end; and I did ponder this a little while, as I did sit upon the great branch, and hearken unto the sound of the hunting, that was now gone a great way off, and was presently beyond my hearing.

And afterward, I gat me to the earth, and did look this way and that way, to see that no beast was anigh, neither any of the Humped Men; and afterward, I eat two of the tablets and drank some of the water.

And when I had gat this far to a readiness for my going, I minded me that I should try the compass again, as I did intend. And surely the machine did point between the North and the South, upon the Westward arc, even as Naani had told unto me; yet, as it did seem, with somewhat more of a Southward pointing than she had made me to think. And because of this telling of the compass, a great ease came upon my spirit; for, surely, was not this but a sure sign that I did go direct unto that hidden place of the world where the Lesser Refuge did abide; but yet was not come over-close, so that the pull of the Mighty Earth-Current of the Great Redoubt was something stronger than in the place where was the Little Pyramid.

And all this did I think very swift to myself, and had a glad uplifting of the heart, as you do perceive; so that I went forward upon my journey, with a great stride, and did scarce fear any strange thing that all the Country did hold, in that moment.

And I went all that day at a strong pace, and did be oft tempted to send the Master-Word unto Naani; yet did keep from so foolish an acting, the which, mayhaps, had brought straightway upon me an Evil Power, and had given me to Destruction when that I was near come to the succour of the Maid. And it was this quick and constant fear of the Evil Forces of the Night Land, that did keep me ever from calling unto Naani, lest that they should discover me, and follow after; and this, I doubt not, you to know by now so well as I.

Now, by the sixth hour, I was come into a part of the Country where there were an exceeding abundance of steam fountains and sprayings and great upboilings of water in basins of rock; and the air did be full of the sounds and the roarings of the boilings and the spoutings, and of a hot mist and spray; so that, truly, I had scarce the power to see to my front, nor to any side.

And here, presently, I made a pause, and did eat and drink, and afterward went forward again; and I did keep the shore of the sea always to my right, and so did go proper to my way; yet with no great ease; for the sea also did steam very strong in that part, and because of this great fog of steam, I was surely much laboured to make a great speed, lest unseeing I go headlong into an hole of the boiling water.

And in the ninth hour, I did go clear of the hot boilings, and was come again free of the mist and the steam, and might look with mine eyes to my going. And, surely, as I did perceive, I was come to the end of the great sea that had been ever to my right; for it did go against the feet of great and monstrous mountains, that went upward for ever into the night, and did seem as that they were the hither wall of that strange Country of Fire and Water. And so was I stood there very much taken upon doubt; for how should I go farther.

And after that I had been there a while, in a bewilderment of doubt and of wit, I went to the left, along the feet of the mountains; and truly this but of common sense; for how might I go any other way, save I go back again!

And at the twelfth hour I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and went forward once more. And lo! at the fifteenth hour, I was come to a place between the mountains, even an upward gorge, very dark and gloomy, and without light for a great way.

And, in verity, I did not want to go up the gorge, in that it was so dreary a place and narrow and horrid and drear-seeming, after the light and wideness of the Country in which I did yet stand.

And presently, I did go past the mouth of the gorge, that I should learn whether there went another way out of that Country. And thiswise, for a great hour more, along the feet of the mountains, and did presently come to a monstrous black river, that was, maybe, a mile wide. And it to be very shallow, and seeming as that the water scarce to cover the mud of the bottom. And here and there a great steam did come from it, and spirtings and moundings-up of the mud in many places, and monstrous babblings and puffings-up of strange smoke, as that a great heat went beneath it in this place and in that.

And surely it went backward into the country for a mighty way, so far as my sight did go; and I did think it to be no river, but truly a further sea. And there was no way across; for there were no trees anigh, to make me a raft, neither might I wade across; for it might be shallow here and deep there, and the mud be in all places. And, moreover, I had been like to be caught in one of those upburstings of mud, even did I have a raft to go upon. And because of all these things, I gat me back again to the Gorge, and presently I did go upward into the darkness.

Now, I went upward very steady, save that I did stumble oft, and did go through six great hours. And truly it did seem that I went in an utter dark, because that I had been awhile in so constant a light.

And, by that I had been six hours in the Gorge, I was gone right away from the Country of the Seas, and did be as that I was back into some place that was like to the dreadness of the Night Land. For there were in this place and in that place of the Gorge, red fire-holes, even as in the Night Land. Yet not many until that I was come a great way up of the Gorge. And there did be life of horrid things about the fires, as soon I did wot; so that I made to keep off from them. Yet, as you shall perceive, I must come oft pretty near, because that the Gorge was nowheres scarce an hundred good paces across, and did oft come very narrow, so that I did come oft anigh to the fire-holes, whether that I did heed to or not.

