



SPONSORED BY  
THE ARTHRITIS TRUST  
OF AMERICA

BROOD WORLD BARBARIAN

1

*Adapted from the story published in If magazine, 1969, Frederick Pohl, Editor, and also in Isaac Asimov's Superman edited by Isaac Asimov, Martin H. Greenberg, and Charles G. Waugh, Nightfall, Inc., Signet, New American Library, 1984.*

## **Brood World Barbarian**

by  
Perry A. Chapdelaine, Sr.

### I

Sand, fear, blood and gawkers -- the trivia of a thousand arenas on a thousand planets in a thousand ages. I am an athlete of great proportions, strength and skill -- one who kills by order of the gawkers or my master, whichever calls first -- and I am one soon to be killed.

She came yesterday on the day of the games after I had neatly decapitated the former Champion of the Sabre worlds by means of wrist pressors. Declared the season's Grand Champion, head garlanded with red-brandy vines, chest proudly extended against chest band, I swaggered away from the game's space on wrist pressors only, as if to say, "Look at me, you weaklings. I have bested your best. Now who is master and who is slave?"

Their sun of a thousand yellow rays beat down on my back as I pushed my way across the game's space into the lower ramp to my cage, expecting there to relax with wine, song and the caress of the opposite sex as, I suppose, has been done by my kind for ages past.

Then she came. Light burned brightly as the crowd surged past our flux cages. The public was not satisfied with the death, pain and sadism of the arena, but demanded that my cage -- all of our cages -- be kept open to public gathering. Like my cell-mates I was a freakish one-G animal, trained by means of gravity-like pressor and tractor beams, to tear and hew at others.

She walked with her father.

He, merely a seven-tenths-G animal, was human and shaped like myself. He had a strong smile, cropped gray hair and rugged features set-off by sunken eyes, a bulbous nose and bright, straight teeth. Oh God! How I hated that animal -- that all-powerful, all-great leader of the Sabre planets. Trevic Strenger and his family walked in public gathering to view *me*, this season's Grand Champion, in my "natural" habitat!

First came the retinue of sycophants and guards, the latter cloaked in tight plastic of weblon to nullify pressor and tractor rays, they stationed themselves to one side of my cage, holding the crowded path open for the dictator Strenger and his family.

I threw my wine outward to vent my disgust and anger, helplessly watching as it struck the surrounding magnetic field, to be sucked inward and downward instantaneously as the powerful field latched onto minute iron particles in the liquid.

They didn't yield a micrometer, nor did they acknowledge my act by even a twitch of the mouth -- except Trevic Strenger. He passed his hand back to his beautiful wife and gently tugged her forward so as not to miss the show, just as he'd done the night I was taken five years ago, on my rocky planet.

I came from an unusual brood, and, had I known then what I now know, even their fleetest hunters would have gone back to their ship empty.

My brood cell -- brothers and sisters, mother and father -- had left me for the day. I tossed rocks at the passing pack animals below our cave, not aware that hunters were swooping over me, preparing to entangle me in their rays and beams.

I spat at Trevic with the thought, and he pulled back his head to laugh, just as he'd done the day I was



® brought before him bound and struggling.

I was more than a barbarian from the Planet of Rocks. I was an educated barbarian, for their pleasure would not be enough unless they knew that inside of each gladiator lay a trapped, cunning and scheming modern mind -- a mind equal perhaps even to their own in knowledge, yet trapped by their superior technology and their orders to fight on a barbaric level of their choosing.

I spat again when I thought of their educators, and how facts were poured into my animal brain day and night, indiscriminate facts. . . .

Did you know that a man named Plato once said, *Know thyself?*

I spat again in honor of such useless information.

Her face strained at Strenger's sadistic laughter and I imagined that she disapproved. Then I vowed that some day I would kill Trevic Strenger with my own bare hands.

I closely watched his daughter.

She pushed through the crowd and I saw perfection. I'd known many other women, slave women thrown to us along with victory wines and victory songs. I'd seen none with the grace, the liveness, the color, and shadows of this one. Daughter of a mad king and a radiant slave-queen she was -- and her eyes seemed to glow with a kind of empathy for me I'd not before known outside of our brood chamber.

Opening my gnarled fists, and carelessly dropping my cups, I sprang to the field. My chest band pulsed with heat as its magnetic field fought against lines of force. I strained mightily to bring my chest closer to her side until only inches separated us and my metal chest-belt glowed cherry red from hysteresis.

Across those billions of lines of flux sprang the stronger invisible rays of my love. Her blue eyes met my gray ones and mine clung while the world dissolved around us. Though worlds of differing customs and a powerful kingdom lay between us, I vowed to reach her as deeply and strongly as I had just vowed to kill her father.

Would Patricia Strenger respond to me? Could a barbaric brood-world creature reach her more refined heart? Though doubt assailed my thoughts, I clung to twin emotions of hate for her father and my new-born attraction for her.

"Barbarian," he said, "You must come to terms with your simple emotions. In you are only the pure emotions -- hate, love, anger -- not refined, civilized, subtle and complex ones."

Snarling, I threw my drinking vessel at him, only to see it stop in mid-air, then retreat backward from the invisible wall. He did not even laugh at my precipitous anger.

"Our people crave heroes," he continued evenly. "You may be a great one. With gladiator success comes civilized opportunities which would normally be denied one of your kind. You may soon see complete freedom, then complete citizenship, with all rights and privileges of a Sabre citizen. Shall we drop this silly feud now?"

Hate boiled in me like a hidden volcano and I did not answer.

Trevic Strenger paused silently to watch my heaving chest, then added: "After all, barbarian, had it not been you who was captured, another from your brood world would now be standing where you are -- another would now be offered full education, citizenship and opportunity for world-wide adulation."

I could not control my emotions. So complete was my hatred for this man who had torn me from brood-home that my whole muscular body convulsed as I spat directly at his face.

With no change in voice tone, he said, "Tomorrow I'll introduce you to Urut of Ewit, a two-point-five-G champion."

I sneered, as I had yet to learn of either Ewit or Urut of Ewit, and therefore lacked comprehension of his plans for the morrow.

Trevic narrowed his browless eyes to watch as he bored in with his varied rapier-like pieces of



® knowledge, "Urut can crush rocks on your planet between his two hands. On his world a day lasts seven of yours. A day's work to him means seven times twenty-four or one hundred and sixty-eight of your hours. Can you fight him even one of his days, Grand Champion?"

I knew the answer. Urut's skin would be as tough as rock, his stamina far beyond any normal one-G human's bounds, and his strength would be like ordinary muscle taut against the pressure of invariant hydraulic presses. I would most surely die tomorrow. I knew it and Tivic Strenger knew it. But I spat again in barbaric defiance.

