



Tara from Rhodes

Barbarian Fiction

TARA FROM RHODES

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The Gladiators of Lakshor

The warriors didn't have any fear, as their souls were traveling through the realms of dead. Them was promised that after a short trip they would come to the house of the most beautiful women. They would show them all the pleasures of the afterlife as a reward for all what they had done. But they didn't know what was waiting for them. The women were indeed the most beautiful, and the men could choose whoever they wanted, but in the middle of the night these women would kill their souls, as they were the women of second death. This the men didn't know, as it was never told to them. Then the essence of their souls would be taken to the realm deeper than hell, a realm called Lakshor. The men didn't know anything about the conspiracies of death. They really believed that they could live the rest of eternity with these women, as that was which they had told them since their earliest childhood. They didn't know that earth was just a trainingschool for them, to prepare them for a greater war : the war of the dead. No one had any understanding of the horrors of Lakshor, but they would find out soon.

In Lakshor the horror-king Metulidan throned. He was a skeleton with a high shrieking voice. He enjoyed it that there were so many spoiling tales about death, that it would be a paradise with well-shaped women, especially for those who would die in battle. Many young men dreamt to become a great warrior for this reason. They didn't fear death anymore, but desired it. Metulidan had chosen the most voluptuous women of Lakshor to seduce the fallen men at the gates of death. They would lure them to their house in the realms of the dead. On the top of their house the skull of a horned animal hang. The men had to get the feeling that they would have arrived in the eternal huntingfields. How their young dreams would turn into a nightmare. In Lakshor there was an eternal war : the war of the dead, or some might say : the war of the damned. It was a place worse than everlasting damnation. In Lakshor there was everlasting slavery.

As the night fell the women had prepared their knives to do the job. They had done this many times before. Some of the women already worked for threehundred years in this house. Metulidan called it : the house of seduction. It was one of his best webs in the realms of the

dead. When the sleeping men had been finally killed for the second time, the essences of their soul woke up, and they rose up in frozen tragedy, not knowing what had happened to them. For the women it was very easy now to lead the men to the city of Lakshor. Behind the house there was a hidden gate of lava, which was in earlier times a sea of fire. Here was an elevator by which the men would descend to Lakshor. In this elevator the women had another job to do. They had to give the men a new armor. To the men it was a strange prison. They had to become warriors again, but now it was forever. The men couldn't speak yet, as their soul-essence was still between sleeping and awakening. They had lost so many pieces of their mind, and a light paralyzing aura was around their head. The women took some liquid metal out of a sort of bag and smeared it on their head and faces. An awful stench was coming from the blend. Then they covered the metal by a sort of dark skin which looked like it was from a sort of animal.

After about forty days in the elevator they came into the city of Lakshor. They were still not totally awake, but they started to react to the smell of the city. It was a very foul stench. The elevator stopped in a huge arena. Here they would have their first fight. A tall red man called Strelon showed up. He looked very dreadful. The men got helmets on, and were pushed towards the huge red man. It was almost like a giant. He had a dark low voice, saying : 'Be prepared to die many times. The realms of the city of Lakshor are deep.' The red man soon tore them apart like they were dolls. At the end of the fight they were nothing like ghosts. The women gathered the shatters and by the liquid metal they could build them up again. It was a sort of strange magnetic glue, keeping the parts together. Then they had to appear before the horror-king. It was in a hall behind the first arena. In the distance the horror-king sat on a huge throne. Metulidan was shouting : 'How could you not defeat the red man ?' The men didn't say anything. One of them called Edmolin suddenly got more and more of his consciousness back. He asked : 'What is the use of this all ?' Metulidan started to laugh but didn't say anything. In a strange sense Metulidan liked the boy. He seemed to be the youngest of them, and soon Metulidan decided he wanted the boy as his servant. The boy was tender and not made to be a gladiator. As the men were led to the next arena, Metulidan took the boy, and told him he could serve in the kitchen. When Edmolin got there he started to realize that there was so much meat instead of other sort of food. There was meat in all sorts and in many different colours.

Edmolin got his own room, and more and more he started to realize how lucky he was. The king often went to gladiator-wars in the arena's, and often he took the boy with him. Often heads got cut off, while the horror-king often used these scalps to decorate the city. One day Metulidan called for the boy, who was working in the kitchen at that moment. The horror-king showed a picture of a girl with pink clothes. The girl was very beautiful in the eyes of Edmolin. 'When you have become grown-up,' the horror-king said, 'you will marry her.'

'Why ?' the boy asked. 'Because I want you to take over my kingdom,' the horror-king said, 'and then you need to have a woman.' The boy sighed. Since that day the boy could only think about the words of the king. When years went by, he got to see her, they married and got the kingdom in their hands. The horror-king had left in a mysterious way. No one knew where he had gone to. The boy had grown-up now, and found out that his woman was the daughter of a snake-farmer. She had an obsession for snakes, and she wanted to have them everywhere throughout the royal place. The big ones she wanted to have in the hall where they were sleeping. It was a very huge hall and there was a very huge bed with a ceiling and with veils and curtains. The snakes here were also very huge and tall. Edmolin didn't feel comfortable with it, but as it was the wish of his woman he was willing to get used to it. Sometimes before

they got to sleep the girl got into a fight with such a snake, and very often she got bitten horribly, but she still wanted to have the snakes in their room. The snakes wouldn't eat them when they were sleeping, for they were tamed in that sense. The woman found out that these snakes had lusts to fight, so she made the decision to put some of them into the arena's, so that the gladiators could take it over. Edmolin wanted to stop the arena's, but his woman said that it was part of the law here, and the law was forever.

