

Leigh Brackett

THE CITADEL OF LOST AGES

Chapter I

Strange Awakening

DARKNESS—nothingness—a void and a voice that spoke to him across the muffled deeps. "Remember! Think, and remember! Who are you?"

It was painful to be thus aroused. And yet he tried to answer and could not. He said, "I don't know."

"Yes, you know. You can remember if you will. Who are you?"

The voice continued to torture him, calm and insistent, and in order to quiet it he tried desperately to remember. It seemed that he should know. He had known,

once.

"I am . . ."

A pause, a groping and then, "I am—Fenway."

"Ah!" said the voice. "Good! You see, you do know you can remember. Now—where are you, Fenway?"

Where?"

Again he answered, "I don't know." The mists were thick and he was growing tired.

But the voice went on. "You are walking, Fenway."

There is a street, buildings, people. Where are you going?"

Suddenly he knew. Of course he knew! He must have been asleep or dreaming not to know. He was walking down the Avenue of the Americas. He had just left his

office in Rockefeller Center. It was dusk and a thin snow was falling. He could see the immense towers of the city leaping skyward, their ledges rimmed with white, their myriad windows blazing and above them in the smother the blinking lights of the airways.

He said, answering the voice, "I am in New York, It is winter and I am going home."

"Good! Now the year. What year, Fenway?"

"I'm tired," he said. "I want to sleep."

"Tell me the year, Fenway. The year!"

He said uncertainly, "The year I was born, the year I married, the year my son was born. The year, this year. I don't . . . Yes, nineteen hundred and

eighty-seven."

He was tired. The voice was growing faint, the restful dark increasing.

"Fenway!" It seemed to him that the voice quivered with a terrible excitement. "Fenway, the Citadel! Do you know of the Citadel?"

"The Citadel?" Some chord within him stirred to the touch of that word, a chord of fear, of doom and desolation.

"Perhaps it won't happen," he murmured. "Perhaps they're wrong. The Citadel—I can't think about the Citadel. Let me sleep!"

He let himself drift into the enfolding darkness. From far off he heard the voice clamoring his name and another voice that cautioned, "Softly. Don't force him! You know the danger of force."

For a brief instant, blurred and gigantic in the void above him, he thought he saw their faces, bearded, bright and hateful—the faces of torment. He thought he heard the voice say softly in triumph, "One more time. Once more and he will remember!"

Then it was all gone--sight and sound and sense. There was only slumber, the deep deep night of silence and forgetting.

DAYLIGHT—a narrow shaft of it, red and rusty on the stone floor. He lay for a long time looking at the light, not understanding it, not understanding anything. His head was heavy, as though weighted with iron bands.

He was enclosed in a small chamber of stone. It was very still. Except for the single spear of light it was dark. He could not remember having seen this place before. He looked at the light, and wondered, and his wondering was slow and vague.

He wondered who he was and where he was and why. Once he had known. Once he had had a name and a place and a reason.

They were gone beyond remembering. He felt that this should have frightened him but it did not. He was puzzled and worried but not afraid. Not very much afraid.

He stood up suddenly, trembling, bathed in a chill sweat. Dim broken images whirled across his mind, too formless for grasping, and he cried out, "I can't remember!"

The cry was only a groan. It echoed dully from the stones with a sound like heavy laughter.

He looked down at himself. He saw his feet, shod in rawhide sandals. His legs, brown and long-thighed and muscular, were marked here and there with old scars. A strip of white cloth was wound tight around narrow loins, above that was a flat brown midriff.

He studied his hands. They were strong but they had no meaning for him. He lifted them and felt his face, the hard high ridges of bone, the hollow planes of flesh. He ran his fingers through short-cropped hair and did not

know the color of it nor the color of his eyes—nor his name.

It was an evil thing, to be shut in a place of stone without a name. He stood still until the spasm passed.

The narrow shaft of light drew him, three slow unsteady steps. He leaned his face to the slit in the wall and looked out—out and down and far away. And again

there came the chill sweat and the trembling, the poignant sense of memory hiding just beyond the threshold of his mind.

A copper Sun hung in the sky and the sky was coppery and thick, streaked with clouds of reddish die that deepened into crimson where they touched the fat off hills.

He looked at the sky and something said within him, The sky is wrong. It did not tell him how.

Below him, at the foot of granite cliffs that seemed to fall forever down from where he stood, there was a city.

It was a great city. There were many buildings, some huge and built of stone, some built of wood, some of clay brick and endless crowding masses of little huts that seemed like lumps of earth itself. It was a bright city, blazing with sullen color under the copper sky.

It was a rich city. He could see the market places, the patterns of the streets and lanes and huddled alleys thronged with men and beasts, the pens and paddocks and the roads that led in and out. The sound of it rose up to him, soft with distance—the speaking of many voices and of much motion.

A large rich busy city—but again the inner something told him, It is wrong. And he visioned white towers rearing godlike, thundering with light and sound, roaring with a great voice of wheels and motors and swift wings in the sunset sky.

He visioned them as a man sees a wisp of smoke erased by the wind. And they were gone, without form or meaning, as though they had never been.

He stood where he was, gazing dully at the city and the wide land that spread beyond it, patched with forest and cleared meadows and the roofs of villages. There were streams and three broad roads that led away toward the hills. The roads were hung with dust where men and horses moved.

The shadows did not change. The Sun hung unmoving in the sky. He did not know how long he stood. There no time. And that too was somehow wrong, that unstirring Sun in a dusty sky.

From somewhere above him, as though on the roof of whatever place this was, there came the brazen thunder of a gong.

The stone walls shuddered with it. He could hear the echoes rolling out across the land, solemn and fierce, and he thought it must be a great gong indeed, fashioned by giants. When the ringing strokes were ended the

world seemed filled with silence.

Below him the city quieted. The voices were stilled, the streets and the market places grew empty. Out on the plain the caravans left the roadways and lay down under the shelter of the trees. The villages were silent. The world slept.

And still the sun had not shifted in its place.

HE began to be afraid again. The city and the plain seemed deathly, too quiet in the unchanging sunlight. He turned from the narrow window-place. There was an iron door in one wall, a low thing heavily made. He hammered on it with his fists and shouted. He did this again and again until he was hoarse and his hands were bruised. There was no answer, not the slightest sound from beyond.

He went back to the couch where he had wakened. He saw a water jug on a ledge beside it and an earthen plate with meat and black bread. He was not hungry. He drank from the jug and then sat down and put his head between his hands and set himself to remember, to know. And that was as useless as the pounding.

His eyes fell again on the food and water. They glittered with a sudden realization.

"Someone will come," he whispered. "Sooner or later, someone will come with food. They will know. They will tell me who I am!"

Chapter II

Arika

WHATEVER it was he had hold of, it behaved like a small panther. He clamped one hand over its face to keep it from crying out and then he rose and dragged it, struggling, into the red shaft of daylight.

He saw that he had caught a girl.

Her hair was black and her eyes were two dark points of fire looking at him over the rim of his hand. He held her so for a moment, watching the empty doorway, listening. Then he whispered:

"Stop struggling and I'll take my hand away. But if you make a sound I'll kill you!"

She nodded. Cautiously he lifted his hand from her face. He saw a pointed chin, a red mouth drawn into what was almost a snarl—a cat-face, predaceous, startled, capable.

Only for a moment did he see that face. Then it softened and the cat-look was gone, and the hardness, so that he thought he had only imagined them. Her expression now was as sweet and plaintive as the voice that whispered:

"Why do you treat me so? Don't you remember me—Arika?"

"Arika," he repeated slowly. And again, "Arika?" His fingers tightened on her arms. "No, I don't remember you, Arika." He began to shake her, not meaning to, hardly knowing that he did so. "I don't remember you. I don't remember anything. Who am I? Tell me who I am!"

Soft pity welled in the dark eyes. "It was so before. But I thought you would remember me. I came only four nights ago to tell you that your escape was arranged."

She touched him, pleading. "Don't shake me so. I don't know who you are or where you came from or even why you're here. I only know you're human and a captive and—I hate the Numi."

With a part of his mind he heard that and was conscious of a crushing disappointment. But his brow was drawn and he stared at her, saying, "Night? This is night?"

"You must have heard the gong."

"Night!" His gaze turned to the shaft of light. Tentatively he formed the word, "darkness."

HE felt the girl quiver. "Don't say that word. It's evil like the Numi. Let me go—we'll talk later when it's safe. Come now, we have a long way to go before the day-gong."

Slowly he released her. The full impact of what she had said about escape reached him. He had a terrible desire to be out of this cage of stone, yet he was afraid somehow of the world he had seen below the 4

window-slit, the world that seemed so strangely wrong "Night," he said again.

Sunset, dusk and dark. A man walking in the (I going—somewhere. . . .

His head swam and for a moment he thought the veil had lifted. He cried out hoarsely, "Fen . . . my name . . . Fen!" Then he covered his face with his hands and whispered, "I don't know. I can't remember. It's all gone. She picked up that syllable and used it. "You will remember—Fenn. But you must come now. I'm only a temple slave. If they catch me . . ." She finished with

shudder and added, "You'll never have another chant She pulled at his hand and he suffered himself to hit led through the iron door into a corridor shrouded in utter darkness. In his mind he turned the word Fella over and over and still he did not know.

Somehow it was worse than being nameless to be called by a name that had no meaning.

The girl Arika guided him surely. The corridor was short, little more than a landing. Then there were steps, cut in the living rock and leading steeply downward, When they reached the foot of the steps Arika's hand stayed him. "Make no sound," she whispered. "There is danger here."

She moved forward a few cautious steps. Fenn could see nothing in the

complete blackness. Then a crack of sombre light appeared and widened slowly and he saw that a block of stone had swung soundlessly on a pivot, revealing an opening large enough for a man to pass through.

Arika made again an intense gesture of silence. She stepped through the doorway and Fenn followed. Behind him the block of stone swung shut and became an indistinguishable part of a massive wall.

Arika gave him a quick bright glance as though seeking acknowledgement of her cleverness and he gathered that the stone block, with the passage and cell beyond it, were very secret things that she should not have known existed.

They stood now in a space no more than three feet wide. Behind them was the wall. Before them was a hanging of some heavy black stuff. Overhead both wall and hanging vanished upward into shadow.

The girl beckoned him on, keeping close to the wall. Hest she should brush against the hangings and disturb them. Fenn copied her every movement with great care. The air was heavy and still and there was a quality in the silence that set his nerves prickling.

The wall curved and curved, it seemed, without end and they crept mouselike in that narrow space behind the black curtain that was as endless as the wall.

Fenn was consumed with a great curiosity as strong as his unease. At last Arika stopped and he brought his mouth close to her ear, pointing to the curtain.

"What is beyond it?" he breathed.

SHE hesitated. Then she smiled, a rather wicked smile. Without touching the hanging she studied it until she found the place where two sections overlapped. Very slowly, very carefully, she drew the edges apart the merest crack so that he might see through.

He looked out into a vault of glimmering darkness. How large it was, how high, he could not tell but it seemed to stretch up and away as high as the sky and as wide as half the Earth. And again painful submerged memories wrenched at him.

He knew that it was all a cheat. The black hangings covered ordinary walls of stone and the upper vault also would be shrouded in the sombre cloth. But the black "sky" burned with points of diamond fire, blazing, magnificent and sown so thick that all the space below was filled with a pale shining, reflected back from peaks and plains of purest white.

