

Edgar Rice Burroughs'

A PRINCESS OF MARS

Screenplay by

Bob Gale

Based on the novel by
Edgar Rice Burroughs

and

Revised 3rd Draft screenplay by
Terry Rossio and Ted Elliot

FIFTH DRAFT

14 August 1991

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - 1910 - DAY

A TRAIN has just arrived. EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, 35, disembarks from a PASSENGER CAR, carrying a carpetbag.

SUPERIMPOSE TITLE: VIRGINIA, 1910

ABNER (O.S.)
Mr. Burroughs! Mr. Burroughs!

ABNER, a drawling attorney, approaches, hand extended.

ABNER
I'm Mr. Abner, your uncle's attorney? I wired you...

BURROUGHS
Yes, of course.

They shake hands. Abner leads him from the platform.

ABNER
I'm sorry we couldn't meet under happier conditions. My condolences. John Carter was a fine man.

EXT. VIRGINIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Abner drives a MODEL-T CONVERTIBLE thru a landscape of green rolling hills. Burroughs is beside him.

ABNER
I imagine you were very close..

BURROUGHS
(smiles, thinking back)
I used to love visits from Uncle John. "Big John" they called him. He was always on his way to some exotic place---Tierra del Fuego or Stonehenge or Fiji...the last letter he sent me was from Ceylon.

(shrugs)
I never knew he considered me anything more than a pesky nephew.

ABNER
Well, his will deeds the entire estate to you, including the house and the grounds.

BURROUGHS
When will we reach it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ABNER

(smiles)
We're already on it.

Burroughs is astonished. He takes in the surroundings with new---and very impressed---interest.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Burroughs stands on a sunlit hill outside a MAUSOLEUM with the name "CARTER" engraved over the entrance.

Abner stands beside him; both men bow their heads.

BURROUGHS

I'm only sorry I couldn't be here in time for the services.

ABNER

Ah...there weren't any.

Mr. Carter's casket was sealed and in this mausoleum before almost anyone even knew he'd died.

BURROUGHS

That's strange. Very strange.

EXT. CARTER ESTATE - DAY

Abner drives Carter past the imposing MAIN HOUSE, restored antebellum.

ABNER

No offense, sir, but your uncle was... Don't get me wrong, but he did have his eccentricities. And some rather strange interests.

We now see a dome-shaped PRIVATE OBSERVATORY.

Abner stops the Model-T in front of it and hands Burroughs a large key ring with 2 KEYS ON IT: a large door key, and a small key.

ABNER

Here, sir. Mr. Carter requested you come here first. Alone.

INT. OBSERVATORY - DAY

The door opens; Burroughs enters, looks around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The MAIN FLOOR is an organized clutter. Bookshelves full of books; maps hang on the walls (including British Columbia, Tierra Del Fuego, Stonehenge, Ceylon); an Earth Globe: grease pencil vector lines and homemade attachments turn it into an astrolabe.

SKYLIGHTS are set into the dome, which is dominated by a large REFLECTING TELESCOPE.

A BEAM OF SUNLIGHT shines down from one of the skylights onto a large wooden table, illuminating a LEATHER BOUND JOURNAL, sealed with a small LOCK. A single CHAIR is before it. (It's not unlike the library in "Citizen Kane").

On the book is a piece of paper on which has been handwritten, "TO MY BELOVED NEPHEW, EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, WHO LISTENS TO MY STORIES."

Burroughs uses the smaller key to unlock the journal, and sits as he opens it. The first page reads:

A PRINCESS OF MARS
Being the True Story of My Adventures
Upon the Red Planet
by
Captain John Carter
Virginia Cavalry

Burroughs glances up at the telescope. He then turns the page; as he begins to read the handwritten account, the voice of JOHN CARTER narrates.

JOHN CARTER (V.O.)
I have never told anyone the
following story. Even having lived
it, it still seems too fantastic to
believe...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST - RAINY DAY

A small STEAMER sails south through steady RAIN along a spectacular but treacherous rocky coast. LIGHTNING flashes behind the grey clouds.

Superimpose title: OCTOBER, 1868. BRITISH COLUMBIA COAST.

LAUGHTER from within the steamer: some serious drinking has been going on...

JOHN CARTER (O.S.)
Jim-Boy, I'm gonna have 3 women---
no, 5 women---every night...at least
for the first night...

INT. SHIP'S BAR - DAY

JOHN CARTER, a dashing soldier of fortune, sits at the ship's bar with his friend JIM POWELL, a grizzly cantankerous coot. Their heavy coats are quite worn, and their rough and tumble appearance contrasts with the CHAMPAGNE that they're drinking.

JOHN CARTER (cont'd)
...and 2 bottles of this stuff for
breakfast, 3 for lunch, 6 at dinner.

Carter refills their glasses, emptying the bottle.

JOHN CARTER
Bartender: Another bottle!

There are only a few other MEN at the bar; small windows reveal the miserable weather outside, and the ship rolls constantly. The BARTENDER comes over, shaking his head.

BARTENDER
You fellas done drunk up all we got,
'ceptin' the Captain's own.

JOHN CARTER
(grins broadly)
Then we'll have to drink the
Captain's.

BARTENDER
'Fraid not, fellas...

POWELL
It's all right. This man's a
Captain himself. Virginia Cavalry.
What's one bottle of champagne
between Captains?

BARTENDER
That war's over, friend, and
Virginia lost.

JOHN CARTER
I reckon he's got us there, Jim-boy.
(to the Bartender)
Tell you what: you tell your Captain
I'll buy him a whole case when we
get to San Francisco.

BARTENDER
Mister, you don't look like you
could afford a keg of beer, much
less a case of French champagne.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

POWELL

Son, you know who you're talkin' to?
This here's Captain John Carter, one
of the 2 richest men in America...
the other one's me. Why, me and
him, we could buy this whole danged
boat if we'd a mind to...

BARTENDER

Well if you're so rich, how come you
ain't even got a decent coat?

POWELL

'Cause we ain't cashed in yet,
that's why. See this?

Powell pulls a LARGE GOLD NUGGET from his coat and puts it
on the bar.

POWELL

Gold. As pure a hunk of gold that
ever come outta God's green earth.
Me and Captain Carter just spent 3
of the coldest, meanest years of our
lives findin' it and a couple more
tons just like it...

BARTENDER

Tons?

POWELL

Decided to sit out winter, go south
and live a little before goin' back
for the rest.

JOHN CARTER

Inside of a week, we'll be wearin'
the finest clothes, eatin' the
finest food, and partakin' of the
finest bordellos in the city of San
Francisco. Blondes, redheads,
brunettes...

BARTENDER

(examining the gold)

Tons, you said? You found tons of
gold?

Lightning flashes, and the vessel rolls more violently.

JOHN CARTER

Give or take a few, yeah.
Say is this boat rockin' more, or
are we drinkin' too much?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

POWELL

No such thing as drinkin' too much.

BARTENDER

Where'd you fellas say you found
this gold?

JOHN CARTER

Didn't say...

POWELL

(takes gold back, pockets
it)

...and we ain't sayin'.

JOHN CARTER

Now how about that champagne?

BARTENDER

Well, I say you're both full of
horseshit. Nobody'd just up and
leave that kinda gold sittin'
somewhere if'n they had it.

JOHN CARTER

Jim-Boy: show the man why we "up and
left" for the winter...

Powell pulls out a little cloth bag, opens the drawstring,
and dumps out 3 small gnarly looking things. The
Bartender picks them up, examines them curiously.

BARTENDER

What's these supposed to be?

POWELL

Ain't what they's supposed to
be---it's what they was: my toes.
Them 3 froze clean off last winter!

The Bartender quickly puts them down in disgust.

BARTENDER

What're you carryin' 'em around fer?

POWELL

(puts them in the bag)
'Cause they're mine!

JOHN CARTER

You see, bartender, my partner
here's a very religious man. Come
Judgement Day, he wants to have all
his parts in one place.

Now, how about that champagne?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

Suddenly, LIGHTNING, THUNDER---the ship pitches sideways! Bottles break, wood cracks, a beam falls, men SCREAM...

MATE (O.S. yells)
We're breakin' apart! Abandon ship!

Panic as everyone rushes to get out of there. Powell fumbles his cloth bag, then gets knocked sideways in the scramble of people---

POWELL
My toes! I lost my toes!

Another loud crack, and cold ocean water pours in! Then the ship is suddenly thrown hard the other way. Carter tumbles, regains his footing, makes his way to a doorway...then reacts with horror---

Powell's chest has been crushed under a huge ceiling beam. Bleeding, it's clear he's got no chance. Still, Carter vainly attempts to move the beam.

A few passengers and crew scramble into a nearby LIFEBOAT. The MATE spots Carter.

MATE
Over here, Mister! Hurry!

POWELL
Save yourself, Cap'n. I'm a goner.
(gives him the gold nugget)
Take it: won't do me no good now.
Have a few extry ladies on me...

As Carter takes it, he spots Powell's bag of toes snagged precariously on a piece of wreckage in the opposite direction from the lifeboat. The Mate is getting ready to drop the lifeboat.

MATE
Come on, Mister, I can't hold it!

JOHN CARTER
Then go!

Carter goes after Powell's bag of toes...so the Mate drops the lifeboat. Carter climbs across the flotsam and manages to grab the bag, then comes back and puts it in Powell's hand, closing the dying man's fingers on it.

JOHN CARTER
'Least you won't have to limp
through the Kingdom of Heaven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

POWELL
(smiles, clutching it)
Bless you, Captain Carter.

Powell dies.

The steamer continues breaking apart. Carter takes off his heavy coat, tucks the gold nugget in his pants, and dives off the sinking steamer.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN AND THE ROCKY COAST - NIGHT

Wide angle. The storm continues. Scattered wreckage is strewn atop the water. Carter clings to a piece of wood, makes it ashore, staggers across the rocks.

EXT. THE ROCKY SHORE

A very inhospitable area, sharp jagged rocks, steep cliffs. Carter catches his breath, looks around.

A lightning flash reveals a small CAVE OPENING not far away. Carter spots it, goes toward it.

EXT./INT. THE CAVE

Carter crawls into the small opening, at last sheltered from the rain. He takes a moment to make sure he still has the GOLD NUGGET; smiles. Another lightning flash outside. And then a lightning flash from INSIDE.

JOHN CARTER
Lightning...inside?

Curious, he advances into the cave. Ahead of him is a distant eerie blue glow. The cave widens and slopes downward; Carter is able to walk. The walls get smoother, almost as if machined. Carter runs his hand along them.

JOHN CARTER
Strange...

Suddenly, the path abruptly ends in a drop off. The glow is coming from below. He looks down.

It's like a deep, deep elevator shaft, with an ORB of BLUE LIGHT at the bottom...and the LIGHT IS RISING.

JOHN CARTER
What the hell...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The light ACCELERATES, glows BRIGHTER.

Carter is scared. He turns and runs back the way he came. But it's as if the light is chasing him: it reaches the top of the shaft, and COMES DOWN THE TUNNEL AFTER HIM!

Carter runs as hard as he can, but the light is faster, and in moments COMPLETELY ENGULFS HIM and COMPLETELY WHITES OUT THE FRAME.

The whiteness subsides and we are now in the...

INT. ATMOSPHERE FACTORY - (NIGHT)

CLOSE ON CARTER who blinks his eyes, looks around. He's in a large, deep shaft, with smooth, sheer walls, standing on a pile of rock.

We hear the LOW POUNDING OF MACHINERY punctuated by SHARP CRACKLES OF ENERGY.

A strange VOICE with an unusual accent echoes down at him.

VOICE (O.S.)
You there! Get out of that pit!
Quickly!

A bolt of energy explodes inches away from him, vaporizing some of the rock! Carter looks up.

It's at least 50 feet to the top. He can't see anyone, but there are some protruding cylinders and struts that he might be able to use to climb out.

He reaches up for the closest one, but it's a good 3 feet out of his grasp.

He jumps for it---and flies past it, going 15 feet in the air!

JOHN CARTER
Whoa!!

Amazed, Carter grabs onto the closest strut, 10 feet higher than he thought he'd be.

Below, another energy bolt vaporizes the rocks where he was just standing.

Carter stabilizes his position, then cautiously leaps for another strut above him.

Again, he sails past that strut, and grabs onto the one above it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

I can fly...?

With 2 more such leaps, he reaches the top of the shaft.

He climbs out, and looks around the vast complex. It all has a very alien look.

In one direction, giant conical devices extend across the floor like haystacks; above are rows of slabs suspended from pipes; energy flashes between them at random.

In another direction are the mouths of more shafts similar to the one he climbed out of.

And then there's a control area, high up, accessible by stairs and a catwalk.

JOHN CARTER

Is anyone here?

A FIGURE pops up in front of him, giving him (and us) a scare.

KEEPER

Yes.

THE KEEPER stands to his full of height of 8 FEET TALL. Thin and spindly, he looks like a living mummy, with wrinkled skin of a grayish complexion. He wears a simple robe with a striking MEDALLION around his neck. The shiny disk in its center has a BLUE sheen.

Carter stares.

JOHN CARTER

I guess I did drink too much...

Okay, Mister, who are you and what is this place?

KEEPER

I am the Keeper. This is the Atmosphere Factory of Barsoom.

JOHN CARTER

Atmosphere factory? Barsoom...?
Barsoom? Never heard of it.
Where is that, in Canada?

KEEPER

In your language, Barsoom is Mars.

JOHN CARTER

Mars? Mars? The only Mars I've ever heard of is another planet.
I just went inside a cave...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

KEEPER

Your arrival here was a result of the transference beam---the white light. You happened to occupy a Junction Point at a critical moment. Although to what end the planet chose to bring you here, I know not.

JOHN CARTER

Are you trying to tell me that that light somehow brought me to Mars? And that you're a Mars Man?

I admit you don't seem exactly human...

(touches his clothes)

...but since my clothes are dry, and I can fly...the only logical explanation is that I'm dead...

KEEPER

You are not dead. Nor can you fly. You leap. The gravity here is less than that of your planet.

Carter finds that he still has the GOLD NUGGET.

JOHN CARTER

Yeah... If I've still got this with me, I guess I can't be dead...

The Keeper walks off, peering down the other shafts, checking that they are functioning properly.

Carter thinks a moment, then jumps up and over the Keeper and lands in front of him.

JOHN CARTER

All right, Mr. Keeper, if I have somehow been transported to the planet Mars, and you're a Mars man, how come you speak English?

KEEPER

I do not speak English. Within the radius of the factory, you hear English, while I hear Barsoomian.

During the age of Chaos, after the Great Cataclysm, many dialects emerged. To facilitate the construction of this factory, technology was developed akin to a telepathic radio device.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

JOHN CARTER

You're right, you don't speak English...

Just tell me which door leads to the other side of the cave?

KEEPER

There is no cave.

JOHN CARTER

Never mind, I'll find my own way out.

Carter approaches a pair of imposing double doors and they automatically open. His mouth falls open in awe and disbelief at what he sees:

INT./EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

A desolate panorama of open plains, craggy mountains and strange rock formations is lit by TWO MOONS.

JOHN CARTER

My God. It's definitely not Canada...

(stares at the 2 moons)

I don't know which is more insane: what you've told me, or the fact that I'm actually beginning to believe you. God take me for a fool, but in my soul...I believe.

The Keeper joins him, and points out a bright, bluish green star.

KEEPER

And there is your world. Jasoom.

JOHN CARTER

Jasoom? Earth...

Send me back. You can send me back?

KEEPER

No. To reverse the beam now, I risk destroying the factory. That is a risk I cannot even consider taking.

The Keeper turns and walks back to the control area. Carter follows him; the doors automatically close.

INT. ATMOSPHERE FACTORY

JOHN CARTER

Well, you'd better reconsider, old man: I've got a fortune in gold waiting for me back home and big plans how to spend it...and I don't give a good Goddamn about your factory.

Carter grabs him by the robes, pulls his BOWIE KNIFE and puts it to his neck.

JOHN CARTER

Send me home---now, or I'll slit your throat.

KEEPER

(calm, unflinching)
Killing me will not accomplish your purpose. Now unhand me, I must return to my duties.

A long moment, then Carter lets go of him. The Keeper begins ascending the stairway to the main control panel.

Carter follows him.

JOHN CARTER

Listen, Mister, I aim to figure a way home...so explain all this to me, or I'll kill you just for spite.

KEEPER

Very well, I suppose you are entitled to an explanation... Long ago, after the Cataclysm, this factory was built to maintain and augment the atmosphere of Barsoom.

It is vast, and its subterranean ducts spread throughout Barsoom.

Several rotations ago, the 2nd dynamo failed.

JOHN CARTER

"Rotations..." You mean days.

KEEPER

To compensate for its loss, I increased the power of the transference beam in order to bring more elements here from your planet, elements no longer available on Barsoom, but which are required to operate this factory...for if the factory fails, the atmosphere will expire and this planet is doomed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Keeper makes adjustments on the HUGE MASTER CONTROL PANEL, which resembles a 3-D polygonal graphic version of the factory. Its very simplicity suggests advanced technology.

JOHN CARTER

What sort of place is this that needs a factory to make air? On earth we have an endless supply of air.

KEEPER

So it was once thought here as well. Until the Cataclysm.

Curse me to Issus! The Central Power Core fails!

On the control panel, a double cone shape (like an hourglass) begins FLASHING.

The Keeper makes some adjustments on the panel, but to no avail: the real CENTRAL POWER UNIT, in the largest pit on the factory floor now sparks and flashes, accompanied by a godawful WHINING SOUND; then a quick nova-like ERUPTION is followed by a SHUTDOWN. Despite a frantic attempt at the board by the Keeper, the throbbing machinery slows, and quiets.

The Keeper looks over the quieting factory in horrified silence.

JOHN CARTER

You can't fix it?

KEEPER

No. I am the Keeper. My technical knowledge suffices to operate the factory; I cannot repair it.

JOHN CARTER

Then telegraph for help. You do have a telegraph?

The Keeper looks at John Carter with a revelation.

KEEPER

The reasons for your presence now become clear to me---how are you called?

JOHN CARTER

Carter. John Carter---Captain Carter to you. Virginia Cavalry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

KEEPER

A soldier from Jasoom on the planet of war. Most appropriate. The planet was wise in bringing you here in its hour of need, Captain John Carter. At first light, you shall go in the direction of the sunset. Find the great city of Helium---I assume it still exists. Bring help. You have been chosen to be the savior of Barsoom.

Carter laughs derisively.

JOHN CARTER

You've got the wrong guy, mister. I'm no savior of anything. And I'm not about to go traipsing across some God forsaken planet looking for some town that might not even be there, just on your account.