One day a wild man from the wilderness came into the royal place. He said he was a wanderer. He said that he wanted to become a gladiator in change for food and care. The woman thought it was a good idea, and often she went to the arena to watch him. He was a very skilled warrior, and he also wrestled with snakes and crocodiles. One day he had to appear before the throne of Edmolin. Edmolin asked him where he was coming from. 'My Lord,' the wild man spoke, 'I come from the land of tragedy. There was so much dryness there, that I decided to wander, and so I came here finally.'

'Where is the land of tragedy,' the king asked. 'It is at the westside of you kingdom, my Lord,' the wild man spoke.

'How is that place a victim of dryness ?' the king asked.

'Oh, my Lord,' the wild man almost stuttered, 'a kingdom wilder than us invaded our land. They took our souls away. We only have a body. They have taken our rivers away. They have imprisoned my whole tribe. I'm the only survivor.' Then the wild man asked if the king would send an army of gladiators to the land.

The gladiators had to travel for three and a half years until they reached the land of tragedy. It was a wilderness of great loneliness, but after months of searching they found the invaders. The invaders were wilder than the gladiators, but the gladiators had a greater number. It was a long and bloody war. Finally the wild tribe had the scalps of all the gladiators, and they moved towards the city of Lakshor. They had birds of prey on which they could fly away, so it didn't took them more than a couple of months to get there. The men were so wild, and even their women, so they could easily invade the city of Lakshor. But when they saw Edmolin, the king, they trembled in fear. Suddenly they bowed down before him. He had a blue triangle above his head, which was the sign of their gods. 'All our kingdoms are yours,' the wild men and women said. And this is how Lakshor grew in size in one day. Lakshor was now greater than hell and heaven together. Because the wild men and women had a lust to fight a lot, they became the new gladiators of Lakshor. But as the kingdom grew the laws became bloodier more and more. And the law demanded that by the blood the kingdom would become greater. Not only would they have their houses of the most beautiful women in the realms of the dead, but also in the realms of hell and heaven.

After awhile the king found out why it had to be so bloody. The wild men and women who came from the west worshipped a blood-sucking fly. If there wasn't enough blood sacrificed to this fly, it would die, and it couldn't lead or guard this wild tribe anymore. And it was like by this blood the fly could make it's women so beautiful. There was only one way how the fly could feed itself. That was to smear the essence of the blood over it's women and then to possess the warriors of earth, of the dead, or of heaven or hell, to let them travel to the houses of these smeared women. This was how the fly could feed itself. The blood was magnetic to the fly in a strange sense. But often the blood was very salty, making the fly more thirsty, and also wilder. That was also the reason why it's men and women who worshipped him were so

wild. They were bound together by a strange bloodline. The fly needed royal blood to quench its thirst a bit. That was why it appeared to the king one day. The fly was already full of rage, because it didn't have enough for such a long time. The king and the fly got in a fight, and soon enough the fly had tied the king to a stake and began to sting him in sensitive places to suck the best blood. After that he flew to the royal bloodlines of the kingdoms of the dead, of heaven and of hell. He now wanted to have royal gladiators, to be assured of a potent and perpetual bloodflow. Now the fly became the king of Lakshor, and Edmolin and his woman had to fight in the royal arena's.

But one day Metulidan with his red guard returned to Lakshor. When they came to the throne of the fly he said : 'I already expected this. Some come to Lakshor just for the blood.' Then his guard, the red giant prince stepped towards the fly, and while the fly shrieked and try to hit him with his sharp wing, the red giant took his slayersword and hit the fly in its head. The fly was spouting lava now, and lightening came from his eyes. Then Metulidan himself took his slayersword and cut a piece of his wing off. Again the fly shrieked, and flew to the other side of the thronehall. Metulidan immediately turned around, took a waspball of poison in his hand and threw it into the stomach of the fly. Blood was streaming out of the fly, while his head became smaller. This was the most dangerous part of the fight, for Metulidan knew that if its head was small like this it was in a terrible rage, ready to use its most deadly weapons. But if it would use one of these weapons, it could also die itself, and it would at least lose much of its strength. The fly attacked, missed, and started to hyperventilate. In its weakness it floated to the floor, but still the fly was in the most dangerous position, for it could use another deadly weapon now. Suddenly it had used its heartsnake, which pierced Metulidan and the red giant prince in a flash, while the both fell to the ground, losing their soulbeat. Softly and tenderly the fly started to eat from their fallen and paralyzed meat, for it was still very weak. Now the fly could drink from a well of high and pure royal blood.