And all that time, and ever, did the Gorge go very sharp upward, so that it was a very weary thing to make great trial of speed, as you shall know. But yet I went so fast as I could do; for I was grown sudden very excited about the heart, and to feel as that I did surely draw anigh to that strange and hid place of the world, where was the Lesser Refuge.

And when I had gone upward through six great hours, as I did say, I took caution for a place proper to slumber; for I was surely very wearied.

And I saw a place presently, afar upward of the dark side of the Gorge, upon the right, where a ledge of the Rock did show in the glaring from one of the fire-holes that made a gloomy light in that place. And I climbed unto this ledge, and did find it to be secure, and awkward to come upon. And presently, after that I had eat and drunk, I did compose myself unto sleep, the which came very speedy upon me, whilst yet I did believe I thought only upon the sweetness of the Maid. And truly it had been something over three and twenty hours, since last I did sleep; so that I was greatly awearied.

And in six hours I waked and did eat, and did climb downward again to the Gorge, and so unto mine upward journey.

Now, as you do perceive, when that I was come properly a great way up the Gorge, and had come among the fire-holes, there was no more an utter darkness, for the dull red glare of the pits beat upward upon the black sides of the rock-mountains, that did make the sides of the Gorge; so that oft I did see both sides very plain in the lower parts; yet of the height of the Gorge, who might know aught; for the black sides did go upward for ever into the everlasting night.

And because of the light from the fire-pits, I did see, time and oft about the fires, horrid monsters, both that were snakes, and others like to scorpions so great as my head; but no more than these for a long while. And afterward I perceived that surely other matters did move among the rocks of the Gorge; so that I did keep the Diskos very ready in mine hand; yet had truly no use for it all that day.

Now I eat and drank at the sixth and the twelfth hours, and went onward at a very strong speed. And at the sixteenth hour, I did seem as that I knew the æther to be stirred about me, and the beat of the Master-Word very faint upon mine inward ear. And immediately, a wondrous great and lovely thrilling did wake all my being; for surely, I said, this was the spirit of my love, calling unto me with her brain-elements. And, indeed, this was a very proper and sensible thinking; for had the Master-Word been sent from the Mighty Pyramid, I had been like to hear it very plain, by reason of the force of the Earth-Current which was with them and to their command. But, as you do know, the Earth-Current was nigh gone from the Peoples of the Lesser Refuge; so that they were over-weak to make any proper calling. And this I have spoken of before this place.

Yet, in a little while, as I did stand very hushed, that I should hark the better, I was come to doubt whether that I did truly hear the Master-Word. And one moment I did say that it had surely beat in the night about me; and immediately would I be just so unsure; and so in a while I gat once more to my journey, and had doubt in my heart; yet, as you shall conceive, more of hope. And because of this thing, I went onward for thirty great hours from the time that I did wake; for my heart was excited within me.

And when that I had gone so long forward as this, I did see how that I did foolishly; and I lookt about for a place for my slumber; and I found a small cave that was clean and empty, as I did discover by the shining of the Diskos which I made to spin a little time. And the cave was in the cliff of the mountain that made the right side of the Gorge, and was nigh twenty good feet from the bottom of the Gorge, and hard to approach.

And when I was come secure into the cave, and sure that it was proper to my purpose, I eat four of the tablets, as was just and nice to my belly, and did afterward drink some of the water, and so to my slumber; and all the while, very sweet and strong in my thoughts upon Naani; so that surely I was a little time before that I had myself rightly unto sleep.

And I slept six hours, and did wake, for I had set my spirit hard unto such wakening; yet was I still greatly yearning for sleep. But this did go somewhat, when that I had fought a little with my need. And afterward, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and did gat my gear upon me, and was presently down unto the Gorge; and so again to my journey.

Now in all that day I did go with a very stern speed; for it did seem as that my soul did know for surety that I was truly come something nigh unto that hid place in the night where I should find mine Olden Love again. And the sweet hope that was bred of the calling that had seemed truly to sound about my spirit, was in all my being, and more sure on that day, than before that I had slept.

And I went thirty hours in all, even as before, ere that I did come again to sleep, and I eat and drank at every sixth hour, so that my strength should abide within me. And by that I was come to the ending of the thirty hours, I was sorely awearied, and gat me upward of the monstrous cliff

that did make the left side of the Gorge, having perceived in a place a great ledge of the rock, that did seem very proper for my purpose of slumber.

And when I was come upward upon the ledge of the rock, I saw that there did seem something, like to a mighty spider, that did stay half without of a hole in the back part of the ledge. And I smote the thing gently with the Diskos, so that it was very quickly dead; and afterward I searched well about; but did gladly perceive that there abode there no other horrid creature.