It's your planet: You go find this city and bring help.

KEEPER

I am old. I would perish upon the plains of Mars within a day. Some 60 revolutions ago, when the 1st dynamo failed, my companion Keeper set out on such a quest. He never returned.

JOHN CARTER

60 revolutions...? Revolutions around the sun? 60 years ago? Just how old are you?

KEEPER

I ceased counting after ten thousand revolutions.

John Carter, you have been brought to us for this purpose. Bring help. Do this for Barsoom... and then I shall send you home to Jasoom.

JOHN CARTER

You'll send me back to earth?

KEEPER

Yes.

JOHN CARTER

Will you swear to that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

KEEPER

You have the Holy Word of The Keeper; I would prefer that the planet perish than to violate this oath.

JOHN CARTER

I'm not sure why I trust you, old timer, but I do. You've got yourself a deal.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A MEDALLION IN A CASE

The medallion is similar to the one that the Keeper wears around his neck. The Keeper lifts it out of its impressive case and presents it to Carter.

They are in the ENTRY ALCOVE of the factory, before closed double doors.

KEEPER

Take this medallion, John Carter. Present it to the Great Oracle of Helium. He will know what it means, and who to send back with you. You must not lose it, for it will act as a compass to lead you back here: this triangle always points in the direction of the factory's center.

He points out a small white triangle which seems to float in the center of the blue disk.

JOHN CARTER

(nods)

The Great Oracle of Helium.

The Keeper steps forward and the doors open, revealing

EXT. MARTIAN LANDSCAPE - DAY

In the daylight, the Martian landscape is reddish orange. The doorway to the factory is literally in a rock wall; other than the doorway, the factory is completely hidden by rock formations and mountains.

The Keeper steps out. Carter, right behind him, takes a step and literally bounces and bounds!

KEEPER

Swaxzzim pywsessess...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER
What? I can't understand you!

KEEPER
Zilempesss---

As Carter goes closer to him, he (and we) again understand him.

KEEPER (cont'd)
...beyond the radius of this
machinery, I cannot understand your
language.

JOHN CARTER
I understand now. I went too far.
(notices the sun)
Odd. The sun is smaller, yet it's
just as bright as upon earth.

KEEPER
Perhaps our thinner atmosphere
allows more light to pass through
than upon your world.

Carter suddenly realizes that the factory doorway is gone!
The rock wall where it was is now solid.

JOHN CARTER
Hey, what happened to the doorway?
It was right here...

Carter feels the rock wall, but it's smooth, with no
indication of a doorway.

The Keeper takes his own medallion and puts it into a
narrow crevice. The doorway opens up in the rock wall.

KEEPER
Your medallion acts also as a key.
Without it, you can never re-enter
the factory.

JOHN CARTER
Amazing. There's no way anyone
could know there's a factory here.

Carter tries it himself with his own medallion.

KEEPER
The various races and tribes of
Barsom are perpetually at war with
one another.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

KEEPER (cont'd)

Thus, the factory was designed to be completely hidden, so to protect it from the destructive ignorance or petty ambitions of any one of them.

When you meet them, as you inevitably must, trust no one.

JOHN CARTER

These other races and tribes...what do they look like? Are they human in form...like you?

KEEPER

It is you, John Carter, who appears Barsoomian in form to us.

Our Ancestors taught that all life in the Universe sprang from the same seeds, spread through the galaxies by the Progenitors, to evolve like unto the Progenitors.

JOHN CARTER

And God created man in his own image...

So, how much time do I have?

KEEPER

Nine, perhaps ten rotations; beyond that I cannot be certain. The factory has never failed; how long before what atmosphere remains turns poisonous is but conjecture. But the medallion will tell you: it will turn green, then yellow, then red...

JOHN CARTER

Green, yellow, red. Like the leaves of tree...

KEEPER

And then it will turn black. If you have not returned by then, you will never return.

JOHN CARTER

Oh, I'll return. I've got women and whiskey waiting for me back on earth---"Jasoom."

(puts his medallion in his pants pocket)

And if I don't find help, I'll still return: just to kill you for cheating me out of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

Carter bounds off with a mighty leap, and sails 30 yards. Another leap takes Carter over a ridge, and out of view.

KEEPER

May Issus protect you, John Carter
of Jasoom.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS OF MARS - DAY

The sun is higher in the sky. Carter continues leaping across the plains of Mars. He bounds up a mild slope.

At the top, he spots a man-made structure, with adobe-like walls about 4 feet tall and some 15 feet square. Curious, Carter bounds toward it.

EXT. THE STRUCTURE - DAY

As Carter approaches, he sees that the structure has a thick glass roof. He looks down through it.

Inside are at least 50 WHITE EGGS, somewhat bigger than ostrich eggs, glistening in the sunlight.

JOHN CARTER

Eggs! Ostrich eggs?

A couple of scrambled eggs would
taste pretty good right now...

(touches the glass roof,
recoils)

Owww, that's hot!

Now one of the eggs moves slightly, cracks: it's hatching.

Carter stares transfixed as a yellowish-green creature emerges, with oversized head and 4 limbs that can only be described as a "baby lizard-man" (but with no tail).

JOHN CARTER

You're an ugly little thing...

Carter moves around the INCUBATOR and spots two more, already hatched, in the shadows. These creatures are called THARKS.

JOHN CARTER (continuing)

...Things...

A sound draws his attention. Carter turns and sees 3 ADULT THARKS about 50 yards away, looking at him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

Uh-oh...

Ugly big things, on...camels?

They're mounted on THOATS, which resemble Camels; they are controlled not by reins, but by club blows to the head.

The adult male Tharks are easily over 7 feet tall with heads in proper proportion to their bodies; 2 TUSKS protrude from their cheeks. They wear short BLUE CAPES and carry various weapons. (Note: Thark Tribes are identified by the color of the cape; therefore, these are BLUE THARKS.)

One of them puts a fist to his shoulder and looks at Carter as if expecting him to respond. But Carter just stares at them, not knowing what to do or think.

Fist-Thark mutters something to his companions, who nod. One of them draws a SPEAR---long, spindly---

JOHN CARTER

Hey, no need for that...I didn't touch your babies...

He charges on his mount, intending to run Carter through.

Carter leaps over him---20 or 30 feet into the air!

Spear-Thark whirls around on his Thoat in amazement.

His companions are equally amazed. One of them unshoulders a HUGE CROSSBOW, loads a vicious looking ARROW and points it at Carter.

JOHN CARTER

(raises his hands in
surrender)

Yeah, I know a crossbow when I see one.

Now more Tharks appear from the side of the hill, some on Thoats, some on foot, including some FEMALES who are a bit smaller than the males, with smoother skin and no tusks.

JOHN CARTER

Hello there. I don't suppose any of you speak English?

(no response)

I was afraid of that...

Spear-Thark has inspected the incubator. He gestures to the others that everything's fine.

As the Tharks converse in Barsoomian, we hear the word "Sak" frequently as they point to Carter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Crossbow-Thark approaches and gestures for Carter to jump.

CROSSBOW THARK

Sak! Sak!

Finally Carter figures it out.

JOHN CARTER

"Sak?" Oh, you want me to jump?
All right...

He leaps high into the air.

The Tharks are astonished and delighted.

JOHN CARTER

You like that, eh? Just like the
circus.

More Tharks gather to watch; a crowd parts to allow a proud looking character on thout-back to watch. This is TARS TARKAS. He wears a necklace of many tusks, and his cape is the most substantial of the group. The deference that the others show to him indicates his importance.

Tars Tarkas stays back and watches with interest as Carter performs another jump or two. He strokes his left tusk the way a man would stroke a beard.

Now Carter stops jumping, despite repeated shouts of "Sak" from the green men.

JOHN CARTER

No. No more "sak." I'm hungry.
Eat first. Food. Have you got any
food? Eat?

Carter pantomimes it, trying to make himself understood.

DOTAR, a formidable, nasty looking Thark with a 3-pronged spear (like a pitchfork), swaggers up to Carter. He too has a necklace of tusks.

DOTAR

Sak! Monaga sak!

JOHN CARTER

No. No "sak" till I get some food.

But Dotar is used to having his way. He prods Carter with his spear.

DOTAR

SAK!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

JOHN CARTER

Hey, don't poke me.

Carter pushes the spear away. But Dotar leans closer and prods him again, harder.

JOHN CARTER

I said, stop it!

Carter hauls off and smashes a fist into Dotar's face, a bone crunching sound on impact---

Dotar drops to the ground and lies there, motionless.

Carter looks at him lying there. He's not getting up.

JOHN CARTER

I must be a lot stronger here than I am at home...

Tharks cautiously circle Carter and the fallen Dotar.

Spear-Thark comes over, lifts up Dotar's arm; it drops to the ground: Dotar is dead.

Tars Tarkas exchanges a look with ZAD, his grim visaged retainer, who bears a musket on his shoulder; Zad might be described as the Basil Rathbone of Tharks. Neither has seen anything like this before.

Carter reacts with concern, they're not about to take this lightly.

JOHN CARTER

I didn't mean to kill him...

Spear-Thark says something in his native tongue, then points to the dead Dotar and LAUGHS.

Now all the Tharks LAUGH.

Carter looks around at them, not sure what's so funny about this, but he smiles and goes along with it.

JOHN CARTER

I take it you're not too upset...

SPEAR THARK

Maotar vunn shumaggan. Tah-ma sak vi Dotar.

JOHN CARTER

Sorry, I don't speak Mars talk. I can't understand a word you're saying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

Now Tars Tarkas barks an order to the others, gesturing.

TARS TARKAS

Kala! Nutama vior chai semtama!
Sukal sim saka Dotar!

Two Tharks respond. A female runs off to get something; a male comes forward with a weapon similar to a HATCHET, bends over Dotar and repeatedly SMASHES DOTAR'S HEAD with it. Finally Dotar's skull literally CRACKS open; from it oozes a jelly-like substance.

Carter watches with a combination of revulsion and fascination.

But the other Tharks behave as if there was nothing at all unusual about this.

The female returns with a WOODEN BOWL. She puts a small handful of brain jelly in the bowl.

She offers it to Carter, expecting him to partake of it.

JOHN CARTER

Uh, no thanks, I'm not that hungry.

TARS TARKAS

Jiss nito mah Sukal kokay.

Suddenly, 2 Tharks grab Carter from behind to restrain him; Carter struggles, but another pulls a SHORT SWORD on him.

"Bowl Thark" grabs a bit of jelly and moves toward Carter.

JOHN CARTER

No! No! Let me go!

He struggles; the Tharks hold him tighter, and "Bowl Thark" forces Carter to taste it. Carter swallows some, then coughs, trying to spit it out.

JOHN CARTER

Let go of me, damn you! Let me go!

TARS TARKAS

Maka rygar mivroko....release him now.

The Martian words have become English!

The Tharks release him and Carter wipes the remaining brain jelly from his mouth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 5

JOHN CARTER

I've heard of drinking the blood of
someone you've killed in battle, but
not eating brains...

TARS TARKAS

We simply wish to comprehend your
words.

Tars Tarkas dismounts and approaches Carter. Zad follows.

JOHN CARTER

My God! I can understand you now!

TARS TARKAS

Of course. You have partaken of the
essence of one who knew the language
of Barsoom. Now you know it. Such
is the manner by which all of our
tribe learn the language.

JOHN CARTER

That's unbelievable. But by what
mechanism? How can that even be
possible?

TARS TARKAS

How can life itself be possible? It
is and that is enough.

I am Tars Tarkas, the Jed---or
leader--of the blue tribe of Tharks.

JOHN CARTER

"Tharks?" That's what you call
yourselves?

TARS TARKAS

And what manner of being are you,
pale one who jumps, that you know
not of the mighty Tharks nor the
language of Barsoom?

JOHN CARTER

My name is John Carter and I'm from
Earth---uh, Jasoom.

TARS TARKAS

Jasoom? Jasoom is another world.

JOHN CARTER

That's right. I'm from a place
there called Virginia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 6

ZAD

A creature from a world called "Virginia?" And yet, though ugly in appearance he seems not unlike a Barsoomian. How can such a thing be possible?

JOHN CARTER

How can Life itself be possible? It is and that is enough.

TARS TARKAS

Ha! Listen to him! Already he quotes the wisdom of Tars Tarkas! He at least shows intelligence!

You interest me, John Carter, although your actions here have created a most serious dilemma.

JOHN CARTER

Look, I didn't mean to kill that fellow....

TARS TARKAS

Dotar the Fierce. No, that is of no concern. Tharks often kill each other in duels. The manner of death provides us with amusement. Dotar's death was unique and entertaining.

JOHN CARTER

You have an interesting sense of humor.

TARS TARKAS

My quandry is this: You are not a thark, yet you bested one of our most feared warriors in direct combat. By right, this earns you a position among us, yet you declare yourself neither ally nor enemy. No one would think less of me for killing you; in fact, your death would make things far simpler for me. Yet I shall defer such decision to Tal Hajus, the Jeddak of all the Tribes. Your strangeness may be of interest to him.

ZAD

If not, my Jed, his death will certainly provide him with much amusement at the games.

Carter gives Zad a look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 7

TARS TARKAS

Tomorrow, after the hatching, we embark for Korad, city of the Jeddak of Tharks. If you swear you will not attempt escape, you may move among us as a peer.

JOHN CARTER

Tell me, is this "Korad" in the direction of the sunset?

TARS TARKAS

Yes. Zad, let us show John Carter the direction of Korad...

Zad unshoulders his crossbow, loads it; Tars Tarkas throws a SPEAR high and far into the western sky.

Zad takes aim and FIRES: his arrow strikes the spear head dead on.

TARS TARKAS

Zad is the poorest archer in the tribe.

Zad snickers at Carter. No doubt, he'd like to shoot him.

JOHN CARTER

Well, then, it looks like we'll be travelling together.

TARS TARKAS

(to Zad)

Proceed to the encampment. See to it that Dotar's quarters are made ready for him.

ZAD

But he is not a thark!

TARS TARKAS

He has slain a Thark warrior. Thark law applies. Do it!

Zad grudgingly nods, mounts his thout and gallops for the encampment.

CUT TO:

EXT. THARK ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Tars Tarkas leads John Carter through a TENT CITY at the foot of the hill. Clearly, the blue Tharks are nomads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tharks of all ages come to gaze in wonder at the white man as he passes; Children Tharks run up and touch him to see if he's real.

JOHN CARTER

Boo!

The young Tharks squeal and run away.

Finally, the procession stops at a tent. ZAD is already there.

TARS TARKAS

This was the tent of Dotar. It is now yours. By slaying Dotar, you inherit his tent, his weapons, his servants---

Where are the servants?

ZAD

Dotar's servants refuse to serve a "smelly half limbed otz." Of course, who could blame them?

TARS TARKAS

No, this is not the Thark way.

Now SOLA, a female Thark, pushes through the onlookers. She has a softer temperment than the other Tharks, which makes her attractive, if not by Thark standards, by Carter's (and our) standards. It seems the other Tharks would rather have nothing to do with her.

SOLA

I shall tend to John Carter's needs.

ZAD

Yes, let she who is spurned by decent tharks serve he who is not a thark.

TARS TARKAS

Is this servant acceptable to you, John Carter?

JOHN CARTER

(indicates Zad)

Well, if he doesn't like her, I'm sure she'll be fine.

Zad glares at Carter.

TARS TARKAS

Good. Now we must tend to the hatching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Everyone leaves but Sola and Carter.

SOLA
I am called Sola.

JOHN CARTER
Hello, Sola....I'm John Carter.

SOLA
Yes, I know.

JOHN CARTER
Listen, uh, Sola, I don't know how it is with the Thark race, but where I come from, we sustain ourselves by, well, it's a process by which we ingest other matter...

From her reaction, Sola seems to have no idea what Carter's talking about.

JOHN CARTER (cont'd)
...but only organic matter: plants, animals...and we call this process "eating..."

SOLA
Oh, you want food! Why not simply say so?

JOHN CARTER
It just seemed too easy...

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. CARTER'S TENT - DUSK OR NIGHT

Carter eats from a bowl of something resembling paste. It's not too good, but Carter is hungry.

The front tent flap is open, and torch fires burn around the encampment.

SOLA
You have food like this on Jasoom?

JOHN CARTER
Yes. In the army.

SOLA
The creatures of Barsoom not only eat, we drink, and we sleep and we excrete and we procreate...
You do these things, too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER
Every one of 'em.

SOLA
Amazing. That one from another
world could be so much like us.

Now Tars Tarkas arrives, along with a large animal called
a CALOT. It's a cross between a boar and wolf hound.

TARS TARKAS
John Carter, I wish to present you
with a gift: this Calot, called
"Woola." Calots possess the most
powerful jaws on Barsoom, thus Woola
is quite suited to protect you from
danger. For example, were you to
wander off "accidentally," great
harm might befall you. But with
Woola at your side, such a thing
could never happen.

JOHN CARTER
A watchdog? You don't trust me,
Tars Tarkas?

TARS TARKAS
Why, John Carter, I trust you as far
as a sleegat can jump.

JOHN CARTER
(aside, whispers to Sola)
What's a sleegat?

SOLA
A creature without legs. They
cannot jump.

JOHN CARTER
(to Tars Tarkas)
Then I thank you for this great
gift, Tars Tarkas, and for the
spirit in which it is given. And
may I say that I too trust you, just
as far as a spider can piss.

Tars Tarkas looks at Sola; Sola shakes her head, not
knowing what it means either.

TARS TARKAS
Until morning then.

Tars Tarkas departs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

SOLA

If you have no further needs, John Carter, I shall go to sleep in the servant quarters.

JOHN CARTER

Good night, Sola.

She exits. Woola plops down in front of the doorway.

Carter stares at the animal.

JOHN CARTER

So, Woola, I think I'll go outside and take a little walk. You stay, boy, stay.

As he gets up to go out, Woola stands and snarls, bearing huge sharp teeth.

Carter sits back down.

JOHN CARTER

Uh, maybe you'd like some food?

Carter pushes the bowl toward the animal. Woola sniffs it, then EATS THE ENTIRE BOWL, pulverizing it in its jaws!

Carter stares at the animal. Woola grins back.

JOHN CARTER

I hope you don't snore.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE INCUBATOR - DAY

The incubator wall has been BROKEN apart in several places. As BABY THARKS scurry out, they are snatched up by adult females.

Off to one side, male tharks are destroying unhatched eggs with mauls.

CARTER watches this with interest; WOOLA is at his side.

