

The Boneless Horror

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Science Wonder Stories Vol 1, N° 2 (1929)

Publication Office, 404 North Wesley Avenue, Mt. Morris, Illinois.

Editorial and General Offices, 96-98 Park Place, New York City.

Stellar Publishing Corporation

H. GERNSBACK, Pres. I. S. MANHEIMER, Sec'y. S. GERNSBACK, Treas.

Título original: The Boneless Horror

Transcription: Yan Viana

Published in: www.atomicvintage.com.br

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CHAPTER I – An Emperor’s Wish

THE Emperor of Gobi sat proudly on his marble throne.

Below him on the Steps of the first Magnitude sat the Seven Wise Men, on whom the Emperor depended for the welfare of his realm and the continued power of his dynasty.

And on the other Steps of Magnitude, of two down to seven, stood the nobles of the realm, all of them selected because of some brilliant achievement adding to the splendor of Gobi.

One after the other the Seven Wise Men read from parchment scrolls the record of their departments for the past month, and the Emperor praised them for all for what they had done; especially did he give credit to the Royal Mathematician, the Royal Engineer and the Royal Geographer, for these three men, separately and in unison, read of the plans that they had prepared for the destruction of the Land Of Mo, that great Kingdom of the South, which dared to dispute with Gobi the supremacy of the world.

The Emperor of Gobi had issued orders that Mo must not only be conquered, but actually destroyed, and for months the three Wise Men in charge of these departments of Mathematics, Engineering and Geography had studied over the problem. Now, they had a plan, and it was a good plan, and at the end of it Mo would be no more.

There was one flaw in the beauty of the plan; namely, the time that must be taken to accomplish it. Tunnels had to be dug under the sea, and under the great gulfs of water, separation had to be made of Mo from Gobi, and even though all of the slaves and all the machinery and the great skill of Gobi, though all these were put to work, still, years would pass before the desired end would be accomplished.

So, the face of the Emperor darkened, for he was now passing his fifty-ninth birthday, and he knew that ere thirty more years faded away he and his Seven Wise Men, and all who had helped him make Gobi great, would be worm food and dust in their golden coffins, or else so old that their greatest worry would be the dragging of broken bodies through another, day. Of all his illustrious fathers, but one thing remained certain, and that was that they lived a while and then died.

And thinking thus, his face grew hard and sad, and he chewed the end of his mustache in such a way as to make the Royal Barber tremble. Finally he cried:

“All of your plans are folly and your thoughts foolish vanity, for who of us will be here to see this ending of our enemy thirty years from now? And what comfort if a few of us live on, yet lack the mental power to glory in our triumph? Give us youth, take away

from us the weight of the years gone by, and there would be satisfaction in the perfecting of your plans. Give me youth! Take from my shoulders the weight of years, from my head the whitened hair, from my face the little wrinkles, fateful handwriting of Time the Conqueror, and then you can destroy Mo. Which of you Seven Wise Men can make a man young?"

Silent, the Seven looked at each other, fiddling their fingers and toying nervously with their dragonian rings, emblem of the immortality, that they believed in but lacked. The Dragon, swallowing his tail, the never ending, ever beginning, symbol of fadeless youth, made the golden ring sacred to the Seven and to their Emperor who had a ring like theirs, (only his was carved from a single garnet, while theirs were only gold).

Then the ruler from his throne commanded that seven of his slaves be brought in, and these he had his Chief Executioner kill in seven various ways, by the silken cord, decapitation, the bleeding from the wrists, the pouring of molten lead in the ear, the golden needle stuck slowly past the eyeball, the placing of one drop of poison on the tongue, and, finally, the frightful death by command, wherein the Mighty Ruler orders that the man die, and he dies from fear of being disobedient.

The seven dead bodies of the slaves lay stretched on the floor of the palace, and the Emperor rose and whispered,

"I can give death, but I cannot make myself live on till I see the ending of Mo. Listen, Seven Wise Men; am I Ruler?"

The seven bowed low before him.

"Then pay attention. Meet me in three months, and at that time tell me how to prolong my life tenfold so I can glory in the conquering of the country that I hate so much. Do this, or I shall kill the Seven Wise Men, and other men will take their place and wear their dragonian rings. And the manner of your death shall not be as easy, as was that of the seven slaves. But you shall be weeks in the ending of life, and all the time you shall have due cause to reflect over your lack of intellect, in that you could not make me live on long enough to glory in the fall of Mo. You are all wise men, and you have worked well for the Land of Gobi, but all of your wisdom will not suffice unless you give this immortality to me."

The High Priest's Story

THEY bowed their heads and withdrew from his presence, stepping aside so that their silken robes should not touch the dead bodies of those who had died to teach them how they could go on living.

Other slaves came and removed the carrion, and the Nobles left the great hall. At the last, only the Emperor sat there. He rang a gong, and at that summons came the High Priest, a man who knew all the wisdom of the Gods, and what he did not know he would not admit. And the Emperor permitted him to sit near him.

“Tell me again, Norazus,” the Emperor asked, “about the dragon, whose ring I wear.”

“This dragon lives far to the North of Gobi,” the High Priest began. “He lives perpetually, with his tail in his mouth, thus, never reaching either an ending or a beginning, but going in a circle, which is an emblem of eternity, of immemorial, immortal life. Yet is he nothing like everlasting, for every seventh year he lays seven eggs in the sands of the desert, and of these seven he selects one which he swallows, hatching it out in the heat of his stomach, and when it ripens, the new dragon eats the old one and emerges from his inner gut, but in his body is the soul of the old dragon and in his head the wisdom of the ages. And, thus, is the life of the dragon renewed every seven years by means of a new body, but the skin of the old dragon lies dried and bloodless on the ever shifting sands.”