Fenn knew that the peaks were only painted on the black cloth and that beneath the white substance on his foot there was only stone. But a shivering of awe and anti-recognition ran through him and a terrible giddiness that made him reel.

Somewhere, sometime before he had seen those fires in the night sky and known a whiteness on the Earth!

Arika's voice whispered in his ear, softer than thought, "This is the Temple of Eternal Night. See them sleeping there, the Numi priests, trying to appease their own dark gods?"

He saw them then and all sense of recognition or kinship vanished. Whatever night or winter he had known, it had no part with this!

On pallets of white fur they slept, row upon row, the ones she had called the Numi priests. And they were not men.

Or were they? Their form was like his own except that the bodies of the Numi had a look of tremendous toughness and strength, more like the bodies of lions than of men. And like lions they were furred. He could see the soft gleaming pelts of them, their long hair and their silken beards. They were beautiful, lying there in their sleeping strength.

Some were light and some were dark and some were reddish and some gray, exactly as color runs in the human hair. And in spite of their strength and their gleaming fur there was nothing beastlike about them. Rather they seemed to Fenn to be above men like himself, as he was above the brutes.

It was their faces, he thought—their cold wise cruel beautiful faces, so full of knowledge and power even in sleep.

A terrible anger swept suddenly over him. He had seen faces like that before. His clouded mind could not remember where but he knew that they were the faces of torment, of pain, of loss.

He lifted up his eyes then to the fireshot vault, the darkness and the glistening hills. He saw the awful savagery of that cunningly wrought landscape, the remote uncaring sky and the white peaks sharp as fangs to rend the flesh—a landscape that hated man.

A revulsion of fear and loathing shook him. He stepped back, turning his face away, and Arika dropped the edges of the curtain. He saw that she was still smiling that strange smile full of secret thoughts.

She turned, her fingers gliding surely over the stones of the wall. Presently another silent door swung open and he followed her onto yet another lightless stairway, going down.

The descent was very long. Arika counted the treads with great care. Several times she guided him over traps, balanced stones that would have triggered death upon him had he stepped on them. Once he thought he heard her drop some soft thing as though deliberately but he did not speak to disturb her counting.

When at last they stood on the level again she laughed a little shakily and said, "The Numi built the temple with human slaves and then took care to kill them all so that the passages should be unknown. But we humans are clever too in our way."

She was proud of herself. Fenn laid a grateful hand on her shoulder. But his mind was on other things.

"Arika," he said, "what are the Numi?"

He could feel her staring at him and when she spoke her tone held incredulity. "Surely you haven't forgotten them?"

"But I have," he said. I have forgotten them and the world and myself. I live now but did I live before? When and where and how did I live before?"

His hand tightened on Arika's shoulder. She seemed to understand and she did not rebuke him. "Numi means in their language New Men," she told him quietly. "They are the race that came from out of the Great Dark to conquer us. And you and I aren't free of them yet."

They came to the end of the short passage. A stopped and he heard her draw a deep breath. "Go carefully, Fenn," she whispered. "If we can pass the tomb of the Numi kings we'll be safe."

She opened the third pivoted door of stone.

Fenn stepped after her into a low square chamber lighted by a golden lamp that burned upon a tripod. The dressed blocks of the wall were hung with golden wreaths and inscribed with the names of men. Fenn thought at first this was the tomb Arika had mentioned. Then he looked through an archway that had been hidden from him by the outswung door.

Arika's murmur reached him. "In here are the names of the honored ones, the favorites. There is the place of the kings."

Fenn glided forward to peer cautiously around the sick of the arch. The space beyond was empty of life, steeped in a drowsing silence and a haze of red-gold light that came softly through hidden openings.

It was a large space. It was grand and strong and somehow insolent in its sheer lack of adornment, as though the Numi needed nothing but themselves. And around its walls of sombre stone were ranked the kings of the New Men, embalmed and dressed in their crimson robes, buried upright in pillars of clear-shining crystal, a solemn company too proud to bend their necks even to the Lord of Death.

It seemed to Fenn that the bearded kings looked at him from out their upright crystal coffins and smiled with their handsome mouths, a chill and secret smile.

He heard Arika breathe a deep sigh. "The gods are with us, Fenn. Come on."

He had no desire to linger there. The human-unhuman faces of the dead filled him with a kind of horror. He followed more than halfway to the great arch at the far end when they heard the stamp of hoofs and the jingle of harness outside and then the sound of voices.

They remained poised for a moment, frozen. There were a number of voices. Many feet moved sharply in the dust and the horses stamped and snorted. Fenn glanced at Arika.

Her dark eyes had the fear of death in them but her mouth was set hard. "Back into the alcove, Fenn—and pray!"

Chapter III The Trap

RIGID and still as the dead kings they stood, pressed back into the corners on either side of the arch. By moving his head a little Fenn could see a part of what went on in the tomb.

They were all Numi who entered. Some of them wore the harness of soldiers and these remained by the outer door. Two came on, a man and a woman, walking slowly along the lines of crystal pillars.

The man was golden-bearded, dressed in black robes frosted with silver. The woman held herself regally, moving with the deliberate pace of age. She was gowned and cloaked in purple and her hair was white. Fenn noted that her face was as smooth as Arika's. It was haughty and sorrowful and her eyes were quite mad.

Neither of them spoke. They came on until Fenn thought surely they were not going to stop short of the alcove. Then the man—Fenn guessed from his robes that he was a priest—inclined his head and drew back, leaving the woman standing alone before the crystal-sheathed body of a tall king, big and black-bearded, with an eagle look about him even in death.

For what seemed an endless time she stood there, her mad eyes studying the face of the dead king. Then she spoke. "You never change, my husband. Why do you not change? Why do you not grow old as I do?"

The king regarded her with a lightless agate gaze and did not answer.

"Well," she said, "no matter. I have much to tell you. There is trouble in your kingdom, trouble, always trouble, and no one will listen to me. The human cattle grow insolent and your son, who does not fill your throne, my lord, is soft and will not punish them."

Her voice droned on and on, full of disquiet. An eerie qualm crept over Fenn. It began to seem to him that the dead king had a curious air of, listening.

The priest had withdrawn himself beyond Fenn's vision. The soldiers stood motionless by the outer door, bored and heavy-eyed. Fenn looked at Arika. The expression of catlike ferocity he had surprised before in the cell was on her face again—and this time there was no mistaking it. Her hands opened and closed like the flexing of claws and her body was drawn with tension.

Fenn began to sweat.

The Numi queen talked. She told of endless slights and injuries, of the misdeeds and follies of the courts. She was a vain spiteful old woman, mad as a March wind, and she would not have done with talking.

Arika's lips moved. She made no sound but Fenn could read the words as she shaped them.

"Be still, be still! Gods above, make her be still and go! If we don't get into the city before the day-gong we are lost, both of us, and all because she won't shut up!"

Presently she went from prayers to curses and still the old queen talked.

Arika glanced from time to time at Fenn and her eyes were desperate. Fenn himself began to feel the pressure

of moments passing. He did not clearly understand the reason but Arika's fury was convincing enough. Fenn's legs began to ache with standing in one place. The sweat trickled down his breast and back. It came to him that the air was hot and the old queen's unending words filled it like a swarm of bees.

Abruptly she said, "I am tired. And I do not think you listen. I shan't stay any longer. Good night, my lord!"

She turned and moved away in a whispering of purple robes. The priest appeared, hovering discreetly at her elbow. The guard formed ranks.

Fenn glanced at Arika and her eyes warned him to be still. He found time to wonder what sort of girl she was and why she should be taking these risks for him.

The woman, the priest and the guards went out of the tomb.

Fenn's knees grew weak with relief. He remained where he was, listening to the sounds that reached him from outside. At last he sighed.

"They've gone now, Arika. Hear the horses?"

She nodded. "The old sow! I've heard that she comes here often at night to talk to him. But why, of all nights!"

"We're all right now," said Fenn soothingly.

And as he spoke the priest returned alone into the temple.

HE was moving fast, a man who has got rid of a confining duty and is on his way to better things. He reached out and struck one of the crystal pillars so that it rang and all the others picked up the sound and gave it back like the distant chiming of bells. The priest laughed. He strode on, straight for the alcove, and this time there was no hope. He was going up into the temple by the stairway in the rock.

As though they were doing it of themselves Fenn felt his muscles twitch and tighten. He held his breath that there should be no warning sound. Arika's eyes were two black narrow sparks and he saw that one hand had fallen to the girdle of yellow cloth she wore above her waist.

The priest came through the archway, and Fenn made his leap from behind.

He got one arm around the Numi's neck and his thighs locked tight around his loins. He had gauged the strength of the priest by the strength of a strong man and any man would have been borne over forward by the rush and the weight. But Fenn had forgotten that the Numi were not men.

He had not realized that anything living could be so strong. The body under the black robes seemed not of flesh, but of granite and whalebone and

steel. Instead of falling as he should have done the priest threw himself backward, crushing Fenn beneath him on the stone floor.

The breath went out of him in a sickening grunt. His skull rang on the stone and for a moment he thought he was done for. From somewhere above him he heard Arika's voice and knew it had a deadly urgency but he could not grasp the words.

He was suddenly aware that he hated this golden-furred creature he had between his hands.

It was a hatred without memory or reason. But it was so red and furious that he found himself growling like a beast, forgetful of everything except that he was going to kill. New strength poured into him and a terrible excitement. He locked his thighs tighter and made of his arm an iron vise to shut off voice and breath and the moving blood. He was no longer conscious of Arika. He had forgotten escape. There was nothing in the world but this straining powerful golden body that he was going to destroy.

They were out of the alcove, thrashing among the crystal pillars where the red-robed kings looked down and watched them. The strength of the Numi priest was a wonderful thing. Fenn thought it was like trying to pinion a storm wind or ride the crest of a flood.

Their lunging bodies rolled and crashed against the ringing pillars. The robes of the Numi wrapped them both and presently there were stains of crimson against the black and silver. Fenn would not relax his grip. He was oblivious to pain. He knew that if he once let go he was lost and he would not let go.

The fingers of the priest clawed at his legs, threatened to tear the living muscle from his arms. He set his teeth in the gold-furred flesh and tasted blood and tightened, tightened, tightened the pressure of his limbs.

"Fenn!"

It was Arika's voice, far off. Arika, calling, touching him, urging. He was getting tired. He could not hold on much longer. Why did she bother him now before the priest was dead?

He turned his head to snarl at her. And he realized then that the Numi was very still in his arms, that there was no slightest movement between his straining thighs.

"Let him go, Fenn. He's dead. He's been dead for minutes. Oh Fenn, wake up and let him go!"

Very slowly, Fenn relaxed. The body of the Numi slipped heavily away from him. He watched it. After awhile he tried to rise. His muscles were palsied with tremors like the muscles of an old man. Dark streams of blood ran from his torn wrists and down his thighs and his bones ached.

Arika helped him. She looked at him now with a kind of awe, mingled with something else that he was too tired to read. Doubt, perhaps, or even fear—a shrewd calculating something he did not like. It occurred to him to

wonder again why she was so bent on his escape from the Numi.

The dead priest wore a gown of fine white linen under his robe. Working very swiftly Arika ripped it and gave the worst of Fenn's wounds a hasty binding.

"You'd leave a trail a blind man could follow," she explained. "Now come!"