SOLA comes over, leading a Thoat. In the background, the THARK CARAVAN is forming. In addition to Tharks on thoats, there are huge wooden CARTS (containing tents and supplies) pulled by Mastadon-like animals called ZITIDARS.

JOHN CARTER

Why are they destroying those eggs?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLA

Eggs too long in the hatching can be flawed.

JOHN CARTER

But how can the parents let that happen?

SOLA

The parents do not know their eggs, nor their offspring. By law, the eggs are mixed together and sit 5 years in the incubator to hatch. The young are taught to know only the tribe.

JOHN CARTER

You mean there aren't any families?

SOLA

"Duty to a family would detract from duty to the tribe. This makes the Thark a more formidable warrior."
So we are taught.

Apparently, Sola does not subscribe to this philosophy.

JOHN CARTER

It means life is cheap.

SOLA

With less value on life, there is less concern for death. And as Mars is a dying planet, with limited resources, some believe this is for the best.

JOHN CARTER

But if no one cares if they live or die, why should they care if the planet itself dies?

SOLA

Such is the riddle of cause and effect: Which came first---the Thark or the egg?

Now TARS TARKAS rides up, and indicates the Throat that Sola has brought.

TARS TARKAS

Can you ride the throat, John Carter, or would you travel in the carts?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

JOHN CARTER

"Can I ride?" you ask. Can I ride?
Sir, you are addressing a former
Captain of the Cavalry of the Army
of Northern Virginia; a veteran of
Manassas, Fredricksburg and
Gettysburg, who has served
personally under General Robert E.
Lee, General Jeb Stuart, and the
late great lamented General Thomas
J. "Stonewall" Jackson.

And you ask me, "Can I ride?"

Carter mounts the Thoat and is promptly thrown off.

TARS TARKAS

I take it that means "no..."

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - THE CARAVAN IN PROGRESS - DAY

The massive THARK CARAVAN moves along the desert floor.

CARTER sits sullenly in the back of a Zitidar-driven
BAGGAGE CART, stroking WOOLA who sits beside him.

ZAD comes riding by.

ZAD

I see you travel with the baggage,
John Carter. How appropriate. Do
all the warriors of your race travel
thus?

JOHN CARTER

No, Zad; however, the warriors of my
race would prefer the company of
baggage to the likes of you.

Zad hisses and rides off.

Woola growls at the departing Thark.

JOHN CARTER

Easy, Woola. We'll have our day.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - THOAT CORRAL - DAWN

JOHN CARTER, carrying some rope, comes over to a makeshift
THOAT TRAINING RING. (The temporary Thark encampment can
be seen in the background.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As always, WOOLA tags alongside him.

Carter watches as 2 THARKS "train" a thoat: one beats it on the right side of its head with a club; the other pulls it left. The Thoat doesn't like this and the Tharks need all of their strength to keep it under control---the animal's head is bruised and bloody, indicating this has been going on for awhile...

JOHN CARTER

I need a Thoat.

TRAINER THARK

This one will be trained soon.

JOHN CARTER

No, I'd prefer one a little less
"trained."

The two Tharks trade a conspiratorial look, then the first one points at the pack of thoats in a LARGER CORRAL made of rope braided with blades.

TRAINER THARK

You can take that big one there on
the right: "Laughing Boy."

Carter looks: the animal is by itself because it looks a little nastier than the others. Yep, it's the Thark version of the "Old Thunder" routine.

JOHN CARTER

"Laughing Boy," eh?

Carter gives the trainer Tharks a knowing look, but okay, he's game.

He approaches the big animal, uncoils his lariat and lassos it easily.

The trainer-Tharks watch with great expectation.

Carter firmly pulls the animal closer. The thoat rears, frightened.

JOHN CARTER

Easy, boy, easy...

Carter raises his hand to pat its head, but the thoat snaps at him.

Carter pulls some milkweed from his pocket and offers it to the animal. It sniffs it, then rips it from Carter's hand and munches it happily.

As it eats, Carter ties a piece of rope into a HACKAMORE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

The Trainer-Tharks are unsure what Carter is up to.

Carter holds another bit of food for the animal to see.

A beat, then it comes over to get it.

As it chews, Carter slips the hackamore onto its head. Carter gives it more food, and when the animal opens its mouth, Carter gets the rope in, then pulls it tight around the back of its head.

The animal tries to shake it off, but it can't.

JOHN CARTER
Easy, now. The more you fight it,
the more it'll hurt.
(pulls the rope harder)
See?

The animal squeals, then calms down. Then Carter gives it more food.

JOHN CARTER
And when you behave, you get to eat.
Now...this next part's a little
tricky...

Carter prepares to mount the animal.

The Tharks snicker with anticipation.

Carter climbs onto the thoat, who immediately throws him.

The Tharks laugh.

Carter gets up, throws a look at the Tharks, then goes back to the Thoat. The Thoat exhales, making a sound like a laughing hyena.

JOHN CARTER
All right, "Laughing Boy," we'll try
it again.

Carter again mounts. He clamps his legs hard around the thoat's body. It again bucks, but Carter stays on it like any good horseman would in breaking a bronco.

The Tharks laugh again, anticipating that Carter'll be thrown off.

But gradually, their expressions change as Carter stays on.

"Laughing Boy's" resistance breaks, and Carter is definitely in control.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

JOHN CARTER
There, that's not so bad is it?
(strokes its neck)
See, you let me ride you, and I give
you food.

He gives it some more food, then waves to the Trainer
Tharks as he rides past them.

JOHN CARTER
Thank you, gentlemen. He's a fine
animal.

The Trainer Tharks just scowl.

Woola wheezes in "laughter" at them.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOVING CARAVAN - DAY

The Caravan proceeds through a vast canyon. CARTER
confidently rides "Laughing Boy" up toward the head of the
Caravan, with Woola running proudly alongside.

JOHN CARTER
((singing))
"Camptown ladies sing this song,
doo-dah, doo-dah..."

He passes ZAD who rides a mount smaller than "Laughing
Boy."

JOHN CARTER
Morning, Zad. Do all Tharks of your
stature ride such puny thoats?

Zad simply hisses. Woola "laughs."

Carter rides up past Tars Tarkas.

JOHN CARTER
Good morning, Tars Tarkas. These
thoats are actually smarter than the
steeds I'm used to.

TARS TARKAS
I scarce believe my senses. You
ride without beating its head in?
How have you bewitched it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

With kindnesss.
(at Tars Tarkas' disbelief)
The softer sentiments have their
value, Tars Tarkas. In battle, I
know my Thoat will obey me, so my
fighting ability is enhanced.

Tars Tarkas considers this, then nods.

TARS TARKAS

Hmmm. You will demonstrate these
techniques to our herdsmen. It
should impress the Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER

And you will take credit for this
technique?

TARS TARKAS

Of course. But I shall speak
favorably to him on your behalf.

JOHN CARTER

Fair enough.
(riding back along the line)
"Camptown ladies sing this song,
Doo-dah, doo-dah..."

TARS TARKAS

Hold, John Carter, what mean you by
those words, "Doo-dah, doo'dah?"

JOHN CARTER

Oh, it's just a song.

TARS TARKAS

A song?

JOHN CARTER

Music. Where I come from, people
often sing.

TARS TARKAS

To what purpose is this "singing?"

JOHN CARTER

Different songs, different purposes.
In war, our troops always sing to
build morale for battle...

TARS TARKAS

So it is a fighting song, to improve
your mettle at battle!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

TARS TARKAS (cont'd)

(sings)

"Doo-dah, doo-dah..."

And this, this "Doo-dah" must have been a mighty warrior to have his name invoked in such a song.

JOHN CARTER

Oh, yes...the very name "Doo-dah" strikes fear into the hearts of the enemy.

TARS TARKAS

You will teach Tars Tarkas this fighting song?

JOHN CARTER

Yes. I will teach you. It starts like this: "Camptown ladies sign this song...Doo-dah, doo-dah..."

Now TWO ADVANCE RIDERS gallop back to Tars Tarkas from ahead.

RIDER

Sir, our scouts report invaders approaching by air.

JOHN CARTER

By air?

TARS TARKAS

Pass the word: battle formation, defensive positions. Fire when in range.

The Riders nod, salute, and ride along the line, spreading the word.

JOHN CARTER

"Shoot first, ask questions later," eh?

TARS TARKAS

"Shoot first, ask questions later."
(laughs)

I like that, John Carter. That's very good. "Shoot first, ask questions later." Apparently your race possesses great wisdom.

I suggest you take cover, John Carter.

JOHN CARTER

Really? I thought my death would make things a lot easier for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

TARS TARKAS

It would. But I would then be
deprived of the chance to learn your
song.

Carter sees everyone taking cover behind rock formations
and carts; he spots SOLA waving to him from beside a cart
and joins her. She offers Carter a crossbow.

SOLA

Can you handle a crossbow?

JOHN CARTER

Sure, if it's anything like---

Carter tries to aim it, but the Thark weapon is much too
long for his shorter arms. He gives it back.

JOHN CARTER

Not my style.

All eyes watch the skies.

A distant modulating WAIL grows louder: THREE AIRSHIPS
approach, emitting this weird sound.

These flyers are unlike anything that exists on earth,
resembling ships more than planes. It's not even clear
what makes them fly, as no propellers or engines can be
seen. They're not more than 100 feet off the ground, with
a speed of 25 miles per hour.

JOHN CARTER

My God! What are those things?

SOLA

Airships. Of the red men.

JOHN CARTER

Red men? You mean you've got
Indians on Mars?

SOLA

What are "Indians?"

JOHN CARTER

Never mind.

Incredible! How do they stay
aloft without a balloon?

SOLA

What is a "Balloon?"

The first ship, a SCOUTING SHIP, flies a flag with a
SYMBOL VERY SIMILAR TO THE KEEPER'S MEDALLION.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

The other two are meaner looking WARSHIPS, with large CANNONS mounted fore and aft; these fly flags with what we'll call a Barsoomian swastika.

JOHN CARTER

The one ship is very different than the other two.

SOLA

Those two fly the colors of Zodanga. They are at war with the people of the other: Helium.

JOHN CARTER

Helium? That's where I'm----
(catches himself)
And which do the Tharks fight?

SOLA

All red men are our enemies.

JOHN CARTER

(nods, understanding the concept)
The Comanches fight the Apaches,
but the white man fights them all.
(at Sola's bewildered look)
Never mind.

The Zodangan Warships are trying to capture the lone Helium Scout ship. ZODANGANS and HELIUMITES run about the decks of their craft: with copper colored skin, they seem human in every regard. The Zodangans wear dark grey uniforms and body armor; the Heliumite wardrobe seems much more benign. Each ship carries a crew numbering 12 to 20.

The Zodangan leadship FIRES A CANNON at the Helium flyer, blowing a hole in its side.

Now the THARK ARCHERS OPEN FIRE!!! Thus begins...

THE BATTLE

This is what happens: The Helium Flyer swings around to avoid the fire of the Zodangan leadship while being showered with Thark arrows. The Helium ship CRASHES into a canyon wall, then plummets to the ground.

Carter reacts and runs toward it. Sola has no idea why. Woola follows right behind him.

The Zodangan leadship also heads for the wrecked Helium flyer; meanwhile the other Zodangan vessel exchanges arrows with the Tharks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 5

As the Zodangan leadship descends toward the wreckage, rope ladders drop and ZODANGAN SOLDIERS scramble down.

But a phalanx of Thark archers, led by ZAD, pick them off.

TARS TARKAS aims at and hits the Zodangan STEERSMAN, who falls against the rudder control: the Zodangan ship suddenly spins wildly and CRASHES not far from the Helium ship, then catches fire!

Several ZODANGANS jump clear, including one with the most ornate uniform of all. This is PRINCE SAB THAN, intense, darkly handsome with cold, narrow eyes and a formidable SCAR across his left cheek. His weapon of choice is a SERRATED BATTLE AXE.

SAB THAN
Kill everyone! Take no prisoners
but the woman!

Hand-to-hand fighting breaks out between Zodangans and Tharks, with broadswords, spears, mauls. The fighting is savage and bloody.

Carter, with Woola beside him, moves closer and takes cover behind a cart. He sees a Zodangan archer taking aim at TARS TARKAS.

Carter grabs a thong off the cart, puts a stone in it, whirls it around above his head and lets fly:

The stone hits its mark, and the sniper is downed!

Tars Tarkas realizes what's happened and acknowledges Carter with a gesture.

A nearby Thark witnesses Carter's sling attack; impressed, he tries it himself---but hits himself in the head!

JOHN CARTER
(to the stunned thark)
You have to let go of it.

Carter again runs toward the Helium ship, then jumps into an 8-foot deep crater to avoid being hit. Woola jumps in too. Carter easily bounds out of the hole, but Woola can't jump out.

A HELIUMITE climbs out from his wrecked ship. Weaponless, he is killed by a ZODANGAN, who is in turn killed by a THARK who GORES him with his TUSKS.

SAB THAN spots a Thark leading a Zodangan prisoner away from the Zodangan wreckage at spear point.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 6

Sab Than crouches behind a boulder, and when the Thark passes, he comes up behind him and swings the axe into the Thark's back, killing him.

The Zodangan soldier sighs relief.

ZODANGAN
Thank you, my Prince. You saved
my---

But Sab Than hacks him to death, too.

SAB THAN
Coward! You're not fit to lick my
boots!

A Zodangan arrow hits a Zitidar hitched to a CART full of SMALL "CHILDREN" THARKS. The startled mastodon bucks and the cart is overturned. The frightened young ones scatter onto the battlefield.

Sab Than butchers the young with sadistic glee.

Carter, horrified, is too far away to stop the slaughter quickly, so he again resorts to a SLIGHSHOT attack.

Carter's stone hits Sab Than square in his helmet, causing him to drop his weapon.

Stunned, Sab Than turns and sees John Carter leaping toward him while the little ones scurry to safety.

SAB THAN
A white man?

JOHN CARTER
Real soldiers don't kill babies,
scarface.

SAB THAN
The only good Thark is a dead Thark.
No doubt the same holds true for
white men.

Carter draws his knife.

SAB THAN
(shows his empty hands)
But I have no weapon.

JOHN CARTER
(sheathing it)
Fine. I'll beat you to a pulp with
my fists.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 8

Now she sees Carter. She's unsure what to make of a white man among Tharks. She makes the same gesture that the first Thark rider made to Carter at the incubator: a fist to the shoulder. She looks at him awaiting a response.

He nods and returns the gesture identically.

She snaps her head away coldly, insulted.

JOHN CARTER
(doesn't get it)
Was it something I said?

More Tharks come over and roughly push her into a COVERED WAGON.

Carter overhears TWO THARK SOLDIERS nearby, talking.

THARK SOLDIER
Indeed, a prisoner of her position
will surely elevate the stature of
Tars Tarkas in the eyes of the
Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER
That red woman---who is she?

2ND THARK
She is the Princess, Dejah
Thoris....daughter of the King of
Helium.

The 2 walk off, leaving Carter staring at the covered wagon.

JOHN CARTER
The Princess of Helium. Things are
starting to look up...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CARAVAN - DAY

The Caravan is again on the move.

Carter watches as SOLA converses with one of several THARK GUARDS accompanying the COVERED WAGON containing Dejah Thoris. Then Sola rides back over to John Carter.

SOLA
She refuses to speak to anyone save
the Jed.

JOHN CARTER
Did you tell her who I was?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLA

She said "least of all to an albino
who fights alongside green men."

JOHN CARTER

(shakes his head)

Royalty. In Virginia, we'd call her
a "snob."

SOLA

"Snob." It is a good word. "Snob."
We too have many snobs in our tribe.

JOHN CARTER

So I've noticed.

He pulls the medallion from his pocket: it's now GREEN.

SOLA

What is that?

JOHN CARTER

A trinket.

(puts it away)

How long before we make Korad?

SOLA

We should be there by dusk.

CUT TO:

EXT. KORAD - DUSK

The CARAVAN enters the main gate of the Thark city of KORAD, a once magnificent city which is in decay; some buildings are intact, others are in ruins; rubble is prevalent, as well as rotting garbage. The unusual architecture includes tall spindly spires, and building supports that appear flimsy, due to construction techniques possible in the lesser gravity of Mars.

CARTER rides alongside TARS TARKAS and ZAD; he looks around with interest.

There is much activity in the streets; Tharks of other tribes, denoted by their DIFFERENT COLORED CAPES, move to and fro, bartering weapons, eating, drinking, brawling.

Carter notices that the scale of Korad seems too small for the Tharks.

JOHN CARTER

Tell me something, Tars Tarkas: if this is the great Thark city, why were the doors built so small that you all have to duck to get in?

TARS TARKAS

The Tharks did not build the city. The red men built it. Eons ago, our ancestors simply took it.

ZAD

No Thark would ever labor for that which can be taken in battle from others.

JOHN CARTER

I see. So that explains the maintenance situation, too, eh?

TARS TARKAS

Tharks are warriors, John Carter. We live to fight. Not to build. And certainly not to clean up.

Carter notices 2 Tharks of different tribes mauling each other, while others bet on the outcome.

JOHN CARTER

Yet all these different tribes live here...together?

TARS TARKAS

No. The tribes gather here twice a year for the games.

JOHN CARTER

Games?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TARS TARKAS

The prisoners of the tribes are pitted against one another in the great arena until only one remains.

The victor is set free, and restored to his previous station.

ZAD

Of course, there is also the torture of those sentenced to death for the entertainment of the tribes.

JOHN CARTER

Oh, of course.

Uh, am I a prisoner?

TARS TARKAS

Tomorrow you shall appear before the Jeddak in the council of Jeds and he will determine your fate. I will, however, speak favorably on your behalf.

For now, find quarters for yourself and your servant. You will be summoned.

ZAD

And the penalty for failure to appear for the Jeddak's summons is death.

JOHN CARTER

I can always count on you for good news.

(to Tars Tarkas)

Exactly what kind of a fellow is this Jeddak?

TARS TARKAS

He is...the Jeddak.

We get the sense that Tars Tarkas does not have a high opinion of the Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER

Right. If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. CARTER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Carter stands on the balcony of what once was a 2nd floor apartment, finishing some food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The streets below are quieter; the 2 moons of Barsoom shine brightly in the heavens, but Carter's attention is focused on:

DEJAH THORIS who can be seen in SILHOUETTE in a 3rd story window of a building some 100 yards away.

SOLA watches Carter watching Dejah while WOOLA sits by the door.

SOLA

You seem transfixed by the snob.

JOHN CARTER

That snob may be my ticket home...

SOLA

Your home. What is your world like?

JOHN CARTER

Well, for one thing, there's water. Most of my world's covered with it.

SOLA

Then you live in water?