“A pretty tale, Norazus, but is it true?”

The two men looked at each other. Then the Priest whispered:

“What if I showed you eggs of the dragon, some of the six that he discards and leaves to turn to stone in the sand?”

“Eggs or stone, what boots it ? How can you tell the dragon egg from the giant auk, or the dodo, or other birds that my wise men prate of?”

“Some things must be taken on faith.”

“What is that? A bubble for children. We are wise. I wear this dragon ring, because it is the emblem of power. My Father and his before him wore this ring, but we must seek elsewhere for life everlasting. The dragon may know how to renew himself, but we cannot use his power.”

“Have you benefited from the daily blood of a new born child ?”

“Not much. In fact, I fear that it has harmed my appetite. The meals are not as good as they were before I took this tonic. Several times I have belched, making necessary the death of my cook.

No, Norazus, let us wait till the Seven Wise Men report on their method of prolonging life. Whatever they advise, I will share it with you and with them. But we shall never learn the secret of the Dragon or of the Salamander or of the Phoenix, who buildeth a fire for a new life through the burning of the old body. Not in such forms must we seek added years. And I must live to see the ending of Mo.”

At that time there were three great Empires in the world. Atlantis occupied all of the land west of Ireland, an island reaching far west, till from its furthest shores the coast of America showed as a purple haze on the horizon. From this country went emigrants to Egypt, Greece and the other countries of the Barbarians, bordering on the Great Sea.

The Empire of Mo filled in all the great waste that is now covered by the waves of the Pacific. To the west, it was separated from Asia by three hundred miles of water, but on its eastern borders it was almost in touch with Central America. It had colonies all through North and South America, but the largest of these were in Central America. Some of these colonies were commercial, others were to spread the service of the All-Good-God, whom they worshiped diligently, and one, in the valley of the Colorado River, where Arizona now stands, was intended for a city of refuge, if at some future time (as the dismal priests believed) all of Mo should be destroyed.

The third great Empire was Gobi. This kingdom occupied all of Asia, at that time a low land, covered with fertile plains and dark forests. There were little rolling hills, but the Himalayas still slumbered unborn in the womb of the earth.

Of these three countries, one gave, before its destruction, of its learning to Egypt, which, in turn, made the culture of Greece possible. Mo, most brilliant of all three, as far as learning was concerned, died so quickly that nothing remained save a dim memory in the places where once her peoples had ruled in their might; while Gobi, shattered by a grim cataclysm, managed to live on in the desperate cold and barbarous country of Thibet. The three lands died together; man lived, forced by circumstance to forget all that these countries ever knew and learn it all over again. Gradually, humanity rose in the scale of civilization, and by the time fourteen thousand years had passed, man had relearned perhaps half of what he knew before he had destroyed the three fairest empires that the world had ever seen.

CHAPTER II – The Wise Men Found One

AT the end of three months the great men of Gobi met again, but this time no plenteous splendor marked their gathering. Secretly, they met by night in the bowels of the earth, many feet under the Palace, in a room that only a few of each generation knew of and which none ever dared to name above a whisper. It was a room of black marble. Around the walls were nine dragons of red stone, and from their eyes came a glow that lit the room. In the belly of each dragon was a seat. Thus, there was a seat for the Emperor and one for each of the Seven Wise Men and one for the High Priest, and on the floor sat a blond man of about thirty. His eyes were blue and his hair flaxen, and there was an unafraid look on his face, for on him there were neither bonds nor fetters.

The Chief of the Navy of Gobi began the tale of the stranger.

“Oh! Most Illustrious Emperor, Representative of the Dragon in human form, Wearer of the ring: when you commanded us to find for you the secret of longevity if not even that of immortality, each of us went his varied way to find the answer to your command. To me came the inspiration to search the sea between our land and Mo, in the hope, that among the prisoners whom I might capture, there would be a man of learning in the art and sciences of the cursed country of our enemies. In order to examine those whom we captured, I took in our fleet one of our learned men and other men, skilled in obtaining the truth from such persons, no matter how unwilling they are to disclose it. We cruised for some weeks, and took several vessels which had sailed too far from Mo for their safety. Of those whom we captured, we killed the most, either as ignorant folk, or else stubborn ones who died when the tormentors began to work on them. However, we were fortunate in obtaining one of their physicians, who, when he found what we wanted, claimed the power to lengthen life. This man you see here; if his ability is equal to his boasts, he can satisfy our desires to prolong the life of your Highness.”

Heracles

THE Emperor looked thoughtfully into the face of the young man.

After a long pause he asked :

“Have any of you Seven Wise Men questioned him to find wherein his power to prolong life lies?” “We have done so, Your Highness,” replied the Royal Physician, he who knew more about the healing arts than any other man in the realm. “I talked over the matter with him.”

“And what opinion did you arrive at concerning his method?”

“It has all the elements of philosophical truth in it.”

“But will it really work to the lengthening of life ?”

“That cannot be said without a trial.”

Again silence, filled with suspense, covered those in the mystic room, the sacred Hall of the Dragons. And then the Emperor asked the young man: “Are you a man from the land of Mo?”

“No, I come from far away Atlantis.”