She led him out of the tomb into the glare of the sullen copper Sun that never moved. A strong wind blew. It smelled of heat and dust and the edges of the world were veiled in crimson.

High above him Fenn could see the half-monolithic temple crowning the cliff. It looked an evil place to be prisoned in. Why had the Numi had him there? What did they want with him?

WHAT did Arika want with him? He was glad to be free of the temple.

He stumbled after Arika down a slope clothed in tall trees that thrashed in the wind. The tomb of the kings was built on a ledge of the cliff itself and almost beneath it the city began. It must still be night for no one was stirring in the streets.

Again that world "night" evoked a sense of wrongness and Fenn glanced at the burning sky and shook his head.

Halfway down the slope Arika stopped and brought forth from its hiding place in a thicket a bundle of cloth. "Here," she said, "wrap this around you. Over your head, Fenn! Keep your face hidden."

He struggled clumsily with the garment—a large shapeless length of cotton much smeared with dust and gray ash. Arika draped her own around her and helped him impatiently with his.

"What are these?" he asked her.

"Mourners' cloaks. Since humans are allowed to visit their burying grounds only at night no one will pay any attention to us if we're seen in the streets." She added wryly, "There are always mourners!"

"But why only at night?"

"Would you have them go by day and waste the time they should be working? The Numi don't keep humans just for pets!"

She led off down the slope again, going almost at a run. Fenn could not keep up with her. A number of times she came back to him and urged him on, snapping

at him, cursing him in an agony of worry. Now and again she glanced upward at the temple and as the angle changed Fenn could see the cause of her apprehension—a great gong as tall as several men, glinting dully in the sunlight upon the temple roof.

They entered the city, slowing their pace to a walk. These were the mean quarters, the vast huddle of huts that girdled the magnificence of the

palace and the opulent dwellings of the Numi like a muddy sea. Here were refuse and filth and the stuttering feet of rats. Here were twisting lanes and the ancient smells of humanity crowded and unwashed. Fenn snorted in disgust and Arika shot him a smouldering glance from under her ash-smeared hood.

"The air was cleaner in the cell, Fenn, but you'll live to breath this longer!"

They did not speak again. The crumbling mud-brick houses slept under the dusty wind, their windows covered with bits of cloth or hide. Here and there a child cried and an occasional cur-dog barked. They did not pass anyone in the bewildering tangle of lanes and if anyone saw them there was no sign of it. Arika's face was drawn and anxious and Fenn knew that she held herself from running only by the greatest restraint. She was cursing the old queen under her breath.

Up on the temple roof two black-robed priests appeared, tiny dolls in the distance.

Arika turned into an even narrower way, hardly more than a crack between the walls. Here she risked a faster pace, dragging Fenn without pity.

The distant priests bent and a second later a great hammer swung on counterweights and the day-gong sent its first harsh sonorous stroke echoing over the land.

A low doorway curtained with greasy cloth appeared on Fenn's right. Arika thrust him through it, into a stifling dusk that was blinding after the light.

Something large stirred in the shadows and a man's voice whispered, "All right?"

Arika said, "He killed a priest." And then to Fenn, "Stay here!"

The curtain rose and fell again. Fenn turned, reaching out for her. But the mourner's cloak lay on the earthen floor, and Arika was gone.

Again the large bulk moved, very lightly for its size. The shadow of a man came between Fenn and the curtain. He bent slowly and picked up the fallen cloak and as he straightened Fenn caught a glimpse of his face in the dusty gloom.

It was the face of a Numi.

Chapter IV

Remembered Doom

A KIND of bleak fury came over Fenn. He had had it in the back of his mind that Arika was engineering some treachery but this he had not expected. His two hands reached and encircled a corded throat, and under the vast booming of the gong he said the one word:

"Numi!"

The voice of the man said harshly, "Wait!" The curtain was lifted to admit a

single beam of light. Gasping against Fenn's grip the man said, "Look again!"

Fenn looked. Uncertainly his fingers loosened. The man was beardless, his cheeks shaven close to smooth skin. His hair was cropped and his body, naked except for a twist of cloth, showed only a fine down and not the silken fur of the New Men.

And yet in the eyes, the shape of the head, the unmistakable cast of the features ...

The man lifted his arms and struck Fenn's hands away. "I'm Malech. I'm Arika's brother."

"Arika's brother? And who is Arika? What does she want with me?" Fenn's hands were still raised, and hungrily curved. "What do you want with me, Malech? And why do you look like a Numi, a Numi plucked and stripped?"

"I'm a half-blood," Malech said sourly. "So is Arika. I can assure you we have no love for our fathers, who give us their blood and then despise us for it. As for the rest of it, it will have to wait until tonight.

"I'm a slave. I work in the palace gardens. If I don't go there at once I shall be flogged, with ten stripes extra because I'm half the breed of the masters. Arika has the same problems at the temple. Besides, she might draw suspicion by her absence. So . . ."

He thrust Fenn ahead of him, into another room. It was not large but it was clean. There was a hearth, two box-beds filled with straw, a table, three or four rough benches.

"This is the house," said Malech. "All of it. Stay in it. Don't even look out the window. You'll find water, wine and food. Be quiet and trust us if you can. If you can't, after all we've risked to get you free—why, the priests will be delighted to have you back."

He swung on his heel to go, and then paused, turning to look again at Fenn as though he found in him something of special interest.

"So you killed a priest." Malech's eyes, which were lighter than Arika's, almost tawny, gleamed with an evil joy. "With a knife? A strangling cord? How?"

Fenn shook his head slowly. "I had no weapons."

"With your hands? Don't tell me with just your hands!" Malech's smile was the feral grin of a tiger. "May the gods of the humans beam upon you, my friend!"

At the door into the lean-to he said over his shoulder, almost casually, "As half-blood Numi, my sister and I—particularly my sister—share some of the mental peculiarities of our illustrious fathers. It's quite possible if you do decide to trust us, that we can restore the memory Arika tells me you have lost."

He was gone before the other could speak.

Fenn stood where he was for some time without moving, his gaze fixed upon the doorway. The mighty voice of the gong was stilled and in its place came the numberless tongues of the waking city, jarring, clattering, settling at last to a steady beehive drone, punctuated by the shrill cries of children.

But Fenn was conscious of nothing except those words of Malech's that were still ringing in his ears. ". . . we can restore the memory Arika tells me you have lost."

He sat down and tried to think but he was very weary. His wounds were stiffening and his body ached beyond endurance. He did not like Malech. He did not trust Arika. He understood nothing—why he had been imprisoned, why he was free. But whatever else happened he did not want to be taken back to the temple. And—if he could remember again, if he could have a name he knew was his own and a past that was longer than yesterday . . .

If Malech had been a horned demon and Arika his sister Fenn would not have left that place.

He washed his cuts with wine and then drank off a good bit of what remained. He was seized with a desire to go after Malech, to drag him back and force him to do his magic now. He felt he could not wait for night. But he realized that was folly speaking. He lay down in one of the straw-filled beds but he could not sleep.

To remember! To be again a man with a whole mind, a whole life!

What kind of memories would they be? How would he appear to himself after he remembered? What stains would he find upon his hands?

Even evil memories would be better than none, better than his terrible groping into nothingness.

Suppose that Malech lied?

IT was hot and the fumes of the wine were clouding his thoughts. His body wanted rest even if his mind did not. The world began to slip away from him. He thought how strange it was that Arika was half Numi—such a handsome girl for all he did not trust her. Very handsome . . .

He slept and in his dreams ghostly towers brightened against a dusky sky and the word "night" returned to plague him.

Twice he spoke aloud, saying, "I am Fenway."

Arika woke him. He had not heard the gong that marked off night from day nor had he heard the others return. Yet they must have been there for some time. A pot bubbled fragrantly on the hearth and the cloth was laid for supper. Outside the wind howled in the alleys, filling the air with dust.

He rose, feeling stiff and sore but otherwise normal and ravenously hungry. Yet he hardly thought of food. He was shaken with an eager half-fearful excitement. He told Arika what Malech had said and demanded, "Is that true? Can you do it?"

"Not all at once perhaps—but I can try. You must eat now, Fenn. Otherwise

the body will disturb the mind."

That seemed reasonable and he curbed his impatience. He watched the others for awhile in silence, trying to judge them, but there was something about their strange breed that was beyond his grasp.

He demanded abruptly, "Why did you rescue me?"

"As I told you," answered Arika. "You were human and a captive of the Numi. This isn't the first time a human has vanished out of the Numi dungeons—though not, I'll admit, out of the temple. That was a brilliant feat, Fenn. You should appreciate it."

"I'd still like to know why."

"Does there have to be a reason?" asked Malech. "Haven't you ever done anything without a reason except that it was a good thing to do?"

Fenn shot him a hard glance. "You don't have to remind me that I don't know the answer to that. However, I won't quarrel with your motives—not now." He turned to Arika again. "What did the priests want of me? Why was I there?"

She shook her head. "I couldn't find out. RhamSinhe was your special jailor, Fenn—is a very brilliant man. He rules in the temple as the king rules in the palace and there is great rivalry between them.

"Whatever purpose he had with you, it was something of great importance to him, something he wanted to keep secret from the king and even from the other priests. Else you would not have been hidden away in that cell. The Numi are free to use humans in any way they wish, just as we use cattle, so there could be no other reason."

She met Fenn's gaze directly. "Perhaps that's why I rescued you, Fenn. I hate RhamSin. Remember, I've been a temple slave since I was old enough to climb there. Perhaps I wanted simply to cheat him of whatever success he was after just to make him sweat."

An expression of such diabolical hatred crossed her face that Fenn was convinced she had told at least a part of the truth.

Suddenly she smiled. "All that being so—have you wondered why RhamSin hasn't searched the city for you?"

"Perhaps it's easier just to get another human."

"Maybe. But I made sure—partly, of course, to clear

myself. Only the priests and the royal family and some of the nobles are supposed to know about those temple passages. So on the stair I dropped a girdle belonging to a man of the royal house—which Malech managed to steal for me. Therefore it will appear to RhamSin that he stole you away and took you directly to the palace. So I am safe and you are safe—at least for a while."

"You're a clever girl," said Fenn admiringly. "Very clever indeed." Arika's

smile broadened. And Fenn wondered silently, Just how clever are you, Arika? Too clever to trust? In one thing he was forced to trust, whether he would or not.

He got up with sudden violence. "I can't wait any longer! Get to work, blast you, do your magic—I can't wait any longer!"

"Softly, Fenn," said Arika. "All right." She pointed to the bed. "Lie down. Let your body relax. You'll have to help me, Fenn. I'm not like the Numi, who can do what they want to with the minds of men and beasts. You'll have to open the way for me Fenn. Don't fight me. Let your mind be easy."

HE stretched out. He tried to do as she said, to relax his limbs and let his mind go free. Her face hovered above him, white in the shrouded light from the windows. She was handsome. Her eyes had strange dark fires in them. Her voice spoke to him softly.

"You'll have to trust me, Fenn, if you want to remember." Malech handed her a drinking cup and she held it to Fenn's lips. "There is a drug in this wine. It will not hurt you. It only makes the way easier and the time shorter. Drink it, Fenn."

He would not drink it. His muscles tensed again and he looked at her with narrow-eyed suspicion, almost ready to strike her aside and run. But she only took the cup away and said, "It's up to you. Your memory is your loss, not mine."