JOHN CARTER

No, on land. But because there is so much water, it rains: water comes down from the sky and makes everything green...trees, grass... It's very beautiful.

Do you have any of that here?

SOLA

I do not know. There are legends of rivers, legends of ice. But all I know is the desert.

JOHN CARTER

We have desert, too. Never much cared for it, myself.

SOLA

Barsoom is not without its beauty, John Carter.

Carter looks across again at Dejah Thoris.

JOHN CARTER

Yeah...

Sola: what does this mean...?

He repeats Dejah's hand across the shoulder gesture.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

SOLA

It is a battlefield signal. It means, "To whom are you loyal?"

JOHN CARTER

And what's the appropriate response?

SOLA

If it were asked by your own jed or tribesman, you would do this:

She brings an extended open hand to her sternum.

JOHN CARTER

What if you did this?

He repeats the initial gesture.

SOLA

That would be an insult, indicating complete disrespect for he who asked the question.

JOHN CARTER

(shakes his head)

John, old boy, you've certainly got a way with women.

(looks at Dejah's window)

Sola, I'm going to take a little stroll.

SOLA

It's not safe to go out at night.

JOHN CARTER

I'll take a sword. I'll be fine.

Carter takes a short broadsword and starts for the door; Woola gets up to go with him.

JOHN CARTER

Stay here, Woola. Stay with Sola

(after Woola ignores him)

I said "stay."

SOLA

The calot has been assigned to you, John Carter. Woola will never leave your side...until death.

JOHN CARTER

No wonder nobody's worried about my escaping.

All right, Woola, come on, let's go for a walk.

EXT. KORAD - NIGHT

Carter walks toward Dejah's building, Woola at his side. Carter trots, so Woola trots too. Now Carter breaks into a run and Woola keeps pace. Suddenly Carter stops, but Woola keeps running, past him.

A beat, then the animal realizes Carter is no longer there; Woola turns around:

Carter has vanished!

The calot runs back, hunting for him.

JOHN CARTER

is above, on a BALCONY. He looks down and smiles at Woola's confusion.

Carter leaps up onto the roof, then looks across at alley at DEJAH'S BUILDING.

Below, 2 THARKS stand on guard, watching the street.

Carter jumps across onto the roof and creeps toward an open SKYLIGHT. Unseen by Carter, an APE-LIKE SHADOW also prowls across the same roof.

Carter reaches the skylight and drops down into

INT. DEJAH'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

It's a large torch-lit room with a high ceiling; a half eaten bowl of food sits on a broken table with chair.

DEJAH stands at a window, staring at the moons.

JOHN CARTER

Good evening, Princess...

She whirls around, startled.

DEJAH THORIS

You! How did you get in here?

JOHN CARTER

(points to the skylight)

My name's Carter. John Carter. And you and I may have something in common...

DEJAH THORIS

You and I have nothing in common. Now get out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER
Look, ma'am, if you're upset about
my doing this instead of that...
(makes the 2 gestures
Sola taught him)
...I'm sorry. I'm not up on the
local protocol.

DEJAH THORIS
A Thark who apologizes?

JOHN CARTER
I'm no Thark. Do I look like a
thark?

DEJAH THORIS
No...but one can be judged by the
company he keeps. And you are
certainly not of my race.

JOHN CARTER
I'd say that's pretty obvious. The
fact is, I'm not from anybody's race
around here. I'm from
earth---Jasoom.

DEJAH THORIS
Jasoom? Impossible! Everyone knows
there is no life on Jasoom!

JOHN CARTER
And everyone knows that no
Barsoomian can do this....

John Carter leaps up through the open skylight, out of
sight, then drops down again. He then leaps all over the
room, and bounces off the walls in a spectacular
demonstration.

She's amazed.

Suddenly he looks at her with wide-eyed shock and draws
his sword---it's as if he's ready to kill her---he shoves
her aside:

A HUGH 4-ARMED WHITE APE called an OTZ has dropped through
the skylight! It snarls!

Carter charges it, shoving the sword into its chest---but
this just makes the creature angrier.

With a swipe of a clawed paw, the enraged Otz slams Carter
backward, drawing blood; Carter's weapon is still embedded
in it.

Carter clutches his bleeding side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Now the creature turns to Dejah and attacks...

She's expecting its lunge and dodges just in time; the Otz smashes into the table instead.

Again the Otz goes for Dejah, but now Carter is up; he picks up the chair and breaks it over the Otz's head.

The Otz isn't even stunned! It turns on Carter and knocks him down. The animal pounces on Carter, about to rip him to shreds...

Suddenly WOOLA charges in through the door, leaps on the Otz and rips into the Otz's neck with its jaws!

The Otz bellows in pain and stands with Woola still clamped on its neck, blood pouring out.

The Otz yanks Woola off and hurls the calot against the wall.

Woola lies there, stunned...

Carter is back on his feet: with a piece of chair, he beats the Otz over the head. The Otz falls, stunned.

Carter yanks his sword out of the Otz's chest and shoves it repeatedly through the beast's neck wounds.

The Otz dies.

Carter sighs relief, as does Dejah.

The calot wimpers where it lies, bleeding. Carter goes over to it, clutching his wound.

JOHN CARTER

(strokes the calot)

It's all right, Woola, you're going to be all right...

DEJAH THORIS

You fool! You nearly got us both killed!

JOHN CARTER

Lady, I just saved your life, and you're calling me a fool?

DEJAH THORIS

You charged an Otz! It's suicide to charge an Otz.

JOHN CARTER

What the hell are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

DEJAH THORIS

That is an Otz. You wait for it to attack, elude it, then flee.

"Never charge an Otz." Everyone on Barsoom knows that.

JOHN CARTER

Well, like I said, I'm not from around here.

(indicates Woola)

Thank God these jaws of his can rip through anything.

Don't worry, boy, we'll get you stitched up.

DEJAH THORIS

If you're referring to that calot, she's female.

JOHN CARTER

Oh... Right.

Now a group of THARK GUARDS rush in.

GUARD CAPTAIN

What goes on here?

DOOR GUARD

Sir, that wild calot knocked me down---

GUARD CAPTAIN

Silence!

(spots Carter)

What are you doing in here?

JOHN CARTER

Who, me? I was just saving the lady from this...Otz.

GUARD CAPTAIN

This is forbidden!

JOHN CARTER

Look, I don't know all your customs, but where I come from, we don't let women get ripped apart by giant 4-armed white gorillas---otzes.

GUARD CAPTAIN

I mean that she is a prisoner and is not permitted visitors without permission from the Jeddak.

Were you not aware of the guard at the door?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

DEJAH THORIS

He did not enter through the---

JOHN CARTER

(motions her to be quiet)
Guard? What guard? I didn't see any guard.

And if you were serious about guarding her, you'd have had somebody out there to protect her from these, these Otzes. Tell me, was it your job to arrange for her protection?

GUARD CAPTAIN

Well, yes, I'm the Captain of the guards.

JOHN CARTER

And do you have a name, mister "Captain of the guards?"

GUARD CAPTAIN

Koos Mahnos.

JOHN CARTER

Well, Koos Mahnos, I should report you to the Jeddak. Don't you realize how important this prisoner is? And if anything happens to her, do you have any idea what will happen to you? You're damned fortunate I did happen to be here...

Dejah Thoris tries to suppress a smile at watching Carter intimidate this Thark.

JOHN CARTER (cont'd)

In fact, you should be on your knees, in gratitude.

Why, if you were in my outfit, I'd have you court martialed. I might even have you hauled up in front of a firing squad.

Two other guards whisper, aside.

2ND GUARD

What's a "firing squad"?

3RD GUARD

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 5

JOHN CARTER (cont'd)
From now on, this prisoner is the
charge of John Carter of the tribe
of Tars Tarkas, is that understood?

GUARD CAPTAIN

Yes, sir.

Dejah's hopeful expression turns to abrupt disappointment.

DEJAH THORIS
(quietly, to herself)
So he is a Thark...

The Door Guard examines Woola, then draws a sword, about
to kill the animal.

JOHN CARTER
Hold it, you! Just what do you
think you're doing?

DOOR GUARD
The calot is useless.

JOHN CARTER
Wrong. That calot just saved my
life. We can save hers.

DOOR GUARD
Save the life of a calot? Ha!

JOHN CARTER
Mister, I just killed that Otz over
there. Am I to understand that
you're now challenging me?

The Thark considers his options, then backs down.

DOOR GUARD
(to Guards 2 & 3)
Save the calot.

The two guards carefully take Woola away.

JOHN CARTER
Now if you'll excuse me, I'll take
the Princess someplace where she'll
be safe.
Ma'am---

Carter takes a step toward her and promptly passes out.

CUT TO:

EXT. KORAD - STREET, PALACE - DAY

Afternoon. A group of THARK GUARDS escort CARTER up the steps of the JEDDAK'S PALACE. SOLA is with him.

Carter's wound is bandaged. He takes a look under the dressing: it's nearly healed.

JOHN CARTER
You're quite a nurse, Sola. We
could have used you at Gettysburg.

SOLA
"Gettysburg?"

JOHN CARTER
A battle I was in.

SOLA
The healing ointments of Barsoom are
of great potency.

JOHN CARTER
Remind me to take some back to
Jasoom with me.

The lead Escort pauses before the Palace Guard.

ESCORT
This prisoner, John Carter, has been
summoned to the Jeddak.

PALACE GUARD
Proceed.

The Carter party enters.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY

CARTER and company enter an imposing chamber that must
have been absolutely glorious in its day.

The COUNCIL OF 8 JEDS (including Tars Tarkas) sits in
attendance; each Jed wears a different colored CAPE, and
has an aide and a servant.

On a dais in the midst of them is enthroned the JEDDAK
himself, TAL HAJUS. His cape contains all 8 colors of the
tribes, but that's the nicest thing we can say about him.
Ugly and obese, he's the Thark equivalent of a decadent
Roman emperor.

TAL HAJUS
Tars Tarkas, Jed of the Blue Tharks,
you may present your prisoners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tars Tarkas stands, bows, then gestures to Carter. If Tars Tarkas doesn't like the Jeddak, the feeling is mutual.

TARS TARKAS
My Jeddak, this white one is
called "John Carter." He is---

TAL HAJUS
The sight of a creature so repulsive
is offensive to me. Kill him.

TARS TARKAS
Your highness, he has served me well
in battle and---

TAL HAJUS
Then you have my permission to kill
him quickly.

The Jed of the Red Tribe stands.

RED JED
I beg your pardon, my Jeddak, but I
have heard tell that the white man
has devised a new method for
training thoats which makes them
more formidable in battle. Such a
method might prove useful to all
Tharks.

TAL HAJUS
Tars Tarkas, is this true?

TARS TARKAS
It is, my Jeddak.

TAL HAJUS
Then why didn't you state that to
begin with?

Very well, the prisoner may live
under the guardianship of Tars
Tarkas. He shall instruct these new
methods to our trainers. If they do
prove useful, perhaps I shall
continue to allow him to live.

TARS TARKAS
Again, my Jeddak demonstrates his
great wisdom.

JOHN CARTER
(under his breath)
Oh, he's brilliant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

TARS TARKAS

I now present a prisoner of great status: Dejah Thoris, Princess of Helium.

Dejah Thoris steps forward.

TAL HAJUS

Princess of Helium, you will explain the presence of your airship over the land of Tharks.

DEJAH THORIS

Great Jeddak, we were involved in a scientific expedition, gathering data and information so that we might analyze---

ZAD

She lies! Her people attacked us!

DEJAH THORIS

No! Our enemies of Zodanga attacked us, and in so doing attacked you!

Listen to me, great Jeds of your green race. There was a time before the Great Cataclysm in which life on Barsoom thrived, and our ancestors lived in peace.

Helium would see those times return. Unlike our enemies of Zodanga, we do not make war upon the Thark, nor do we wish war with anyone.

PURPLE THARK

A people that does not make war is not worthy of respect.

TAL HAJUS

Insolent Princess of Helium, I might wring a mighty ransom from your people would I but return you unharmed. But a thousand times rather I would watch you writhe in the agony of torture, days of torture and pain, in payment for the outrages the red men have visited upon us for eons.

Such is the vengeance and cruelty of the Great Jeddak Tal Hajus!

JOHN CARTER

Excuse me, your highness, but I saw what happened and---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

TAL HAJUS

Silence!

TARS TARKAS

(whispers to Carter)

Hold your tongue, John Carter.

(to Tal Hajus)

A thousand pardons, your highness.
John Carter is a stranger here, and
ignorant of our ways. He comes from
a place in which all may address one
another as equals.

TAL HAJUS

How barbarous!

What place is this?

TARS TARKAS

He calls it "Vagina," my Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER

It's "Virginia."

TAL HAJUS

"Vagina?" Ha! It is obviously a
place of no significance if I have
never heard of it.

He laughs. The other Jeds laugh with him.

TAL HAJUS

Take your pale skinned thoat trainer
and leave us, Tars Tarkas.

As for you, Princess, tomorrow,
your torture will commence in the
arena, for all of our race to
behold. Tonight I shall have you to
myself.

Throw her in a dungeon cell until
I am ready for her in my upstairs
chambers.

He gestures toward a stairway leading up.

Carter makes note of this...and Sola notices this.

As Thark guards take Dejah away, Carter, Tars Tarkas, Sola
and company proceed out of the Council chamber.

JOHN CARTER

What will he do to her?

TARS TARKAS

He is the Jeddak. If he wishes to
engage in...acts of depravity, it is
his privilege.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

JOHN CARTER
"Acts of depravity?" The
politicians here are just as bad as
where I come from.

Well, I'm going to have to do
something: that woman is my ticket
home.

TARS TARKAS
You can do nothing, John Carter. He
is the Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER
Why is he the Jeddak? You be the
Jeddak.

TARS TARKAS
I can become the Jeddak only by
formal challenge, in the presence of
the rest of the council of Jeds.
But for me to make such a challenge
over the fate of a red female, would
be foolhardy. I would never have
the support of the other Jeds, or
the Tharks.

JOHN CARTER
(shakes his head)
Politics. God, how I hate politics.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. CARTER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

On the balcony of his quarters, Carter stares coldly at
the PALACE as he sharpens his knife with a stone.

SOLA watches him gravely while she mixes some sort of
concoction with mortar and pestle. She knows what's on
his mind.

SOLA
I wish to tell you a story, John
Carter, a story I have never told
another living soul. It is the
story of how the Jeddak, Tal Hajus,
murdered my mother.

Carter looks at her.

JOHN CARTER
You told me that Tharks never know
their parents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLA

My mother's name was Gozava; my father was a young warrior when she fell in love with him. She was, as she explained it to me, overcome with this strange feeling and could not pretend otherwise. So Gozava accepted it as part of her nature: an aberration. Yet he loved her, too.

My parents kept their love secret, and when I was conceived, they kept my egg hidden in a secret place for the 5 years it would take to hatch.

My father hated the deceit. And after he learned that there had been a time in which all Tharks knew love and had families, he resolved that someday he would challenge Tal Hajus and become Jeddak and change Thark law. But first he had to become a Jed.

Before he could accomplish this, he was sent off on a 4 year mission. It was while he was away that I hatched. Gozava raised me and kept me hidden, but then her crime of love was found out. She managed to mix me in with the brood from an incubator before she was taken to the Jeddak. Tal Hajus tortured her for 5 days, but she would not reveal who her lover was. She told him that she had killed me to spare me from her fate. Finally her body was devoured by Otzes.

Two years later, when my father returned, he was told what had happened, but he could not and did not display the slightest emotion. Nor does he know that I am alive.

JOHN CARTER

Why didn't you tell him?

SOLA

I believe even now, he stoically waits for the proper moment to take his vengeance. I fear that his knowing that I live would compromise him. And as I know the pain he has suffered, I would never risk seeing him deprived of that vengeance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

JOHN CARTER

In other words, you're asking me not to kill the Jeddak tonight when I escape with the Princess?

SOLA

That was your intention, was it not?

JOHN CARTER

You're a pretty fair judge of character.

Sola soaks a piece of cloth in the concoction she is mixing.

SOLA

Force this cloth into his mouth. The potion it is soaked in will cause unconsciousness at least until morning.

JOHN CARTER

And then he'll revive and send a party out to recapture us.
No, Sola, killing him is safer.

SOLA

If you kill him, his death will be discovered by morning. They will come after us in either event.

JOHN CARTER

"Us?" You mean you'll help me?

SOLA

I wish to assist you in every way possible. After all, there is nothing for me here, not while the Jeddak lives.

Carter considers it, then sighs reluctantly.

JOHN CARTER

All right, Sola. I must be crazy, but I won't kill him. I'll leave him for Tars Tarkas.

(at her surprised reaction)

Tars Tarkas is your father...?

SOLA

But how did you know?

Carter smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

JOHN CARTER
I'm a pretty fair judge of character
myself.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALACE - NIGHT

TWO bored GUARDS stand on duty at the foot of the palace steps. It's late; the dark streets are quiet.

CAMERA TILTS UP to CARTER on the roof, looking down.

Now the GUARD CAPTAIN (who was in charge of Dejah) and 3 other Guards come out of the palace.

GUARD
How high would you wager that the
Princess will survive the night?

GUARD CAPTAIN
As high as a slegat can jump.

As these guards disappear around a corner, Carter drops down behind the 2 palace guards and darts into the palace doorway. The guards haven't even noticed.

INT. PALACE - COUNCIL CHAMBER - NIGHT

CARTER peers out from behind a pillar in the dark, empty room. A LONE GUARD stands at the stairway; light emanates down from above.

Carter darts closer, stays in the shadows; he picks a piece of rubble off the floor, throws it across the room.

The guard reacts to the sound and goes to investigate.

Carter quickly bounds up the stairway, leaving the guard to shrug off the incident.

INT. CORRIDOR AND JEDDAK'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Carter creeps down the hall and looks into a lit doorway:

The eerie torchlit PRIVATE CHAMBER OF THE JEDDAK. Whips, chains, weapons and implements of torture hang on walls and are scattered about the room.

DEJAH THORIS is gagged and chained to a pillar in the center of the room. She's still clothed. She struggles against the chains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAL HAJUS approaches her. He drops his cape, revealing his pockmarked, boil laden flesh; he wears spiked straps around his wrists, chest, waist and groin.

TAL HAJUS

Now, Princess, prepare yourself for the tender embrace of the mighty Tal Hajus!

JOHN CARTER

Get your fat green paws away from her, you dog ugly son of a bitch!

TAL HAJUS

You! You would dare blaspheme my imperial chamber with the putrid stench of your foul---

Carter punches him right in the gut.