“How came you in a ship of Mo?”

“Years ago, as a child, I Was taken prisoner from my home, and since then I have lived in Mo. They thought that they saw in me astonishing aptness to be a physicker and a dealer in drugs and magical healings; so, they taught me all that they knew, and, of all the young men in their college of medicine, none knew more than I did. And when I was taken by your ship, I was voyaging to a far land to heal a mighty man of his disease.”

“So, you have no tie of love for Mo ?”

“Why should I, when they killed my family and took me from the home of my childhood?”

“Would you Stay with us?”

“One place now is as good as another, since I cannot be a free man.”

“But suppose I make you free? Give you a place at my right hand?”

“It would all depend on what was in your right hand,” answered the young physician, and there was no fear in his eye as he said it. “For I have been in the presence of the King of Mo and I have seen mighty ones sit at his right hand and die there, from poisoned: wine and the silken cord around their neck.”

The Emperor frowned, for even so did great men die in Gobi.

“Can you make me live beyond the age of common men?” he finally asked, and in his words was a great longing for. Years sufficient to see the ending of Mo.

“I can.”

“How ?”

The young man eased himself on the floor and then spoke his answer.

“The life of the working bee is six weeks. It works that long and then it dies. Mo is full of flowers, and the bee is there a sacred insect, and for centuries the Royal Bee-keepers have studied the habits and manners and diseases of these bees in the Royal Hives. So they know that the working bees live six weeks. But the Queen Bee lives for five and sometimes six years, and all those years she is lively and full of vigor and does her work in the world of bees with a healthy constitution. Long years ago this difference

was seen in the relative age of these bees, and the men who worked with the bees tried to lengthen the lives of the workers so that more honey could be produced. But no one was able to tell why; one bee lived six weeks and another five years. And then I was told of the question and how the wise men had failed to solve it, and I worked on the matter, and now I know why the Queen lives so long. It is all a matter of the food that she eats from the time that she first crawls from the broken egg shell. This feed, the queen jelly, has in it the elements of immortality. I think if she were protected from the younger Queens, she would never die, but the time comes when she is killed, and perhaps that is best for the hive — but, at least, she lives a life that is nearly two and fifty times as long as the existence of the working, bee, who eats what he can and when he can, and dies after six ‘weeks of toil.’”

And thus, as the young man came to the end of his talking, the Emperor replied:

“Would such food work on a man?”

“I think so.”

“But how could it be made in quantities to keep a man alive? We have no bees in Gobi, and if we had, it would take large numbers of hives to make a meal for a man.”

“When I studied this queen-jelly, I made thereof an analysis, and found of it the various components and their amounts and the formula of the making. I can take the blood of a bull and the fat of geese and the oil of the turtle and the flesh of certain fish, and, by a way that I know of, I can make a food in abundance that will do even as the food of the hive. This food I have tried with creeping things and flying things and little mice, and all of them thrive on it and their life appears to be greatly lengthened. This I can make here in Gobi, if I have a place to work and dishes of glass and of gold and all the parts of the formula brought to me. And I will make the food, and this food you shall drink and eat and nothing else. Some of it I will flavor and serve solid, and others will seem like wine, with the perfume of the vine and the poppy, and in every way your thirst and your hunger shall be satisfied, but this only shall you eat and drink and nothing else.”

“You shall have what you need to work with!” swore the Emperor with a horrible oath, “and I shall eat and drink of the food and so shall these Seven Wise Men, and so shall this High Priest, and so shall you. We ten will eat and drink of this food, and we shall see the ending of Mo and the destruction of our enemy, and because of this thing you shall have great honor and shall sit at my right hand, and all the people shall reverence you. I will give you land and places of beauty and things to delight your soul, and you shall be the child of my old age, and the ten of us shall one day gather here in this Sacred

place to hear of the ending of Mo. And now, you Seven Wise Men, harken unto me, and do as I command, for, even though your bellies are filled with this bee food, yet, can your throats be cut as easily as ever. Give this Physicker all that he demands, satisfy his every desire, aid him in every way. Do this first, and after that, use all your power for the hastening of the destruction of Mo, for life will be tiresome to me, so long as they rule in splendor all over the South Seas and deny me the right to levy taxes and take tribute from them.”

Thus, the meeting came to an end, and all of the Seven went and worshiped their special Gods because a way had been found to prolong their Lord’s life and thus permit them to live longer with their sons and their wives.

Heracles, the wise young physician from Mo, was given a place of his own, with special rooms to work in and others for him to live, and all of the wealth and wisdom of Gobi went to aid him in his work. Assigned to help him were certain young men, who labored for him as he commanded, but the final preparation of the food was done in secret. At the ending of the third month the first supply of food was made and ready to feed the ten, who were appointed to eat of it. In every way it was delicate and delicious and dainty in its taste and smell and in the pleasure that it gave to the tongue and the palate. The Emperor was pleased, and sent a dozen dancing girls to Heracles as a present, and each girl bore on her body jewels that would have served as a King’s ransom. Heracles put the jewels in a place that he knew of and the girls in his harem and promptly forgot about both, for he was engaged in a mighty work.

After that, the Emperor and the Seven Wise Men and the Priest ate all their meals together, though, after he found that the food was healthful and not in any way poison, the Emperor would at times excuse the Physician from attending at meat with the others, as he knew how hard he was working, preparing food for all of them. And yet this absence from the Royal table caused the Emperor sadness on account of the great love that he was holding for the young physician.