## II

I awoke in the morning to the sounds of tractor and pressor duels around me and knew I had overslept on this, my last day. According to my educated brain, thousands of years before a certain B. Franklin had said, *Early to bed and early to rise will make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.*

I paused briefly in disgust at giving thought to such revolting associations. Why had not my mind been permitted to remain that of a normal brood-world barbarian?

I bound my two pressor beams to my wrists and my two tractor beams to my ankles and gyrated my body through the endless contortions of tension and counter-tension so necessary to the gladiator.

I pulled my leg muscles to their limit of endurance, slowly but surely overcoming the tractor-versus-tractor configuration. Then, and so rapidly that the eye would be unable to follow, I twisted body muscles to push pressor against pressor until, biceps bulging, I heard the faint clink of wrist plate against wrist plate, signifying I had once again overcome the hidden power of my death machinery.

Only then did I eat lightly, my good nature returning slowly as I felt an increased sense of well-being.

Again I passed my body through every one of the hard-learned exercises designed to test to the utmost one muscle against another, passing through the last just as the aurora at the side of my cage indicated that I was to move out into the arena.

To avoid death from my chest-band pressure, as my cell slowly contracted around me, I moved forward, following the energy glow. There, under the beat of their merciless sun, was the open arena, its sand, its hate-driven gawkers, its blood of the past and psychic blood soon to flow.

Pushing my way toward the ellipsoid's nearest focus, I squinted to see the squat hulk of Urut of Ewit at the far end.

The crowd of blood-mongers surrounding our large cage, except at floor level, howled on my entry. Knowing I was the handicapped, they screamed for Urut's blood which, could I but arrange it, would be most happily furnished them -- for it was his blood to be spilled, or mine.

Almost I felt sorry for that hulk -- short, broad of torso, leg and arm, flat-headed with parrot-like lips; humanoid of form and lizard-hided of skin. . . .

My survival was at stake and my mind lurched back to life and death calculations. He had the sun. Tivic Strenger would have seen to that. He had more. As strong as I was, my muscles were but one-G trained. As quick as I was, he would act faster. Very probably I would not find any weak spot in his natural armor, whereas to him I was but an anthropomorphic jellyfish.

In a gladiator's daze, I calculated my survival paths overlong -- already he was swimming toward me with tractors and pressors working the ground together.

No sooner had I tensed to meet his first attack than he was beyond me, already rebounding from magnetic walls.

I pushed both tractors outward at the widest angle of my legs, unconsciously reaching for bedrock which I knew to exist there. Both arms were folded against my chest band to place the pressors in their firmest position.

He struck like a ten-ton boulder rolling inexorably downhill. My muscle-banded legs vibrated with pressure and my reserves soon evaporated.



His right tractor could reach around to the side of my head to hold while his left reached to my right side and I knew scant instants stood between me and decapitation.

More with instinctive desperation than for any logical, thought-out reason, I switched pressors down low and slipped my body under his. He rocketed overhead to slam mightily against the far side of the arena's shield, chest band glowing brightly red, while I twisted around from back to belly on the sand floor.

Still no effective strategy came to mind. Can a Pygmy subdue the elephant? Can the ant topple the pedestrian? Can a simple one-G human resist for long the heavy-planet man under one-G conditions?

I concentrated every bit of thought and will on my survival. Brute force against inhuman force was my only strategy, by default.

He sliced through the air again, and I dodged. He brought both legs into play to cut me in two, and I again dodged. He tried the ploy of alternative leg tractors and arm pressors, and I eluded him.

Not until he sat above me in the overhead tractor-lock position did my strategy bloom. Though only tiny moments of time were involved, my thoughts ran as follows: *Why can I dodge this lightning-like man so easily? How is it he misuses his speed so much? Could it be that he is unused to fighting in a one-G environment -- that this is his first experience on such a light world? If so, his timing must be too fast, and I am not really eluding him by my own cleverness. He misses me, then I dodge.*

Using tractors, pressors, fingers and toes, I crawled -- excruciatingly painfully -- slowly across the bottom until his tractors caught bedrock below, and I could slide out from beneath him.

He jabbed down with pressors, but this time I was ready. I kicked my tractors into his squat belly and followed behind his moving arms with my own pressors. He somersaulted, and pinwheeled before catching himself.

Now I had the trick. Every time he moved, I swung either tractor or pressor, catching his motion from behind and enforcing his motion further. I used his own strength against him until finally, during one complex maneuver, where his tractors reinforced his pressor movement, I doubly reinforced his action with my pressors and tractors and his two arms snapped.

The gawkers screamed and howled for blood, but I had other ideas. Already exhausted, I doubted my ability to penetrate his thick hide, though he lay helpless. More important to me than his destruction was the death of another, and the attachment of love I had for a third.

Urut floated around and around on his tractors, frantically twisting his body to redirect his dangling arms and their pressors. I shot forward and spoke for the first time.

"Urut. Cooperate with me and live to fight another day."

In a high, squeaking voice, he asked warily, "What is it you want?"

"I want out of this cage and you can help. What they do to me outside and where I go should be of no concern to anyone but me -- and no one will suspect your help in what will follow, by my plan."

"What am I do do?"

"I'm going to use both pressors and tractors to propel myself through the cage. Only if I go very quickly will my chest band remain sufficiently cool for me to survive the transition. I'm going to place myself within range of your tractors and with their help, and the quickness of your legs, I can crash through. Will you do that, Urut?"

"But you'll die if we are not quick enough. Why should you place yourself within my control when you have already won?"

"Urut, my friend, you and I have no quarrel. We have never been enemies. We fight, you and I, only to survive -- now let's help each other to live. I want freedom and revenge. You want your life. Why not a bargain?"



® The crowd had already begun its death chant, shouting, "Blood -- Blood! Kill the hulk! Kill the hulk --!"

I could tell from their frenzy that soon something must be done, or their passion would be on all of us. Urut could also sense their passionate mood. The idea of mutual help had not fully integrated throughout his mind, but he nodded, saying, "May your mud-nest be pleasing!"

I swung to the other side of the arena to begin my hastily devised plan.

From hundreds of previous contests I knew every inch of arena bedrock and I used the knowledge to advantage, flinging wrist pressors at each point behind me and ankle tractors ahead, accelerating swiftly in line with Urut. The crowd hushed and Urut patiently moved his hulk into position for the throw.

I swung past his body swiftly. More swiftly still he lashed onto me with both tractors webbed together. I felt the fringe of the beams pass my arms, then my head and thick neck absorbed the pull and I was flung up to and against the magnetic shield surrounding us.

My chest band glowed and part of my body wrenched itself backward -- but still onward and through I passed, flying over the heads of those in the first tiers, and then plowing into the next ranks.

Heads popped; chest, arm and leg bones snapped. I arose amidst the gore of dead and dying gawkers. Their hush changed to screams. Pandemonium reigned.

A small number in the crowd rushed toward exists, but the majority stood shouting "Champion! Champion! Champion!"