After awhile friends of Metulidan had called for one of the most feared warrior in and around the realms of Lakshor. It was Witigus, the flyslayer. When he came the fly had already turned Lakshor in doom more than ever before. The fly throned on a perpetual stream of royal blood. 'You will have to surrender your kingdom to me,' Witigus spoke. Witigus would only fight the fly for no less price than Lakshor itself and all its vessels and souls. If someone wanted to call for Witigus for a favour the price was always slavery. Witigus would never take less than total domination. But also Witigus would be nothing but prey to the fly. The fly took his prey to a stake on a high rock in the wilderness, tied him to it, and left. He would be an easy meal for snakes now, and for the birds of prey. Then another man called Metusalach tried to conquer the fly, but he fell into the same fate as Witigus the flyslayer. What has become of all these men who wanted to wage war against the fly ? Their spirits have been thrown into the abyss of Lakshor, while their souls have become gladiators in the deeper arena's of Lakshor. They have searched for the well of blood, but they have become wells of blood themselves, for the fly turned their remains finally into trees of blood. Since then no one was allowed to enter Lakshor than those who had drunk from this forbidden blood. And those who had drunk from it would be damned to stay in Lakshor forever. There was no escape possible. And in Lakshor one was doomed to be a gladiator forever, for here there was the eternal war of the damned.

There was no horror greater than the horror of Lakshor. The fly, its king, had the most cruel ways to let his victims and the breakers of the laws of his kingdom suffer to turn them into living and perpetual bloodwells. Those who became a part of the horrors of Lakshor to become its finest warriors had to be baptized in these eternal bloodwells first. There was no greater horror than to drink from the forbidden blood, for it would write your name in the

Book of Blood, which was a horrible and everlasting traumatizing experience of losing all hope and faith in salvation. There was no salvation left for those who had been tied by their souls to the everlasting horrors of the Book of Blood. Their beings were now filled by such an eternal fear and tragedy making them gladiators of doom, destined to the unbearable grief of eternal dying. There was no pain compared to this.

Men tied to the stakes of the Book of Blood could only cry blood, and whenever they spoke, the only thing coming out of their mouths was blood. This was how the fly dealt with his enemies, and this made him the greatest horror-king ever. No one ever coming to Lakshor spoke about the giants of hell anymore. All they could do was seeing and remembering the horrors of the giants of Lakshor. The day the giants of Lakshor came to hell was a day no one who was there would forget. They came to take gladiators to Lakshor.

But behind the veils of Lakshor a wasp was living, hiding the wells and falls of waspian blood. Whenever a woman died in the arena the wasp came to take her soul away. He would tie her to a stake in his realms, where he would use these women for reproduction. They brought forth the waspian souls full of the rushing and sensual waspian blood. Then after awhile he would send them back to the arena's. But some of these women he kept for years. He would finally baptize them in his waspian well of blood, to let them become his own gladiators. These waspian gladiators were the most feared, for they could bring the pains of death. One of these women was called Tara from Rhodes, and after a few years she returned to the arena's. She was a woman of such a tranquilizing beauty that she could lure the birds of prey to let them sit on her hand. She had a strength greater than lions, and this was why she always could sleep near them, warming herself in the skincontact she had with them. Oh yes, sometimes they had fights, but Tara from Rhodes would always dominate them by her voice.

She was an inspiration to the youth in the arena's, mostly when they were in the arena's of lions and snakes. But since the fly found out she had returned from the wasp's place, her skull hangs above his throne. The fly didn't have any mercy to those who had returned from the waspian domain. The arena's of the wasp were foul in his eyes, and one day he invaded the place. He found out about the waspian bloodwells and fed himself.

If anyone was wild, it was Tara from Rhodes. She dived from tall rocks in rivers, she wrestled with bears, apes, and dangerous Martian beasts, and had to survive among the most murderous tribes of Mars. She had a lot of enemies and not many friends. As you can imagine in such wildernesses like the wildernesses of Mars she became a soul-hunter, one of the darkest. If anyone could stir up horror it was Tara from Rhodes. With her lions and panthers she waged wars against the most dangerous tribes. Most of the times she was driven by revenge. She knew these tribes since her childhood, and she still remembered what they had done to her and her loved ones. There was no one darker than Tara from Rhodes the time she was living on Mars. They called her the black snake. She was the most feared of all warriors on Mars in that time. She believed in everlasting war and damnation more than anyone else. She always said it was the well of eternal birth.

Tara from Rhodes was a riddle no one seemed to understand. The tribe where she was born had been enslaved by Gitdugal, the killer-king. He was dressed up by bones and skulls, and his body was covered by white wasp-guards, which would attack any time he spoke. He could take away minds and souls, to turn his victims into zombies. In a huge valley they had to do slave-work. Tara from Rhodes had been saved by a monkey when the zombies of Gitdugal the killer-king invaded the camp of the tribe where she was born. Tara was then just a little girl,

and the monkey took care over her for a long time, until another tribe accepted her. But since she grew up and became an outcast there, she started to look for Gitdugal the killer-king, for she wanted to set her original tribe free. But no one seemed to know where the valley was where Gitdugal the killer-king had his slaves. In her search she met Kingul, a black warrior. He knew where the valley was, but they had to be on their guard. They had to travel south for a couple of days, and they first had to defeat the armies of zombie-guards. When they came there they saw warriors of her tribe tied to trees, and from the bushes zombie-guards jumped having spinning swords. These swords were very dangerous for they didn't only kill you, but they also killed your soul and mind. Tara from Rhodes shrieked and yelled, while she took her knife and threw it into the heart of the first zombie-guard. Then she took an arrow from her quiver very fast and with her bow she quickly shot into the heart of the next zombie-guard. Then she took a spear and pierced three of them. But there were so many zombie-guards surrounding them, that soon they got captured in a net. They now had to appear before the throne of Gitdugal the killer-king. It was a strange pyramid of many layers like a sort of stairway. On top there was another smaller pyramid in which the killer-king sat. Many skulls were surrounding him, and white wasps were coming from his body to cover the net.