After a minute he said, "Give me the cup."

He drank it. Again he lay still, listening to her voice, and now it was easier to relax. Gradually he lost all sense of time. Arika's eyes were huge and dark and full of little dancing lights. They drew him. They compelled pelled him. Soft folds of colorless mist slowly blotted out the face of Malech in the background, the mud-brick walls, the roof, Arika herself—all except her eyes.

Just at the last he felt the power that lay behind them but it was too late. They willed him into the final darkness and he could not but go.

Deep, deep, timeless dark.

A voice ...

Under the prodding of that voice he roused a bit as though from slumber. Another voice had spoken once, asking, asking—but this time it was easier to answer.

"My name is Fenway," he told the voice. "I am in New York."

Yes, it was much easier to answer. He told about Times Square on a summer night, the blaze of light and the crowd. He told about Central Park in the morning after rain.

"And pretty soon it will all be gone," he said. "All the buildings and the subways and the people—gone, erased, forgotten."

He laughed. "They're working on the Citadel. They're burying it deep in the rock above the Palisades. It's almost finished—and for what? What good is a citadel without men?"

He laughed again, dreadful laughter. " 'Repent ye, for the end is at hand!' I repent me that I had a son. I repent me, I repent me that I begot him just for death!"

"Fenway—Fenway!" The voice shook him, brought him to himself. "You must remember—yourself, New York, the Palisades. Draw it, Fenway. Draw the size and shape of New York, of the Palisades, so that when you wake you will remember."

Dully under the urging of the voice he began to draw. Whether he had pencil and paper he neither knew nor cared. He drew as one does in a dream, the familiar outlines, and as he did so he was filled with sadness and a sense of loss and he began to weep.

"I will not draw," he said. "What good is drawing on the evening of Destruction?"

The voice called to him. It called again and again and he fled away from it. He was running beside the wide gray river. Night was closing down and from the darkling water the mist rose thick and cold, clinging round him, drowning out the world that was so soon to die.

Chapter V

Secret of Ages

THERE was a drawing, done with charcoal on a slab of wood. It was lopsided and clumsy and unfinished, showing a long, narrow little island between two rivers near the sea.

Fenn stared at it. His hands trembled. Arika said softly, "You told me its name was New York. Do you remember?"

"I—I don't know." His mouth was dry and it was difficult to talk. "My head feels queer. It's full of smoke. Sometimes I see things and then they're gone again."

He looked up, almost pleadingly, from Arika to Malech and back again. "Where is this place I called New York?"

Malech shook his head. "I never heard of it."

There was an odd tone to his voice, Arika rose and removed two bricks from the wall above the bed. From the cavity behind them she drew a bundle of parchment scrolls. Even in his distress Fenn could see that she was laboring under some great excitement. She spread the scrolls beside him on the bed.

"When the Numi came out of the Great Dark and into the human part of the world they made pictures of the lands they passed through. I stole these from the temple long ago. Let us see if the pictures of the Numi show your island."

Fenn studied the maps. Strange maps of a strange Earth. The Numi must have traveled far. The names and inscriptions were in a tongue he did not know but Arika pointed out desert and jungle and mountains, forest land and sea, and there was nothing that resembled the island he had drawn while in that uncanny sleep.

"No," he said. "It isn't here."

A quick glance passed between Arika and Malech. She unrolled another scroll, the last.

"This," she said, "is the birthplace of the Numi. You remember the Hall of Eternal Night in the temple, Fenn? All their birthland is like that, I have heard, white and cruel and very cold. It is what humans call the Great Dark."

"I don't understand," said Fenn. "What is the Great Dark?"

"The other side of the world," she answered. "Its face is turned always away from the Sun, toward the black gods of night that men say spawned the Numi."

Fenn concentrated on that last map. Endless areas of whiteness, broken here and there by the dim outlines of continents. In imagination, remembering that hall that he had glimpsed, he could see the jagged mountains rearing under a black sky shot with fire and at their feet the wrinkled ice of oceans.

It was Malech's quick eye that saw it first. "Here!" he said. Look here, see it!" He traced with his strong finger. "Away from the Sun, beyond even the Shadow, well into the Great Dark itself. Here is the edge of the sea and here—two rivers and an island!"

He laughed, a short harsh burst of merriment, and then was still.

Arika whispered, "This is a thing of wonder. It is a miracle from the gods."

And Fenn said, as he seemed always to be saying, "I don't understand."

"Nor do I! Listen to me, Fenn—listen carefully and try to remember." Her hand had caught his now, gripping it almost cruelly, as though she would grip his mind that way.

"I tried to call your memory back. I gave you the drug to throw down all your conscious barriers and I tried to draw aside the bars that keep your memory prisoned. I called to you and you answered, naming yourself Fenn-way, and you talked quite readily.

"But the things you spoke of were not of this world you stand in now! You told of great buildings and of things that roared in the sky and in the streets and under the earth. You told of day and night, of the things we have never seen—the moon, the stars, dawn, sunset."

Her fingers tightened until her nails brought blood. "Fenn, your memories were of the world that was before the coming of the dark star—the world before Destruction!"

He was glad of her hand holding him. Because suddenly the solid earth dissolved beneath him and he was falling, spinning, crying through a reeling vortex.

He whispered, "I remember, I remember."

He put his face between his hands. He shivered, a shallow rippling of the flesh, and presently the palms of his hands were wet with a salty moisture.

I remember.

But did he? He still had no full memory of a past life. He had only flashes of a life, disjointed, infinitely strange—painful and yet somehow distant, somehow not of his flesh.

He asked hoarsely, "If I remember that far past, does that mean that I belong to that past? That RhamSin somehow dragged me out of it?"

Arika shook her head. "It seems impossible. And yet the powers of the Numi priests are great."

Malech interrupted, asking him passionately, "Where are the Palisades?"

Fenn was too numbed with horror to answer. He felt suspended over an abyss that yawned between two worlds, himself a stranger to them both.

Malech's hands rose in a fierce aborted gesture and Arika warned him back. She said in the compelling voice that Fenn had answered in his dream, "Fenn, show me the Palisades."

Without thought or volition, he placed a finger on the charcoal map.

MALECH'S eyes suddenly blazed. He said in an exultant whisper, "It was what RhamSin was trying to get from him—the secret of the Citadel's location. And now we have it. In Fenn we have it!"

Fenn had begun to talk. It was like a dead man slowly speaking.

"The dark star," he said to no one. "They looked at it through their telescopes. They watched it rushing closer and they told us that the world as we knew it would die. A dark star, coming out of space to kill the world."

Arika whispered, "Do you remember the Destruction?"

"No. It was not to be—not just yet. The dark star would pass the Sun. They had it charted, they knew what it would do. It would take away some of the planets, the outer ones, and go on—and the worlds that were left would be torn and changed."

He added slowly, "There was a terrible fear on the world. Not for ourselves but for our children. Sometimes we would not believe it could happen. We looked at the great cities and the mountains and the green land. We looked at the sea and we did not believe it could ever change."

"But it did," Arika said somberly. "Legend tells how it did—how when the dark star passed all Earth was rent and shaken and its spinning slowed, so

there was no more day and night. How the cities were thrown down and the mountains moved and the seas ran wild and millions died."

"They knew what was coming," said Fenn in his dead strange voice. "It was why they built the Citadel, to preserve man's knowledge and power for those who might survive."

Malech was shaken with bitter mirth. "And the Numi have hunted for that legended Citadel without dreaming that it lay in the Great Dark from which they came! They mapped this place New York and didn't know the Citadel was there! And now, with Fenn's help, we shall find it!"

Fenn looked at him and at Arika with hopeless eyes. "What difference does it make to me who wins the Citadel? The only world I can remember perished—how many thousand years ago?"

Arika's face flashed and she took his hands warmly, strongly, into hers. "Fenn, don't you realize what you can do? You are human—all human. You've seen a little of how humans live in this world—slaves of the Numi here in the cities or as outlaw tribes in the wilds. That has gone on since the Numi first came out of the darkness that bred them.

"But you can change all that, Fenn. You can free us from the Numi. You can make the world as it was before the Destruction—a good world for men to live in. You can give men back all their lost knowledge!"

"Or would you prefer," Malech said, "to give the Citadel to the Numi so that with the knowledge in it they can rivet fetters on us forever?"

A blaze of anger leaped up in Fenn's mind. "No! Men built the Citadel, men like us—for men like us!"

He was remembering again the tragic last hope of that doomed world, the hope centered in the Citadel that was to be man's answer to the coming night.

"Then help us find it, that its secrets may belong to man!" Arika pressed. "We can get you out of the city and the outlaw humans out in the wilds will aid us in this quest. Will you lead the way?"

Fenn felt iron resolution hardening swiftly in his mind, a resolve born as much of bitter hatred of the Numi as of loyalty to his own kind.

He said between his teeth, "I will lead you. And if the Citadel has power in it—it will be used to destroy the Numi or to drive them back into their darkness."

He added eagerly, "And it may be that there at the Citadel, at the place New York that I remember so strangely, I shall remember all my past!"

Malech was on his feet, his face flaring with excitement. "I'll begin preparations at once! We'll need to have horses ready and slip out of the city tomorrow 'night!"

He swung aside the curtain to leave. As he did so, with startling suddenness, a man stumbled in from outside. He came as though the

howling wind had brought him—a quite human man, with the marks of the lash on his back.

"Temple soldiers are searching the quarters!" he cried and then he caught sight of Fenn. His eyes widened and his mouth became an open oblong in his seamy face. He started to speak.

Malech stepped between them, reaching one hand to the small man's shoulder, turning him around as he demanded, "Which way are they coming?"

"From the tomb of the kings, ransacking every house. We're spreading the word."

The edge of Malech's free hand took him in a slicing blow under the ear. The little man folded quietly over his own middle and Malech shoved him behind a water cask in the lean-to.

Fenn crossed the room. He gripped Malech by the shoulders. "That man knew me," he said harshly. "Why would you not let him speak?"

"Don't be a fool," snapped Malech. "He saw a stranger and was surprised. He would have sold you to the Numi for a sack of corn."

Arika's face was white with fury and despair. "RhamSin was too cunning to be completely deceived by my trick! If we had had but one day more. . . ."

FENN'S hard new determination would not let him share their despair. He said, "We are going to find the Citadel! Since we can't wait until tomorrow night we go now."

"But horses—" Malech objected.

Fenn cut him short. "I saw paddocks of horses near the gates. We can steal mounts. Quickly!"

Arika gave him a startled glance as though revising her estimate of him. But she caught fire from his resolution. "He is right, Malech—we must risk it now!"

She brought forth the mourner's cloaks for them. While Malech was hastily improvising one for himself from a length of cotton smeared on the hearth, Arika rolled the map-scrolls and tied them in her girdle.

Fenn led the way out. The narrow valley was deserted but in the distance they saw furtive figures running from house to house with the warning. The parching wind enveloped them in clouds of dust and the Sun burned red and evil in an ochre sky.

"Which gate?" snapped Fenn.

"This way," said Malech. "The Desert Gate."

The driven dust made everything obscure as they went swiftly, their heads down. Temple and cliffs were veiled by the blowing haze. Fenn could see no soldiers yet.

They skirted the edge of a market square, deserted except for a few folk sleeping huddled in the stalls. Beyond the market were the great stock pens and the quartering places of the caravans lying inside the Desert Gate.