Over and over again their acknowledgement echoed -- like the beating of surf on rocky shores -- until my very bones vibrated with the chant. Never before had one escaped the magnetic arena and the crowd acknowledged with their wild enthusiasm.

I should have trusted to my judgment of their emotion. My next move was utterly foolish. I swung out to reach for Trevic Strenger, hoping to crush his thin neck between my pressors. Above and below and all around me flew his weblon-encased protectors.

High over me were the platforms of heavy rays, while on each side were the smaller hand weapons -- but I had agility, speed and coordination far beyond those of any group of Strenger guards, and also one tactic which would catch them by surprise. My muscles were trained to use beams but my mind was trained to use muscles. With those I bowled over the first group, tumbling weapons and guards onto the tiers below.

### III

Fighting one-G animals in an open environment and with full knowledge of their beams and rays, I was more than a match for them all. But no matter how I hacked and hewed, how cleverly I spilled their heavy weapons, I still could not reach Strenger. I can see him even now, in my mind's memory, sitting back, watching with faint amusement as I tossed his guards here and there like feathers -- only to find more guards taking their places.

The gawkers shrieked with great pleasure over this new barbaric form of entertainment, but I turned and ran, dashing up beyond the seat rims, finding space between the roof and two structural pressor beams to squeeze my bulky body through.

Outside the arena I fell several hundred feet before my rays caught bedrock, and I could twist myself across the pylons and roadways of this ungodly civilization to search for the city's end and silent peace.

Behind me, perhaps a mile away, guards boiled outward, and I swept down low below their sight. Another mile, and another -- when would this gigantic city end?

Then, little by little, trees, parks and farms replaced dingy city blocks, until only farm land and tall mountains lay ahead.

That first night I slept in peace among the wild foothills of this strange world, free for the first time since being taken from my brood-world. In dreams lived the face of Strenger -- but also was the sad, melancholy face of Patricia. My body longed for both in their proper places.



Morning sun was no longer hot and sultry. The air seemed fresher and the planet, even with its strange, to me, flora and fauna, appeared friendlier. I speared a small carnivore with a tractor beam, drank fresh water, and ate the meat raw, washing it down with clear water. After this I rested and planned.

Were I to go back to the city my large bulk would easily identify me as the escaped Champion. My bulk and muscles would be impossible to hide.

Farmers I knew about because of my helter-skelter education -- I knew, for example, that some Sabre planet genius had said *Farmers are stewards of the state*. Could I trust the farmer not to turn me in for one of Strenger's great rewards? I thought not.

Though I searched my mind for other informative tidbits, I concluded that only the mountains and hills would safely hide me.

I removed my tractors and pressors, fastening them to my chest band by means of twisted fibers, and then I unhesitatingly swung off toward snow-capped mountains.

Day followed day and night, night. I easily speared game with tractor or pressor while I followed animal trails from elevation to elevation. I stayed trim and my hate gradually oozed outward as my path came closer to the appearance of rocky plateaus similar to my brood world -- all, that is, except the tiny, reserved corner of emotions which repeated my need over and over, saying, *Kill Strenger!*

The rocky path wound upward and I trod closer to the snowy peaks, my body now covered with animal skins for warmth. Slowly the rock turned to snow, then snow to mixed snow and ice, glazing white, while I moved onward and upward, never hurrying, never slowing.

Miles of ice were crossed and only once did I have to pull myself from a deep crevice by means of well-placed tractor beams.

Finally the downslope snow line was reached on the mountain's opposite side. I stepped with relief into familiar rocky plateaus, fully expecting a similar leisurely pace downward. Then my peace dissolved!

It was Strenger again. I was caught easily. His men dropped the cage neatly over my body and turned the field on high. He then came from behind rocks with his bold smile and just looked, hands folded against his chest.

"The gawkers now love you, barbarian, and we can still make a truce. Come, I invite you to bury your hatred. You are one of the greatest of our world's champions -- over all time -- and it saddens me, your waste. By popular demand I can now release you from gladiator status to become a free citizen. But how can I permit a hate-driven barbarian to roam free among us?"

I revealed my feelings. I growled like a mindless animal encaged. I clenched my fists, imagining his thick neck in my hands.

Trevic beckoned his retainers to lower the cage. He found a convenient rock upon which to sit while he pleaded his case further.

"Know this, barbarian. Your use of tractor and pressor beams can be traced wherever you go. Even so, you have no further need for them, no matter what your decision."

He motioned with a finger and my cage began to tighten until my chest band squeezed me from all directions. Weblon-encased tools drove through my sheild and skillfully cut my beams from my chest band, after which my immediate prison was restored to its full size.

"Your chest band is made of the very strongest metal. It cannot be removed without specially constructed tools. Wherever you wear it, you are subject to immediate seizure and capture. Do you still wish these marks of the gladiator?"

With great effort my tongue finally loosed, and I said with an angry tone, "You tore me from brood-world without permission, mad king, and I shall one day kill you!"



Unable to reason with me further, he beckoned his men forward. My cage was lifted by weblon devices and I continued my trans-mountain journey as captive again.

#### IV

They towed me father into the mountains, disregarding any inconvenience inertia might make to my encaged body. My chest band glowed, burning pain into my heart and soul, not to mention my body, as again and again I bounced from the cage's sides.

Perhaps fifty miles inward, we followed another rocky path down to a valley. Below, laid out in neat geometrical array, were thousands of energy cages, each containing an enslaved human.

Like tiny bugs walking between each cage were the weblon-protected guards who passed out either food or water or else taste of a whip -- whichever seemed most appropriate for the moment.

A scrap of random information forced its way into my consciousness, I suppose, by the association of antlike men far below. Only a century ago someone named G. Harcel had said, *Men are tiny bugs once they have seen their souls.*

Could any information be more useless at a time like this?

High on one side were the mine tailings, glistening red from the evening's sunlight. Immediately behind those tailings stood the factory, puffing out streamers of noxious gases which, I eventually learned, represented part of the physical and chemical wastes resulting from separating weblon metal from ores found deep in the planet's crust.

My cage was tugged next to a larger one. A bright aurora along one side of my cage signified an opening which led to the larger cage. I hurried across and into the larger one, whence Trevic Strenger paid his last respects, saying, "Enjoy your new lessons, barbarian. When you've learned more, find a way to contact me."

He walked away and I flung myself furiously at the magnetic shield.

My routine was simple: Each day, every day, I was chained to a row of ten other prisoners who walked two miles along the valley's floor and three miles downward on sloping shafts to our work area. There alternating tractor-pressor beams were given to us, each a model considered too large for a single human to support.

Two of us would hold the mining tool aimed at the green streak of weblon ore running throughout the enormous, partly natural, partly man-made, caverns. The alternating tractor-pressor forces acted swiftly on cavern walls, grinding all but the impervious weblon metal to thin mono-molecular layers.