CHAPTER III – Counter Plans

MEANTIME, the wealth and manpower of Gobi was working as it had never done before. To the North and West lay the Kingdom of Gobi, while to the South and East, for more miles than man could measure, was the beautiful land of Mo. Sixty million men and women of power lived in that land, besides untold slaves and common folk. Between the two lands rolled three hundred miles of ocean. Neither country could transport armies

large enough to conquer the other; each grew in greatness and wealth and hatred of the other. They knew of Atlantis, the third kingdom, but that land gave neither of them concern, for her ways were peaceful and her ambitions more in the conquest of art than of other nations.

Gobi determined to destroy Mo.

Mo brooded over the ending of Gobi.

Each used all the skill and energy and determination that it possessed toward the accomplishment of its purpose, and, while each had a partial idea of the plans of the other, they both laughed at the impending danger, because it seemed so fantastic.

The plan that Gobi was working out was simple and yet gigantic in its scope. It was nothing more or less than to blow her enemy to pieces. Tradition and the ancient wise men whispered of large caverns under the land of Mo, huge reservoirs, ten miles under the surface of the land, and these were filled with explosive and inflammable gases. It was believed that the entire land of Mo rested on a thin crust of earth, and that beneath that crust were vast caves, large caverns, tremendous open spaces, filled only with threats and sullen murmurings from the hidden fires that lived silently so many miles below. Mo was existing on a living Hell. Unconscious of her danger, she laughed and sang and loved, while beneath her a scarlet doom waited, with endless patience, the signal for its release. This was the way that the land of Mo was built and on this fact the Seven Wise Men of Gobi formed all their hopes. Their plan was simple in its scope, though it would take years in its working. It was nothing more or less than a tunnel under that three hundred miles of ocean, and then from that tunnel a dozen side tunnels, till all of the land of Mo was burrowed under, even as a mole works in a garden after worms. Then, at the end, deep shafts were to be sunk, till the fire of the Pit made, it impossible to work longer, and in these pits powder was to be put, not just pounds or yet tons, but all of each of the twenty-seven vast pits were to be filled with explosive, and the lateral tunnels, were also to be filled, and even part of the tunnel under the sea.

And this powder was not the kind that is made of saltpeter, but was of a power that was so great in its might that even the men of Gobi dreaded it; no greater punishment could be given a criminal than to be sentenced to work in the houses where it was made.

All the dirt from these tunnels had to be carried back to the mouth of the tunnel in the land of Gobi, and there it was piled in long rows, and the mountains thus made are still to be seen in parts of Asia, though few knew how they came there.

The finishing of this tunnel and the placing of the powder would take thirty years, but the actual exploding of the powder would be but the time of the taking of a deep breath, though it would take a day for the final distant charges to be exploded, such was the great distance to the far parts of the land.

Only a part of the destruction would be accomplished by the powder's exploding. The flames from this would light the large caverns of lethal gases, and these would explode and blast holes into the very Pits of Bottomless despair, and from these pits would come the fire of Hell, and what that fire would do to the hated land of Mo could hardly be guessed at.

Part of this plan had reached Mo through its secret spy system, but it was so fantastic, so peculiarly impossible in its greatness that little attention was paid to it. Besides, the inhabitants knew that it would take years for Gobi to dig such tunnels under their land and under the far corners of their kingdom, and before that time had come they had a very pleasant surprise to hand to Gobi, which would make the wise men of that land have plenty to worry about, besides spending an eternity of years, digging tunnels under the sea.

For there were also wise men in Mo. Perhaps their wise men were possessed of more wisdom than the Seven Wise Men of Gobi, though at the present when, fourteen thousand years have passed since both lands died and lost their wisdom, it is hard to evaluate such a delicate matter as the intelligence of a nation. However, what happened nearly confirmed the boast of Mo, that they would win a victory over their enemies before those enemies could come to an end of their tunnel.

Now, it is an interesting fact that the men of Gobi knew of the plans of Mo just as the men of Mo knew of the plans of Gobi. Each had a partial idea of how the enemy was going to attack and each felt that the schemes were impracticable and foolish. For it is no wonder that the Seven Wise Men made a special report to the Emperor of Gobi and in that report told him that Mo would try to destroy them, but that the method was an impossible one and opposed to all the known laws of nature. To be brief, Mo intended, to have the laws of gravity set aside for a brief period over the entire land of Gobi, with the result that the land, no longer held down by gravity or the weight of the atmosphere, would leap into the air and leave the entire kingdom miles above the ocean in an atmosphere of bitter cold, where pleasure would cease and men would be so occupied with fighting the winter that no time or energy would remain for the pursuit of pleasure or the softer recreations of life. The People of Gobi would have neither time nor energy

for building tunnels to destroy Mo. If they remained in their former land, they would have to fight the cold; if they left it, they would have to fight the Barbarians. Meantime, the gentlefolk of Mo would continue to live in pleasure and a warm place under the tropical sun.

Thus, each country lived in what proved to be a fool's Paradise.

Yet, not all, for the Emperor of Mo had built in the far East a special retreat and a place of refuge, and there he and his rich men and their wives went for six months every year, when the summer sun was the warmest in Mo. Many centuries before, it had been foretold that when Mo was destroyed, it would be during the period of intense heat; and now for several decades the chosen few protected themselves against such a fate, even though they laughingly told each other that it was impossible.