When Tara from Rhodes awoke she found herself in a bed in a huge hall. There were soft penetrating lights coming from small oil lamps. A veiled girl entered the hall, to bring her some food. She was a slave-girl but she wasn't from the tribe of Tara from Rhodes. The slave-girl made a sign with her hand, and Tara from Rhodes stood up to follow her. They came in an even huger hall, where lakes of crocodiles were. The lakes were like boiling. The crocodiles looked tormented, like they could slide outside the lakes to attack every moment. Tara from Rhodes didn't trust any of them. When she walked over some bridges suddenly a plank cracked, and she slid into the depth. Immediately three crocodiles slid towards her, while she could get herself on the bridge just in time. She had to be very careful. The slave-girl knew exactly where to walk. With a beating heart she followed the steps of the girl accurately. Suddenly a huge and tall coffinlike case of bronze slid out of a wall. The slave-girl stopped walking, and told Tara from Rhodes she had to lie in the case to come to have dinner with the killer-king. Tara from Rhodes refused, but suddenly the slave-girl took a gun, and some men with sunglasses came in through a door, also holding guns. 'Your life will be over, girl, if you don't do what we tell you.' Slowly and hesitating Tara entered the case. Immediately when she laid down the case slid into the wall again. It was very dark inside, but suddenly the walls of the case started to glow. Tara from Rhodes started sweating, while the case turned hotter and hotter. Then flames appeared in the walls of the case. Tara started to scream and shriek. Suddenly there was light everywhere. She could step out of the case, as Gitdugal the killer-king was taking her hand. 'No worries, my lady,' he said. 'Do you want some tea?'

'No,' Tara from Rhodes spoke harshly, 'you need to free my people.' But Gitdugal showed her the wonderful and lovely, wealthy dinner-table. It was filled with all sorts of tropical fruits, the most strange and rare sorts of meat, and even bones. 'Let us discuss here,' Gitdugal spoke friendly.

'I do not want to discuss with you, you need to let my people go. I am not hungry,' Tara from Rhodes spoke persistent.

Still the killer-king tried to distract her. 'I'm sure you will like the food. It is from my rare gardens.'

'Well, I do not care about your gardens, but I do care about those who suffer in those gardens, the ones you have burdened with such slavery,' Tara from Rhodes said while her eyes were full of piercing fire. 'I warn you, king of killers, you will not like what I will do to you if you will go on with your games,' she said.

Gitdugal pushed on a button of his table. Tara from Rhodes still hadn't sat down. Suddenly some slaves entered carrying dishes and bags with meat and strange rare vegetables. Gitdugal began to eat. Then after awhile Tara from Rhodes also started to eat. After awhile Gitdugal asked : 'And, did you like the meat of your tribe ?' Tara from Rhodes stood up, and grasped the throat of Gitdugal very tightly. 'It's better you do not do that,' Gitdugal said, still friendly, and then he hit his head against her head. In one moment she was slammed to the ground. 'Now I will eat your brain-meat, lady,' Gitdugal said, 'and it's juices and blood I will use to wash my dishes and my room. I have a lot of cleaning work to do I see.' But then Tara from Rhodes kicked him in his male parts like a truck crashing through the walls. Gitdugal fell to the ground, and tried to push one of his floorbuttons, but Tara from Rhodes already stood on his hand. Then she kicked his head very hard. But what Tara didn't know was that there were also big spiders under the meat, and they started spitting all sorts of fluids towards her. Tara from Rhodes fell on the ground and lost consciousness. There are not many masters of sleep like Gitdugal. He has all sorts of tropical secrets having their own sorts of fluids, and if such a spider is one of it's deliverers in some cases, then that is very okay with Gitdugal.

It was like the veils of the brains of Tara from Rhodes were breaking, and she didn't know where she was, or how long she had been unconscious, when she slowly woke up again. She felt very dizzy. Tara from Rhodes felt her blood was growing stronger by all these strange attacks. It was like her body just didn't give up. Others would have died already in the dangerous and tropical mysteries of the realms of Gitdugal with all these poisons threatening the heart and the blood. Some of these rare fluids should have block the nerves of the brains in certain area's so that Tara from Rhodes wouldn't be able to breath and move anymore, for to breathe you needed to use the muscles of your lungs. But Tara from Rhodes seemed to be immune to these lethal threats. Maybe that was because she just lived the wild life. She didn't believe in society. She believed in the industry of nature, by which she could raise the more refined forms of immunology, not poisoned by the paw of civilization. It was the force of civilization she hated, for it bound her to something she was not from origin.