Follow-up crews sucked up the dust-mixed metal and transported it back to the surface, where further chemical and physical processes separated the pure weblon metal from the mono-molecular dust. Large ships transported the purified weblon to other industrial locations for treatment into forms and shapes for use wherever beam neutrality was desired.

It was obvious from the beginning that I was different from the others. Most were political prisoners with only puny muscles. Most were gregarious creatures, friendly with one another, some counting days until their release, while others were hopelessly resigned to making the best of a lifetime under lock and chain.

Though I was as sociable as anyone on my brood world, here I snarled and spat until, like one with a scabrous disease, I was shunned by all. Enemies were easy to make. The chip on my shoulder was as big as a sturdy oak, balanced precariously and waiting patiently for anyone to tip its trunk toward the ground.

We were fed in a line and normally the distance between each chained figure was the maximum length of chain between us. One day a particularly fast, aggressive person bumped against my broad body in his eagerness to get at the food. I swung about snarling, grabbed his neck between my large paws, and



® began to squeeze the life from him.

Only the whips of guards and the combined pulls from other prisoners dragged me from his body while life still throbbed.

Another day my reflexes were sufficiently quick to grab the whip from a guard as he swung its tip toward me. I turned the whip around and nearly lacerated the guard to his death before others could stop me.

That I was not only asocial, but also beyond the restraints of all of them, prisoners and guards alike, had now become obvious.

In the first attempt at my life, one of the heavy tractor-pressor beam generators was tipped on me from a height of about fifteen feet. Fortunately my gladiator-honed senses caught the movement and I easily side-stepped. I didn't catch on to the conspiracy then.

The next time a small, wiry prisoner pushed his body against mine in such a way that I tumbled backward into a yawning black chasm. I twisted and caught the edge of the chasm's rim and quickly drew myself to safety.

Already guards had moved my attacker beyond my reach, passing him quickly to the surface to become part of a different and unreachable work crew. That was when I began to suspect the conspiracy.

One day the guards left our work crew alone. All became quiet. I looked up to see every eye staring at me. Some had grasped rocks and stones while others held tightly their neck chains in swinging loops. Slowly the group began to close in on me, their eyes fired, muscles taut.

I moved swiftly and easily to my gladiator's stance and waited quietly. Every sense was alert, and I was quite aware of the nine around me. How little they knew of my training and speed. None had access to gladiator power-beams, so I was faced with a purely two-dimensional survival problem.

Rocks came first which were easily brushed aside or dodged. Then, with a sudden quick resolve, all nine swooped toward me.

I rushed through their circle, grabbing the nearest by his chain, lifting him from the ground and flailing the nearest of the group, though the chain was also held by two others at his side. Those poor misguided point-seven-G fools had no concept of a gladiator's training and strength.

I flailed until it seemed that none survived. But two had climbed above me during the melee to redirect the mining beam at my body.

I am quick and well coordinated, but even I could not move as fast as their fingers could move at the machine's switch.

Quite probably the alternating tractor-pressor had never before been used on human flesh around these prisoners. I stood my ground and let the waves of current ripple through my body, neither resisting nor helping the flow of alternate tugs and pulls, and my gladiator-trained body as well as my water-based tissue withstood the strains well. Every piece of metal I wore -- including my hated chest band and the newly attached neck band -- disintegrated into mono-molecular powder as fine as any created in the weblon mines. I was truly free of their hated instruments of slavery!

I leaped to the machine's top and from there crushed all of my attackers' heads like eggshells. Now only I, the mining machine, and the solitude of the caverns remained in this branch of the tunnel. I wondered how long I had before guards returned?

Behind me lay certain capture. Directly ahead lay granitic rock, but to my side lay the deep, perhaps more dangerous, chasm. What choice did I have?

I picked up the mining tool and chain, using the latter to tie the tool to my back. Then slowly, using trained fingers and toes, I picked my way down the steep crevice's side, using the slightest of indentations along the chasm's wall to support my own two hundred pounds and the additional two hundred on my back.



Dropping pebbles down the long, dark, silent chasm, I heard the sibilance of soft-whistling air, but never heard splash or bounce from the pebble. It was then I paused to consider.

It was highly doubtful that I could climb upward, and going downward further seemed futile, so on this thin ledge I managed somehow to unlimber my mining instrument, pointing it inward against the chasm's dark walls, powdering my forward. The first layer covered my feet, some of it sweeping outward into the deep chasm, but soon I was scrabbling with hands and knees to force the dust beyond me. Fortunately the mono-molecular layers filled less space than their more complex forms, and air from the chasm swept in behind me to fill the spaces I'd created.

Mile after mile I bored ahead, although when tiring, I rested, and then bored again for miles more. Days passed, until even my gladiator's physique suffered from lack of nourishment and I became sluggish, my mind tormented by memories of Trevic Strenger's graceful body, and sneering laughter. His red-spurting throat filled my mind to overflowing until my muscles would once again respond.

I pressed onward, even forgetting which way was up and which downward, distrusting my fatigued senses for knowledge of either direction.

Dust filled my eyes, mouth and ears and, it seemed, even my mind, until I could go no further. With one last effort at survival I shoved my poundage and my machine against the wall and suddenly lurched forward, now under downward acceleration as both machine and I fell outward and downward, for I'd broken through into another chasm.

My body revolved around. Centrifugal force flung my arms and legs outward as I plunged through this narrow fissure.

I strained my tired back and neck and belly muscles to bring my turning to a stop, but did not succeed. Light glimmered several hundred feet below and my fatigued mind focused on it until my spinning made it appear that the whole galaxy of light particles spiraled in faster and ever tighter circles.

When my mind let go, my back and head hit the water together.

## V

How long did I lie there? Weeks? Days? Minutes? No one will ever know. I do know that hundreds of thousands of scraps from their so-called educative process passed through my mind, only one of which I remembered on regaining consciousness: *"The time has come," the Walrus said, "to talk of many things: Of shoes -- and ships -- and sealing wax -- Of cabbages -- and kings --."*

Could any thought have been more out of place and foolish or less useful?

On returning to complete consciousness, I found my body to be whole and undamaged, but bruised terribly. Water was washing over me, some trickling into my open mouth and some laved my nose and ears, trailing my hair downstream like fine wires extended.

My right arm lay under me, touching the rocky stream bed. My left arm lay partially submerged, the hand resting on a shallow bank. My legs were upstream, resting on a rock. My eyes were pasted shut by dust around their rims. Soon I became aware of the mining tool's soft hum and the gentle tugging and pulling of my flesh under its influence.

I waved my right hand around in a circle and connected with the broken chain that I'd used to attach the mining tool to my chest. I scraped mud from swollen eyes, opened them and found I could see from phosphorescent particles that emitted sufficient photons. The mining instrument was still on and pointed steadily in my direction. I drank steadily until my shrunken belly was fully distended, and then I lay back to rest and to peacefully sleep under the gentle vibration and hum of the tractor-pressor beam. Probably never before had a human been subjected so long to the rapid alternate pull and push of the tractor-pressor. Would its effect be harmful? I didn't know, and was too tired to care.