JOHN CARTER

Oh, shut up!

Stunned, Tal Hajul staggers back and falls.

Carter jumps on top of him, and as the Jeddak wheezes, Carter shoves the cloth soaked with Sola's potion in his mouth.

Tal Hajus chokes, then passes out.

Carter removes the gag from Dejah's mouth, then examines her chains.

JOHN CARTER

Where are the keys?

DEJAH THORIS

With the Captain of the guards!

Carter grips the chain and yanks it apart.

Dejah is amazed.

JOHN CARTER

Sometimes I forget my own strength.

He takes a look out the window.

P.O.V. OUT THE WINDOW

Below, SOLA is waiting with 3 THOATS (including Laughing Boy); they are saddled and loaded with supplies.

BACK TO SHOT

Carter beckons Dejah to the window.

JOHN CARTER
Let's go, lady, I'm in a hurry.

DEJAH THORIS
"Lady?" I am not a "lady." I am
Princess of the Royal House of
Helium, and I demand that you
address me with the respect that
befits my station.

JOHN CARTER
Lady, I've got no time for this!
Come on!

DEJAH THORIS
I have not consented to accompany
you, Thark. Nor shall I, until you
explain your intentions.

JOHN CARTER
(can't believe she's saying this)
My intentions? My intentions are to
take this cloth and shut you up...

As he says this, Carter tears off a piece of Sola's potion
soaked cloth and forces it over Dejah's mouth and nose.
She passes out. Carter picks her up and throws her over
his shoulder, shaking his head.

JOHN CARTER
Royalty.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS OF BARSOOM - DAWN

The morning sun rises. CARTER and SOLA ride abreast on
their Thoats, leading the 3rd Throat with DEJAH on it:
Dejah is still unconscious, and is TIED UP as well.

Carter examines the medallion---it's color is now YELLOW.

Now Dejah revives, realizes her situation...and is she
ever pissed.

DEJAH THORIS
What is the meaning of this? I
demand that you untie me this
instant!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

What did I tell you, Sola? No "Good Mornings," no "Thank you for saving my life." Just "do this," and "I demand that." Don't they teach manners on this planet?

SOLA

You were correct, John Carter. She truly is a snob.

DEJAH THORIS

"Snob?" What's that supposed to mean?

JOHN CARTER

You know, lady, you're damned fortunate I need you alive. Otherwise, I'd turn around right now and take you back to the Jeddak.

DEJAH THORIS

You'll do no such thing! I categorically forbid it!

Carter turns Laughing Boy around and stops, facing Dejah Thoris. He is not amused.

JOHN CARTER

Lady: you may be a Princess in your home town, but here, you're my prisoner. You don't demand, you don't command, you just do what I say. Right now, you've got 2 choices: you can keep your mouth shut, or I can gag it shut.

She glares at him for a moment, then sighs.

DEJAH THORIS

I'll...keep it shut.

JOHN CARTER

Good. If you wish to open your mouth to express yourself, you will use a civil tone of voice, as befits a prisoner, and you will address me as "Captain Carter Sir." Do I make myself understood?

DEJAH THORIS

(grudgingly)

Yes, you make yourself understood.

Carter gives her a look, indicating he expects more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

DEJAH THORIS
(reluctantly)
...Captain Carter, sir.

JOHN CARTER
Not bad. Not bad for a first
effort. All right, let's move.
There'll be a Thark posse out after
us before long.

DEJAH THORIS
And may I be so bold as to ask where
you are taking me, Captain Carter,
sir?

JOHN CARTER
I'm taking you to Helium.

DEJAH THORIS
(brightens)
Oh...!
(then cynically)
To collect a ransom for me, no
doubt.

JOHN CARTER
Actually, it never occurred to me
that someone would be willing to pay
good money for the likes of you.

DEJAH THORIS
(infuriated)
Captain Carter, sir: I too wish to
go to Helium. I'm also a most
competent rider. If you would
simply untie me, I assure you that
we'll not only make far better time,
but that your ultimate reward will
far greater than anything you could
possibly imagine.

JOHN CARTER
I'll think about it.

Carter turns his thcoat around and they continue riding.

CUT TO:

EXT. GATES OF KORAD - DAWN

A posse of some 20 Tharks on Thcoat-back thunder out of the
gates in pursuit...but none are Blue Tharks.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SKY

A ZODANGAN SCOUT SHIP (recognizable with its Barsoomian Swastika emblem) flies thru the Barsoomian sky. (The sun is higher in the sky, indicating it's later.)

As it recedes, we TILT DOWN to reveal Carter, Sola and Dejah (still tied up) on their Thoats, watching with concern from behind some rock formations.

DEJAH THORIS

We can proceed safely now.

Carter unites her, much to her surprise.

DEJAH THORIS

You're untying me?

JOHN CARTER

With those guys looking for you, I reckon I don't have to worry about you running off alone. Why didn't you tell me they'd still be after you?

DEJAH THORIS

You didn't ask.

JOHN CARTER

All right, I'm asking.

They begin riding again.

DEJAH THORIS

The Zodangans have had our city of Helium under siege for weeks, but their airships cannot penetrate our defensive energy shield.

So Prince Sab Than, who is known as "The Butcher"...

JOHN CARTER

He's the guy with the scar...?

DEJAH THORIS

Yes. Sab Than believes if he takes me hostage, he can dictate terms. He's mistaken, of course.

JOHN CARTER

That I believe. What's this war about, anyway?

DEJAH THORIS

Sab Than wants to conquer Barsoom and he needs Helium's technology to do so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

Great. Tharks behind us, Zodangans
above us... What next?

SOLA

The Black Waters: before us.

Sola, Carter and Dejah have come to an area with BLACK
POOLS of some sort of liquid. Carter dismounts to
investigate.

SOLA

These are the Black Waters of Death.
To drink of them is to die.

JOHN CARTER

(sniffs)
It's not water...

Carter sticks his sword in the black stuff, strikes a
match and puts the flame to it: It ignites.

JOHN CARTER

It's some sort of oil...coal oil, or
tar... Can't you smell it?

SOLA

Smell? What is "smell?"

John Carter looks at her in amazement, then bursts into
laughter.

SOLA

Why do you laugh, John Carter?

JOHN CARTER

Tharks have no sense of smell!
Finally I understand how you can eat
that slop you call food! You can't
taste it!

(indicates the tar)

Let's fill some skins with this. We
might need it to make a fire.

Carter suddenly notices a small armadillo-like creature
that slithers out of the sand toward him.

Carter stabs it with his sword---red blood spurts out. He
lifts it up and examines it. It has no legs.

SOLA

That, John Carter, is a Slegat.

JOHN CARTER

Looks like we'll have meat for
dinner.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP SITE - NIGHT

A tar campfire burns. Carter, Sola and Dejah are eating a meal of roast slegat.

JOHN CARTER

No offense to your cooking, Sola,
but roasted Slegat beats all hell
out of that gruel of yours.

SOLA

I fail to perceive any difference.

DEJAH THORIS

It is in fact quite flavorful, Sola.

JOHN CARTER

Well! You're actually agreeing with
me, Princess? Wonders never cease.

DEJAH THORIS

Even a fool can be right sometimes.

JOHN CARTER

There she goes, Sola, always talking
about herself.

DEJAH THORIS

(sighs, exasperated)
We should keep moving. With the
Tharks and Zodangans in pursuit---

SOLA

No. To continue would be more
dangerous. Otzes prowl this region.
The fire will keep them away.

JOHN CARTER

Ssssh! Someone's out there...

They listen. Indeed, it sounds like approaching
footsteps...

JOHN CARTER

...just around this rock...

Carter tenses, ready for action. He takes a step and---

WOOLA joyfully pounces on him and licks his face. The
wound on her side is bandaged.

JOHN CARTER

Woola! What are you doing here,
gal?

SOLA

She was assigned to guard you, so
she followed you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEJAH THORIS

And who's following her?

A sobering moment as they consider this.

Woola nudges Carter back toward Korad.

JOHN CARTER

No, no, no! I am not going back to Korad.

Woola collapses. Carter looks at her bandaged wound: it's bleeding again.

JOHN CARTER

You poor dumb creature, you're bleeding again. You weren't ready to go running around yet.

SOLA

(looks at the wound)

She can't walk. We may have to leave her.

Woola whimpers. Carter, Sola and Dejah exchange looks.

CUT TO:

EXT. FURTHER ALONG - DAY

Day. Carter, Sola and Dejah ride abreast, Woola nowhere to be seen... then CAMERA REVEALS the calot riding on a rope and blanket sling between Laughing Boy and Sola's Thoat. Woola squeals, enjoying her ride.

JOHN CARTER

(shaking his head)

What is wrong with me? We've got Tharks chasing us, Zodangans looking for us, I've got a fortune waiting for me back home, not to mention my pick of the finest bordellos in San Francisco, and I'm slowing us down for the sake of a dumb, ugly animal.

Woola squeals again.

JOHN CARTER

Yeah, I'm talking about you, Woola. It must have been that Slegat we ate, making me soft in the head...

DEJAH THORIS

(quietly, to Sola)

I think he protests too much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLA
(nods, smiles)
It is simply his way.

Dejah looks over at Carter and nods, understanding.

Ahead on the horizon, yellowish smoke rises from a break in a ridge.

Carter motions the riders to a halt.

JOHN CARTER
What's that smoke up ahead?

DEJAH THORIS
I don't know. I've never seen smoke that color before.

SOLA
Nor I. But it comes from the canyon of the winds---a place where the winds blow so strong that we cannot pass. We must go far around.

DEJAH THORIS
Even our airships steer clear of that place. But we must get through somehow, for that is the shortest route to Helium.

JOHN CARTER
The Princess is right, Sola. We go through.

DEJAH THORIS
Do my ears deceive me, Captain Carter, sir? You are agreeing with me?

JOHN CARTER
Well, as you say, Princess, even a fool is right once in awhile.

DEJAH THORIS
Indeed. And this makes twice for you.

Carter gives her a look, then they all proceed onward.

CUT TO:

EXT. CANYON/CRATERS OF THE WINDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Through the entrance to the CANYON can be seen numerous LARGE CRATERS, like the mouths of volcanoes; wafts of yellow smoke blow out of them. Besides the sound of wind, we hear an echoey low rumble.

CARTER, DEJAH and SOLA approach the nearest crater on foot to investigate. WOOLA follows, dragging her bad leg.

SOLA

This is most curious. In times past, the winds were so strong here that one could not even enter the mouth of the canyon.

Carter looks down the crater: it's quite windy, and his hair blows wildly.

JOHN CARTER

Well, it's windy, but we can certainly pass through without much trouble...

Woola sniffs along the crater rim. The animal takes a misstep and YELPS as she slips INTO THE CRATER!

JOHN CARTER

Woola!

A moment of horror as Woola disappears into the hole---

---then suddenly, Woola shoots out straight up on a blast of air and yellow smoke!

Woola rides the air blast up and down like a ping pong ball over an exhaust fan.

As the wind pressure drops, Sola reaches over the crater rim and pulls her to safety.

SOLA

Without too much trouble.

Now Carter runs his hand around the crater mouth.

JOHN CARTER

Amazing. See here? It looks like rock, but it's machined. Man-made. Or Thark-made...whatever.

DEJAH THORIS

It must be connected to the Atmosphere factory: this is where the fresh air comes out.

JOHN CARTER

It's a vent...!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOLA

The legend is that there are other places like this on Barsoom.

DEJAH THORIS

Yes, there would have to be---so that fresh air can be distributed evenly around the planet. The technology that devised this was incredible!

JOHN CARTER

And because the factory's broken down, that's why this yellow smoke's coming out and the force of the wind is so much less.

DEJAH THORIS

The Atmosphere Factory has broken down? Then that explains the anomalies in the air my expedition detected! Great Issus, why did you not tell me of this before, John Carter?

JOHN CARTER

You never asked.

DEJAH THORIS

I'm asking now.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPSITE - CANYON OF THE WINDS - NIGHT

Another TAR CAMPFIRE. Dejah examines the Keeper's Medallion, still yellow, and then hands it back to Carter. She looks at him with new respect...and humility.

DEJAH THORIS

...to think that I considered you a mere brigand...when in fact I have been travelling with the noblest man to ever walk the sands of Barsoom...

JOHN CARTER

Now, slow down, Princess: saving the planet wasn't my idea, and it's not like I had any choice. If I did, I wouldn't be here, believe me. I'd be home, getting drunk, running wild.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEJAH THORIS

But you are here, John Carter, and that is enough for me. Forgive me, please, for I have misjudged you most severely.

JOHN CARTER

Okay, you're forgiven, the slate's clean, just don't get all gushy on me, Princess.

DEJAH THORIS

Dejah. Call me Dejah, please. It is you who should be addressed as royalty.

JOHN CARTER

Stop it! Christ, I think I liked you better when you were sassy.
(stands, uncomfortable)
Excuse me, I, uh...I'd better feed the horses.

DEJAH THORIS

Horses?

JOHN CARTER

Camels---uh, Thoats. I meant thoats.

SOLA

Feeding the thoats is my duty, John Carter. I shall tend to it at once.

JOHN CARTER

Great...thanks...

Sola goes to the thoats, a short distance away, depriving Carter of his excuse to get away from Dejah. He sits back down.

DEJAH THORIS

Tell me of your home, John Carter.

JOHN CARTER

My home. Well, Jasoom is covered with water---

DEJAH THORIS

No, not your world. Your home.
The place that you live.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

JOHN CARTER

My home. Well... Fact is, I haven't really got one at the moment. Had a little farm once. Soldiers took it...then politicians took it. Joined an army to get it back... Never did. Got to like soldiering though...the travelling, the adventure...the intensity of every experience. And I hated it for exactly the same reasons.

DEJAH THORIS

You are more Barsoomian than you know...

JOHN CARTER

I'm a rich man now. When I get back, I can have anything I want.

DEJAH THORIS

And what do you want?

JOHN CARTER

That's always the question, isn't it?

A long sobering moment as Carter stares at the fire and thinks about this.

JOHN CARTER

We always want what we don't have. Then when we get it, we want something else...

He keeps staring at the fire; then realizes Dejah is staring at him.

JOHN CARTER

Why are you staring at me?

DEJAH THORIS

Does it make you uncomfortable?

JOHN CARTER

Well, no...yes...I don't know.

DEJAH THORIS

I apologize. I was just wondering about you, John Carter. Scientifically, I mean.

JOHN CARTER

I beg your pardon?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

DEJAH THORIS

You are a man from another world... yet in appearance you are much like a Barsoomian. I was curious as to whether your...hidden parts...were also like those of a Barsoomian.

Carter clears his throat uncomfortably and looks away.

DEJAH THORIS

Surely, John Carter, you are curious about me? Or are there not females upon your planet?

JOHN CARTER

Oh, yeah, we've got plenty of females. I, uh, well, I'm just not used to hearing a woman, well, express herself so...clearly and directly...

DEJAH THORIS

I am a Princess. I am accustomed to making my wishes known clearly and directly.

JOHN CARTER

Yeah, I've noticed that...

She smiles.

He looks at her and smiles back, albeit nervously.

JOHN CARTER

Well, since you brought it up, I...suppose I am...a little bit...curious, too.

DEJAH THORIS

Perhaps then we should participate in a mutual satisfaction of our curiosities?

JOHN CARTER

Well...I, uh, suppose that we, uh...could...

She removes her clothes.

DEJAH THORIS

Now tell me, John Carter, am I like the females of your race?

Carter's jaw drops and he stares for a long speechless moment at the vision before him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

JOHN CARTER

Yes...but, uh, well...more so...

An awkward moment as he realizes she's waiting for him to remove his pants. Finally he does so.

JOHN CARTER

And...am I like the males of your race, Princess?

She smiles with delight.

DEJAH THORIS

Much more so.

Their eyes lock and they move toward one another.

Their shadows merge in the firelight.

Sola returns, about to speak. She stops, watches and smiles. She quietly backs away.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP SITE - MORNING

Morning. Dejah stirs in her bedroll, a smile on her face. She reaches over, expecting to find John Carter beside her...but he's not there. She sits up with a start.

DEJAH THORIS

John? John Carter?

Now she sees him, standing at the mouth of the canyon with Sola; they're looking back in the direction they came.

DEJAH THORIS

Sola? What's wrong?

SOLA

The Tharks gain upon us. Within hours they shall overtake us.

Dejah looks for herself.

Indeed, an approaching dark mass in a cloud of dust can be seen in the distance.

Carter pulls out the Medallion, now turning orange. He looks at Dejah with genuine concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

Here, Dejah: Take the medallion; you and Sola go on to Helium and get the factory fixed. I'll decoy the Tharks away from here, and catch up to you later.

Woola sniffs at the medallion, takes it and gives it back to Carter.

JOHN CARTER

Thanks, Woola, but I want Dejah to have this now. Give it back to her now, go on.

Woola turns to Dejah with the medallion.

DEJAH THORIS

No, John Carter. I cannot allow you to risk your only means of getting home for my sake. I'm the one the Tharks want. You go on to Helium, and leave me behind.

Woola turns back to Carter with the medallion.

JOHN CARTER

Dejah, listen to me: Even if I make it to Helium, they may not believe me. You they'll believe.

I can outrun the Tharks. You can't. And if they get you, you're as good as dead. The idea of that Jeddak touching you...and...

(he can't say it)

...well, I couldn't live with that. That's why you have to take the medallion, Dejah. It's the best chance for all of us.

Again, Woola turns back to Dejah. Her eyes are welling up with tears.

DEJAH THORIS

Curse me to Issus, why do you have to be right all the time?

JOHN CARTER

Habit, I guess.

At last she takes the medallion from Woola's mouth.

DEJAH THORIS

You'd better go quickly, before I change my mind...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

She turns away, not wanting to look at him, not wanting him to see her crying. Carter takes her, kisses her.

JOHN CARTER
I'll see you. Good luck.
(to Sola)
Take care of her, Sola.

SOLA
I shall.

Carter hesitates about kissing Sola---she's so...alien. But love wins out: he plants one on her cheek.

Sola smiles.

Carter mounts Laughing Boy and, with a wave, rides off toward the approaching Tharks.

At last Dejah turns and watches him go.

DEJAH THORIS
Sola: what is "luck?"

SOLA
I have no idea...
Woola! No! Come back!

Too late. Woola is already 100 yards away, limping after Carter.

DEJAH THORIS
...but whatever "luck" is, I believe John Carter will need it far more than we.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS OF MARS - DAY

JOHN CARTER gallops across the plains in an effort to draw the Thark posse after him. He looks over his shoulder.