And I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water; and did afterward make me ready for slumber, as ever. But now I did put the cloak well about me; for truly there was grown a chill into the air of the Gorge; and here also will I tell how that it did seem unto me that the air was gone something from that great thickness and strength which had been with me in the past days of my journeying.

Now I was gone so tired, that I fell upon sleep in a moment, yet with a dear thought and anxious, concerning Naani; but was so starved of the body for slumber, that even mine anxiousness kept me not awake. And I was then so fast with sleep that I knew naught for eight hours of very sound slumber. And then did I awake, and very thankful of the heart that no evil beast or creeping thing had come upon me whilst that I was so utter lost in sleep.

And now, truly, was I something fresh and ready; and I ate and drank, and had my gear once more upon me, and so down into the Gorge. And afterward, I went upon my journey for eighteen hours, and did pause but a little while at the sixth and the twelfth hours that I should eat and drink.

And when the eighteenth hour was nigh come, I perceived that the nature of the Gorge was grown very horrid and dank. And in verity, I did feel as that afar upward in the night the black mountains that did make the sides of the Gorge had come together, and did make a monstrous roof unseen in the utter height.

And this thing I do tell, only as of my belief; for I have no very sure proof. Yet, truly, my reason doth say likewise; for there did oft drip water upon me out of the darkness, even though I walked in the middle way of the Gorge; and how should this thing be, save that there went an overreaching of the sides, that should let the mildew down upon me.

And in this place, and for more than eleven great hours, there were fire-holes and fire-pits only in this part and in that, and each a great way off from another. And they burned very dull, and did seem to throw a fume of sulphur into all the air, as that there was no freedom above for the stink to pass away. And in every place were the rocks of the Gorge very thick and slippery with strange growths; so that it was a sorrow to walk upon them. And all that time was there an heavy wetness and slowness in the air; and a smell, beside the stink of the fire-pits, as that I did go forward through a place where dead things did be.

And for a great time there was a horrid darkness, as it had been that the air was grown thick with the fumings of the fire-pits, as I do believe; and beside this thing there was, as I have said, but a dull fire here and another there; so that it was like that there should be a heavy dark. And because that it was so utter black, and because that there were growths upon the rocks in the bottom of the Gorge, I did go but slowly, and with pain of stumblings; and always with the stink of that place to trouble me half unto a sickness.

And sudden, as I did go past one of the fire-pits, I saw that the fire made a dull shining upon some monstrous thing that did move before me, upon the far side of the fire. And I came in one moment unto a swift silence, and hid among the rocks of the bottom of the Gorge. And I lookt very cautious at the thing that moved beyond the fire, and surely I had seen no thing so monstrous since that I had come free of the Night Land; for it was as that some huge Creature,

like to the hull of a great ship did move down out of the dark of the upper way of the Gorge. And it went by the fire-hole, and onward into the dark of the lower way of the Gorge; and I had perceived somewhat of it, as it did go past the fire, and, surely, it was black and beslimed, and utter great in height and in length, and it went always without noise, so that I had not known it to be there, but that I saw it plain with mine eyes. And, truly, if I do say that it was somewhat as that I had seen a monstrous slug-thing, surely I should use wise and proper words to make known to you this horrid brute.

And I stayed very quiet a time, and afterward I went upward again of the Gorge, and did use a new caution to my way, and saw that the Diskos was free upon my hip; for even thus I did carry the weapon, being that I must use both hands to my way, and to save me in my stumblings and slidings over the slippery rocks.

And once it did seem to me that some great thing moved in the darkness, and I went downward among the rocks, and stirred not my body for a great while; and sure am I that there went some living monster past me, that did stink as a loathsome grave. And afterward, I went on again.

And three hours did I go thus, and came at last to a place where a fire-hole did shine more ruddy; and I did look well about me, that I should perceive that part of the Gorge the better. And as I stood there, very quiet, away off from the fire, so that it did show no great light upon my person, I did note how utter still was that place; and this to take me anew, as though it had come fresh upon me. And here, there would be the drip of water, and again in that place, and again elsewhere; and all very solemn and very dismal. And the silence to be constant.

And presently, as I lookt, now to this way and again to that, I saw that there was a monstrous slug-thing laid upward against the black side of the Gorge, as that it had stood up on end; and the one end of the monster went upward beyond the light from the fire-pit; but the other part did come down and trail into the Gorge, as a long hillock, very ugly and black and beslimed.