On awakening I again took my fill of water. Beneath the water were shining shapes, water creatures,



® among which was the welcome shape of a fish. I struck with my right hand and grabbed the unwary creature tightly. Its cold flesh furnished my first nourishment in what seemed like ages, but was only days ago.

Again I slept, ate and slept again. Later I walked over to the mining instrument and turned it off.

I felt light-headed, but oddly healthy and not in the least tired. I attributed this fact to the effect of poisons manufactured by my own system under great stress, and at that time had no idea of damage that had been done to me. I could have acted no differently in any event. Suffice to say that I felt unusually alert and full of a sense of well-being.

At last I began my long walk along the hidden stream, hopefully toward light, air and freedom, packing the mining instrument on my back once more. The walls of the stream bed became narrower, and soon they reached a point where my broad shoulders could no longer squeeze through. My way forward, then, was finally halted by granite walls.

With almost a swagger of confidence, certainly more than the occasion called for, I unlimbered the tractor-pressor instrument and blasted outward.

The ship waited for me at my exit point. Of course -- use of the tractor or pressor beams anywhere on the planet could be easily followed by Strenger and his men, but I hadn't been taught that by their devilish "educator."

I turned too late to reenter my cavern retreat. A rock bounded from my head and I fell forward to lie unconscious once again.

When I regained consciousness, my feet were trussed together, my arms tied behind my back and my head ached.

I was in some sort of cabin. Two gnarled men sat in front of me, alternately eating and gawking. Was I back at the arena? Were these my new keepers?

I strained at my bonds that held my hands and feet, but the ties were stronger than I, and so I humped my body to a sitting position and stared back at my two captors, hatred washing through and through.

"Pretty, ain't he?" the one on my left said to the other.

"Needs a bath, though. Think we can oblige him?"

Both stopped eating. One tied a drag rope to my legs and hauled me outside the cabin to a nearby spring. My flesh was torn and bleeding from the sharp rocks and sticks over which I was dragged, and my head swayed from the recent blow, but I uttered no complaint.

They pulled the rope over an overhanging rock until I was dangling upside down above the water, my head scant inches from its surface. I took a deep breath, expecting the worst. It came, and I was dunked under water seven or eight times, probably saved from drowning only by my one-G physique and high lung capacity.

I was dragged back into the cabin, trussed up against a post and forgotten for the time being.

They finished their dinner, checked various instruments lying around the small room, then turned back to me. The older one -- gray-haired and with a stubble-covered chin -- was the first to speak directly at me, saying, "You might as well tell us why you were snooping around our private weblon mine. It's your only chance of saving your life."

My mind, now confused, failed to function as quickly as it might have under gladiator conditions. I said nothing.

The one with black hair and coal-black eyes bent his bulk over me and said, "If you're a government agent we'll let you go free on another planet. It's to your advantage to tell us the truth."

I coughed some water from burning lungs, answering with, "I'm a gladiator. I have no name."

"All gladiators have names," the first one said. "Besides, what would a gladiator be doing using



pressor-tractor equipment in these remote mountains? Come on, fellow -- if you value your life -- tell us the truth?"

I strained every muscle to burst those bonds. At last my body sagged. I knew a spasm of futility before I lost consciousness again.

I came to again inside their ship, an interior of pure luxury to me, and also it was here that I learned that the gawkers had searched for me in vain. I was now one of the most popular heroes in all of Sabre history -- my life was public property and not even Trevic Strenger, dictator over all, would dare to violate that public commitment, at least openly.

No one had found a trace of me until these two law-violating miners sensed me near their illegal mine.

I was kept bound inside their ship while they checked and double-checked my now clean-shaven features with pictures taken during my gladiator days. Convinced, at last, that I was truly the escaped Grand Champion, they at last struck off my bonds, not knowing how close they were to their own death at the moment.

I learned the status of the public's admiration for me very quickly, but I also was certain that I would be unsafe anywhere on a planet that was ruled by Trevic Strenger and his kind, so I stayed with the mining ship, hoping to find my way back to Brood World one day. But then, how could I flee when my two goals of hate and love were both here, in so-called civilization? Not only would deserting these twin emotions be unnatural to my brood training, it would be unnatural to the unusual state of my biology, functions still deeply buried beneath my conscious processes.

Still, in violation of my most basic instincts, I left civilization behind to flee toward the Planet of Rocks of my birth, Brood World, seven long light-years ahead, meaning months of fuming travel. Hundreds of thousands of strange worlds would be silently, unknowingly passed as we sped onward. How many contained brood worlds? How many had produced two-and-a-half-G monstrosities like Urut of Ewit? How many contained Patricia Strengers or Trevic Strengers? How many had educated barbarian champions and how many even held the humanoid form?

As the days passed so slowly, I became better acquainted with the two outlaws. An objective study of their behavior patterns gave me a certain recognition of their finer emotional shadings. All three of us were outside of the law, but these two still subscribed to certain ethics and species-assisting behavior patterns-- much like one of the brood helps another for the sake of the whole.

But unlike one of the brood, they had days when their minds were dominated by mixtures of pure destructive emotions. They certainly exhibited pure forms of overt anger and calm complacency, but they also showed fine shadings of moroseness and languor.

I began to recognize emotional subtleties and, for the first time, began to question my pure hatred response to Trevic Strenger. Was he really as bad as I had projected? Or did he, too, have comprehensible feelings and behavior-motives mixed into his relationship toward me?

One day I noticed the outlaws' deep concern for one dial on the ship's panel. Daily the dial's indicator swung upward and daily other instruments were checked and rechecked against it. Presently I understood their concern -- patrols were on our path. A whole fleet crawled toward us, closing in slowly, but inexorably.

There are no maneuvers that a single ship can perform to deceive a determined fleet. Our only hope lay in an act of some god who, out of the goodness of his being, and the emptiness of space, would reach outward and hand us some device or means by which to escape.

To make matters worse, I had no place to stand and make my fight, no place to use my gladiator training. I was trapped and felt trapped, like an animal. I could almost sense civilization's magnetic cages crushing through my bones again. Although my chest had healed, where I'd worn the metal band of servitude, I was still covered with keloids, and I wanted no more slavery.



® One slim hope remained. My captors searched the directory for any kind of planet with breathable air. Then they began long-range perturbation analysis of surrounding stars, hoping to spot planets within our range.

One bright yellow sun on our pathway seemed to offer hope and they quickly adjusted our route slightly to pass near its planets. We swung inward in a giant cycloidal loop, and an automatic analysis assured us that one planet, fourth from center, had breathable, oxidizing air.