Finally another slave came to the place where Tara from Rhodes was now. It was a dark cave, smelling like the slime of snakes and spiders. The slave told her that Gitdugal wanted to play a game with her : Wild Chess. It would be a living chess, for people of her tribe would be the pawns. If she would win she would free her tribe, but if she would lose, then Gitdugal would take her skull. To Tara from Rhodes it seemed unfair, for on both sides the pawns would be from her tribe, but she didn't have another choice. Gitdugal called it the Chess of Knives, for all living pawns had to carry a knife, and when they had to move they had to push the knife to the next field. Tara from Rhodes only had one demand : All the pawns had to be blindfolded. Gitdugal agreed but then he called for some slaves to sting the eyes out of all the living pawns. Tara from Rhodes was in rage, but now she would play this game to the end, to set her tribe free.

So many of her tribe were slaughtered that day in this Wild Chess, but none of them could win the game. So the killer-king decided to play it again. Tara from Rhodes was desperate, but she didn't have another choice. And again, many of her tribe got slaughtered in this cruel game. But this time none of them could win either, and they had to play it again and again.

After awhile she found out that the rules of the game were designed in a sense that no one could ever win. She found out it was a trap. If this would go on, then no one of her tribe would finally survive. She then got into such a rage that she took one of the Knives of the Wild Chess, and threw it into the heart of Gitdugal. This knife was charged with so much blood of her tribe, and with their souls of the dead, that it pierced itself in vengeance and hysterical rage into his heart. 'So, you don't want to play the game anymore I see,' Gitdugal said. 'Then we need to throw away it's pawns.' Then he called for some slaves, and they had to throw all the remaining pawns of her tribe off the rocks. In the depths of a ravine their souls shattered on the rocks, taking away their minds and lives. The horror was only raising for Tara from Rhodes could see how the ghosts of her loved ones got attracted and absorbed by the skull of Gitdugal. 'Now you have offered them an even greater slavery : the slavery of the damned.' Gitdugal said. 'Let me know when you want to play again.'

Emotionally absorbed by rage she followed him to the place he slept. He slept on a huge bed surrounded by big spiders and snakes. As she came closer his guards attacked her, but she was so full of concentrated rage that she slayed them all in short time. Gitdugal was so tired that he didn't take notice of her. But as she was coming close to his body and could even hear and smell his breath the white wasps of his body were attacking her, trying to poison her mind. But Tara raised her shield and in full rage she pierced one of his own spears through his lungs. She found this spear in his room, but he stood up and smashed her to the ground. Then he raised her up above his head and threw her through the windows above his bed. Tara fell into a river close to a waterfall. Where was she ? She had never seen this land ? On the other side of the river she saw slaves working in gardens and on fields. Were these the famed Gardens of Gitdugal ? There were trees of meat growing here, and trees of all sorts of strange organs. But there she saw Gitdugal coming. 'I wasn't done with you !' he shouted. Tara ran away through the gardens and fields. She first had to make up another strategy, for battling against him made her very tired and even confused.

I do not know the rest of the story, as she couldn't tell me for some reason. Sometimes she just stopped telling, and then she went to sleep. Later I found out that she partly couldn't deal with it. She knew where all her stories could lead her. She was always the flame in my heart, but since she's gone it's different. I can hang on to a lot of stories she told me, but most of these stories do not have an end, or she just didn't tell how it ended. It keeps me thinking. She could be fragmentaric at times, but that was her code to survive.

The Python

Stone

Chapter 1. Captured

Chapter 2. Python City

Chapter 1. Captured

From a black stained cave, Tara from Rhodes is awakening. Since she killed the black lion all she could do was sleep. Now she is running through the jungle to tell her tribe the great news. This black lion had tortured the minds of her people for such a long time. It was a mind-eater, and whenever he bit pieces of their mind away, there was horror rising in their bodies, tragedy after tragedy. Tara from Rhodes had sworn she wouldn't live in a tribe anymore. But the tribe where she was born she would never forget, and she still called it 'her' tribe. She didn't know how the terror was rising behind the mountain of the black lion. The lion had bred so many children there. Yes, the tribe of Tara from Rhodes didn't know which horror was waiting for them since the black lion had died.

The breed of black lions was in great mourning since the death of their father. They were howling in their hidden place in a dark cave behind the mountain. No one knew of their existence, for their father always went hunting, and brought the meat to their secret place. No, they never left the cave, since there were too many dangers to these young ones. But since they had grown up and their father had died, they had to leave the cave. They could smell what had happened, and they could smell the one who had done this all, the one who made them orphans in their lonely and cold years : Tara from Rhodes. They could smell the patterns of the bloodline, and they had sworn they wouldn't rest nor eat before they had killed the ones she loved. Tara herself had to be taken to their cave ... alive.

It was the greatest slaughter Tara ever had to deal with, the day the black lions came to her tribe to slaughter her loved ones. It hurted Tara more than anything. That day Tara had gone to a different area. Although Tara didn't want to live in the tribe anymore, she was always around since she freed them from slavery. Since she had killed Gitdugal the killer-king who had enslaved them for such a long time, she took his skull and brought it to her cave, where she swore she would always be around for her people. The skull of Gitdugal was of a rare stone : the python stone. But since the python stone had been stolen, she had to find it. It was the stone of slavery, and it also protected the owner of it against any form of slavery. She returned without the stone, to find out about the fate of her tribe. When she had come into a certain wigwam the leader of the black lions suddenly stood in the opening. Tara turned around, but it was already too late. She had been hit on the head by a sort of iron or bronze candle. They took her away to the den of the black lions in their cave behind the mountain.