And I near sweat with a disgust and horror of the thing; but afterward I had more courage, and spied well upon the brute. And surely, it moved not at all, any more than the side of the cliff of the Gorge; and I conceived that it stood not upward upon any feet; but clung to the rock, even as you shall see a slug to go. And for a great space I was very quiet and moved not, neither did I make to hide, but stood there very stupid.

Yet, in a time, I had more of courage which brought strength unto my heart, and I began again to go upon my way, but with an utter caution, and I then to creep for a weary time upon my hands and knees among the dank and weariful rocks and boulders that lay in the bottom of the Gorge. And thrice between four hours was I passed by hidden and monstrous things in the horrid dark places of the Gorge; yet with no noise, save, as it might be, the odd rattle of a rock in this place and that; but with an utter and dreadful stinking. And I to be quiet as they went, as you shall think.

And each time now that I did go by the fire-pits and fire-holes that lay odd-ways in the Gorge, I did pause and search about me with mine eyes, very cautious, and oft now did I perceive how that the monstrous slug creatures did lie in this place and in that against the cliffs of the Gorge. And I did go then utter still, from this space to that space among the rocks, and oft upon the flat of my belly, and with a constant heed that I make not mine armour to knock against the boulders.

And always as I did go, there was a monstrous stench, and the choking of sulphurous smoke very oft. And here and there, as mine heart doth believe, there were utter great caverns within the mountains to the right and to the left; and of this thing I have some small proof; for once I did go by a place where a fire did burn, as it should be a fire-hole, afar inward of the mountain side upon my right; so that I saw in a moment that I looked in the darkness through the mouth of a

mighty cave-place; and I went past very quick and silent, for I knew not whether any horrid thing should come forth out of that place to slay me.

And, truly, as I did think, if there did be one such place, there were like to be many; and mayhaps the slugs came forth from those caverns, where, as I did conceive there was naught save an eternal dripping of waters and the foul growth of things in all parts. Yet is this last but a thought, as I do say; and you shall wisely take it for no more than that.

Now, I came clear of the darkness and the slime and the stinking in about twelve hours after the time that I did think the mountains to be a roof unto the Gorge; and the air was now free and did seem as that some life and health did abound in it; and the fires did be more plentiful, and burned very bright and clean, and threw all their fumings upward, so that there was no more any bitter pain of sulphur within my throat.

And surely, it was with a thankful heart that I went onward, and with a good speed; for there was much of light all about me, in that there burned an hundred fire-pits here and in that place; so that I saw clear before me and behind, and conceived that the slugs did abide only in the closed part of the Gorge. And oft I did take the air very full into my lungs, for the sweetness of it, after the horrid stenchings that I had abode all those hours.

And presently, when I was come free of the roofed part of the Gorge, maybe some three good hours, I lookt for a place proper to slumber; for it was surely something over three and thirty hours since that I did last come upon sleep; and I was utter worn and lost of strength with so much of creeping and harking for monsters, as you shall believe; moreover, about that time I had gone bitter long whiles between slumberings through more than an hundred hours, as you shall have perceived from my tellings.

Now, presently, I saw a small cave that went inward of the side of the Gorge. And I lookt into the cave, and found it to be sweet and clean, and very dry. And there was a small fire-pit off from the mouth of the cave that did throw a good light for my purpose; so that I saw there was no creeping thing or horror in the place; and I went in, and made to prepare for my slumber.

But truly, when I was come to look upon myself, I was utter soiled and did seem as that I stank with the slime and disgust of the dark part of the Gorge, where I had gone upon my hands, and upon my belly. And because of this, I was set that I should not eat or come to sleep, without I washed me.

And I went out from the cave, and there was a spring near to the fire-pit, as was oft in that part of the Gorge. And the spring was hot and did fill a hollow of the rock, very quiet and with a fuming of sulphur, as I did bend above it. And I washed mine hands and face and mine armour and gear, in the hot spring, and did dry me with my pocket-cloth; and so was sweetened and put to happiness of mind.

And I went back into the cave, and did sit in the mouth of the cave, with the Diskos to mine hand; and I eat four of the tablets, for I was gone a mortal long while without, and afterward I drank some of the water. And as I did eat and drink, I lookt out upon the lightness of the Gorge before me, and with a cheerful and composed heart.

And I saw presently that there came certain creatures out from their holes, even as it might be that they were part rats; but very strange looking, and not properly such. And some did lie about the fire-hole, and some did hunt about in the rocks; and one came presently, and had a snake by the neck. And it stood upon the snake, and did eat it, even while that the snake did lash about upon the rock. And the snake did lash until that it was nigh all eat; and a very strange thing this was to see, and something troublesome to the pity. Yet was I glad to perceive that there were enemies to the serpents of that place.