But now our range was within the patrol's striking ability and power and their beams reached out for hundreds of thousands of miles to vibrate our craft ceaselessly.

Structurally weakened, we recklessly approached the planet's atmosphere, dropping swiftly into its density to skip and skip again as the craft was buffeted by the force of its own passage. Now weakened further and red from heat, it plunged at an even sharper angle until its tail section broke off and our front spun uncontrollably toward the water below.

## VI

My two newly found friends must surely have been killed in the plunge. At the time I attributed my survival to gladiator training and my powerful physique. I had bunched my muscles together and dived out just the instant before the ship splashed.

I hit hard, maybe as hard as Urut had hit me; maybe a little harder -- I don't remember. In any case my body sustained the shock and I swam to the surface, after a deep plunge downward. Land was perhaps ten miles distant, and toward it I swam until just before this planet's sundown I arrived at a sandy beach where I pulled myself exhausted.

The jungle ahead was unrecognizable. Whether fern or animal, flora or fauna, I could not know. Only future experience would enlighten.

Food was my immediate concern, and then shelter and potable water.

I rose, rather unnaturally recovered, and strode confidently into the strange organic configurations ahead.

Suddenly my emotional complex dropped from open elation and overwhelming optimism to complete apathy. Death would have seemed a pleasant release. Striving always with my gladiator's training and the stubbornness of brood world, I consciously searched everywhere without success -- no recognizable cause was creating my emotional void.

Down the scale of emotions I had plummeted, whence slowly and silently the fibrous matting of the jungle undulated toward me. It was white with streaks of gray running through it and had the appearance of some broad-patterned foliage which moved like a leech. Who could tell what it really was? I wanted to back away but my apathy was already too deep, and so I stood in an abandonment of despair, even squatting so the slimy thing could more easily flow up my body.

My apathy was dense, as thick as glue, and the thing had already covered my back. I squatted lower to permit it to cover me more completely, and then felt its acid trickle over my sensitive skin. Apathy prevailed, nonetheless, but under the pain stimulus my gladiator's instinct snapped by body erect and my hands and feet flung the horrible thing far from me.

Acid had etched my back, neck, arms and shoulders.

I was not yet safe, however. The thing flowed toward me as before and my apathy deepened. Why should I move when all life seemed useless? W. Shakespeare did not quite say it, but my mind, sunken in depths beyond conscious control and mired in the facts of the educators, paraphrased it as: *O mighty barbarian -- dost thou lie low? Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils, shrunk to this little measure?*

I will say this about the paraphrase -- at least there was some relation between its semantics and my condition of the moment, though there was little else to recommend it?



® OF AMERICA

Yet my instinct to survive had been aroused and at another level of beingness, I strove for the excitement of adrenalin, and then I strove to force enthusiasm into my cells. Whatever force the thing had, my manufactured enthusiasm was not the answer.

I let my body freely wage swift endocrine war as my emotions were forced from cheerfulness through antagonism, overt anger, covert hostility, resentment, fear, grief and apathy.

Nothing manufactured by my body or for my body helped.

As the thing crawled closer I switched my endocrine war outward against the whole world of loops and snakelike whorls around me, raging within my soul but nonetheless subtly spouting torrents of emotion outward through some unseen orifice of my stilled body.

It was when I thought of Strenger, and I again hit anger, the overt hostility band, that the thing stilled. Each time my body broadcast open anger, it retreated a little further. My body had instinctively discovered the key to survival on this planet. I had loads of overt anger, and would surely survive. The thing's emotional load of apathy lifted, and again within my haze of natural anger I felt lighthearted and full of a sense of health.

Little by little, over time, I was able to decipher the tangle of organic misshapes and ferret out their secrets. The ropy black serpent-like form dangling from above responded to fear. The flapping fan-like objects responded to overt anger and the other dangers responded to one emotion or another.

I followed the first stream upward with the hope of learning what was edible and what was not. Clearly the acid and alkaline-forming entities were not edible.

Time after time I succumbed to all of their emotional complexities, learning only after their acid sting or alkaline burn, to fling them off by redirecting my emotions outward.

Time and again, my skin blistered and peeled and healed.

Order began to appear from the chaos surrounding me. I studied the slinker root, a slob of jellylike flesh that looked like a weathered tree-root from my Planet of Rocks, as it flushed out its quarry, a small blob of milksac covered with horny projections.

By the use of almost pure fear, its emotion would sweep outward to cover growths of pink and purple velvety layers of vertical growths. From the bottom of this growth the milksac animals -- if that's what they were -- rushed directly toward the jellylike growth. There they were easily held until the chemical base dissolved their vital layers, after which they were absorbed into the attacker's system.

For lack of better knowledge, or hunch, I followed the next jellylike sack. It captured a victim, and I tore the victim away from its grasp, using my hands for the act of tearing and my emotions for the act of neutralizing this strange -- to me -- beast.

I touched the juices of the injured beast to my tongue, finding it sweet, but then some poisons are also sweet. While I might not know the difference between the poisonous and non-poisonous, I made the necessary assumption that my body would tell me.

So I chewed and swallowed and stayed healthy.

Luck?

It must have been pure luck, because I now know how foolish was my thinking.

I ate my way across hundreds of miles of outrageous growths and forms as I traveled from coast to coast across one huge continent. Occasionally I had to hide from search ships, for I assumed that the patrol would not rest until our bodies were discovered, or at least some evidence of our demise, I reasoned. Now and then I permitted just a glimpse of my presence, but then I left no trail by use of tractor or pressor beam and my body could easily hide among the fibrous, gelatinous, oozing, slinking, stinking mess around me in every direction.

I crossed two mountain ranges, walking high above the life-plateau, living for weeks on air, water,



fat and determination. Lonely pools of water were to be found at these higher altitudes.

The longer I lived and survived in that jungle of emotion the more grip I had on my own emotions -- until finally I had learned to turn up the emotion of hate against Trevic Strenger instantly, but just as speedily the hunger of my fascination and love for his daughter.

I controlled the jungle because I could control their emotions, but I could only control their emotions by at last learning to control my own.

Now I wanted one of the occasional ships to find me, but only on my own terms. The problem: to attract their attention enough to make them suspicious, but not enough to alert their senses. The problem: to trap the trappers!

But even as I was formulating a plan to attract and attract the searchers above, they found me, and apparently as easily as Trevic Strenger had been able to track me.

## VII

There were two of them, one on either side of me, and they held me fast with heavy portable pressors. No straining was effective against the huge force they controlled.

The strange jungle life around me boiled in confusion and from that tremendous surge came my idea. I summoned energy and emoted apathy, driving fauna toward one of my captors. He faltered, and then fell under the onslaught. The other man also slumped and the pressors slipped from me and I ran to each man in turn taking their means of death and control from them, and throwing all but one far into the fibrillating jungle flora.

One of the pressors I focused on the ship, wedging the pressor into the rocks for support.