Next to the wall of the caravan building was the fenced horse-paddock. There were at least fifty horses in it, shaggy creatures patiently standing with their heads away from the wind-driven dust. There were also a half dozen saddled horses, powerful sleek animals, tethered separately.

"There are our mounts, waiting for us," Fenn said. "They're Numi horses!" Malech warned. "They don't like human riders and you'll have trouble. . . ."

"Don't worry—I'll manage," Fenn snapped. "But first I want a look at the gate."

From around the corner of the paddock fence he peered. He saw the road, hollowed deep by the wind, and the posts that marked the gateway and beyond them the way that led over the hills to the desert and freedom.

A dozen Numi soldiers guarded the gate and their big, sleek steeds were picketed within the gateway. "We can't ride through them!" Malech said. "It's hopeless!"

Fenn's eyes had begun to gleam with an unholy light. He said to Arika, "Give me your dagger—and then you two mount and hold a horse ready for me."

Arika stared, then gave him the weapon. She and Malech slipped back to the corner of the paddock where the saddled Numi horses were tethered.

Fenn sprang to the bars of the paddock gate. He took them down silently. Then he went through the shaggy horses to the rear of the paddock.

He suddenly drew the dagger point in a long shallow scratch down the quarter of the nearest horse. The animal recoiled with a whinnying scream of pain and terror.

Fenn scratched another horse. It too screamed. The shaggy herd began to mill frightenedly, scared by the outcries and the smell of blood.

Fenn suddenly cried out, a long shrill howl with an eerie wolf note in it, and leaped forward at the herd with his reddened dagger upraised. Instantly, the whole herd bolted out of the paddock.

There was only one way for them to go. They poured out with a great thundering of hoofs and an explosion of dust—fifty horses, stampeding in panic toward the Desert Gate.

The Numi had no chance against that onslaught. It came too suddenly even to give them time to run. The wild-eyed herd crashed over them, broke their picket-line, carried their own steeds out with them.

And close on the heels of that stampede, so close that they were almost a part of it, came Fenn and Malech and Arika.

Fenn had been fighting the Numi horse since the instant he had leapt on its back and only the fact that it too was panicky kept it from setting itself to throw him. "Swords!" he yelled to Malech. "Get swords!"

Ahead of them in the gate sprawled the broken furry bodies of the Numi soldiers caught by the stampede. They would need the weapons that lay there but Fenn dared not check his own steed now.

Malech heard him and with catlike deftness pulled up his steed long enough to reach down for two of the Numi blades.

"Soldiers come!" warned Arika's cry.

A half-dozen Numi were running out from the horse-paddock, after them. Fenn laughed, as he caught the sword Malech tossed him and gave his bolting steed its head.

"We have their horses—let them catch us!"

They went full gallop down the road. The forefront of the stampede had gone on to wear itself out among the villages.

The road climbed to a low pass through the hills. Beyond the pass lay desolation—of copper Sun and copper sky and under them the rusty barren earth.

"It is far to the Great Dark—and RhamSin will follow!" Arika warned. "He will follow to the world's end for the Citadel!"

Chapter VI

The Quest of Yesterday

THEY had left the caravan track and struck out across the open desert. They had no guide but the gossip of the drovers that Malech had heard in the market place.

"Where or how far the place of the outlaw tribesmen may be I don't know," he told Fenn. "But it lies in this direction, away from the Sun." He pointed to his shadow stretching out before him.

Fenn asked, "How do you know these men will help us?"

"They have all suffered from the Numi. Every living human has in one way or another. And to find the Citadel—they'll help!"

Fenn looked at the barren earth and said, "We had better find them soon."

They went on, keeping their shadows always before them, pushing the horses as hard as they dared.

Fenn rode silently, withdrawn in his own thoughts. He had had it out with the Numi horse and won his battle and after that brief violence his mind had turned again to himself. He thought of the things that had been said between himself and Arika and Malech and the decision that he had made so swiftly and with such conviction.

His mood was not one of doubt or hesitation. It was only a hardening and clarifying of what was in his mind. In the city he had felt confused and driven, tortured by the blankness of his memory, raging against a world he could not understand. Here, where he was free of walls and houses, he could think again.

He still did not know who he was or where he came from or how. He had a feeling that when he reached New York he would remember. But even if he did not he remembered other things—the world that was before the dark star and the Numi, the pride and the courage of the men who had built the Citadel so that knowledge might not perish from the Earth.

It holds all the past of man, they said, and it will hold the future. The Citadel will stand forever, man's challenge to the coming night.

Men had built it and it should be given back to man. A deep anger rose in Fenn against RhamSin, who had tried to steal knowledge that did not belong to him—human knowledge to use against humankind! Fenn's hatred of the Numi was a towering thing and it stood large over everything else—larger even than his passionate desire to know himself.

He looked. He looked ahead across the desert, and he thought, Once this earth was green and men lived upon it and were free. It shall be so again!

He smiled at Arika and urged his horse a little faster, impatient of every step that lay between him and his goal.

Here there was no temple gong to tell them day and night. The angry Sun burned forever in the sky. The fierce wind lashed them and the dust-clouds rolled in red and ochre across the land and there was no time. They hungered and they thirsted and now and again they stopped to rest the horses and to sleep.

They had slept twice when Fenn looked back and saw atop a distant rise a plume of dust that was not made by any wind.

He said, "RhamSin."

Malech nodded. "They will have spare horses, food and water. They will push hard and the Numi are stronger than men."

Fenn smiled, an ugly smile. He began to lead by devious ways, covering and confusing the track, going on bare rock or on loose earth where the wind would blow away the prints of the horses' hoofs. And for a time they lost the distant plume of dust.

But Malech said, "They know our direction. They will follow without a track. And remember, RhamSin is a Numi and a priest. He may be able to touch our minds with his enough to guide him."

Fenn's mouth hardened. He said nothing and they went on across the bitter land. Hunger became a gnawing pain and then a weakness and an agony but it was forgotten in the pangs of thirst. The splendid horses began to falter. Arika rode bowed and silent and the men were not much better.

At rare intervals Fenn would stop and dig, wherever there was a shadow of

green life in some sunken spot or the hollow of a dead watercourse. Sometimes a few drops of muddy water welled up to keep them alive.

They stopped for the third time to rest. Fenn did not sleep. He sat looking over the desert with red-rimmed eyes, thinking of the Citadel and feeling an iron determination not to die.

The plume of dust showed itself again on the horizon. He cursed it and rose to wake the others.

They started on again. The wind blew, never ceasing, and all at once Fenn's horse lifted his head and snorted, pulling against the rein. The others snuffed the wind and they too began to go aside from the straight line they followed. A kind of madness seemed to have come over them. Their dragging pace quickened to a shambling gallop.

A RAW scarp of rock lifted from the desert. The ground sloped downward to form a ragged basin at its foot. Fenn saw that a sullen river ran from a cleft in the scarp and spread into a great marsh before the thirsty desert drank it up. He set his heart on that vivid patch of green that seemed so far away and would not come closer.

Then he saw the men riding toward them—leathery sun-bitten men, well mounted and riding fast, carrying long spears that glinted red in the angry daylight.

There were half a dozen of them. They swept up and ringed the three fugitives round and made them stand, holding the plunging horses. They looked at Fenn and Arika and Malech and when they saw Malech their lips drew back as though they were wolves about to tear their prey.

One said, harshly, "Numi!"

"Half-blood—slave." Malech's voice was a croaking whisper. He turned to let them see the old scars of the lash across his back and Fenn tried to crowd between him and the hungry spears.

"They saved my life," he said. He too was almost mute with thirst. "They saved me from the temple." Then, angrily, "Let us drink!"

They studied Fenn a long time without answering.

Their hesitation alarmed him and he knew that Malech was the cause of it—Malech, who looked so much like the hated creature that had fathered him. The green marsh tortured Fenn with the promise of water. He looked at Arika's drawn face and the suffering horses and he became so furious that he lost all caution.

He reached out to the man who was holding his horse and caught him by his long hair and pulled him out of the saddle, shouting as loud as he could out of his swollen throat, "If we die, no one will ever find the Citadel! I know where it is. Do you hear that? I know!"

Arika whispered, "The Numi priests are hunting us to get the secret. We ask protection." She managed the ghost of a laugh. "What are you afraid of? We are only three."

The cold suspicion did not leave the face of the outlaws but Fenn saw that they were uncertain now. The leader said, "No one knows that secret."

Fenn met his hard gaze fairly. "All right. Kill us. Let the Numi rule forever over slaves and outlaws. You haven't the courage to be free."

The leader looked again at Malech, saying, "You travel in bad company for an honest human. But I'll let Lannar decide this one. Give me your swords." When he had them he reined his horse around. "Come on."

They started on again toward the marsh. It spread for several miles along the base of the scarp, wide, lush, dotted with islands of higher ground on which there were trees and thick scrub. It was beautiful, green, soft and moist under the red haze of the desert.

They were allowed to stop beside a shallow pool, to drink and wallow in brackish water that tasted to Fenn like the wine of heaven. Then they were made to mount again.

"Keep your horses exactly in line," said the outlaw. "One slip and you'll never be found again."

He began to thread an invisible path through mud and quaking bog and green water. Here and there submerged bridges had been laid, narrow things of slippery planks that could be taken up, Fenn guessed, to make the marsh impassable.

At first he saw no sign of any dwelling places. Then as they got deeper and deeper into the marsh he saw there were huts of mud and wattle under the trees of the larger hammocks. Men and women watched the strangers pass and naked children splashed out through the mud to shout at them.

They came onto dry ground again, on a long narrow island close under the scarp. A man stood waiting for them. There were others behind him but Fenn saw only the one, a lean dark laughing man who looked all fire and acid and steel, controlled and shaped by a keen intelligence.

Fenn knew that this must be Lannar. He began to hope again. The man who had brought them in from the desert dismounted and began to speak. While he talked Lannar's gaze moved slowly over the three.

The man finished, pointing to Fenn, "He says he knows the secret of the Citadel."

Imperceptibly the muscles of Lannar's face tightened until the lines of it were hard as iron. He looked up at Fenn, a gaunt parched man sitting on a jaded horse and waiting now with a strange sort of patience.

"Is that true?" asked Lannar.

"It is true."

A muscle began to twitch in Lannar's cheek. "Dismount. I want to talk to you." His gesture included all three. He turned away toward a large hut, first giving a rapid order or two that Fenn could not hear.

FENN and the others got stiffly down and followed him.

The men who had been with Lannar stared at them with a mixture of hostility and wolfish eagerness as they went with the three into Lannar's house.

The shadowy interior was furnished with a haphazard richness. Bright silks, rugs and furs and bits of ornate furniture and dishes of crystal and gold—the loot of the caravans that went between the Numi cities, consorting oddly with the mud walls and floor of beaten earth.

Women came from somewhere in the back, bringing bread and dried meat, water and wine. Fenn and the others ate and drank voraciously. The portions seemed very small.

"You can have more later," Lannar said. "Too much now will make you sick." He leaned forward, his wiry body poised and unrelaxed in a gilded chair. "Now! What is this about the Citadel?"

Fenn told him, speaking without haste. Lannar listened. His eyes glowed with a still hot light. The men in the shadows listened too. Fenn could hear their breathing, tense and short. From time to time Arika spoke and Malech. At last the scroll was spread out at Lannar's feet, showing the island that was lost in the Great Dark.