The plans of the wise men of Mo were not as fantastic as might be imagined. Even today, in our dense ignorance, there are East Indians who can suspend themselves in the air in absolute defiance of the laws of gravitation. If a man can do this now in our dark ages, why should not a field or a forest do the same at that time when men knew many things of which we are ignorant? At least, what really happened was this. Heracles had not come to Gobi by accident. His capture was simply a part of the plans of the conspirators of Mo. Had he not been captured on ship board, he would have come to Gobi anyway. His ability, to make the life-prolonging bee jelly was just a happy incident, something happy in its occurrence, but, at the same time, such was the wisdom of this young man that had almost anything else been asked of him, he would have been able to give a satisfactory answer. He had come to Gobi to lift that unhappy country three miles or more into the air; his making of the bee food simply made it easier for him to carry out his plans. Now, as the trusted friend of the Emperor, in fact, as the man who was making his royal food, he had full access to every part of the Kingdom of Gobi.

Heracles' Plan

IT is easily told what Heracles did. How he obtained his results cannot even be guessed at, but there is this to say, that if any wise man of today duplicated his experiment, there would be no similar result; so, it must be true that this man of Mo knew something that the scientists of today do not know. All that Heracles did was to set aside a room, and in that room no one came but himself. In that room he built, with his own hands, a table on four legs, and the top of the table was near the floor. The legs were telescoped so that when air was released into them from a tank, where it was stored under pressure, the table

slowly rose into the air till it came near the ceiling of the high room. On the top of this table, Heracles built, out of sand and stone and little painted pieces of wood, a replica, or relief map, of the Empire of Gobi. When the time came, he intended to raise the table, and even as the table rose in the air, so would the entire land of his enemies rise.

The plan was perfect, and, yet, at the very end a little thing destroyed the perfect consummation of it, and allowed matters to end as they did.

To select this room, to secretly build the table and the tank and the apparatus for compressing the air and to make a perfect duplicate of the Kingdom of Gobi on the top of the table, took time. Even in his moments of greatest fancied security, Heracles could not relax his caution one moment. Every piece of wood and metal had to be carried into the room under his flowing robes, or at the dead of night, and, at times, a year passed without his being able to even enter the room, for often the Emperor insisted on trips of inspection to the far corners of the Kingdom, and on these trips he was careful to see to it that the Seven Wise Men and the Priest and the Physician accompanied him.

Meantime, the years passed. The special food, the nourishment of Queen-bees, the only nutriment of the Emperor and the Wise Men, was working admirably in every way. The Emperor was not only retaining his original age, but he seemed to be growing younger. It was rumored that the High Priest, who had been nearly ninety at the beginning of the experiment, had become a father through the aid of one of the ladies of the Temple. There was no doubt about the rejuvenating value of the food. Thirty years had passed.

These years had not been idle. Thousands of men worked to destroy Mo, while one man patiently worked to destroy Gobi. Meantime, the Emperor of Mo spent more and more time in his special retreat under the mountains of Arizona. In a Royal trireme, he would sail east till he came to the mouth of a large river, the one that is now called the Colorado. Up this he would sail to a harbor, from which place the royal elephants would carry him and his escort to the mouth of a tunnel. There, he changed to litters, carried on the shoulders of slaves, and for twenty-seven miles under the massive mountains, the slaves would walk on a pavement of red sandstone through a tunnel, illumined by the torches of marble slaves who patiently stood in almost endless rows. The light from their torches never varied, and was cold. Since then, the secret of a cold light has never been rediscovered.

At the end of the twenty-seven miles, there came an end to the tunnel, and there, in a natural crater was built the splendid royal city. It was a small place, there being room at most for a hundred of the nobility and their servants. But in that little city was the

wealth of the land of Mo. For seven hundred years each Emperor had carried there his finest treasures and left them there. Such was the place in which the great men of Mo waited for the prophecy to come true; from there, every six months, they returned to Mo, glad that another year of safety had passed over them.

CHAPTER IV – Heracles is Ready

YEARLY, and half yearly, Heracles sent messages to the King's Councilors at the capital of Mo, reporting his progress and warning of the dangers that threatened the country, but concerning most of these warnings, little attention was given, while the certainty of the destruction of Gobi was fully believed and occasioned much joy.

Finally, at a meeting of the Wise Men of Gobi and the Emperor, the time for the finishing of the tunnels and the exploding of the powder was determined, and it was announced that in one year this would take place. This announcement filled Heracles with boundless determination to finish his work and, thus, prevent the destruction of Mo, by first hoisting Gobi into an eternity of cold and snow. Of the work that he was doing, little remained unfinished. One or two more nights would see an ending of the preparation, and then Gobi would be destroyed.

But not at once.

Heracles was not content with simple destruction. The years of study, the sacrifice of a lifetime among strangers had filled him with the determination for a deeper and more terrible vengeance than simply the freezing of his enemies. For thirty years he had plotted this vengeance; for all those years he had studied and planned and experimented, and now he was prepared to begin a deed that would strike terror to all the people, and, in after years, when it became known, would place the name of Heracles, the Physician of Mo, among the names of the Great of the whole Earth.

During these thirty years he had fed the Emperor and his Seven Wise Men' and the High Priest. He had fed them and given them drink and nothing passed their lips save what he prepared for them. Years of wonderful health, boundless vitality and splendid vigor gave these men the greatest confidence in the honesty and integrity of the man who fed them. Now, Heracles, with their fate in his hands, prepared for them a future that was so different from what they had expected that not even their wildest dreams could anticipate it.