By further broadcasts of emotion, I threw off the jungle hordes, and tied together both wounded men with a neutral vine. Visibly shaken, they could only stare as I ran my own emotional state and output up and down several times to determine basic confusion state and to stabilize the planet's life as well as my captive's emotions. "How many are in the ship?" I quietly asked.

"Just us," one answered, "But who are you? What are you doing alone on this surrealistic planet?"

It's strange, but up that that time I had not thought of myself as a name. On the planet of my birth I was just one of the brood and could easily be identified by smell or appearance. On the Sabre planet I was known as "Barbarian" or "Champion" or "Grand Champion." Here, on this alien planet, under an alien sun, I was being asked a most fundamental question whose answer I could not give.

"Are you on patrol around this planet?" I asked.

"Yes."

"What are your duties?"

We're to observe and report any slightest irregularity in shape or phenomenon or behavior over the whole planet's surface. We make routine recordings of electromagnetic spectrums, and from time to time we sample the life forms."

"How long has your patrol held surveillance?"

"Better than a year. Ever since outlaws were seen to approach the planet, and their ship broke apart as they attempted to flee."

I moved the speaking patrolman closer to the pressor beam so that I could more quickly reach its controls if need be. "What did you expect to find here?"

"None of us know. We merely take orders. We sighted your shape by thermographic and other spectrographic analysis and watched you from time to time. It was then ordered that we detain you."

"Are you a follower of the gladiators? I asked.

"Who isn't?"

"Then you're familiar with the disappearance of your Grand Champion over a year and a half ago?" He looked me over carefully, and then said excitedly, "Why, I believe you are he! Yes -- you must



His emotions bounced from my artificially maintained level to interest and sincerity. "If you are indeed the Grand Champion of a year ago -- then you should know that your status is that of free man. After your successful fight with Urut of Ewit and your escape from the arena you were declared free by the enthusiasm and will of all the people.

"How did you get here? How did you survive?"

At one time I might have snarled and growled at this representative of their civilization. Now my conscious portion, with heightened perception, became aware of my own lack of intense emotional response. I merely listened politely and rationally to his talk. Nonetheless I buzzed internally with a kind of consternation. Was I wrong to continue hatred toward Trevic Strenger? Was their world and vaunted "civilization" really so bad? Would I have been better off staying with my pack on the Planet of Rocks, chasing off wolves and fighting with others for the spoils of the brood?

Then against all the instincts which make up a brood world barbarian, I freed the men and docilely followed them to their ship.

The way back to Sabre planet was one of great honor, as word had early gone out that the Grand Champion had survived shipwreck on a horribly inimical planet. My fame spread farther than ever before. I had been declared the Greatest of Grand Champions.

### VIII

Only Trevic Strenger, I felt, knew my true feelings, and vital hatred. I thought we were like two giant computers silently, but secretly, battling each other. Trevic would know every move that would inevitably lead to his death or mine, for I meant to keep my vow. He held the power and education and controls, but I held closely, more closely than ever before, my intense and abiding hatred.

I was the Great Grand Champion, beloved of the people, and not entirely unused to facing great dangers.

Urut of Ewit was now Champion, for no ordinary one-G humanoid had been able to withstand his stamina, strength and speed once he'd grown experienced to one-G conditions.

Between Urut and myself the people gawked as only shallow gawkers can.

When I first re-entered the gladiator stands, gawkers stood up and they cheered for fifteen minutes.

On the other side, faraway from my hungry hands, Trevic Strenger sat surrounded by his sycophants and guards. Did I still wish him ill? Part of me shouted "Yes! Yes!" and part of me wondered -- yet I knew I was destined to kill him.

Urut entered and the crowd applauded with great enthusiasm. Today was his show, and we shared a common bond of gawker approbation.

Then Trevic began his clever move against me. He arose, stilled the gawkers, and announced that the newest and best of champions, Urut of Ewit, should be challenged by the world's Great Grand Champion.

As he knew it would, the idea caught the gawkers' imaginations and they howled their approval. I had been committed before my barbaric wits could form a defensive reply.

And only by sustaining the people's good will could I ever be safe from Trevic, and he'd cleverly made use of the situation.

I had to fight.

I flung off my civilized accouterments and leaped into the arena, no longer bound by the hated the chest-band, free to enter and free to leave as I wished. But in this instance, I was just as captive to the gawkers' wishes as I had ever been to the intense pain of the chest-band.

I caught the tractors and pressors and bound them to my ankles and wrists, and waited silently for Urut's move.

He looked at me sadly from heavy-lidded eyes and parrot-shape mouth and I knew he had no desire



for what he felt was sure to come -- his death or mine.

His first blow was light, and so I knew he was pulling his pressor attack. As would be any other one-G gladiator, I was clumsy, slow and weak compared to Urut. I was also out of training. At any time he could have decapitated me or ripped my body to shreds, for his timing was always perfect.

For purpose of show, I'm sure, he permitted me to cartwheel him several times and the gawkers thought my response would soon build up in duration and quality.

I knew that he knew that we were mismatched and that he had the advantage.

Survival on the Planet of Emotions had taught me that emotion, too, can be a club if only one could generate and control its broadcast. At that, I'd had much practice, and while Urut had his will with me -- now under tractor lock, then under pressor throw -- I sought the key to the emotions of this humanoid bulk.

My endocrine system worked rapidly, generating pure emotions from apathy through grief, resentment to fear, boredom to happiness. None worked on Urut.

I then tried combinations as I'd learned to do on the Planet of Emotions. Once I saw Urut falter briefly and pause to stare from behind glazed eyes. I thought then I'd found the key, but at once lost the combination.

My powerful physique was tiring fast. Urut had pressors on opposite sides of my body and tractors at right angles. I was being simultaneously squeezed and pulled on different body sections. I could almost feel cartilage tear and muscle tissues pop.

Gawkers were now yelling for blood, as I continued my search for the correct emotional key.

Urut paused briefly again, I knew I'd found the right combination. I drove my emotional wedge in and he faltered. He stumbled and fell to his chest, as I slowly rose from the sand, giving every appearance of pushing back on pressors and pulling back from tractors still clinging to me.

Gawkers screamed.

As my body was freed it seemed to strengthen, and my emotional output rose and Urut twitched in agony. I've no idea what the emotional content meant to his way of life; but it was a powerful antidote to his physical superiority.

By the time I reached his side my body was fully recovered and, using every ounce of my two hundred pounds of muscle, I might have been able to decapitate him.

I looked to the crowd and asked their pleasure and I thanked the great brood-God that nearly all screamed for his release.

Gawkers yelled, stamped their feet and clapped their hands. For them the solution had the appeal of a well-laid plot. How else could they have both their Great Grand Champion and the newest Grand Champion to carry on with their future entertainment?