"There is the Citadel," Fenn said and was silent.

Lannar voiced a harsh sigh. He rose and began to move back and forth, a catlike man suddenly drunk with hope but suspicious none the less, too old and hard to take anything for granted.

Abruptly he took Fenn's head by the hair and bent it back, studying his face with those hot shrewd eyes that saw everything.

"You tell the truth," said Lannar. "But perhaps it is a truth these Numi spawn have put into your head, so that you believe it."

"It is the truth," said Fenn steadily.

"Memories—dreams!" said Lannar, and let him go. "You cannot prove these things. There is no bone and flesh in them for a man to get his hands on."

Arika said, "I can open his mind again. Then you can hear him speaking of the past he knows."

He glanced at her half contemptuously. "I know the tricks of the Numi, the things they can do with a man's mind. I would hear words but they would not prove themselves."

Malech asked quietly, "What have we to gain by such a deception?"

"I don't know. I cannot see a gain now but there may be one that is hidden from me." He faced the half-blood, saying with a vicious softness, "I learned so long ago, with so much blood and pain, never to trust a Numi!"

"Numi," whispered Malech. "Numi!" He got up. He was a big man. He

towered over Lannar. His eyes blazed with such a passion of fury that it seemed he would take the smaller man between his hands and tear him to bits. He laughed.

"Numi. That's funny, Lannar. You don't know the humor of it. All my life I have lived with that joke. The Numi spit upon me because I'm human and the humans want to kill me because I'm Numi."

He glanced at Arika with a flash of sheer hatred that startled Fenn. "My sister is more fortunate. She looks human." He turned again to Lannar, who had not moved or even raised his hands. Malech seemed to sense contempt in that very lack of fear. He laughed again, a short harsh ugly sound.

"If I stood over you, full-furred and bearded and wearing the trappings of a Numi, it would be different, Lannar. Oh, yes! But I am naked and shorn and therefore nothing." He sat down again abruptly, hunched sullenly over his knees. "Try your courage on RhamSin, Lannar. See if you can face him down!"

Lannar said, "RhamSin?" From the tone of his voice it was obvious that he held that name in great respect. Fenn rose.

"Yes," he said. "RhamSin. I have told you all the story, and it's a true one. RhamSin will prove it to you. He has followed me from the city to get the secret back."

He paused to let that sink in. And Lannar said to himself, "He would not do that for any ordinary captive nor for any slave."

He began to pace again, more slowly. Fenn moved to stand before him. "Give us the things we need, Lannar, and we'll go on alone."

"No," said Lannar. He was silent for a time, looking up into Fenn's gaunt face, his gaze narrowed and withdrawn. Then he murmured, "He has the stamp of the deserts on him, the same as I." He laughed. "No, Fenn—we'll go together. After all I gamble my life against every caravan I plunder—and even the chance of finding the Citadel is worth the risk. There are others here who will think so too."

Arika leaped up. She looked at Lannar but it seemed she could not speak. Her eyes were very bright and Fenn saw that there were tears in them. She turned suddenly and put her arms around him.

"The gods are with you, Fenn," she whispered.

He found that he had caught her to him almost without knowing it. Over her shoulder he said fiercely to Lannar, "We will find it!"

From outside came the heavy splashing of a horse through mud and water and a man's voice crying, "Lannar! Lannar! The Numi come!"

Chapter VII

The Great Dark

THE harsh braying of horns spread the alarm across the swamp. Two or

three more riders came in from the desert, the last of the patrols. The bridges were taken

up. From among the trees of the island Fenn watched the company of the Numi come down to the edge of the green water and stop. Lannar laughed with savage humor.

"They have done this for generations, trying to wipe us out. But they can't pass the swamp." He pointed among the hammocks. "See how our bowmen are placed? Even if, by treachery or miracle, the Numi were able to come in our arrows would kill them on the path. So they come and threaten us and offer bribes and go away again when their food runs out."

His brows drew down. "All in the black and silver of the temple, eh? It seems you were not lying, Fenn!"

He turned aside, talking with rapid urgency to his chieftains. Fenn remained, watching the Numi. They were too far away to distinguish details. But there was one commanding figure robed in black and riding a black horse, and Fenn shivered.

Arika was close beside him. Her face was worried.

A captain of the Numi began to speak, using a trumpet of bark that magnified his voice. In the name of RhamSin, he offered pardon, power, and reward for the return of a runaway slave who had murdered a priest.

There was no answer from the marsh. He repeated the offer three times and still there was no answer.

The distant figure that was RhamSin reached out and took the speaking tube.

The voice of RhamSin spoke, carrying clear across the silent marsh.

"Fenway! There is no escape from me. I brought forth your mind and it belongs to me. When the time comes I will call—and you will obey!"

That voice seared into Fenn's brain like fire. He had heard it before, commanding, torturing. He had heard it and obeyed.

RhamSin wheeled his horse and galloped away and his men turned to follow.

Fear rose up and caught Fenn by the throat. He tried to shout defiance after the Numi priest but the words would not come. The hot Sun burned him but he was cold and his face was damp with a clammy sweat.

"He lies, Fenn. He lies!" cried Arika but Fenn shook his head.

He muttered, "I am not sure that RhamSin lies."

He turned to Lannar and his eyes had a strange look. "How long will it take to be ready?"

"My men are already gathering horses and supplies." Lannar gave him a

side-long glance that seemed to penetrate him like a sword-thrust but he did not mention RhamSin's words. He nodded toward the retreating Numi.

"They have drawn off so that we may feel free to go where we will. But they will watch and follow. However, we have a back door—a way up the scarp, hacked out long ago in case of need. The Numi will have to go many miles around to get up onto the plateau, so we'll have that much start of them."

He smiled, a nervous, vulpine baring of the teeth and Fenn knew that Lannar, too, was eager to be moving.

"I can't spare many men," he said. "But a light force moves faster and is easier to feed. But in the end we'll need help. The Numi are twice our number and better armed. So I have ordered messengers to go among the other outlaw tribes, asking them to follow."

He paused, and added, "This is all madness, Fenn. We can't live long in the Great Dark without warmth or sight of the Sun. But the Numi will be on their own ground. Even though RhamSin's generation may never have seen the homeland, it is the place that bred them as they are."

He shrugged. "Well, we shall see what madmen can do! And now you had better sleep while you can."

In Lannar's house Fenn slept—a nervous slumber plagued with ugly dreams. He was glad when the time came to mount and go. Malech was of the party. No one had suggested otherwise. But he rode a little apart with a proud sullen look, speaking to no one, and Fenn saw that Lannar kept a close eye upon him.

They scrambled up the steep trail to the plateau, twenty men armed with sword and bow and axe, and from every island in the swamp the eyes of men and women watched in fear and hope and wonder.

At the crest of the scarp, Fenn looked back across the vast emptiness of the desert, a wind-torn desolation under a copper sky. He had survived it and now it seemed familiar to him. He felt almost a sadness at leaving it to go into the trackless dark that was forbidden to humankind.

He saw the dusty plume that marked the march of the Numi following the scarp, knew that they had already begun the chase.

Ahead, the plateau stretched to the short horizon. The rusty clouds seemed lower here, scudding close over the earth. Stiff grasses bent before the wind. They had climbed a long way up from the desert and it seemed to Fenn that the wind had an edge to it, a memory of cold.

They formed their ranks for the long trail, twenty men and forty horses, heading outward toward the Shadow and the Great Dark.

It was a strange and timeless journey. For some distance the way was known to Lannar. There was game on the plateau and good forage at certain times of the year and the men of the marshes made use of both. But they were soon beyond those limits, plodding across an endless dreary

upland of tumbled hills. The shadows grew longer and the Sun sank lower and lower at their backs and the teeth of the whistling wind grew sharper.

The country was too rough to let them see far along their backtrail. But they would spot from time to time the distant smoke of cooking fires and Fenn thought that they drew always closer.

The desert horses were small but tough and enduring and more used to short rations and hard work than the Numi beasts. Fenn loved the rough ill-tempered little brutes and that gave them this one advantage over the Numi.

"Wait though," said Lannar. "Wait until we are all on foot."

The wind boomed ever stronger and colder and there were bursting storms of rain and then, at one sleep period, Fenn roused to find the whole earth mantled with a chill whiteness. From that time on the men grew more morose and silent and he knew that they were afraid.

He was beginning to be afraid himself.

ARIKA clung close to him. She seemed very strong for her slight body, riding as long as the men and never complaining. When they slept, huddled together around the fires, it seemed natural that she should be near Fenn. They did not talk much—no one did. They rode and ate their meagre rations and slept and were too weary for anything else.

Malech kept always apart. He seemed to have taken a dislike even to his sister, who was tolerated if not web corned by the humans. His beard had grown and his hair was longer. He was wrapped in fur and leather like the others and with his body covered it was impossible to tell him now from a true Numi. He did not seem to need the warmth of the fire and he slept alone with an air of contemptuous strength.

And as Malech grew more like a Numi the tribesmen's distrust and hatred of him deepened. But Malech's strength and unhuman endurance helped enormously in the tight places of the trail. That held their aversion to him in check.

One of the horses died. They flayed him and dried the meat.

"They will all die," said Lannar grimly. "They will give us hides and food for the rest of our journey." He was a desert man and did not like to watch the death of horses.

The Sun became a red ember on the horizon behind them. They went down into a valley filled with snow and darkness and when they reached the other side the Sun was gone beyond the higher hills. Arika whispered. "This is what men call the Shadow."

There was still light in the sky. The land began to slope gradually downward, flattening out. Here there were no trees, nor even the stunted scrub that had grown to the edge of the Shadow. The wind-swept rocks were covered with wrinkled lichens and the frozen earth was always white.

One by one the horses died. The frozen meat was hidden by the way so

that there should be food for the return march—if there was to be one. The men suffered from the cold. They were used to the dry heat of the deserts. Three of them sickened and died and one was killed by a fall.

The Shadow deepened imperceptibly into night. The rolling rusty clouds of the dayside had become the greyer clouds of storm and fog. The men toiled through dimming mist and falling snow that turned at last to utter darkness.

Lannar turned a lined and haggard face to Fenn. "Madmen!" he muttered. And that was all.

They passed through the belt of storm. There came a time when the lower air was clear and a shifting wind began to tear away the clouds from the sky.

The pace of the men slowed, then halted altogether. They watched, caught in a stasis of awe and fear too deep for utterance. Fenn saw that there was a pallid eerie radiance somewhere behind the driving clouds.

Arika's hand crept into his and clung there. But Malech stood apart, his head lifted, his shining eyes fixed upon the sky.

A rift, a great ragged valley sown with stars. It widened, and the clouds were swept away, and the sky crashed down upon the waiting men, children of eternal day who had never seen the night.

They stared into the black depths of space, burning with a million points of icy fire. And the demoniac face of the Moon stared back at them, pocked with great shadows, immense and leering, with a look of death upon it.

Someone voiced a thin, wavering scream. A man turned and began to run along the backtrail, floundering, falling, clawing his way back toward the light he had left forever.

Panic took hold of the men. Some of them fell down and covered their heads. Some stood still, their hands plucking at sword and axe, all sense gone out of them. And Malech laughed. He leaped up on a hummock of ice, standing tall above them in the cold night so that his head seemed crowned with blazing stars, "What are you afraid of? You fools! It's the moon and stars. Your fathers knew them and they were not afraid!"