And in preparation for this fate he held a long secret converse with his friend, the Emperor, and warned him of the danger of the explosions that they were going to make.

Once the bowels of the earth were teased till they vomited fire, it was hard to tell where the trouble would end. Would it not be best to prepare the Hall of the Dragons with beds and food and all necessary luxuries, and retire there with his Wise Men before the electric spark was fired? Would it not be wise to have the wires run into the Hall of the Dragon so that the Emperor himself could have the joy of personally pressing the golden button and, thus, all by himself, have the satisfaction of blowing the Hell of the Bottomless Pits into the faces of his enemies of Mo?

The Emperor was delighted with the plan. He agreed to all that was suggested. He even went further and arranged for a month of entertainment in the Hall of the Dragon, consisting of feasting and amusements, and the delightful killing of slaves in strange and unusual ways, and he gave orders that for all that month he and his Seven Wise Men and the Priest and a few of the Nobles should lie on golden couches, on pads of goose feathers, covered with fine velvets and silks, and there, they would drink the wine and eat the bee-food that their friend, Heracles, prepared for them. And, when the time came, the golden button would be pressed and Mo would be destroyed. And when it was safe, they would go to the sea-shore and sail over the land of their enemies to see for themselves the deadly fate that their energy and hatred had prepared for them.

Now all was to the liking of Heracles. A month of drunkenness, during which he would work his final plans. Then, on the day before the pressing of the button, Gobi would move slowly into the air — and what cared Heracles how long the Emperor of Gobi and his advisers lived, so long as they lived the life that he prepared for them?

Thus, at the beginning of the debauch, Heracles changed the food. It tasted and had the fragrance of the former food and wine, and it still contained large amounts of the Bee-jelly, but, in addition, there was opium added to lull their senses and allay their suspicion, and hyoscine to make their dreams more pleasant, and, finally, a secret compound, made from the internal glands of actual men and women, collected carefully during all these years from the bodies of slaves and criminals condemned to death.

And this medicine, given in proper doses, melted the bones of those who took it, so that finally they became boneless bags of skin, within which bags they lived and thought but could not move, simply lying where they were placed till someone placed them in a different shape.

Men in their normal minds would know of the changes taking place in their bones; men, walking or taking exercise, would have fractures and strange changes in their shape, due to the gradual weakening and bending of their long bones. But men who lay in a long

drunk for a month, dull with opium and pleased with drug dreams, would gradually weaken and become helpless without knowing what was happening to them.

This was the final revenge of Heracles, to turn these men into boneless horrors, men without skeletons, jelly fishes of humanity, helpless in their despairing terror — and they would not die! That was the beauty of it — that they would live on forever, like the Queen bee. In their system was food, concentrated and powerful, to keep them alive a thousand years, yet, what would such a life mean to them?

And Heracles, in his joy, visioned these helpless men in the Hall of the Dragons, hurled thousands of feet into the air. He saw them, living in a palace, cold and cheerless, with the damp of doom at noonday turned into a freezing, living death of cold, as soon as the weakened sun dropped behind the Western mountains. There they would live, perhaps worshipped and cared for as Gods by a few shivering mountaineers, perhaps neglected and forgotten, but, no matter what happened, they would never die. That was the beauty of it — the fact that they would keep on living. He was going to send them up, up, up in the air, so high that there would be no wolves to tear their boneless bodies and so cold that no flies would larvate in their helpless nostrils. Perhaps for a year or so he would visit them and talk over matters with them, or he might even induce the Emperor of Mo to come on an excursion and see for himself the fate that had come to those who plotted the destruction of Mo.

A Little Accident

SO, to the Bee-food and the opium and the hyoscine was added the juice of the internal glands of thousands of criminals and slaves. The entertainment began, and the Emperor of Gobi was happy in that he had such a wise physician and such a long life ahead of him, and such a fine ending to Mo, and such lovely women and such a skillful High Executioner, who could think of so many new and novel ways of killing men slowly. They laughed and loved and drank and stupidly thrilled over the men who died in front of them for their entertainment, not once realizing that their bones were slowly being dissolved within them, for each day Heracles increased the dose of the opium.

Across the Hall of the Dragons, Heracles had his seat of honor. He, only, of all those in the hall, could come and go, for the Emperor had given command that of all who came into the hall at the onset of the month, none should leave it till the golden button was pressed — that is, none except the dead slaves and those who killed them. And Heracles sat there, day after day, and he saw his enemies weaken from the disease, now

known as Osteomalacia, but the servants and the Queens and those servants who were shapely enough to comfort the Emperor by serving as pillows for him and his Wise Men, these servants and dancing girls were spared the disease and simply lived on in a phantasmagoria thinking that the growing incapacity of the Emperor and the other great men was simply the reaction, born of surfeit and drunkenness.

Then, on the twenty-eighth day, when Heracles knew that all of his plans were ready, he lessened the dose of the opium and thus allowed the drugged men to come to their senses, and, preparing food and wine in abundance, he left the Hall of the Dragons, and, cautioning the guards to let no one in or out, he retired to his palace, there to finish the destruction of the hated country.

When he had shut and barred and doublelocked the room in his Castle, wherein stood the table with the map of Gobi on it, he had left everything in readiness for the debacle. The tank was full of compressed air; from it a tube ran, divided finally in such a way that each of its four parts connected with the hollow of the telescopic legs. The joints of these legs had been carefully oiled with grease obtained by boiling the bodies of slaves. On the table was the finished map, perfect in every detail. A turn of the screw loosened the compressed air, the pressure of which would raise the map thirty feet into the air. As the map would rise, so would all of Gobi.