JOHN CARTER
Come on, you Thark sons-of-bitches!
Come and get me! That's right,
chase me!

The Thark posse is indeed now coming after Carter. Laughing Boy "laughs."

JOHN CARTER
You're right, Laughing Boy, I should have kept my pants on.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER (cont'd)
One woman in 3 years and now I'm
gonna get us both killed for her.
If we get outta this alive, I should
have myself shot for stupidity.

EXT. FURTHER AWAY - WOOLA

And WOOLA, far behind is also following in Carter's
direction. But there's no way she'll ever catch up.

EXT. THE CANYON OF THE WINDS - DAY

Dejah and Sola ride out of the Canyon of the Winds. Sola
notices something between 2 boulders a distance away.

SOLA
Princess, there, between those
boulders: is that not a Zodangan
scout ship?

As Dejah looks, a ZODANGAN LIEUTENANT appears from behind
a boulder with a rifle.

LIEUTENANT
It is indeed. Prince Sab Than will
be most pleased to see you,
Princess.
Dismount, if you please.

5 MORE ZODANGAN SOLDIERS reveal themselves and surround
Dejah and Sola. They exchange a look, then dismount.

DEJAH THORIS
Sab Than is here?

LIEUTENANT
On his Imperial Flagship, nearby.
We shall deliver you to him.

SOLDIER
What about the Thark, sir?
(hopeful)
Do I kill her?

LIEUTENANT
Bring her along. I would not
deprive Sab Than the pleasure of
butchering a Thark.

The Zodangans escort their prisoners toward their ship.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARSOOMIAN PLAINS

Carter, on Laughing Boy, continues leading the Thark posse after him. But they're gaining.

An ARROW whizzes into the ground in front of Carter; then another grazes Laughing Boy's ass.

The Thoat rears, throwing Carter to the ground. Carter calms him.

JOHN CARTER

Easy, boy, easy.

(looks back at the gaining posse)
I forgot you bastards were such good
shots with those things!

More ARROWS; one pierces Carter's arm. The wound is not serious. Carter withdraws the arrow, shakes his head.

JOHN CARTER

Why didn't I keep my pants on?

He raises his hands in surrender.

JOHN CARTER

(yells)
Don't shoot! Don't shoot!
(to his Thoat)
Laughing Boy, go back, find the
others. Go on, hurry!

Carter gives the animal a slap and Laughing Boy gallops back toward the Canyon of the winds.

Carter faces the approaching posse with raised hands.

CUT TO:

IN THE BARSOOMIAN SKY - DAY

The ZODANGAN SCOUT SHIP banks in the sky as it approaches (and now reveals to us) SAB THAN'S IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP. Huge, imposing, this gigantic floating airship dwarfs the Scout ship.

The scout ship literally lands on the Flagship's top deck.

ON THE IMPERIAL FLAGSHIP - DAY

Led by the LIEUTENANT, the Zodangan soldiers escort DEJAH THORIS across the open deck of the Flagship through a doorway into an enclosed portion of the ship. SOLA is brought along behind.

INT. SAB THAN'S OBSERVATION DECK

SAB THAN stands before large windows which show the planet below; wisps of the yellowish smoke/clouds go by. He turns to face DEJAH as she is escorted in.

SAB THAN

Why, Princess Dejah Thoris. How fortuitous that we meet again.
(reacts as Sola is brought in)
Travelling with a Thark, Princess?
You would betray our race?

DEJAH THORIS

I have more in common with this Thark than I would ever have with you.

SAB THAN

Hardly the appropriate words and tone to use to he who will soon become the most powerful man on Barsoom.

(to the Lieutenant)

Commendable work, Lieutenant. My compliments.

(into an intercom tube)

Helmsman: set a course for Zodanga.

DEJAH THORIS

Zodanga? No!

Sab Than, listen: you must return me to Helium at once! All of Barsoom is at stake---

SAB THAN

You overestimate your importance, Princess.

DEJAH THORIS

The great atmosphere factory of Barsoom has failed! The strange yellow clouds you see before you are a result. Look upon this medallion...

(withdraws it from her garments)

It senses the condition of the atmosphere! Already it is orange. Next it will turn red, and then black and then there will be no breathable air!

This must be presented to the Great Oracle of Helium. He alone will understand the process by which the factory can be restored!

Sab Than takes a closer look at the medallion in her hand. His reaction changes from skepticism to concern.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAB THAN

This carries the sacred mark of the Holy Keeper. How did you come by it?

DEJAH THORIS

Through a messenger of the Holy Keeper himself.

Sab Than, what matters the rivalry of Helium and Zodanga when the fate of the entire planet is at stake?

SAB THAN

So you would have me believe, Princess, that our planet will die if I do not return you and that medallion to Helium?

DEJAH THORIS

Yes! That is the truth of it!

SAB THAN

And thus, you ask me to throw away my political advantage in holding you hostage, this for the sake of all of Barsoom.

DEJAH THORIS

Yes!

SAB THAN

No, Princess...
(takes the medallion from her)
Instead, I ask the same of you.

DEJAH THORIS

What do you mean?

SAB THAN

You and I shall travel to Helium, as you requested. But you will instruct your father, the King, to surrender Helium to my forces.

Then, and only then, will I present my medallion to your Oracle, and if this factory needs repair, it shall be done.

DEJAH THORIS

By Issus, you would use the entire planet as blackmail to advance your own petty ambitions?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

SAB THAN

The true warrior takes his advantage
wherever he may find it.

DEJAH THORIS

You disgust me!

Even if I agreed, it is
impossible. Helium would not
surrender to Zodanga under any
terms.

SAB THAN

On the contrary. They would
surrender if it were announced that
you and I were to wed. Of course,
we would not use the term
"surrender." We would call it
"peace."

(to the other soldiers)

You men: hang the Thark from the
railing outside so that she may have
a better view of the planet which
the Princess would have us save;
while you, Princess, may consider
your options.

SOLA

(to Sab Than as she's dragged off)
Snob!

As the scene continues, visible through the window, the
soldiers drag Sola through a door to the outside deck and
tie her wrists to the outside railing so she dangles off
the edge of the airship.

DEJAH THORIS

You are nearly as contemptible as
the Jeddak of the Tharks.

SAB THAN

You'll excuse me, Princess: I must
secure my medallion below in a
place of utmost safety.

Sab Than is about to descend a staircase.

DEJAH THORIS

You forget, Sab Than. I have a new
champion: John Carter of Jasoom.

SAB THAN

The white man?

(smirks)

He has been captured by the Tharks.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

SAB THAN (cont'd)
(at her disbelief)
We saw it, shortly before your
arrival. If he is not yet dead, he
will be soon.

Sab Than exits with the medallion, leaving Dejah in shock.

CUT TO:

INT. JEDDAK'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Jeddak TAL HAJUS stares down from his throne at JOHN CARTER, who is in heavy chains and in the company of 4 vicious looking Thark guards.

Tal Hajus is flanked by his usual lackeys, including the KEEPER OF THE LAW, a the Thark version of a bureaucrat.

TAL HAJUS
So Dejah Thoris was killed by an
Otz. I am displeased to have been
deprived of the pleasure of her
death throes.

But I can take solace in
anticipating your fate, pale one.

JOHN CARTER
You're going to torture me to death?

TAL HAJUS
Would that I could. Unfortunately,
Thark law allows you a chance to die
in the arena.

Keeper of the Law: there is no
exception to this?

KEEPER OF THE LAW
No, your Highness. Since your
Majesty has already decreed that
John Carter may live under Thark
law, he must now be allowed to die
under it.

TAL HAJUS
However, ugly one, if you survive
your first opponents, your final
opponent shall be...

The Jeddak makes a gesture and TARS TARKAS is brought out
under guard, also in chains.

JOHN CARTER
Tars Tarkas! No!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZAD steps from the shadows, wearing the raiments of a Jed.

ZAD
He has been charged with allowing
your escape.

JOHN CARTER
That's ridiculous. He had nothing
to do with it, and you know it!

TAL HAJUS
Silence! Throw them both in the
dungeon to ponder their fates.

JOHN CARTER
(glares at Zad)
Why do I have the feeling that this
is all your doing?

Zad smiles cruelly.

ZAD
And ponder this, John Carter: if
you do survive the arena, by law
your previous status will be
restored---but no longer under the
guardianship of Tars Tarkas; instead
you will be under the personal
guardianship of the Jeddak himself!

The guards drag Carter and Tars Tarkas away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAB THAN'S FLAGSHIP - DAY

The Imperial Flagship floats through the Barsoomian sky.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK

Dejah watches helplessly through the window as Sola, tied
to the outside railing, stoically bears her torture,
dangling over the thickening yellow clouds.

Now SAB THAN returns from below.

SAB THAN
You have considered my "proposal,"
Princess?

DEJAH THORIS
(sighs, reluctantly)
You win, Sab Than. To save the
planet, I will agree to marry you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAB THAN

No, Princess, not like that. You must make me believe that you wish to wed me. Plead with me. Beg me to marry you

DEJAH THORIS

Have a care, Sab Than. Do not push me too far...

SAB THAN

Or what, Princess? What will you do? You can do nothing! If that medallion is what you say, then your actions here determine the fate of the planet. Live by my terms, or you and all of Barsoom will die.

DEJAH THORIS

And you, Sab Than, you do not care if Barsoom dies?

SAB THAN

I am a warrior. I do not fear death. And if I am to die, I care not whether the rest of the planet dies with me.

DEJAH THORIS

Curse me to Issus that I must marry such as you. But I cannot allow my pride to destroy this entire world, my people, and the one man whom I do truly love.

(mustering up her courage)

Please, Sab Than, I implore you, I entreat you, I...I beg you, to be my husband.

SAB THAN

The role of supplicant becomes you. Before long it will be as 2nd nature.

He looks at her with complete contempt. He offers his hand...for her to kiss.

She reluctantly bows her head and kisses it.

He smiles triumphantly.

SAB THAN

(feigns disinterest)

Very well, Dejah Thoris. I do consent to your desire.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

SAB THAN (cont'd)
(to the soldiers)
Men: "release" the Thark.
(into the intercom tube)
Helmsman. Set a course for Helium.
We have a wedding to attend.

Through the window, we see the two soldiers outside raise their swords, and sever Sola's bonds: SOLA PLUMMETS straight down into some dense yellow clouds.

Dejah is horrified.

DEJAH THORIS
You barbarian!

SAB THAN
No, Princess. A barbarian would have mutilated her first.
She will not suffer: we are above the Canyon of the Winds. The air currents will simply dash her to pieces on the canyon walls.

EXT. CANYON OF THE WINDS - DAY

Sola's falling form drops through the yellow clouds, into the gaping mouth of a crater.

A beat, then a blast of air shoots her back out again!

Just like Woola did, she goes up and down on the air blasts. Finally as she drops close to the side of the crater mouth, she manages to grab onto the edge and pull herself free.

She collapses next to the side of the crater and lets out a tremendous sigh.

Suddenly, a THOAT nudges her. She sits up with a start, then smiles.

SOLA
Laughing Boy!
(then realizing)
Then harm has befallen John Carter.

She climbs onto Carter's thoat and rides toward Korad.

CUT TO:

INT. THARK DUNGEON - DAY

TARS TARKAS and CARTER are both chained to the wall of the dimly lit DUNGEON. The chains are much thicker this time, too thick for Carter to break.

JOHN CARTER

Don't you understand? We've got to stop this arena ritual. Even if Dejah Thoris gets back to Helium, she may not be able to get out again, what with the Zodangans still after her. Then the atmosphere factory will never get repaired.

TARS TARKAS

The wars and politics of the red men are of no concern to Tharks.

JOHN CARTER

If the planet dies, the Tharks die too. Everybody suffocates.

TARS TARKAS

I am inclined to believe you, John Carter. But only the Jeddak can halt the games and this he would never do, certainly not at our behest.

Carter sighs. He knows Tars Tarkas is right.

TARS TARKAS

Our fate is sealed. But of one thing I am certain: I would prefer a quick death in the arena than the slow torture of suffocation. Therefore I ask you to kill me quickly, John Carter. It would be no disgrace to die by your hand.

JOHN CARTER

You're just going to give up? You won't fight, even to save Barsoon?

TARS TARKAS

All I have ever lived for is gone. Perhaps it is my time.

JOHN CARTER

Would it matter to you if I told you your daughter still lives?

Tars Tarkas suddenly becomes energized.

TARS TARKAS

My daughter? What do you know of my daughter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER

Your daughter is Sola, Tars Tarkas.

TARS TARKAS

Sola? Sola! Praise Issus...! And all this time... I had no idea...

If a Thark could cry, Tars Tarkas would be crying.

JOHN CARTER

She told me the whole story. She never told you for fear it might jeopardize your position or your plans.

TARS TARKAS

My plans. My grand plans of vengeance...

Tal Hajus laughed when he told me of Gozava's torture and death. And then he bemoaned having lost the opportunity to torture and brutalize her daughter...my daughter.

Where is Sola now?

JOHN CARTER

With Dejah Thoris, on the mission to save the factory.

TARS TARKAS

(resolute)

Now I must fight...and triumph. I shall regain my status as Jed, I shall challenge Tal Hajus and I shall have my vengeance. And then as Jeddak I shall command the Tharks to aid Sola and Dejah Thoris.

JOHN CARTER

Great! That's great! Now we've got a plan!

TARS TARKAS

My only regret is that to succeed in this, I shall have to kill you, John Carter.

JOHN CARTER

Well, on the other hand, maybe we should consider escape...

Carter jerks on his chains, but he can't break them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

TARS TARKAS

No, John Carter, there will be no escape, not for myself, nor for you. We must proceed according to Thark law, because it is the only way I can take my vengeance...and I shall have my vengeance!

Never fear, I promise to make your death as quick as possible.

JOHN CARTER

All right, keep your shirt on. I've got another idea: what if we both refuse to fight?

TARS TARKAS

Refuse to fight? I do not understand.

JOHN CARTER

It's going to end up between you and me, right? But instead of fighting, we'll throw down our weapons and refuse to raise arms against one another.

TARS TARKAS

Such a thing would not be tolerated.

JOHN CARTER

Has it ever happened before?

TARS TARKAS

No.

JOHN CARTER

Then how do you know?

As Tars Tarkas considers this we

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ARENA - DAY

It's the Thark equivalent of the Roman Coliseum. In the stands, each of the 8 tribes has its own section; the capes create 8 bands of color around the arena.

There's a special "V.I.P." (or should we call it "V.I.T.") section for the JEDDAK, the 8 JEDS and their lackeys. ZAD is the acting blue Jed.

On the field, two contests are going on: JOHN CARTER battles a YELLOW THARK; TARS TARKAS battles a member of the GREEN tribe. The combatants are bruised from previous battles. In the center is a pile of BLOODY CORPSES from these battles, including Tharks and Red Men; SLEEGATS crawl over them.

Tars Tarkas and his opponent fight with axes in one hand, swords in another.

Carter and his adversary use heavy broadswords. (Note: they are NOT fencing; they need both hands to hold these swords and they swing them at one another). Carter uses his jumping skills to great advantage in eluding blows.

In the Royal Box Seats, the Jeds and Jeddak watch with interest.

PURPLE JED

He fights well, this John Carter. I do believe he will best Tars Tarkas.

TAL HAJUS

And then he will be mine. How pleasureable it will be to burn the eyes from his head with hot irons that he may not pollute my person with his vile gaze.

ZAD

And should Tars Tarkas emerge victorious, you do remember our "discussion...?"

TAL HAJUS

Of course: That we test his fitness to survive by tying each of his 4 limbs to 4 wild thoats.

It should indeed provide a most enjoyable entertainment.

On the field, Tars Tarkas dispatches his enemy and raises his weapons in victory.

All eyes turn to Carter's fight.

Carter drives his opponent back toward the pile of corpses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly Carter leaps over the Thark's head , and lands on top of the pile. As the Thark turns to face him, Carter throws a SLEEGAT at him. The surprised Thark lets down his guard to deal with the sleegat, giving Carter the opening to skewer him (and the sleegat).

The crowd ROARS.

Carter raises his sword in victory.

Now the GAME MASTER, a THARK who wears capes and sashes of black and white (the referee motif) steps out to address the crowd.

GAME MASTER

The last 2 surviving prisoners shall now battle one another. By Thark law, only one shall survive.

John Carter, the choice of weapon is yours.

Carter steps away from the corpse pile clutching his left side, as if hurt. He turns and faces the crowd

JOHN CARTER

Mighty Tharks of Barsoom: I refuse to raise arms against the noble warrior Tars Tarkas!

He throws down his sword.

Boos from the crowd. They want to see blood.

The Jeds exchange looks.

Now Tars Tarkas steps forward.

TARS TARKAS

I, Tars Tarkas, also refuse to raise arms against the noble John Carter.

Tars Tarkas also throws down his sword.

The Game Master doesn't know what to do.

Now the Jeddak stands, angry.

TAL HAJUS

This is forbidden. By Thark law, you must fight.

JOHN CARTER

I repeat, I refuse to fight him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

TARS TARKAS

And I too refuse to fight him, oh Jeddak!

TAL HAJUS

Keeper of the Law: has such a thing ever happened in the annals of our race?

KEEPER OF THE LAW

No, your highness, it has not.

TAL HAJUS

There is no precedent whatsoever?

KEEPER OF THE LAW

None, your highness. But Thark law maintains that when there is no precedent in a matter, the Jeddak may decree law.

TAL HAJUS

(smiles)

Very good.

(addresses the crowd)

Mighty Tharks, as Jeddak of all Tharks, I now decree that refusal to fight in the games is punishable by torture and death at the hands of the Jeddak!

Cheers from the stands.

Reactions of concern from Carter and Tars Tarkas

TARS TARKAS

(faces Carter and Tars Tarkas)

What say you now, John Carter, do you still refuse to fight?

JOHN CARTER

I still so refuse.

TAL HAJUS

And you Tars Tarkas?

Tars Tarkas hesitates. He looks at Carter. Carter nods.

Tars Tarkas looks back at the Jeddak, hesitates...

Suddenly, Tars Tarkas's expression changes.

TARS TARKAS

No! I choose to fight and triumph!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

Tars Tarkas immediately grabs his broadsword and quickly thrusts it into John Carter's left side.

Blood spurts out from Carter's left armpit.

Carter reacts with shock---and falls in stunned silence, covered with blood.

Tars Tarkas steps on Carter's motionless body and raises his bloody sword in victory.

TARS TARKAS

Tars Tarkas claims victory according
to Thark law!

A roar of approval goes up from the crowd.

TARS TARKAS

And now, Tal Hajus, I challenge you!
Bare handed!