'The soul of our father asks for revenge,' the black lions said. Tara, who was just waking up, said : 'Revenge ? I have all rights to have revenge for your father tortured my tribe, and you have finally slaughtered them.'

'There is no such thing as revenge,' one of the black lions said. 'Sometimes things just have a deeper history. We know from our father that you had killed Gitdugal the killer-king.'

'Yes !' Tara shouted, 'but do you think that's so crazy ? He enslaved my tribe for such a long time, and finally he killed most of them.'

'But why do you think he enslaved them ? What do you know about the dark primeval state of your tribe before you were even born ?' another black lion said. 'I know they weren't the best kind of tribes, but you see,' Tara said, 'maybe you are right, but when will this all end ?'

'Now,' some of the black lions said, 'for we are going to kill you and eat the intestines out of your body. But first there will be some dark nights to prepare you for dinner.'

'Oh yes,' Tara said cynically, 'I will prepare myself for dinner. Who of you want to be the first piece of meat ?' Tara took one of her legknives, put it between her teeth and jumped on one of the black lions. Another black lion jumped on Tara, and then another, and soon there was a bloody wrestling. 'Tara from Rhodes,' one of the lions roared mean, 'the dinnerbell has rung.' And he bit her horribly in her stomach. Then she kicked his mean snout as hard as she could. She took a knife and slayed two of them, while the others ran away, howling. Quickly she took the skin of the slain black lion and tied it around her middle where the wound was. She would now have to go to the lake where she could clean her wound. But also the black lions were there to drink. She felt a weakness coming over her because of the wound. So she left very soon.

All she needed now was the python stone, but she didn't know where she could find it. Maybe the black lions would have the stone, or they would know where it was, for they knew a lot making them questionable. Tara had such a dark feeling coming over her. They knew a lot about her past and that of her tribe. If the stone would be in the wrong hands, it would also affect her earlier or later. She had to find the stone which was potentially a very dangerous stone. When she had raised her power again she went to the den of the black lions again, in their caves. Deeper in the den there was a small door leading to a hall in the mountain. She had never been here before. She saw a huge black lion sitting on a throne which looked like made of python stone, but she wasn't sure. As she moved closer she heard a scream. It looked like the scream of someone from her tribe. 'Meleshuel, is that you ?' she shouted. 'Yes, come and help me,' the young warrior shouted, 'They have tied me to a stake.' It was somewhere behind the throne, where the same sort of stone was. The black lion was roaring and slowly went towards Tara. Tara had to swallow a few times. But the black lion didn't do anything. 'It is not the bad one, Tara !' Meleshuel shouted, 'he only protects me.' Tara found out the black lion couldn't walk so well. He had a handicap. Maybe he had been severed in a fight. 'Why are you here, Meleshuel ?' Tara asked, while she came closer. Suddenly she saw the stake to which the boy had been tied. 'At night the pythons come to hurt me, but the black lion protects me,' the boy told. Quickly Tara untied the boy, and they embraced each other. 'Who has done this,' Tara asked. 'Who has done this to you ?' The boy had strange scars all over his body, and some of these places were still bleeding.

'I will bring you to the lake to wash the wounds,' Tara said. 'No !' the boy screamed. 'You can't, for the black lions will find me again to bring me here.'

'I will slaughter them all until none of them has it's skull on it's body anymore,' Tara said with cold eyes. 'The only one I will spare is this friend of yours here.' He had become an outcast of the group because of his handicap, but actually he was the one who saved the life of this boy. If he wouldn't be there, they would have killed the boy. Since then the black lion stayed with the boy to watch over him, like it was his only child. The boy could see so much love in the eyes of Tara as she watched this precious black lion. For he guarded the last remains of her tribe.

Suddenly the black lions entered in. They saw the older black lion with Tara and the boy. They jumped on the older black lion and killed him. It all went so fast and they were with so many more black lions, it looked like an invasion. The boy was crying. Tara took him tight under one arm and started to slay the mass of black lions with her sword. Suddenly all sorts of pythons came out of openings in the wall. A horrible fight started between the remained black lions and the pythons. There were also pythons who went after Tara and the boy, and again, Tara was the great slaughterer. After all black lions and pythons were dead they could see

through the openings a hall full of weapons of python stone. There were spears, five-pointed and six-pointed blades, bows, arrows and a lot more. The boy said these weapons were called bone-breakers. They could easily crash any sort of bones and skeletons. That the older black lion had told him. So they crept through the openings in the wall and came in the other hall. There were also a lot of small hills of python stone.

But all of a sudden giantspiders and one giantpython were coming out of a den. The boy grasped some weapons and started to fight, and also Tara grasped some weapons. She killed the giantspiders by spears and the giantpython she killed by a sevenpointed blade.

Chapter 2. Python City

Tara hoped she would find the stolen skull of Gitdugal the killer-king somewhere here. It was the most precious stone among all the python stones. But there was no any trace of it. The boy said the black lions had spoken about it. They said it was somewhere in Python City. They would have to travel three days to the north to find Python City. It was a city in the middle of the Great Python Jungle on Mars.