The secret of such scientific magic is now lost to mankind, but it can be guessed that Heracles possessed a knowledge of fluid pressures that has never been matched.

This much we know, that the pressure of the air in each of these little tubes, was, by his devices multiplied billion fold by a force under the surface of Gobi aided by powerful volcanic gases, so that when the table was lifted, the force of the gases under Gobi, proportionately great, lifted the country.

Heracles left all in readiness when he left. Now he came back.

He turned on the screw, and there was a hiss of air. Nothing happened.

For a very little and unexpected and unheard of something, even, had taken place during the twentyeight days that the chamber had been tenantless. A little hungry mouse had wandered into the room, and for some reason had taken a fancy to the taste of the fiber tube, through which the air passed, and during many hours that mouse had eaten of the tube in many places, little holes, hardly to be seen, but large enough to prevent the tube from holding the air.

Heracles for all his wisdom had not been able to foresee this mouse. Now, with but two days at his command, the entire plan was ruined unless he could repair the tube.

It was useless to try and make a new one. There was nothing else to do except to work, and this he did, tirelessly, systematically, persistently, repairing hole after hole. But, even with all his ability, the tube remained weak and not fully worthy of trust, and, finally, when the full pressure of air was turned into it, it still leaked so that it was not sufficient to raise the table. So, Heracles spent more precious hours, refilling the tank with compressed air, and then he did the only thing that he could do. He took part of the map off the table to lighten the load. Thus, all of the map, representing what is now Southern China and Burmah and the lower part of India, was taken off the table, and shared no part in the cataclysm that befell the rest of Gobi.

Then, finally, all was ready, yet, in this delay many valuable hours had been wasted, and Heracles stood there, swaying from fatigue and nervous tire and worry, and beneath his hand lay the screw that, turning, would destroy Gobi.

Yet, he waited.

And suddenly he heard a dull roar and then another and another, like a distant thunder storm, and he sickened, for he knew that he had waited too long.

There being nothing to do, he turned the screw and sent the full force of air into the legs of the table. It worked, and up went the map of Gobi into the air; but one leg was weaker than the rest; so, the table rose unevenly, and there was some sliding and slithering of the earth forming the map.

Heracles felt himself moving, slowly, as the palace he was in went up, because all of the land under it was in upward motion. It was a slow movement and hard to realize in that part of Gobi, for all of the land for thousands of square miles was going upward in perfect harmony. There was no way, in that part of the country to detect the movement save by the gradual increase in the coldness of the air.

The Boneless Horrors

HERACLES knew that his experiment had been a success.

Yet, from far away, there came the rolling thunder, and with a sickening sense of failure he knew that he had been a little late and that already Mo was sinking under the tormented waves of the Great Ocean.

Sighing, he put on heavy furs that he had prepared against this hour, and walked slowly through the deserted streets of the great city. Here and there a small house had fallen, but all of the royal palaces remained as they had been. For the most part the people, accustomed to a semi-tropical climate, were seeking warmth in their houses. Thus, the

streets were deserted. On, the great Physician went, to the Royal Palace and on, to the Hall of the Dragons. There he found the guard on duty, but almost numb from the cold. With pity in his heart, he bade them seek warmth if they could find it. Then he went into the inner Hall of the Dragons, where he knew that, helpless, lay the Emperor of Gobi and his Seven Wise Men and his High Priest, and perhaps with them would be a few of the Queens, but of this he was in doubt.

While Heracles had been working in almost a frenzy to repair the air tube, the Emperor and his advisers had slowly regained their normal senses. Almost dazed, it was hard for them to realize what had happened to them, but of one thing they knew and that was the useless state of their bodies for a strange sense of helplessness overcame them, and all efforts to move but resulted in a peculiar writhing and a sad changing in their shape, with no progression.

The Emperor was no fool. While unable to know what had really happened to him, he had no difficulty in determining who was at the bottom of it. Only one man in all Gobi could work such a wonder as the dissolving of a man's bones in his body! He looked upward and saw that he was being supported on cushions, held by his favorite wife, and, not daring to speak, he made signs with his eyes that he should be lifted up a little. She did so, but slowly, for the sudden bending of that which had been his backbone caused fearful pains to shoot through him, which nearly killed him with the dreadful agony.

The woman wiped the sweat from his face, and he looked around him, and there on the divans he saw the men who had been his counselors, and they lay in odd shapes, like leather bags full of thin sausage, and on the faces of all of them was a Hell of despair, for that something had come over them, and they knew not what it was, save that they could not move and were growing cold, and realized that they could not die.

And, one by one, the women took the gold and the silver and the precious gems and fled from the accursed place, and only one remained. She held the head of the Emperor and tried to ease him of his pain, for she was his favorite wife and was going to bear him a son.

The Emperor tried to remember what it was all about and how he had come to this depth of trouble and then he recalled his bitter hate and knew that Mo still remained undestroyed, and he breathed harshly, and his woman knew that he desired to talk; so she put her pink shell near his mouth, and with a great effort he told her to press the golden button. This thing she did.

Thus, Mo was destroyed by the dainty fingers of a slave woman, who had no name and was simply there and faithful to the Emperor, while all others left him, because she loved him and was to bear him a son.