With that, Tars Tarkas hurls his bloody sword into the stands.

The crowd quiets.

TAL HAJUS

You cannot challenge me, Tars
Tarkas, for you are no longer a Jed.

KEEPER OF THE LAW

Begging your Highness's pardon, but
Thark Law clearly states that, by
surviving the arena, Tars Tarkas'
previous status becomes restored.
He therefore once again is Jed of
his tribe and can in fact
challenge your highness.

You in turn must either fight
him, or abdicate to him.

Tal Hajus and Zad exchange a concerned look.

TARS TARKAS

You have been challenged, fat one!
How do you respond?

TAL HAJUS

(quietly to the Keeper of the Law)
Give me your knife.

KEEPER OF THE LAW

Sire, I cannot. You must fight him
with the same or lesser weapon that
he chose. Since he chose none, you
can have none. That is the law.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

TAL HAJUS
Curse be to these laws.
(loudly to Tars Tarkas)
I accept your feeble challenge.

The crowd roars with anticipation as Tal Hajus comes out onto the field.

He and Tars Tarkas circle one another.

TARS TARKAS
It was I who loved Gozava.

TAL HAJUS
So Zad was right...

TARS TARKAS
Zad? Then Zad informed on Gozava..!

TAL HAJUS
You love her still. You're not fit
to be a Jed, much less a Thark!

Tal Hajus lunges, but Tars Tarkas gets him in a headlock. He pummels Tal Hajus, then knocks him down.

Tal Hajus rolls over near Carter's motionless body, where Carter's sword lies.

Tal Hajus picks up Carter's sword.

Tars Tarkas is shocked that the Jeddak would do such a thing.

So is the crowd; they react accordingly.

TARS TARKAS
I hold no weapon! You would violate
our law?

TAL HAJUS
To kill the lover of Gozava, yes.

Tal Hajus leers in anticipation of victory.

Then John Carter lifts his leg and trips him!

Tal Hajus falls...and sees John Carter smile triumphantly.

Before the Jeddak can fully react, Tars Tarkas picks up the sword and swiftly beheads the fat Jeddak.

Tars Tarkas raises the severed head of the dead Jeddak, and a mighty CHEER goes up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 5

ZAD, however, is not cheering. He quietly steals out of the Royal Box.

TARS TARKAS

I am Tars Tarkas, Jeddak of all the tribes of Thark!

I decree that from this moment forward, that the last two survivors of the arena shall regain their status!

As the crowd cheers, John Carter still lying on the ground, moves his left arm, revealing a dead, ruptured slegat at his armpit, where he was "wounded."

John Carter now rises.

JOHN CARTER

That makes me feel a whole lot better.

The crowd quiets, not sure what to think, as Carter approaches Tars Tarkas, and the other Jeds. Tars Tarkas hands Carter back his sword.

PURPLE JED

What trickery is this? The white man should be dead!

KEEPER OF THE LAW

If Tars Tarkas did not kill him, then Tars Tarkas had no right to challenge the Jeddak.

JOHN CARTER

No, great Jeds. Tars Tarkas did indeed kill me. But men of my race have two lives. I now have but one left.

The Jeds exchange looks and murmurs, but they buy it.

TARS TARKAS

(quietly to Carter)
Is this true, John Carter? You actually have 2 lives?

JOHN CARTER

Of course...
(winks)
...but the other one I left behind on Jasoom.

Tars Tarkas grins, then looks over the Jeds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 6

TARS TARKAS

Where is Zad, the betrayer?

Everyone looks around for him.

YELLOW JED

Look! He steals away like a coward!

The Yellow Jed points to the section where his Tribe is seated: Zad's BLUE CAPE sticks out like a sore thumb in the sea of yellow.

Tars Tarkas takes a crossbow from a nearby guard, aims at Zad and FIRES.

The arrow rips through Zad's neck, and his body rolls down the stairs.

TARS TARKAS

Thus to all traitors.

Now SOLA comes riding into the arena on Laughing Boy.

JOHN CARTER

Sola! What happened? Where's Dejah?

SOLA

We were captured by Zodangans. Sab Than took the medallion, used it to blackmail the Princess into agreeing to marry him and into surrendering Helium to Zodanga---

JOHN CARTER

She's going to marry him?!?

Now a ROYAL GUARD rushes down to Tars Tarkas.

GUARD

Sire: a lone envoy airship from Helium approaches, flying the flag of parley. Shall we attack it?

TARS TARKAS

It flies the colors of Helium? Not Zodanaga?

GUARD

Helium, sire.

TARS TARKAS

Let it land. John Carter: meet this envoy and bring him to us at the palace. My palace.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 7

Carter salutes.

CUT TO:

EXT. KORAD PLAZA - LANDING SITE - DAY

A small 2-man HELIUM FLYER descends into an open PLAZA in Korad. It flies the flag of Helium, as well as a solid green flag (which we must assume is the flag of parley).

As it touches down, LIEUTENANT KANTOS KAN, a Red man of Helium, steps out of the cabin.

JOHN CARTER (now wearing a blue cape) and some ROYAL THARK GUARDS approach.

KANTOS KAN

I bid you greeting. My name is
Kantos Kan. I am a Lieutenant in
the personal guard of Princess Dejah
Thoris---

JOHN CARTER

Is the Princess safe?

KANTOS KAN

You are John Carter?

JOHN CARTER

I am.

KANTOS KAN

Thank Issus, her prayers are
answered.

CUT TO:

INT. JEDDAK'S CHAMBER - DAY

In attendance are Tars Tarkas (on the throne), Carter, Sola and the Council of Jeds. KANTOS KAN is in the middle of his explanation.

KANTOS KAN

...when the betrothal was announced,
our citizens were told to welcome
the Zodangan forces into Helium for
the purpose of mutual peace.

JOHN CARTER

In other words, Helium surrendered
and Zodangan troops now occupy the
city.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KANTOS KAN

(nods)

I escaped via a secret catacomb known only to the Princess; she hoped you might still live.

JOHN CARTER

And the medallion?

KANTOS KAN

Sab Than will not present the medallion to the Oracle until after the Wedding Ceremony.

JOHN CARTER

Of all the low, despicable...Well, I'm not about to sit still and let that scum marry the woman I love... Besides, I've got a score to settle with Mr. Scarface. Sola, I need a new sword. A big one. A sharp one.

KANTOS KAN

John Carter, if you kill Sab Than, you can never marry the Princess. No Barsoomian woman can marry the murderer of her husband. That is our law.

JOHN CARTER

I thought you said they weren't married yet.

KANTOS KAN

It applies to the betrothed as well.

JOHN CARTER

This planet has as many stupid laws as mine does.

How soon before the ceremony?

KANTOS KAN

The day after tomorrow, at dusk.

JOHN CARTER

Tars Tarkas, how long to bring an attack force on Helium?

TARS TARKAS

5 days. Possibly 4.

SOLA

That is by the route around the Canyon of the Winds. It will take less than half the time by going through it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

RED JED
Through it? But that cannot be
done.

SOLA
It can be done.

JOHN CARTER
Then we've got a chance, assuming
the air doesn't run out first.

TARS TARKAS
A direct attack may be risky against
a full Zodangan armada...

SOLA
We can deal with their airships.

YELLOW JED
We can?

TARS TARKAS
Sola, you speak with the confidence
of a warrior born. You truly are my
daughter.

GREEN JED
Your daughter??

SOLA
Then you know...

TARS TARKAS
John Carter told me.

RED JED
Your daughter, Tars Tarkas??

TARS TARKAS
It's a long story, great Jeds, but a
new age is dawning for our race.

JOHN CARTER
First let's make sure we all live
long enough to have a new age.

CUT TO:

EXT. GATES OF KORAD - DUSK

A tremendous spectacle: the entire THARK ARMY is now
massed outside the Gates of Korad on Thoat-back, waiting
to depart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

John Carter and Tars Tarkas ride their Thoats along the front line. They pause, surveying the army.

JOHN CARTER

An impressive sight, Tars Tarkas.

TARS TARKAS

Indeed. I know not if we shall survive the coming battle, John Carter, but at least we have lived to see what none could have dreamed possible: all 8 tribes, under one banner, in united cause.

JOHN CARTER

In a great cause, Tars Tarkas---a heroic cause. In all my years of battle, this is the first time I've been able to say that. To think that I had to come all this way to find something truly worth fighting for...

Now Sola comes galloping up.

SOLA

John Carter, a message from Kantos Kan: he is ready to depart for Helium and awaits you in his airship, in the plaza.

JOHN CARTER

Thank you, Sola.

TARS TARKAS

Farewell, then, John Carter. Go with Issus. And if your end is to come, may it be a warrior's end: with glory.

JOHN CARTER

Farewell to you, my Jeddak. And if it is fated for us not to meet again---for whatever reason---know this: I consider it an honor to have fought beside you...and to call you friend.

Carter puts an open hand to his chest, making the loyalty gesture to Tars Tarkas. Tars Tarkas returns the gesture.

JOHN CARTER

For glory, and Barsoom!

As Carter rides back toward Korad, Tars Tarkas faces the troops and raises his sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

TARS TARKAS
Onward to Helium! For glory and
Barsoom!!!

The Thark Army takes up the battle cry!

THARK ARMY
FOR GLORY AND BARSOOM!!!!

And so Tars Tarkas leads his army into the sunset, toward
Helium. And from orb of the setting sun, we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HELIUM EMBLEM ON KANTOS KANS' 2-MAN AIRSHIP - NIGHT
Kantos Kan's small flyer zips across the night sky.

INT. KANTOS' AIRSHIP - PILOT ROOM - NIGHT

Kantos Kan steers by use of a large wheel; adorning its
hub is the emblem of Helium. Carter stands close by.

JOHN CARTER
The key to our victory is in getting
that medallion back. Did the
Princess tell you where it is?

KANTOS KAN
She told me she does not know where
it is.

JOHN CARTER
All right then, we'll just have to
get Sab Than to tell us.

Carter uses his knife to pry the hub decoration off the
wheel. It bears a striking resemblance to the medallion,
although without color in the center.

JOHN CARTER
Kantos Kan: do you have any paint
or dye, something we could use to
make the center of this thing red?

Kantos Kan takes Carter's knife, cuts his finger, and
squeezes blood on the ornament.

JOHN CARTER
Why didn't I think of that?

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MORNING SKY

The small flyer is lit by the rays of the morning sun.

INT. PILOT ROOM - MORNING

Kantos Kan points through the window.

KANTOS KAN
Behold, John Carter, the City of
Helium.

JOHN CARTER
That's some town...

Indeed it is, as we now reveal HELIUM which, even in the distance, is clearly the most splendid city of Barsoom---a sort of Martian City of Oz---characterized by the delicate tall towers and fantastic "low gravity architecture" that is possible on Mars.

Numerous ZODANGAN AIRSHIPS ring the city.

KANTOS KAN
The wedding will take place in the Great Hall of the Palace, which stands upon the hill there, overlooking the city. Are you certain you'll be able to find your way through the catacombs?

JOHN CARTER
Don't worry about me. You just make sure the Tharks get into town.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREAT HALL - PALACE OF HELIUM - DUSK

A Royal Wedding is a spectacle even on Barsoom. The Great Hall is lit with torches, and by the last rays of the setting sun through a row of stained glass windows.

ZODANGAN OFFICERS with weapons are interspersed among HELIUM CIVILIANS, ATTENDANTS, and PRIESTS.

A HIGH PRIEST stands before an ALTAR.

TARDOS MORS, KING of Helium, is a white haired, regal looking fellow in his royal robes and raiments. He sits upon his throne.

DEJAH and SAB THAN stand before him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Again, I ask you, my daughter, you wish to marry this..."man" by your own free will?

Dejah looks at Sab Than. He leers at her in smarmy triumph.

DEJAH THORIS

(takes a deep breath)

I do so wish, father.

KING

As Jeddak of Helium, I decree that the wedding ceremony may progress.

The High Priest nods and chants an incantation in a language we can't understand.

The King now joins Dejah and Sab Than, and they all approach the Altar.

HIGH PRIEST

Bring forth the collars of matrimony.

The attendants step forward bearing twin gold necklaces linked together with golden chain.

HIGH PRIEST

We invoke the blessing of Issus as your majesty now links these two subjects to one another forever and ever.

The King opens one and fastens it around Dejah's neck. He takes the 2nd and is about to do the same to Sab Than.

SAB THAN

Not around my neck, your highness. As a Prince of Zodanga, it is my prerogative to invoke the rite of female supplication. Attach it to my belt, so that her head never be held higher than that to me.

KING

We abolished that rite in Helium eons ago.

SAB THAN

We practice it still in Zodanga, and we shall restore the practice here as well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

KING

I believe I would prefer to be dead
than to be party to this.

SAB THAN

That too can be arranged.

DEJAH THORIS

Please father, we must proceed, for
the Sake of Barsoom.

The King reluctantly attaches the 2nd collar to Sab Than's
belt.

SAB THAN

Now kneel, Princess. Your collar
must never be held higher than mine.

Suddenly, the stained glass window above them EXPLODES as
JOHN CARTER dives through it and lands on the altar with
raised sword!

JOHN CARTER

I declare this wedding null and
void!

Carter severs the chain between their collars.

There are gasps and whispers of "A white man!" from the
onlookers.

DEJAH THORIS

John Carter! Praise Issus, Sab Than
said you were dead!

JOHN CARTER

Sab Than can be trusted as far as a
sleegat can jump.

Now, Scarface, I demand your
immediate and unconditional
surrender.

SAB THAN

(snickers)
Surrender? To you and what army?

JOHN CARTER

The Thark Army.

Sab Than and all of the Zodangans laugh.

SAB THAN

And you would call me a liar?

In the distance, a low rumble and the sounds of a familiar
song.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

THARKS (O.S.)
"Camptown ladies sing this song,
Doo-dah, doo-dah..."

SAB THAN
What is that horrible noise?

A Zodangan officer rushes into the hall.

OFFICER
Sire! An army of Tharks approaches.
More Tharks than I've ever seen, of
every tribe, united under the colors
of Helium.

Carter pulls Sab Than toward the nearest window to see.

SAB THAN'S P.O.V. OF

THE THARK ARMY APPROACHING on thoatback, vast in numbers,
kicking up tremendous dust, singing, carrying HELIUM FLAGS
and LIT TORCHES against the TWILIGHT SKY!

TARS TARKAS and KANTOS KAN are leading the charge, with
SOLA right behind.

BACK TO SHOT

Sab Than isn't laughing anymore, nor are the other
Zodangans.

SAB THAN
But those infernal sounds?

JOHN CARTER
They invoke the name of the great
Jassomian warrior "Doo-dah" to give
them strength.
Now, if you wish to live any
longer, you'll surrender.

SAB THAN
What do you hope to gain here, white
man? Without the medallion,
anything you do is for naught.

JOHN CARTER
I already have the medallion. You
should have kept it some place safe.

SAB THAN
You lie! It is locked in my strong-
box! That box is impenetrable and
only I know the location of the key!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER
Men of my world have ways of getting
through locks: see?

Carter shows him the fake medallion.

Sab Than is astonished, then angered as he glares at
NOTAN, a Zodangan officer.

SAB THAN
Curse you, Notan! I told you to
post six guards around my chamber!

NOTAN
We did, sire. I don't know how he
managed it.

Carter tightens his grip around Sab Than.

JOHN CARTER
Now: tell your men to throw down
their arms, or yours will be the
first blood spilled.

SAB THAN
You won't kill me. If you do, you
can never have the Princess. It's
the law.

JOHN CARTER
I'm from Jasoom. I don't give a
good Goddamn about your laws.
Tell them, before I count three.
One.

Sab's expression turns sober.

His men look to Sab for guidance.

Dejah's face fills with concern.

Tension fills the room...but no one makes a move.

JOHN CARTER
Two.

It's so thick now you could cut it with a knife.

Suddenly Dejah runs forward.

DEJAH THORIS
No, John, I love you too much to let
you do it!

She pulls Carter away from Sab Than.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Immediately, Sab Than grabs her and puts a knife to her throat.

JOHN CARTER

(pissed)
Ever hear of a bluff, Princess?

DEJAH THORIS

Oh.

SAB THAN

Now, white man... Give me back that medallion...or the Princess dies.

DEJAH THORIS

John Carter, you mustn't! If he has the medallion, he can dictate terms. And what matters my life against all of Barsoom?

SAB THAN

The medallion. Before I count three. One!

JOHN CARTER

I'll give it to you on the condition that you call off this wedding.

SAB THAN

You're in no position to bargain. You'll give it to me, or I'll kill her. Two!

DEJAH THORIS

No...!

JOHN CARTER

All right, you win, Sab Than...
(takes out the fake medallion)
Catch!

Carter throws the fake medallion high into the air.

Sab Than releases Dejah to catch it.

Carter grabs her and throws her over his shoulder!

JOHN CARTER

Hold on!

He bounds up into a balcony with her.

A Zodangan guard up there rushes them. Carter smashes a fist into his face and throws him over the balcony. He plummets to the hall floor.

Carter and Dejah run through an upper doorway, into a corridor.

INT. PALACE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The corridor is empty.

DEJAH THORIS
But the medallion---

JOHN CARTER
...it's a fake. We've got to get
the real one before he catches on.
Where are these chambers of his?

DEJAH THORIS
Atop the palace south tower: this
way!

They run in the appropriate direction.

IN THE GREAT HALL - NIGHT

Sab Than pockets the fake medallion as he barks an order
to his men.

SAB THAN
Spread the alarm! Every airship is
to be manned to capacity and
unleashed upon the Tharks!
Spare the Princess, kill the
white man, take no prisoners!

Soldiers rush off to obey.

KING
Your plan has failed.

SAB THAN
It is simply revised. In lieu of a
wedding, you will abdicate your
throne to me. Otherwise I shall
withhold the medallion and let
Barsoom perish.

KING
An empty threat. The Tharks will
overwhelm your forces.

SAB THAN
I doubt that. Yet I would sooner
destroy this medallion rather than
surrender it. If I am to die, all
of Barsoom shall die with me.
So, King of Helium, the fate of
Barsoom now rests with you.

A beat as the King hesitates, then draws a deep breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING
Fetch the Great Oracle. If he
confirms that the fate of Barsoom is
connected with that medallion, then
and only then shall I abdicate.

SAB THAN
(to a guard)
Fetch him!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE THARKS APPROACHING HELIUM - NIGHT

The THARK ARMY moves in on Helium.

A flying ZODANGAN BATTLE CRUISER approaches.

TARS TARKAS
Attack the Airship!

THARK ARCHERS open fire.