And when the rat creature did make an end of the snake, it made across to the spring, and did drink the hot water a while; and afterward back unto the fire, and there laid down anigh to the edge, and seeming very sweetly comforted of the belly, which, in truth, was much otherwise with me. And, after that, I saw many creatures that went about the fire, and did have warmth from the fire and drink from the spring; and surely I did ponder that the Peoples of this our Age should say, if they had stood with me, that Providence had made nigh together the warmth and the drink that were needful unto life (for it was grown to a bitter chill now in the Gorge). But rather did this thing seem to me otherwise, that these creatures did be but of their circumstance, and if that it had been another way, then had they grown of their wits to meet it to their means of life. Yet, as some would say, the arguments do but meet, and be the same thing. And neither way do I care in this place; but do no more than to show unto you the working of my brain, in this way and that, as I made my journey.

Now, presently, when I was done eating, and come very ready to fall upon sleep, I went out from the cave and gat me certain boulders, the which I did carry into the cave. And when I was come back for the last time, I put them very secure in the entrance-way, that no small stinging creature come at me as I slept. And after that, I made ready, and went to my sleep, having sweet thoughts and slumbrous, of the Maid.

Now I slept very quiet that time, and was not over troubled with the chill of the Gorge, which was but little in that place, both by reason of the fire-pit and because that the cave did help to keep my warmth to me. And I had a deep slumber for eight hours, and waked then pretty tired, but strong to go upon my way. And after that I had sat a little while, I came full to wakefulness and afterward did eat two of the tablets and drink some of the water, the which I did, sitting in the mouth-part of the cave, after that I had cast free the boulders.

And afterward, I gat my gear upon me, and I went again upon my journey. And the Gorge did continue very light and cheerful, with the shining of the fires; and oft there did be a little steam that did hiss from this part or that of the bottom of the Gorge and did blow very quaint and noisy in the quiet of that place. And oft there did be hot pools, and everywhere the great boulders in the bottom way, and to the right and to the left the black and mighty sides of the Gorge that did go upward for ever into the everlasting night.

And so I did go, and had eat and drunk at the sixth hour, and gone onward again. And, lo! at the eighth hour, I did thrill sudden with a wondrous great thrilling; for, in verity, it did seem to me that the Master-Word did beat softly about me, out of all the night of the world. And all my heart did throb with great glowings of joy; yet was the beat of the Word unsure, so that I knew not truly whether my spirit had indeed heard aught, for there was immediately a silence, as ever, about mine inward being. Yet, as you shall believe, there was a new hope and strength of courage in all my body and soul.

And I went forward very swift, and all renewed, as it were; and my strength and hope did make naught of any terror that should lie to bar my way, neither did I have further heed of the boulders that lay always upon my path, but did go over them with quick leapings, and a wondrous and thrilling eagerness of the heart within me.

And, sudden, in the end of the tenth hour, I perceived that the mighty walls of blackness that made the sides of the Gorge did be no more there, and that I was come truly upon the end of the Gorge. And I near trembled with hope and astonishment; for when I was gone a little way on, I had ceased to go upward any more, and was come clear out from the mouth of the Gorge, and did peer forth across a mighty country of night.

And it did seem to me as that I was come to a second Land of Strange matters, even as the Night Land where did lie the wonder of the Mighty Pyramid. And surely, I did think within my heart that I was come at last to that far and hidden place of the world where did be the Lesser Redoubt. But yet was there no place in all that night where did tower the shining lights of the Lesser Pyramid, the which I did hope vainly to perceive. And because that I saw them not, a great heaviness came upon my spirits for a time; but afterward the heaviness did go; for I put Reason to help my courage, and did plan this cause and that to show why that I was not come to sight of the shining embrasures of the Lesser Redoubt. But yet was there left an ache of doubting, as you shall well conceive.

Now this Land was very new and strange, and had a great light in this part, and a wondrous grim darkness in that. And I did pause a great while to determine how that I should go properly. And presently I bethought me of the compass, and did draw it forth, and set it upon the earth, that I should see how it did act. And truly it did go almost as Naani had told to me; so that I was very sure in all my being that I was in verity come anigh to the hidden Refuge. But yet did the compass give me no proper guiding to my way; so that I was no more wise to this end than before, only that I had the comfort of that which it did seem to assure.

And, in a little while, I went forward into the Land, and did hope that I should come presently to some matter to help my choice. And I went first toward a certain great glowing of fire that lay before me, and did seem joined to another great glare that went afar to my left.