The scorn and the strength that were in him roused the anger of the men, giving their fear an outlet. They rushed toward him and Malech would have died there in the midst of his laughter if Fenn and Lannar together had not turned them back.

"It's true!" Fenn cried. "I have seen them. I have seen the night as it was before the Destruction. There is nothing to fear."

But he was as terrified as they.

Fenn and Lannar and the bearded Malech who had shed every trace of humanity, beat the men into line again and got them moving, fifteen of the twenty who had started, alone in the Great Dark. Tiny motes of life, creeping painfully across the dead white desolation under the savage stars.

The cold Moon watched them and something of its light of madness came into their eyes and did not go away.

Fifteen—twelve of these lived to see the riven ice of the ocean, a glittering chaos flung out across the world. Malech looked toward the east, where the Moon was rising.

Fenn heard him say, "From beyond the ocean, from the heartland of the Great Dark—that is where we came from, the New Men who conquered the earth!"

Following the tattered map they turned northward along the coast. They were scarecrows now, half starved, half frozen, forgetting that they had ever lived another life under a warm Sun—almost forgetting why they had left that life behind them.

Nine of them lived to see an island between two frozen rivers near the frozen sea and on that island the skeletal towers of a city buried in the ice.

Nine of them lived to see New York.

Chapter VIII

The Citadel

FENN stood alone with Arika on the high cliff above the river. The others waited at a distance and their waiting was a cruel thing. Their faces made him feel afraid.

Then he forgot them. He looked out across the white river, across white snow and reaches of gleaming ice to the island city lying silent under the stars and the black sky.

There was no light in that city now but the cold shining of the Moon. No voice spoke there but the voice of the wind. Yet even in death the grandeur was not gone from it. The shattered towers stood up proudly from the ice that shrouded them, the massive bulk and size were not lessened. New York was not a city. It was a dream of titans and the destruction of half a world had not effaced it.

A feeling of pride and sorrow came over Fenn, mixed with a despair so deep that he could not bear it. Memories crowded in on him, fleeting pictures of another time, half seen but poignant with regret and longing.

He whispered, "Once it lived!" And the tears ran down his cheeks and froze in glittering drops.

Arika said, "Remember, Fenn. Remember those days when the city lived. Remember this place and the building of the Citadel."

Her face came before him, pale in its dark frame of fur. Her eyes were huge, filled with the frosty moonlight, compelling, inescapable.

"Here you can remember, Fenn-way. Here is your past. Look at the city. Remember!"

Her eyes probed deep into his brain and her voice spoke, ringing down dark hidden corridors. Fenn looked past her at the city. His face changed slowly. He was no longer Fenn. He was another man, seeing another world.

He had come to see the Citadel. Everyone came. It was the ninth wonder, the greatest work of mankind. It drew them with an ugly fascination. It was the symbol of death but a death that would not come in their time and so they could find in it excitement and a gratifying pride.

There were lights on the Palisades. There were crowds, children shouting in the summer night, vendors, music. Across the Hudson loomed the immense and blazing bulk of New York, thrusting giant shoulders against the sky.

He began to walk. And as he walked he thought he saw also a phantom landscape, a place of ice and desolation, with the wreck of a city lifting broken girders through the snow.

He had come to see the Citadel. Floodlights, many people, many voices, guards in uniform, a man talking through a loudspeaker.

"Sunk a half mile deep in solid rock—area larger than the Empire State Building—lined and reinforced with steel—earthquake-proof, floodproof—heat and air supplied by sealed atomic generators with an efficiency period of five thousand years . . ."

There wasn't much to see on the surface. Only the great uplifted valve of the door, a core of rustproof alloy many feet thick that fitted into a seat of similar metal sunk into the rock.

The voice of the loudspeaker talked on, explaining that valve, the compressed-air mechanism that would outwear time, the system of levers that would open the door again after it was sealed—after the Destruction.

A system that needed no tool but the human hand and the intelligence to use it. An intelligence capable of operating that door would be on a level high enough to profit by the things that were behind it.

The crowd moved on toward the entrance to go down into the Citadel. He moved with them. The doorway was before him. But he could not reach it. There was a barrier between him and the door, something cold and hard and shining.

He thought he must have fainted then. It was all very strange. He heard the sound of axes and sometimes there were glimpses of things flowing like smoke across his vision. He was frightened. He thought he must be very ill.

Voices—shouting, laughing, sobbing, praying. The voices of crazy men. The axes and the chopping sounds had stopped.

Another voice, saying clearly, "Fenn-way, open the door!"

He could see it, then. It was closed. It had never been closed before. The round metal gleamed at the bottom of a ragged pit, hacked out of ice.

Ice? But it was summer!

He slid down into the pit. The levers were countersunk, sealed against freezing. But they were frozen. He put all his strength into it and one by one they moved, stiff, protesting. He heard the shrill hissing of compressed air . . .

The great valve swung slowly upward.

He saw light in the opening below it. Warm air touched his face. And then the world blanked out.

When his mind cleared again he found himself lying on a metal floor. Someone had taken off his furs. It was warm, blessedly warm—almost hot, after the gelid cold. Above him he could see a web of girders mighty enough to hold a mountain. There was light.

Arika bent over him. Her eyes shone with a feral joy. "You've done it, Fenn," she whispered. "We're in the Citadel!"

His heart began to pound. He sat up, remembering that he had dreamed. Lannar was standing near him. He had been weeping, the hard man of the desert.

"I would have killed you," he said. "If you had failed I would have broken you in my hands."

HE reached out to Fenn and Fenn nodded. "I knew that." He took Lannar's hand and rose and the men crowded around him. They blazed now. They knew what they had done and it was a great thing.. They were proud. But they looked at Fenn with an awe that was close to veneration.

Lannar said, "I have set guards at the door. The stair that leads down is narrow, and if the Numi come, they

130must do it one at a time." He frowned uneasily. "Is there no other entrance?"

"None."

"I don't like a place with only one door," said Lannar.

Fenn laughed. "We have the Citadel. Let us not worry about doors!" He caught Arika to him. He was wild with elation. He looked at the long still corridors that rayed away from the central place where they stood. He thought of the many levels below this one, and of all the knowledge and the strength that waited there, to build the world again. Tears stung his own eyes, and there was no room in him now for fear.

He started to walk, and the others came with him. Like men in a dream they went through the silent halls of the Citadel that had waited twelve hundred years for their coming.

Twelve hundred years ago they had sealed this place, those men of the past who had known they were doomed. This was their gift—their last great offering to the future.

Fenn's mind wavered uncertainly between that time and this. Sometimes he

was Fenn-way, going with a guided group through the myriad rooms. Sometimes he was Fenn, holding a half-Numi girl in the hollow of his arm, walking with the naked riders of the desert. Sometimes he understood fully all that he saw and again only native intelligence enabled him to guess at the nature and uses of the complex things about him.

But whether he was Fenn or Fenn-way the sense of awe did not leave him. It grew and deepened with every step he took. And with the awe came pride—not for himself but for the blood that was in him, and Lannar and every son of man. He felt the heavy obligation they owed to those long-dead builders of the Citadel. He felt the challenge that was inherent in their gift.

Knowledge is a two-edge sword, they seemed to say.

We gave ourselves deep wounds. How will you use knowledge, you men of the future? To build or to destroy?

They had done their work well, the builders of the Citadel. There were books, countless microfilm volumes stored in countless rooms. There were objects, from the first crude axe of stone to a tiny complex model of a cyclotron. There were a million working models of every conceivable type of machine. There were films.

Whole levels had been devoted to chemistry and physics, to engineering and agriculture, to medicine, to every science man had learned to help him live. The art and the music and the thought of a world were stored there too and the records of man's history and his hopes and dreams and follies. Only one thing had been left out.

There were no weapons.

Thinking of the Numi they searched for weapons, for strong implements of war to use against RhamSin and the conquerors they would have to fight after him. And there was nothing.

Frowning, groping for memory, Fenn said slowly, "I think—they said that in all the Citadel there would be no instrument of death."

Lannar's hand tightened on his bow. He laughed, a bitter sound. "That was noble. But they reckoned without the Numi!"

A shadow of dread began to grow in all their minds. Fenn saw how carefully the incredible multitudes of books and models and diagrams had been arranged so that one could grasp the simple things first and use them as steps to climb on. Some knowledge still lived in the world. If nothing had survived but man's own vigor and intelligence the treasures of the Citadel could still have been used, so magnificently had every step been planned.

They did not see more than a hundredth part of that colossal monument to the faith and courage of man.

Their own faith and courage had brought them half across a world to find it. They were tired and they had an enemy at their backs. Dazed, stricken with awe and wonder, they returned to the central hall.

The guards at the stairway had seen nothing.

"They will come," said Malech. He walked over to a globe of the world as tall as two men that occupied the center of the hall. Idly he set it spinning, watching the play of light and shadow on the countries and the seas. He had shed his wrappings and Fenn saw that the light down on his body had grown thicker. It was as though the intense cold had brought out the last of the latent Numi characteristics in Malech.

Fenn went to him. He asked a question he had asked before. "Malech—what are the Numi?"

Malech's large hand stopped the globe from spinning. His fingers rested on a land that had once been called Europe.

"Here," he said. "When the Earth's spinning slowed, all this side of it turned its face forever away from the Sun and was trapped in the Great Dark. The air here did not freeze, for there was still warmth from Earth's heart. But all else here froze and died.

"All except a very few men and women—a few strong enough to survive. These few survivors gathered together and found ways to live. They adapted themselves to the dark and cold, even growing furred against it and their minds sharpened by necessity."

Malech smiled and spun the globe again. "They were the New Men—the Numi. But they were men still and they remembered the Sun! And they came at last to take their place under it!"

Lannar had come soft-footed up behind them. "So they did," he said. "And where is your place, Malech? With the Numi or with us?"

Malech turned slowly. Fenn thought of another time they two had faced each other and now Malech towered over the smaller man, arrogant—and strong. The journey had not told on him too much.

"I made my decision long ago," he said to Lannar. "Tell me, Malech."

But the tall man laughed and did not answer. He stood there looking down at Lannar and the globe spun

round and round behind him. The hand of the desert man dropped to his sword.

Fenn had gripped his own blade. And then there came the swift sharp twang of a bowstring, and a cry and a man pitched head first down the stairs.

He was a Numi, wearing the black and silver of RhamSin.

Chapter IX

The Courage of Fenn

ANOTHER soldier of the temple died on the stairway, and a third retreated with an arrow through his thigh.

Then there was silence. Fenn sprang to the foot of the narrow well.

"Come down!" he shouted. He cursed the Numi and

bade them come and die. Above in the outer darkness, the voice of RhamSin spoke.

"When it is time we'll come!" He laughed. "What will you do with the Citadel now that you have it?"

"Keep it for mankind!" cried Fenn defiantly, and again RhamSin laughed.

"Mankind," he said, "is a long way off."

He seemed to withdraw and Fenn heard the Numi making camp in a circle around the doorway.

Lannar plucked with hard fingers at his bowstring, making it thrum like the string of a harp. He looked

angrily around the great hall, including by inference the whole Citadel.

"In all this place, not a weapon. Nothing!" He had counted on the strength of the Citadel. Fenn realized that they all had.