When they finally came in Python City a warmth was gliding into their souls, very mysterious. It was a warm day in Python City. Most of them were on the beach at the sea. Tara asked the boy if he knew anything else about where the skull could be. The boy said they talked about a certain shop. 'Yes,' Tara said, 'but do you also know what kind of shop ?' But that the boy couldn't remember. He thought a comic-shop. So they went for a walk along the shops. There were many streets with shops, but finally they found a comic-shop. The boss of the comic-shop looked very angry. He also looked like he had drunk too much. 'What do you want ?' the man asked. Tara asked him if he knew anything about a skull. Then the man told that his wife believed in black magic, and that she had bought the skull once to capture the soul of her enemy. The man said he didn't believe in it. 'Can we speak to your wife ?' Tara asked. 'Yes,' the man said, 'tonight, for she's now at the beach.'

In the evening Tara and the boy returned to the shop, after they had taken dinner somewhere. When the woman finally got home she started to laugh when she heard about the story. 'Don't listen to him,' she said. 'He's always drunk.' But Tara knew something wasn't right. It was like she remembered the face of this woman, and it wasn't right. Then suddenly she knew it : It was a slave-girl who once worked for Gitdugal the killer-king. Of course she knew of the powers of the skull. Awhile later the man came downstairs with the skull in his hands. The woman started to curse. But later she explained everything, and Tara seemed to be right. Tara knew how dangerous the skull could be, and didn't trust the woman with it. 'Since I killed Gitdugal and set you all free I had to take care of the skull, but once it was stolen,' Tara said. She asked the woman how she got the skull. She said she had bought it from some men called the black lions. Then Tara knew enough. Of course the black lions could shape-shift into humans to do such things. 'How much did you pay for it ?' Tara asked. 'Sixty tanarings,' the woman said. That was a lot of money. 'I will give you seventy tanarings for it, but I have to get it back,' Tara said. The woman said that that was a good deal. The woman said that they could also spend the night in her house located above the comic-shop. Tara and the boy were very tired. But in the middle of the night the woman came to the room where Tara was sleeping. She had a knife and was ready to kill Tara so that she could keep the python skull. But Tara heard her coming, and had also a knife under her blanket. She acted like she was still sleeping, and when the woman was near to her bed already, and when she almost could feel her breath in her neck she suddenly turned around and pierced the knife into the heart of the

woman. She took the skull and the boy with her, and then they left Python City in the middle of the night.

Now they would go to Tara's cave, where she had a lot of hidden dens. But on their way the boy asked if he could stay with a tribe he knew very well. Tara agreed immediately. When Tara returned to her cave there was a strange man in her cave. The man looked a bit confused, and apologized immediately. 'I'm sorry but I just escaped from an arena and I had to hide myself,' he said. He explained from which tribe he was and what had happened to him. Tara understood, and told him that he could stay as long as he didn't make any troubles. Tara always had a sort of weak spot for gladiators, for she knew how life could be as a gladiator. She cared for him like he was her baby. In the middle of the night he stood before her. He was very tall. He said to her he was very scared. He couldn't sleep. He was afraid they would find him here and would take him to the arena again. He told her that he was a war-prisoner. She listened to his long story, and she took him in her arms to sooth him. She told him that she would protect him, and that if any of his capturers would ever come here she would beat the brains out of their skulls. Then Tara began to tell him stories to sooth him further. The man told her that he had lost many battles, but he fortunately never got killed. Tara immediately said that she could teach him how to fight so that he would never lose any battle anymore. She said that if he would become such a good warrior that he could defeat her in wrestling than he never had to fear anything again. But she also taught him how to fight with swords, spears and how to use a bow with it's arrows. She also taught him how to hunt for food.

One day she told him about the python skull, but she wished she would never have told about it's secrets. For in a night he woke her up, and he had the skull in his hands and put it behind him on a high place. Then he said : 'Fight for it.' The skull was taking all her strength away, and she felt like it was enslaving her. She was almost completely in the power of this man, and if the man wouldn't be of good heart he could have destroyed her heart. She now knew she couldn't feel safe anymore in her own cave since the man challenged her like this. It was like he took away the most dear thing of her heart, although he didn't destroy her heart. This was the moment her hate against men had been stirred up more than ever.

Never ever again would she give her heart like she did. She got her skull back, but she lost something of her heart, and she couldn't get it back. One night she decided to leave her cave for awhile. But when she returned she found out that the man had committed suicide. Maybe he knew that he had gone too far. She had mixed feelings about his death.

But as time went on, his soul started to return to her.

And as she accepted him in her cave again he started to become of flesh and blood more and more. And that could happen because of the python skull. He told her that he had been to the Underworlds of Mars, to Tartarus, where his soul had been captured between the squeezing Moving Walls of Everlasting Damnation. Here his soul got dense again. He said that in the place where he was everything would be turned into Python Stone. He also told her about his true reason why he had committed suicide. And they became lovers for the second time.

But as this strange resurrection went on, Tara more and more found out about what was going on. He only returned to her to seek for revenge. But he wasn't himself anymore, so Tara thought he had been sent back to her by someone for some reason. When Tara had slain him in a fight, she wanted to find out about his second coming. So she decided to go to the Moving Walls of Tartarus, a dangerous realm below the Death-realms of Mars. She knew

exactly which rivers to take in the Death-realms of Mars, and finally after a long journey she reached Tartarus. When she got to the Moving Walls area she met Drinbard, a pirate-captain. She asked him about his friend, but Drinbard didn't want to tell anything. Finally she got into a fight against him. They both had two-bladed swords called doubledeckers. Finally Drinbard gave her access in the deeper realms of the Moving Walls. Before he gave in they had a fight of two days.