And I found the ground of that Land to be very fair for my feet, and to have in this place and that certain bushes, even as it did seem to me, of the kind that we named moss-bushes in the Night Land, as you do know. And I made a very good speed, and went thus until I had gone for maybe six long hours. And by that time, I was come anigh to the glowing of light; and did keep now a strong caution to my going; for truly, as I did know from the tellings of the Maid, there were very horrid and dreadful Powers in that Land, and I did well to remember that I was come again to parts where might be the destruction of the spirit.

Now I made a pause, and lookt toward the glowing light; and it seemed to me that for a monstrous way unto the right and unto the left, there did be surely a great, hid valley in the earth before me. For the shining did seem as that it came up from out of a valley, as that there burned a deep light in such a place; but yet was I all unsure, and had no proper knowing whether indeed there did be any valley there, but only a strange and luminous shining that did come upward from the earth.

And I made no great haste now to go unto that place; but went down sudden into the bushes, and lay upon my belly, and had a new great fear upon my spirit. And presently, I parted the bushes a little, and made a place for spying.

And I looked a great time unto the place of the light, and now to this part and now to that. And sudden, I saw, as it did seem, a monstrous head within the glowing; for the glowing did seem at whiles as that it swept to and fore, as should a shining smoke that went obedient to a quiet wind: and so to hide and again to uncover. And in a moment I lost the great face, and was all unsure that ever I had seen aught.

And lo! in a little minute, I did see it again; but whether it did be the shape of some utter monster of eternity--even as the Watchers about the Mighty Pyramid--or whether it did be no more than a carven mountain of rock, shaped unto the dire picturing of a Monster, I did have no knowing. But I made that I should get hence very quick, and I did turn me about in the bushes, and went upon my hands and knees; and so came at last a great way off.

Now, presently, I came again upon my feet, and did take a new look around that Land. And I had the mouth of the Gorge to my back, and this I perceived by the shining of the fire-pits that made the place shown to me.

And to the left of the Gorge was an utter blackness, as I did conceive of black and monstrous mountains, through which the Gorge did come. And to the right side of the Gorge there were many low volcanoes, that went always along the feet of the great mountains that made the right wall of the Gorge. And I saw the feet of these dark mountains, because that the light from the little volcanoes made a glare upon the lower slopes.

And so shall you have some knowing of that part of this second Land of Night.

And a good way off, was the shining that I had journeyed unto, and the shining went into a distant light through a part of the Land that lay afar to my left, for it stretched a great and strange way toward me, out of the leftward gloom, and came unto my front, and so away into an utter distance. Yet, though it was so great, you shall not think that it made any huge light in the Land; but was rather as that it had a shining made unto other ends; for it made not a great lightness in the Land.

And you do now perceive something roughly how the Land did seem to my back part and unto my left, and somewhat before my face. And because that I did think to have no profit to my search, if that I went to the left, I made attention unto the Right. And here there was much of darkness; yet oft the shining of fire-holes in this place and that amid the darkness. And, as I did look, it grew very plain upon me how great was the spread and drear wideness of that Country of Night; and how that I did be an utter lonesome person in all that dark. And so shall you be with me in sympathy of the utter greatness of my task, and know of the fear that did breed, odd whiles, that I should search until I die, and never find. And you to give me good human understanding.

Now I made no more to delay, but went unto the right, and did keep the chain of the little volcanoes something level to my course; though a great way off. And I went thus with a strange growing of hope, and an excitement, for ten hours, and had eat not then for more than twenty hours, and surely not since the sixth hour of that day and this because that I was so utter shaken from my calmness of going.

And at the tenth hour, I went utter weak, and did seem surely as that I must swoon. And lo! I bethought me how that I was gone so long without aught for my belly. And surely, when I was quiet a time, I eat four of the tablets, and in a good while did feel all renewed, and would rest no more, after that I had drunk some of the water, but went onward; for, in verity, my spirit did be as that it had slain me, if that I had lain down at that time. And this because hope was so fierce in me; for I to feel indeed that I was come near to the Maid.

And I went ten hours more, until that I did truly totter upon my feet, with utter and dreadful weariness; for I had gone now through someways of forty great hours, and had been foolish in mine eating and drinking, as you have perceived; but yet was this to be forgiven; for I was as that I should come any little minute upon the wonder of the Lesser Pyramid, shining afar in the night. Yet, truly, there was nowhere anything that might be likened unto it.

And I lay down there, just as I did be, and with no proper heed to my safety. And I was gone asleep in one moment, as it did seem; and waked not for twelve hours; and then did come suddenly unto knowledge; and thankful was I in the heart that no monster had come upon me in that dead-time of slumbering. And I eat four of the tablets, as was surely due unto me, and drank some of the water, and so gat forward again into the night.

And truly I was mortal stiff and did ache for a great while, and this did be in part because that I had wrapped not the cloak about me, ere I slept; for the Land was bitter cold and did make the blood very chill.