Lannar continued bleakly, "They can't get in, we can't get out. They have food and snow to make water. We have a little food. They're cold and we're warm and the toughest hide will hold out the longest. I only hope the tribesmen don't linger on the way."

"If," said Fenn, "they had faith enough to come at all."

He turned from the mocking stair, desperately searching his mind and the fragments of memory for something, anything, that could be used to help them. And he saw something huddled on the floor near the great globe of the world.

It was Arika.

She stirred in his arms as he lifted her and whispered, "Malech. I tried to stop him." There was a reddening welt on her temple where an iron fist had struck her.

Savagely angry Fenn looked around at the knot of men by the stair, at the huge empty hall.

Malech had disappeared.

A twang and hiss from somewhere up above and the man next to Lannar fell with an arrow through his body. Fenn thought that Lannar would have died then except that he was sheltered by the stair.

Malech's voice cried, "Clear the stair, you human dogs! Stand away!"

The men scattered then, wildly, taking cover where they could behind the pillars that upheld the girders of the roof, and as they went a second shaft took one tribesman through the leg. A cat-squall of sheer animal rage came

from Lannar and Fenn dragged the still-dazed Arika close under the bulge of the globe.

He unslung his bow and set an arrow to the string and then he peered into the cold upper light of the hall, following the sound of Malech's voice.

Some distance from the narrow well of the stair, a steel ladder climbed the wall to a small blind gallery set high among the sockets of the girders. Fenn guessed that behind that gallery was the chamber of the valve mechanism. The gallery itself was little more than a platform but it was large enough for Malech.

He glimpsed the dark bulk of Malech's body, half hidden in the shadows of the niche. He raised his bow,

then let it drop. He could not hope to hit him at that angle.

He called to Lannar, and Lannar and his men answered with a flight of arrows that rattled against the corners and the railing of the gallery.

Malech shouted, "Shoot away!"

He sounded as though he were enjoying himself. He had everything on his side, the light, the angle, the elevation. He covered the whole area around the stairway. He could keep it clear so that the next time the Numi could come down without too much interference.

He said as much, and Lannar cursed him for a traitor. Malech answered, "I was born to be one. The only choice I had was to betray—my mother or my father."

He laughed. "Arika decided for the mother's blood and cast her lot with you humans. She told me on the trail and I knew it was because she loves Fenn.

"So, since she had mined our plans, I too made my choice on the trail. I knew which blood was strongest in me. I left a message, scrawled in charcoal on a strip of hide. RhamSin was sure to find it. Let the humans do the work, I told him. What matter? They are weak, and they will be weaker. I promised him the Citadel."

"What was your price?" asked Lannar bitterly. "What was the price of the human world?"

"To let it be forgotten that my blood is tainted! To be accepted for what I am—a Numi!"

Again his humming bow sent a shaft through the breast of a man who exposed himself to shoot.

FENN reached up and set the world-globe to whirling.

Arika caught his arm but he flung her hand aside. He went low and fast, belly down, keeping the globe between him and the gallery.

Malech called his name. "Will you die now, Fenn-way? Fenn-way! All that

talk about time and the past and how the Citadel belonged to men. Listen to me, man without a memory! Do you know who found the Citadel? Not men, who had lost it! No. The Numi found it. Numi wisdom, Numi science! You were only the little tool in the hands of RhamSin."

He paused. Fenn had gained the far wall. He crouched behind a pillar, measuring the distance to the next. Malech said, "Don't bother, Fenn. Come here, where you want to be. I won't harm you."

Fenn did not move. Lannar shouted, "Don't!"

"Why not?" asked Malech. "It's his only chance. I will have killed him by the third pillar, if he works his way around."

Under the spinning globe Arika crouched and looked at Fenn with eyes that hurt him, full of fear and sorrow and none of it for herself.

Fenn stepped out from behind the pillar. He began to walk toward the gallery, across the wide still hall. He held his bow slack, the arrow nocked point down. Malech kept back in the angle and the shadows. He did not show himself.

He talked. "You told me once that you wanted to remember. Very well, you shall. Why do you stop, Fenn? Are you afraid to remember?"

Sweat glistened on Fenn's drawn face, on his naked breast. The muscles of his arms stood out like ropes.

"Or," asked Malech softly, "are you afraid to have the others know the truth? They're watching you, their great god Fenn-way, who led them to the Citadel. Don't you want them to know the truth about you, about humanity?"

Fenn started on again. He said, "I am not afraid." And it was a lie.

"Then I'll tell you the real story of the finding of the Citadel. You had lost it, you humans, and it would have been lost forever if it had not been for RhamSin. He took a rebel tribesman off the desert—another such as Lannar there, captured in a raid—and used his science on him, so carefully, so patiently, making the little mind of the captive a mirror of the past."

He laughed softly. "Are you faltering again? You don't like to hear this, do you? You're so proud of your achievement!"

The bowstring burned Fenn's fingers. His heart was pounding. Somewhere in him was a sickness that grew and grew. He went on toward the gallery. Malech's voice continued relentlessly, like the biting of salt in a raw wound.

"Arika knew. She watched. She watched RhamSin blot out the memories of this tribesman's own life, closing the channels of his own remembrances. That opened the way. RhamSin probed back then into memories that were not the tribesman's own—the memories of his fathers who had lived before him, ancestral memories, the inherited books of knowledge we do not know we possess but which are there, buried deep in the secret parts of the brain.

"Arika waited. And just before this raw sun-bitten rat of the deserts, under the power of RhamSin's mind, was about to speak with the voice of his long-dead ancestors, telling the secrets of the Citadel, she stole him away from the temple. And why? You wondered about that, Fenn. I will tell you. So that the Numi powers that she and I possess might gain that secret for ourselves to sell to the highest bidder!"

Fenn had stopped entirely. He stared up at Malech. Malech's bow was ready with an arrow aimed at his heart and his own arrow was on the string. But Fenn was

not concerned with killing in this moment. His mind was lost in a dark turmoil. It seemed that he could remember dimly the agony of that probing into his mind. RhamSin's voice, forbidding, commanding, opening hidden doors ...

Ancestral memory—the Fenn-way of the past had known that term. There was a word to go with it—hypnosis.

Malech cried, "Look at your hero, you humans! We were only slaves and half-breeds, my sister and I—but hee was a tool in our hands! Now tell me who has the best right to the Citadel?"

A cold bleak anger took possession of Fenn. It drove away all thought and emotion, all concern with himself. He began to raise his bow.

"It's too late, Fenn," said Malech, laughing. His own shaft pointed unwaveringly at Fenn's heart, ready to fly. "Too late—your masters are already here!"

IT was true. From the corner of his eye Fenn saw the Numi soldiers coming one by one, swiftly down the narrow stair. Lannar and what men he had left had fallen back. Their arrows killed a few but they could not stop the Numi rush. Their only hope had been to hold the stair and Malech had prevented that.

Malech!

Fenn's eyes glittered with a hard malevolence. He dropped to one knee to let fly his arrow, knowing that Malech would instantly shoot.

He expected instant death. But in that second a black shaft suddenly stood out from Malech's breast. The bow of the half-breed fell from his hands unused. He stood for a moment with the long arrow in him, staring over Fenn's head with a look of shocked incredulity.

Fenn heard the voice of RhamSin speak to Malech. "The man's mind can still be useful to me. And your usefulness is done."

MALECH went down on his knees. And Fenn laughed.

Two long strides took him to the ladder. He went up it with a bound and crouched behind the railing. Malech looked at him, still with that hurt unbelief.

He was quite dead. Fenn began to shoot into the ranks of the Numi around

the stair.

He shouted, "Lannar! Up here!"

They made a bolt for it, Lannar and his men and Arika. From his vantage point Fenn gave them what cover he could. Lannar, Arika, and three men made it. Lannar and two others were wounded.

They were crowded on the gallery. Fenn shoved the body of Malech down the ladder and there was room enough for them to crouch together behind the railing.

"What use?" asked Lannar grimly. "We have shot away our arrows."

"Because," Fenn said with a queer desperate hope in his voice, "there may still be a weapon here! One that I can't quite remember."

He was looking down into the hall at the Numi who were gathering there, at the globe of cold light that hung above them.

Cold light? What was it that he could not remember? He looked at the globe and the web of girders close above his head and his brows knit in a cruel effort.

The last of the Numi came down the stairs. RhamSin said, "Will you come down peaceably or must we come up after you?"

"Come if you will," snarled Lannar. "We still have our swords."

Fenn turned to Arika. His fingers bit into her flesh. He whispered, "Help me to remember! The Citadel—the guide that took us through—something he said . . ."

RhamSin's voice rang in her ears like the voice of doom. "I told you once that I would call you and you would come. I call you now. And I warn you—your use-fulness will not save your life if you anger me too far." Arika said, "Don't listen, Fenn! Remember!"

Her eyes burned deep into his. The voice of RhamSin called and Fenn felt a terrible compulsion to obey. But there was an iron fury in him and he would not yield.

The Citadel, the crowd, the guide, talking—Cold light. Radioactive dust suspended in an inert liquid. Deadly compound, harnessed for the peaceful use of man. Bulbs of plastic that screened out harmful rays—absolutely safe

give light almost forever.-

"Stay here," said Fenn to the others very softly. "Keep down. Don't move or lean out to look!"

He leaped up and caught the girder overhead, swinging upon it. Balancing precariously on that narrow bridge of steel he began to run.

RhamSin shouted.

Arrows began to fly around Fenn—black arrows with barbed tips. But he was a hard mark to hit, running high among the interlacing shadows of the girders. And he had not far to go.

Below him he could see the Numi, their angry faces looking up, tall proud lords of conquest in a citadel of peace. He flung himself down across the girder. Here were bolted the chains that held the globe of radioactive light.

He took his sword, a good keen blade of tempered

Numi steel. With every ounce of strength and madness that was in him he struck downward at a single chain.

It parted, helped by the weight of the massive bracket it upheld. And Fenn found it in his heart to laugh a little bitterly. Even in a citadel of peace the ingenious mind of man could find a means of killing!

The globe of light fell with the snapping of the chain. Out of the round bracket that swung now by one edge it fell—down, down, to smash upon the metal floor below.

Fenn hugged the girder. There was a crash and a burst of vicious light, a hissing, snarling explosion, and then . . .

He thought that even Numi did not deserve to die that way, in such corrosive agony of the body, in such shocked terror of the mind.

He waited until the last one had stopped screaming. He did not look again at the seared scored twisted bodies. He worked his way back along the girder and this time he did not run. He was sick and shaken and full of a sense of guilt.

ARIKA and Lannar helped him back down onto the gallery. They too looked sick and pale from what they had seen on the floor below. "They are all dead," whispered Arika. "But how—"

Fenn said heavily, "The men of the far past built this Citadel to be a light in the darkness, a light of hope and peace and knowledge. And now war and death have come into it. And my hands are red."

"You were forced to do it, Fenn!"

He knew that she was right. And men would be forced to war against the Numi, and the knowledge of the Citadel would free them from that alien yoke. But after that . . .

He spoke and his whisper was not for those beside him but for men dead twelve hundred years, the men who had bequeathed them this heritage of the ages. "After that," he whispered, "we will learn to build and not destroy. I will redeem my guilt, men of the past."

He would not be alone. There was Arika—and Lannar, a desert man like himself.

His own memories, of his life before RhamSin, might never return. But that did not seem to matter now. He could start a new life when before them lay

a whole new world.