And in the room it grew colder, and the woman gathered the rugs and the silken sheets and she wrapped each jelly fish of a man up as warmly as she could, but the warmest things she put around the Emperor. There the nine lay, boneless and unable to die, and the breath from their nostrils congealed like steam in the frosty air.

Thus, Heracles found them.

He sat down by the Emperor and told the story of what he had done and how he had planned that his enemies should live on for centuries, filled with the long life of the bee-jelly and boneless, because of the gland-juice that he had given. The Emperor heard it all, but was soundless and motionless, yet in his eyes was a look of hatred that only a great man can devise, and in his heart was a deep content, for he knew from the rolling thunder that Mo was being destroyed.

Meantime it grew colder.

The woman, shivering, feared for her unborn son...

A Changed World

MO was being blown to pieces. The damage done by the thousands of tons of powder was only a small part of the harm done to that fair land. The buried gases, exploding, tore the deep rocks into a million fragments, and all over Mo volcanoes burst into activity. Tidal waves overflowed the land, lava buried it. Sixty million people were drowned, burned or suffocated with the poisonous fumes. A continent was destroyed, leaving scattered islands as small fragments — Borneo on one side and the Easter Islands on the other — Australia to the south was formed, arid, cheerless, a fit home for Bushmen. Some of the citizens of Mo survived on the mountain peaks, hurled upward, as in the Hawaiian group, but their culture, temples, wealth and even their tradition were hopelessly lost.

The Emperor of Mo, with his favorite wives and nobles, was feasting in their small city of refuge. The shock of the cataclysm reached them even in that far away rock-bound enclosure. They feasted on, each man and woman pretending to his neighbors at the banquet table that the sound was thunder.

The banquet passed on through the night, and the next day a breathless messenger arrived with news that could only be given to the Emperor, and this news was whispered

in the royal ear, as the great man sat at the head of the table. He, shivering, commanded a certain wine to be served and ordered in all seriousness that a health be drunk to their beloved land of Mo, and all of the great men and their lovely women drank of this wine and then sat down and died, and their servants fled in terror to press on into the desert, where they died in various ways.

Fourteen thousand years later three prospectors, typical desert rats of Arizona, prospected for gold near the Colorado River. One day, while working in a twenty-nine foot shaft, one of them drove his pick through the roof of what seemed to be an abandoned mine-shaft. It was paved with square, beveled stones, fastened together with cement. These stones had the appearance of great age. Descending into this shaft with torches, they followed it for twenty-eight miles and came to a buried city. There they found many old buildings, one of which was a circular chamber. In it was a large table of marble, around which sat the dead, dried bodies of seventy-two persons, all over six feet tall, with blue eyes, and white skin, and the flesh was white and firm, being preserved in some wonderful manner. On these dead bodies was wonderful jewelry, but most of the clothing had fallen into dust. In another large room were the dead bodies of over two hundred women who looked as though they were lovely in their day, and this place the desert rats thought might have been a harem. Throughout the city there were peculiar trap doors and all kinds interesting levers and mechanisms, the use of which was hard to determine.

Taking a lot of the jewelry with them, they sought civilization to secure help in the exploration of the city. When they returned, a freshet of the Colorado had covered the opening of the tunnel with sand, and they were unable to locate it.

Thus died the great land of Mo.

The fair country of Atlantis had no enemies. It lived only for pleasure and art. From Ireland to the shores of America it lay in the sunshine. Then one day a continent across the globe was destroyed. A terrific shifting of balance of weight took place; large tidal waves rolled from one sea to the other and suddenly the continent of Atlantis was swallowed up by the water of the Atlantic Ocean, and, thus, a kindly lovable people paid the price of the hatred between two nations that they had never harmed. So perished the second of these great lands.

Where Gobi once ruled supreme, now rule the Himalayas. These mountains, the greatest in the world, run nineteen hundred miles from east to west and an average of ninety miles from north to south. They cover a total of one hundred and sixty thousand square miles. Of these mountains, the greatest peak. Mount Everest, reaches upward to

the sky twenty-nine thousand one hundred and forty feet above the sea. Level. Immense sections of these mountains are inaccessible to modern man. Mount Everest remains unconquered.

Hidden in the tops of these mountains, unknown to man save by tradition, lies the ancient capitol of the lost Empire of Gobi. Half frozen Tartars, insect ridden Lamas, barbarians of every description remain as the sole descendants of what was once a great people. Even the memory of their former greatness has been lost in the changing struggles of fourteen thousand years. If they are asked how old these mountains are, they will reply that they have always been there. How could they know that once all this land was lowland, forest land, a pleasant country for rich folk to live in? How could they know of the physician from Mo and his magical table and map thereon?

Yet, amid those mountains, lies the ancient city and the Hall of Dragons. There, on their silken cushions, their beds of goosefeather, lie the boneless Emperor and the boneless Seven Wise Men, and, though their bodies are chilled with the frost of centuries, yet, would there come a pleasant day of springtime, with blossoming almond trees and a warm, gentle shower, those frozen hearts would once again send pulsing life through those boneless sacks, for full of the Jelly food of the Queen-bee they can never die, at least, not for a long, long time.

On the floor in front of the Emperor, lies the body of Heracles, dead of a dagger, thrust by the nervous hand of the woman beloved by the Emperor. The body of the physician, frozen, decays not.

Neither does the body of the beloved woman.

And, frozen in her body, lies the unborn Prince of Gobi, last of a royal line that dared all for their hatred of a bitter enemy.

Thus, perished Gobi