Now when I had gone onward through six hours, I ate and drank; for I did mind now to be wise and keep my strength good within me. And I went onward again at a very great speed, and full of an excitement. And surely, I did be glad at last that the tablets were so easy gone in the mouth, and unfilling to the belly; for I had been without power and patience to eat proper victual.

And at the tenth hour, I saw that there rose a red-shining out of the Land before me, as that it came upward from a mighty pit. And I made slow my way, and so, when I was gone on for two great hours more, I saw that monstrous figures went about, against the red glare of the shining. And I gat me down into the bushes which were very plentiful in that part.

And I stayed there for a certain while, and made a watch upon the red-shining and the figures; and, truly, it did seem to me that there were horrid giants in that Land, even as in the Night Land. And afterward, I crept away, and went outward from the little volcanoes, into that part of the Land that was dark, save, as you do mind, for the glare of fire-holes in this part and that.

And I went now with an utter care; for the giants had put a new caution into my heart, and I did surely mean that I should live to rescue mine own Maid, and have joy through all my life. And thereafter, I went with the Diskos in my hand, and at each hour that was the sixth, I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and so did keep my strength very good within me.

Now, presently, I was come to a place where the Land did go downward a great slope, and there was a difference in the earth that went beneath my feet, and no great plenty of the bushes; but only one in this place and one in that, and nowhere any fire-hole.

And I gat me down and did feel the earth with my hands, and lo! I did find presently smooth stones, and afterward olden shells. And immediately, a great delight took me; for Naani had told how that the Lesser Pyramid stood something nigh to the shore of an ancient sea, that was long dried up in the years of eternity. And surely it might be that I was come down into the dry bottom of that same olden sea, and should presently have sight of the Little Pyramid.

And because that hope was put so fresh into me, I went forward through, maybe, thirty hours, across the olden sea-bed; but in all that time I had no sight of the lights of the Lesser Redoubt. And a great trouble began to take me; for, indeed, Naani had not told me how great was the sea; and it might be that I should wander a weariful age across it, before that I come to the far side.

And it did come to me, presently, how that I should be wise to see that my way was very straight, so that I waste not my strength in useless wanderings. And I had a great care now to observe that the red-shining did be always upon my right, to my rear; and by this reasonable cunning did I make to steer very nicely through the great gloom of that place.

Now, as I did go across the bed of the great sea, I heard strange sounds, now in this part of the darkness, and now in that; and oft did there be a noise, as if things did run this way and that way in the bed of the sea. And once, afar off in the night, there did be a strange and horrid screaming; so that I did know truly that the monsters of that Land were out, and did go about in the dark.

And, as you shall perceive and understand, I was all unknowing of the lore of that Land; so that I knew not what to think of this strange sound or that, neither knew I what they might portend, but only that, as I did say, there were Monsters abroad. And I could do no more than have my way forward with an utter care always, and be very ready with the Diskos, or to hide, each as maybe according to the need.

And, surely, I went one-and-forty hours that day, and eat and drank after every sixth hour. And before this, in the seven-and-thirtieth hour, I heard a great roaring and bellowing in the night,

coming nigh unto me; and afterward the thudding of monstrous feet, as that a giant ran past me in the darkness, and did make a chase of some creature. And the thudding of the feet and the roaring went far off into the night; and there did seem presently to come back to me from a great way, a little screaming; but of this thing I had no surety; and I abode very hushed in a clump of bush, until quietness was come again all about; for there had been an utter frightening sound in the horrid voice and in the thudding of the great feet.

Now, in the one-and-fortieth hour of that day, I came upon the farther shore of the olden sea. But lo! there was nowhere any light to tell me aught of the Lesser Refuge. And truly, a great doubt and bewilderment took me; for, indeed, I could not perceive how it might be that I saw not the lights of the embrasures of the Lesser Pyramid. And a great despair took me; so that I sat down there upon the shore of the olden sea, and had no heed of anything for a while.

But afterward, I ate and drunk, and went into a clump of bush, and wrapt the cloak about me, and so went fast unto sleep, with the Diskos handy to my breast. And, in verity, the pain of the despair and the bewilderment of mine heart did make rather for sleep, than to keep me wakeful; for, indeed, I was half stunned of the brain and of my courage; and did seem now the farther off from the ending of my search than ever I had been.

And I slept six hours, and waked then, sudden. And I leaned up upon mine elbow in the bush, and harked very quiet, perchance some noise had shaken my sleep from me. But, indeed, there was nothing, only that I was wakeful, and did mind me of my trouble of failure. Yet now, I did invent this thing and that thing to make natural account that I was not come to the Lesser Redoubt; and so had hope again within me; yet much also of doubt and bewilderment.