Dozens of other Tharks begin whirling SKIN CANTEENS over
their heads.

One by one, they let fly: the filled skins arc into the
air and splatter onto the airship, spilling BLACK TAR OIL
all over.

Immediately, other Tharks shoot FLAMING ARROWS and hurl
FLAMING SPEARS and TORCHES at the ship, which ERUPTS IN
FLAME: It's the Barsoomian version of the Molotov
Cocktail!

The Tharks chant "DOO-DAH! DOO DAH!"

INT. THE PALACE CORRIDORS - NIGHT

DEJAH leads CARTER through the corridors while the sounds
of pandemonium spread through the palace.

They duck into an ALCOVE, and Dejah points out...

DEJAH THORIS
The stairs to the South Tower!

Carter peers around the corner: 2 GUARDS cover the up
side of a STAIRWAY.

Now a SERGEANT runs up from below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERGEANT
Every man to an airship or a battle
station! NOW!

GUARD
But our orders were to guard Sab
Than's chambers!

SERGEANT
There's nothing left up there to
guard! Now move!

Carter and Dejah watch as 6 ZODANGAN GUARDS charge down
the stairs.

JOHN CARTER
That's all 6. Come on!

They run out and hurry up the staircase.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

A thin, ELDERLY MAN is escorted through the great hall by
Zodangan guards and presented to Sab Than.

GUARD
Your grace, the Oracle of Helium.

Sab Than gives the old man the fake medallion.

SAB THAN
Examine this medallion, Oracle, and
tell your King what it is.

ORACLE
(examining it)
Why it's nothing but an ornament
from the steering mechanism of a
Helium airship, your majesty.
Stained with blood.

Sab Than is speechless, then puts it all together.

SAB THAN
We've been tricked!
To my chambers!

Everyone dashes out of there, including the King.

CUT TO:

INT. SAB'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Palace living quarters, with windows that look out over Helium.

Carter has found the STRONGBOX, but even he cannot break open its HUGE LOCK. Nor can he rip it open by hand.

He tries to pry it open with his knife, but to no avail.

JOHN CARTER

Dammit. He was right. There is no way to break into this strongbox.

DEJAH THORIS

I thought you said you had ways to get through locks.

JOHN CARTER

I was lying!

Outside, through the window, we can see more Zodangan Airships BURNING as the sounds of battle grow louder.

Dejah takes a look out the door, then bolts it shut.

DEJAH THORIS

The Zodangans are coming!
Throw it out the window. Perhaps the impact will break it open.

Carter lifts the strongbox and shoves it out the window. He (and we) watch it fall.

It drops 4 stories onto a STONE COURTYARD, but doesn't break.

JOHN CARTER

Damn!

DEJAH THORIS

We've got to find the key!

She starts throwing open drawers, searching, while we hear POUNDING on the door as the Zodangans attempt to break in.

JOHN CARTER

We don't have time to look for it here! Let's go!

Carter grabs her and awkwardly leaps out the window.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

It's not the kind of a leap or landing that Errol Flynn would be proud of: Carter lands on his ass; but Dejah is still in his arms, and they're both all right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dejah climbs off of him; Carter gets up, rubbing his sore bottom.

DEJAH THORIS

John, look!

The STRONGBOX is nearby: but now it's OPEN...and EMPTY.

JOHN CARTER

Somebody beat us to it!

DEJAH THORIS

The Medallion's gone! Sab Than...?

JOHN CARTER

I don't know.

(examines the box)

The lock's been wrenched off it...

The broken lock is nearby, ripped open as if by the jaws of a huge vice.

We hear a familiar howl: Carter turns to see WOOLA there with the now DARK RED MEDALLION in her mouth!

JOHN CARTER

Woola! Thank God somebody on this planet has a sense of smell!

Carter bounds over to her and gives her a hug.

As he's about to take the medallion from her mouth, he finds himself surrounded by Sab Than's ELITE GUARD.

SAB THAN steps forward, battle axe in hand.

SAB THAN

A clever gambit, John Carter, but not clever enough.

ZODANGAN

Sire, our forces are overrun, most of our airships destroyed, and Tharks are on the palace grounds----

He falls over with a THARK SPEAR in his back!

Immediately, THARKS on Thoats and on foot rush into the courtyard, including TARS TARKAS, and KANTOS KAN!

SAB THAN

Curse Issus!

JOHN CARTER

You were saying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Sab's guards spread out to engage the Tharks.

As Tars Tarkas clubs Zodangans over the head, he chants...

TARS TARKAS
Doo-dah! Doo-dah!
(spots Carter)
It is indeed a wonderful song!

The other Tharks do likewise, some of them using the "Tusk-head butt" combat style to gore the Zodangans.

Suddenly, an EXPLOSION is followed by a DARK SHADOW over the Plaza.

Carter looks up: a BURNING ZODANGAN AIRSHIP is about to crash into the courtyard!

JOHN CARTER
Dejah! Look out!

WOOLA charges toward Dejah and knocks her safely out of the way just before the CRASH!

Burning debris is sent everywhere.

The main wreckage creates a HUGE WALL OF FLAME which separates JOHN CARTER and SAB THAN from everyone else.

The two enemies face one another.

JOHN CARTER
You've lost, Sab Than.

SAB THAN
Perhaps. But at least I can have
the satisfaction of killing you.

Sab Than raises his battle axe against the weaponless John Carter.

JOHN CARTER
I have no weapon.

SAB THAN
That's too bad.

Sab Than smiles...he's going to enjoy this.

Suddenly Carter pulls the GOLD NUGGET from his pocket, hurls it and whacks Sab in the side of the head, briefly stunning him!

Carter then leaps over Sab Than and takes a HEAVY BROADSWORD from a charred Zodangan soldier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

Sab attacks, but Carter easily fends off the axe swing with his sword.

They trade blows evenly, each using his weapon to block the other's.

Finally, Carter avoids a blow not by blocking, but by jumping straight up!

Sab Than swings at empty air.

Carter lands, already swinging the sword, and CUTS OFF SAB THAN'S RIGHT HAND!

SAB THAN

Aaaahhhhh!!

Sab's axe falls to the floor, with his severed bloody right hand still grasping it!

Carter faces his weaponless foe with raised sword.

JOHN CARTER

Say your prayers, Scarface.

Sab glances over and spots a sword just a few feet to his left. As he speaks, he inches toward it.

SAB THAN

You've forgotten one thing: if you kill me, you forfeit the Princess.

JOHN CARTER

No, you forgot one thing: a witness.

With that, Carter skewers him clean through! Sab Than's eyes bug out in complete surprise...and then he's dead.

JOHN CARTER

"...oh, the Doo-dah day."

With the flames of the burning airship subsiding, DEJAH (with the medallion) and the KING OF HELIUM arrive on the scene as Sab Than falls to the ground with Carter's sword sticking out of him.

Dejah's expression turns heartbroken!

KING

You killed him...!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 4

JOHN CARTER

No, sir. He foolishly placed himself in the path of my moving sword before I could tell him to step aside.

The King and Dejah exchange a look, then the King smiles wryly.

KING

It would please me that you marry this man, Dejah. He has the makings of a master politician.

As Carter takes Dejah in his arms, KANTOS KAN arrives, along with TARS TARKAS, SOLA, WOOLA, and other Heliumites.

They all see Sab Than's body with the sword imbedded in it, and react with the same inquiring look: did John Carter...?

KING

(explaining)
Suicide.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON DEJAH AND CARTER

as they kiss passionately. Both now wear the CEREMONIAL COLLARS OF MATRIMONY around their necks.

DEJAH THORIS

A most wonderful custom of your world, that a ship Captain can perform a marriage.

WIDEN TO REVEAL that they are on the deck of

EXT. IMPERIAL HELIUM AIRSHIP - DAY

The Captain concludes the ceremony.

CAPTAIN

May Issus bless you both forever and ever.

KING

I welcome you to the House of Helium as a son, Prince John Carter.

JOHN CARTER

I hope I shall always be worthy of both titles, your majesty.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Among those on board are TARS TARKAS, SOLA, KANTOS KAN, and WOOLA. The Tharks look a bit queasy.

SOLA
I fear flying does not much agree
with me, father.

TARS TARKAS
(nods)
If Issus had wished Tharks to fly,
She would have given us wings.

THE GREAT ORACLE now holds the Medallion, which is now a very dark red.

ORACLE
We must hasten, Captain. The
Medallion darkens.

Carter looks down over the familiar landscape below.

JOHN CARTER
We'll make it. The factory is just
ahead, disguised in that mountain.

ORACLE
Please, John Carter, review with me
again the illustrations in the
sacred tablet, so that...
(with great concern)
...there can be no doubt...

Carter follows The Oracle over to a desk where the Sage inserts the medallion crystal side down into a carved indentation in a large STONE TABLET. It's a perfect fit, and the seemingly solid tablet springs open: it's a BOOK. Its parchment pages are full of Barsoomian script, illustrations and schematics of the factory mechanisms.

JOHN CARTER
You're worried. Doesn't this
explain how to repair the dynamos
and the central core?

ORACLE
Oh, the wisdom contained herein is
indeed complete regarding the
Factory. And the dynamos present no
problems.
But which of these illustrations
represents what you call "the
central core?"

Carter looks over several drawings and points out one of 2
Cones apex to apex.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

JOHN CARTER

That one. That's the Central Power
Core. That's what broke down.

The Oracle sighs. His expression is grave.

JOHN CARTER

What's wrong? Can't it be fixed?

ORACLE

Yes, it can be fixed. But at great
cost: the cost of a life.

CUT TO:

INT. ATMOSPHERE FACTORY - DAY

CLOSE ON THE KEEPER...

KEEPER

The Oracle is correct. Whosoever
descends below to repair the Central
Core will die before he can get out.

+WIDER:

He is addressing the Rescue Party from the Airship in the
Control Area of the FACTORY.

TARS TARKAS

Tars Tarkas shall make this
sacrifice. Let no one, green or
red, ever question that Tharks are
Barsoomians first, even before we
are Tharks.

ORACLE

A noble gesture, mighty Jeddak, but
your sacrifice would be in vain.
These mechanisms were devised by red
men, to be manipulated by red men.
Your hands are too large, and your
dexterity limited from a lifetime of
handling weapons.

KANTOS KAN

Then I shall do it. Gladly will I
give my life that Barsoom may
survive.

OTHER HELIUMITES

No, let me. I'll do it. (etc.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEJAH THORIS

Silence, all of you. As your Princess, I command you to let me be the one.

KING

And as your King, I forbid it.

DEJAH THORIS

Father!

KING

Dejah, please. I almost lost you once. And neither I nor Helium can afford to lose its Princess.

JOHN CARTER

He's right, Dejah. And I can't afford to lose my wife. Besides, I'm the one for the job.

DEJAH THORIS

No, you're not. It's not even your planet!

JOHN CARTER

It is now. Anyway, I've been down there before and survived.

DEJAH THORIS

I won't hear of it, John Carter. I could not bear to lose you again.

JOHN CARTER

You're not going to lose me.

Keeper: You're concerned about the energy beams, right? Those things that almost vaporized me when I arrived here?

KEEPER

Yes. But the beam emitted in the Central Power Core is far more powerful than the mining beam.

JOHN CARTER

Hey, it's a piece of cake. I can jump out of there before the beam hits me.

KING

(whispers to Kantos)
What is "cake?"

Kantos shrugs, shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

DEJAH THORIS

I still don't want you to do it.
You've done enough for Barsoom.

ORACLE

The medallion blackens. If we argue
much longer, none shall be alive to
attempt the repair.

JOHN CARTER

Then it's settled.

Oracle: tell me what to do. I'd
like to get this over with.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A DETAIL ILLUSTRATION OF THE CORE

The detail shows how 3 crystals---a cube, a tetrahedron,
and a sphere---fit into respectively shaped holes in the
central ring of the Power Core, atop the lower cone.

JOHN CARTER (O.S.)

I take the old crystals out---or
what's left of them---and put the
new ones in the 3 holes. Simple
enough.

WIDER - ON THE FLOOR BEFORE THE CENTRAL PIT

CARTER looks at the illustration, and looks down in the
pit at the huge mechanism.

The Oracle removes the 3 SPARKLING CRYSTALS from a pouch.
They're flawless; about an inch or so in diameter.

He shows them to Carter, puts them back in, and gives the
pouch to Carter.

ORACLE

The powering sequence begins once
you insert the first crystal. The
other 2 crystals must be inserted
within a count of 10; otherwise
overload will occur, and---

JOHN CARTER

I know what "overload" means. 10
seconds from the first crystal.

ORACLE

May Issus protect you, oh, John
Carter of Vagina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER
"Virginia," sir.

Looking down from the Control Panel are the Keeper,
Dejah (with Woola), Sola, Tars Tarkas and the King.

KEEPER
And remember, John Carter---

JOHN CARTER
I know, I know. Once the 3rd one's
in, I jump up and to the right.

ALMOST EVERYONE
(in unison)
QUICKLY!!!

Carter waves to them, then leaps into the pit.

REPAIR SEQUENCE

IN THE PIT, Carter lands at the base of the huge power
unit. He climbs up to reach the CENTRAL RING, some 25
feet above the floor.

The ring encircles a HOLE about 9 inches in diameter. As
illustrated, in the ring are the 3 holes containing the
old BLACKENED CRYSTALS.

Carter removes them. They crumble to ash between his
fingers.

The Oracle watches from above.

On the catwalk, the Keeper and the rest of the group watch
intently.

Carter runs his finger around each of the holes to clean
them, then takes a deep breath as he opens the pouch.

JOHN CARTER
Well, here goes...

Carter takes out the CUBE and puts it in the square hole.

Immediately machinery HUMS to life, and electricity
sparks.

The Barsoomians all begin counting.

ORACLE
One.

The Keeper makes an adjustment on his control panel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cube begins to glow.

DEJAH THORIS

Two.

Carter takes out the TETRAHEDON crystal, reaches over and puts it in the triangular hole.

More NOISE and ELECTRICITY CRACKLES. THIN WHITE BEAMS begin to shoot down from above.

At the control panel, the Keeper makes another adjustment.

TARS TARKAS

Three.

The other Barsoomians watch anxiously.

The Tetrahedron now glows; the cube glows brighter and hotter.

Carter takes a deep breath and takes out the SPHERE. He brings it toward the circular hole...

SOLA

Four.

Carter is just about to put the sphere in its hole...

Suddenly, a SLEEGAT pops up out of the hole inside the ring, onto Carter's hand!

JOHN CARTER

YAAA!!

Startled, Carter falls off and DROPS THE SPHERE!

Gasps of horror from the others.

DEJAH THORIS

Five.

The round crystal bounces and rolls across the floor.

Carter sprawls onto the floor. He throws the Sleegat off. The animal hits the ground, then crawls. Suddenly, it gets hit by a BEAM and it's completely VAPORIZED.

JOHN CARTER

Jesus!

KING

Six.

The machinery noise increases in pitch, building toward overload.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 2

Now Carter looks for the sphere.

He spots it a few feet away and moves across the floor toward it. He reaches for it---but a beam singes his wrist and he withdraws it.

JOHN CARTER

Owww!

KANTOS KAN

Seven.

There's a BLACK SMOKING BURN on his wrist where he was singed.

Carter looks at the sphere. Between him and the crystal, 2 BEAMS shoot down at regular intervals.

ORACLE

Eight.

Carter gets a sense of their timing, counting it off...

JOHN CARTER

One, two, grab. One, two, grab.
One, two---

He grabs it!

DEJAH THORIS

Nine.

Carter immediately leaps up like a basketball player and drops the sphere into its hole!

JOHN CARTER

YES!!!

The machinery sound abruptly changes as the power unit stabilizes.

EVERYONE

JUMP!!!

Carter bounces off the power unit, up and to the right, grabbing onto a strut. He sighs relief.

ORACLE

(also sighs)
Barsom is saved.

Above, the Keeper looks down, then throws a lever.

Immediately, Carter is hit with a BLUE BEAM from above.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 3

JOHN CARTER
Hey!! What's happening?!?

KEEPER
I now complete our bargain, man of
Jasoom. The Keeper cannot violate
his oath.

The BLUE BEAM COMPLETELY ENVELOPS CARTER...and then he's gone.

CUT TO:

EXT. PACIFIC COAST - CAVE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Night. The entrance to the cave in which Carter took shelter suddenly glows blue, and strobes with a brilliant FLASH.

JOHN CARTER rolls out, and down to the ocean's edge.

A beat, as Carter catches his breath, then looks around, trying to figure out where he is, what's happened.

In the night sky, one moon.

And now Carter knows where he is.

JOHN CARTER
I'm back. I'm home. Could it have
all been---

Carter looks at his wrist: ther's the BURN he just got from the beam. It wasn't a dream.

Carter looks up at the sky and shakes his fist.

JOHN CARTER
You son of a bitch! I didn't want
to go home!
Bring me back! Please! Bring me
back!

EXT. BRITISH COLUMBIA COAST - NIGHT

Extreme wide angle of Carter, silhouetted against the starry night, raising his arms toward the shining red dot that is Mars, as if pleading for the planet to bring him back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN CARTER (V.O.)

It has been years since I left the red planet. The gold mine made me rich, but it did not bring me happiness.

Each night, Mars calls to me across the vast abyss of space, and in my mind I see my beloved Dejah Thoris standing on the tower of her Palace...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. OBSERVATORY - DUSK

BURROUGHS reads the last page of Carter's manuscript.

JOHN CARTER (V.O.)

And so, nephew, I apologize for the abrupt manner of my departure, but it was the most effective way of turning my affairs over to you.

My life on earth is indeed over: I do not intend to return. For I believe my calculations have revealed a way back to the red planet and to my Princess of Mars...

Burroughs glances at the wall map and the marked astrolabe globe.

JOHN CARTER (V.O. cont'd)

I go now to travel the far corners of the earth, to those places where I believe the mining beam will again appear.

And so I sign this manuscript,

JOHN CARTER, of Mars.

Suddenly, Burroughs has a thought, and rushes out.

EXT. MAUSOLEUM - DUSK

BURROUGHS runs up, pulls open the door and enters the tomb.

INT. MAUSOLEUM - DUSK

Burroughs steps up to John Carter's casket, hesitates, then opens it. He looks inside, then smiles...and laughs.

IT'S EMPTY!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PALACE OF HELIUM - DUSK

DEJAH THORIS stands on the terrace of the tallest Palace Tower with WOOLA beside her, gazing into the evening sky at the blue-green jewel of Jasoom.

A spectacular SHOOTING STAR streaks across the heavens and we

ROLL END TITLES.

FADE OUT.