The day of Trenger's trap ended well, and I rested in my public-donated apartment that was lined with trophies of my earlier wins as a slave. Now, I thought, *it is my turn against Strenger*, and my plan formed of itself.

The faulty educative process to which I'd been subjected, as a slave, brought to mind like a broken record A. Zlinsky's phrase: *To the wise go words!* a meaningless utterance. I tried to suppress it, but it would not leave. I needed a true and honest education to compete with Strenger -- maybe that's what Zlinsky's silly quotation actually meant. I couldn't know, but eventually its constant repetition led me to more efficient and better organized educators.

The habit my mind had developed in tracing all knowledge through quotations or simulated quotations was disturbing. My new human educators explained that I would slowly lose this induced habit over time if I made a conscious effort to do so, and that it arose from a faulty use of an electronic



educator when I was a gladiator trainee.

I would study, and learn, and become Trevic Strenger's superior!

Time passed, as I became more acclimated to civilized behavior patterns. My emotional control was certainly superior to those around me, and I could, to a great extent, influence the moods of others, which fact often eased my path. Were it not for my vow against Strenger, my life might have been joyful and fulfilled. However, I couldn't help but sense another of Strenger's traps when I was next invited to attend the annual fealty procession and to serve as one of many state showpieces for gawker's consumption. My own plans were shelved as I prepared myself for what must be a dangerous situation.

On each leg and arm I attached hidden pressor and tractor beams and joined the grand procession, knowing that we would be passing but feet from Trevic Strenger's box. He could not, of course, know of my equally hidden ability to influence emotions.

The grand procession had begun, and I soon found myself slowly approaching Strenger's position, my symbol of fealty to a state that had unbiddingly yanked me from my brood and brood-world. I could sense his muscles tighten as I approached, and his emotions became snarled and bent by covert hostility.

I grabbed those Strenger emotions and twisted them downward through grief and apathy, and downward they went until his face became placid, his arms and neck muscles relaxed and his whole stance presented hopelessness.

Only one person now stood between Trevic and me and that one quickly moved on, urged by another emotional impulse from my hulking body.

I faced Strenger then as if he and I were alone in the world, and the Gawkers were nowhere at all about. His eyes seemed to plead, but I scorned them, for what power could this emotional invalid have over me?

And then I knew that my hate for him was over and I suddenly, with great amazement, dropped my long vow of hate with vengeance --!

Suddenly the floor dropped from beneath me. Instantly my reflexes snapped on tractors and pressors and I curved my body into the best stance to slow my fall.

Slow it would not!

Somewhere above me automatics caught and sheared off my powers. No matter how I scrambled and twisted my body, the machinery kept up with my efforts, seeming to anticipate every one of my merely human actions.

The fall was not far, and I landed catlike on all fours and bounded up to my feet again. Automatic machinery continued to nullify my pressors and tractors and steel bars surrounded me. Light came from the walls outside of my new steel cage.

The door opened with a slight hissing sound and in walked Trevic Strenger, on his carefully measured tread. He did not smile, nor did he frown. I reached forward with my emotions engulfing him to apathy, but he spoke quickly.

"Turn off your machinery, barbarian. Throw out your tractor and pressor beams, too. I expected you to try for my life again, and, as you can see, your attempt has not and cannot succeed. Face up to the fact that your machine-built education is only veneer-deep, your emotional control is uncivilized and your continuous attempts to kill me are more barbaric than our gladiator's arena. At least there you know the rules."

I threw the pressor and tractors outward, but remained silent.

"That's better," he said. "At least you're intelligent enough to know when you're captured. That's more than I could say for you when I first caught you on your Planet of Rocks. You fought until exhausted. Why not now?"

I remained quiet but watchful. I read less emotional hate from his body than before. I projected less



®  
OF AMERICA  
of my own attitude, also.

"I don't know what mutational talent you've used to control my emotions to such depths of apathy before I triggered your capture this time," he continued, "but I can assure you, you are here to stay until this senseless hatred of me is gone, or -- as is most likely from your stubborn character --you die of old age.

"Which shall it be?"

Unbidden to my mind came Farragut's saying, *Damn the torpedoes! Go Ahead!* I pushed it below my consciousness and spoke to Trevic, saying with pleasant equanimity, "I thought to kill you upstairs, but then realized its futility, and stopped, just before your trapdoor opened. My hate, much to my own surprise, has burned itself out."

He smiled, and I noted how pleasant was that smile, not at all malevolent as I'd believed.

"How can I believe your statement?" he asked.

"You've urged me to accept the civilization that you represent. What guarantee do I have that it consists of the advantages you've described? What guarantee do I have that you will not kill me? Or what guarantee that you will not enslave me again?"

"Try it," he said instantly.

"Then try me, also," I said instantly.

He laughed at my answer and seemed to consider my request seriously, then bravely, after wrestling with his thoughts, he ordered, "Free him!"

The bars rose and I faced Trevic Strenger unhindered by other than a few feet. I could easily have killed him with a flick of muscle.

## IX

Years have passed since Trevic's momentous decision. Sitting at the helm of this tiny empire known as the Sabre planets I look back with nostalgia at my once innocent entrance into its polyglot society.

Man has gone to the stars and returned, and gone again. And those who remained home had formed a weakened gene reservoir. Noting this state, man had returned to the gladiator games, and then had forcibly invited back the barbaric humanoids -- any mutation that might strengthen the gene pool.

Here in the arena of strength and courage one faced up to agility, intelligence and courage, a screening process whose purpose was to find new blood for the human race. Those freed, like myself, were the backbone of humanity's new drive outward and inward. Slowly many returned his or her genetic protoplasm to an honored, aggressive, survival status.

I'll not ever forget the day of my final release from both the steel cell and my own inward-driven emotions to kill my original captor. Trevic Strenger had stood before me, bravely waiting for me to call his bluff -- to kill him suddenly or to accept his offer for civilized peace between us. He waited. Then suddenly, when I refused to kill, he tore off his shirt whence I could view the thickened keloids around his chest where once his own gladiator band had burned.

Patricia Strenger, now hair grayed, skin wrinkled, a doughty figure from age, sat by my side. She crushed my hand in thoughtful empathy as I looked downward on the newcomer captured from far beyond the Sabre planets. His hatred of me was volatile and could have exploded at any moment, were it a gaseous compound.

I could have dulled it, of course, but such intervention would also crush his spirit. Who knew? Perhaps the young barbarian below me would be my replacement as age took its final toll.

I smiled at the thought, all the time knowing that he would interpret my brief flicker as a sneering grin of hatred.

To my mind came unbidden phrases from quotes of our ancient past and I had finally learned to reconcile my thoughts to their contents. J. Christ had said, *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall*



SPONSORED BY  
THE ARTHRITIS TRUST  
OF AMERICA

I signaled to have the snarling barbarian thrown into our ship and prepared myself for our long trek home, with perhaps a wonderous collection of our growing gene pool.