And I eat two of the tablets, and drank some of the water, and again to my journey. And I made that I should keep along the shore of the sea, the which I did through twelve hours, and was then still so much in doubt as ever.

And I ceased from my journeying, and lookt about me over the Land, and lo! I did note how that a weak and strange shining was in the air of the Land, at a great way; as it had been that a far spreaded and faint glowing made a little glare into all the night unto my left and before me.

Now I ate and drank, and made to steady my spirit; for I did fear lest I should feel utter lost in all the night of the world, and to know not where to make any more my search, and so to grow desperate in despair. And this thing you will understand.

And afterward, I did make across that Land, unto the place where it did seem that the dull shining was something bright. And I went thus through eighteen hours, and did make pause at each sixth hour, and ate and drank very resolute; though, in verity, it did seem as that even so small a matter as the tablets did be like to choke me. And by this is it plain to me how great an anguish was come upon my spirit, lest that I was all astray, and should have no joy to succour mine Own.

And thrice in the time that I did go, there did be a running of feet amid the darkness; and odd whiles strange and horrid cryings in the night; so that I put a force upon my despair, and hid me; for, indeed, I had no right to lose care of my life, if there did be any chance yet that I find the Maid.

And lo! in the eighteenth hour, which was truly the thirtieth of that day, I found the shining in the night to be grown very plain, and an utter stinking of sulphur; and truly I did be aware that the Land went upward.

And I made upward through seven hours, and the light did grow more plain, and was of a dull redness, very sombre and heavy. And in the end of six more hours, I ceased to go upward, and

did know of a strange low sound, that did be like to no other sound that ever I did hear; and was like to a dull roar that did never have ceased through eternity.

And I went forward unto the light, and the Land to be now as that I went over an upland plain. And I did go thus through five hours, and the low roar did grow ever upon mine ears. And truly! even as I did shape my thoughts to take a caution for my body, I went upward again a little, and came out upon the edge of a mighty cliff, and the low and constant roar did moan upward against me with an everlasting muttering. And I lookt downward a monstrous way, and surely there was spread out a mighty sea, as it did seem, of dull fire, as that a red-hot mud did lap very deep and quiet below me in all that night.

And I lookt outward across the strange sea, and the far side was hid from me; for, surely, there were dull and solemn clouds that came off the sea, and hid the distance from me. And the clouds to glow a little redly; and so to rise, and presently to blacken into the night. And I lookt to the right and to the left, and it was plain that the black cliffs did stretch out both ways, and did go downward ever into that monstrous sea of slow fire. And there were great headlands that went out into the fire, as into a sea; and the fire did lap very quiet about these, and where the fire lapt about them, there did shine and spirt out green flames and vapours at diverse times.

And, indeed, as I did perceive, I was come to an upward sea of fire, as it were the deep inwards of a low and utter monstrous volcano, that was flat of the top and utter big across. And, in verity, I did look downward into the fires of the inward earth, and a very wondrous sight was it, to stand there alone upon the cliffs of that everlasting sea. And a great heat came upward from the dull and grim fire of that gloomy sea, and a reek of sulphur; so that I was like to be choked, and did go backward from the edge of the cliff.

And surely, I was come to the end of that Dark Land upon that side, and had nowhere perceived the Lesser Pyramid in all the night of my travel. And a new despair came upon me; for, indeed, it seemed I was come all astray in the night of the World, and did nowise have any knowing whether I stood near to the Country of the Lesser Redoubt, or whether that I was gone half across the World unto a strange place.

And, then, as the despair troubled my spirit and dulled the beating of my heart, a sudden thought did light up a fresh hope within me; for, indeed, as you do know, I was come upward of a great height, and did surely have a huge view over all that Land; and mayhaps the Lesser Pyramid did lie somewhere in a valley, if, in verity, it did be anywheres at all in that Country. And I turned me from the cliffs, and lookt backward over all the night of the Land; but there was nowhere in all that Country the shining of the Lights of the Lesser Pyramid.

And lo! of a sudden I did know that there was something in the night. And I stared, with a very keen and anxious look. And behold, there was the black shape of a great pyramid afar off in the night, that did show against the shining of the distant light; for it did stand between me and the far-off fires. But until I was come to that place, whence I did look, I had not stood to have it plain against the shining upon the other side of that Land.

And how I did feel in that moment, I have no words to set out unto you. But surely was my heart gracious with thankfulness, and I ready to leap with joy and hope, and all my body thrilled with an excitement that would not have me to be silent; so that, suddenly, I began to shout foolishly across the night. But I came soon to wisdom and silence, as you shall think.