No one would understand the horror Tara saw there. It was here Tara really learned to fight. It was here she met Diabrillis the puppetmaster. The souls of the damned who got slammed between the walls gained so much density at times that they could form a threat against the ruling classes of Tartarus. Diabrillis was often their last hope, for he captured the densest souls from between the walls to enslave them in puppets. Tara had still no idea how her friend could escape a place like this. Tara had to pay Diabrillis a big deal of tanarings before she could enter his realms. He was such a great puppetmaster, because he knew the art of soul-slaying. His slaughtery was made of all sorts of rare python stone. The huntingfields behind the realms of Diabrillis the puppetmaker were the last area's of this strange fairground. The souls had become flesh and blood here, but now they had to survive on their journeys across the huntingfields. Here the darkest indian hunters lived, and the darkest indian tribes. All they wanted was to eat meat, and that was also what a strange billboard said somewhere in the dark pubs of this area : Eat Meat. It was for the damned souls not enough to escape from the hands of Diabrillis the puppetmaker. If there was any escape then most of the times it was organized by the dark indians of the huntingfields themselves, just because they were in need for meat. How Tara's friend could survive and escape she still didn't understand. Maybe he would have captured many women on the huntingfields by his charms, and maybe they finally let him escape ? Tara didn't know. In the pub where she sat there was a fat barkeeper doing the dishes, and there were sitting a few naked indian women at the bar. They listened to some music, had some talks and a few drinks. They looked a bit strange at Tara, but further they were friendly, and Tara didn't have the impulse to grasp her sword. The feathers of the indian hunter-women were very shiny, and Tara was looking at these ornaments for a long time. Suddenly a cowboy entered in. Tara could see that he was an escaped soul still in his process of growing dense. Tara had the feeling the cowboy didn't know where he was. Maybe he thought he had already reached the finish. The indian women started to whisper to each other, and Tara knew about what they were going to do. The cowboy walked like the whole pub was his, like he was the greatest hero of all times, for he had survived Everlasting Damnation, the Moving Walls of Tartarus and the soul-slaughteries of Diabrillis the puppetmaker. He ordered a couple of beers. Tara supposed he did that because he seemed like he never drank alone. Everyone got a glass of beer, even the barkeeper, on costs of the cowboy. Tara saw his good heart, and was worried about him. Then one of the indian hunter-women stood up and asked : 'Shall we go outside ?'

The cowboy was confused. 'Are you talking to me ?'

'Yes ?' he said, still a bit confused, not knowing what was going on. He stood up, and wanted to walk outside the pub, but in a flash Tara could see how the indian woman was about to grasp her knife. Before they could take any other step Tara jumped from her seat to the woman and kicked the knife out of her hands. But quickly the other indian woman took her spear and wanted to pierce the cowboy. Just in time Tara could jump on her neck and and pushed her on the ground by holding the neck tight between her legs. The barkeeper took the telephone, while the cowboy started to become panicked. The other indian woman tried to approach him. 'Stay away from me !' he roared, while foam almost came out of his mouth.

The indian women sat down again after awhile, and everything was quiet again. The cowboy now knew he was in danger, still. Tara thought the cowboy was a lost case. She didn't have any hope for him to survive in an area like this. Soon she found out how the indian women had turned him into living meat on a stake. But for Tara there wasn't any way to prevent it.

Very often she saw those sorts of men having their skins ripped off and shivering on a piercing stake, while indian women danced around their hopeless souls. They were still the souls of the damned. She wondered how her friend could escape all this. On these fields demons and skeleton-gods were sitting on their high horses causing the doom of everlasting damnation to full extends. Most of the times these skeleton-gods were dressed in garments, causing the horrors of indian sorcery all over the place. They were the ones who had teached all these indians here how to be soul-criminals.

Once Tara met the White Spider Queen, a sorceress who could let nipples grow on bodies in such a number that skeletons would come to suck all the blood, fluids and meat-juices out of the body by these nipples. These nipples were called the nipples of death. The Queen was a very feared woman of the hunting-fields. Even many of the indians feared her. Before Tara realized she was under the webs and fluids of giant-spiders. The White Spider tried to put her spell on Tara, but she failed. They had a fight of several months, which Tara finally won. This was how she could finally escape the horror surrounding the Moving Walls of Tartarus. She still didn't find an answer to the questions she had about the one she once loved.

Not many would believe her if she would tell about all the horrors she saw in the darker area of the Moving Walls of Tartarus. But as she grew so much in Life and Death, she more and more developped the dark sides she encountered in the area of the Moving Walls in herself. It was something she could not escape, for everything was growing darker around her, and she needed to survive and dominate her own skull. She needed to possess herself instead of letting someone else possess her, but she more and more found out about the high price it had to protect herself like this. And this attitude she didn't need only for a day, but for the rest of eternity. She had to wage an Everlasting War against everything which was threatening and possessing her, or she would lose herself forever. In her eyes that was the only Love she could really bring up to herself, but it was enough for life.

Tara wanted to return to the White Spider Queen she once defeated. She needed help from her. The White Spider Queen had mixed feelings about Tara, but finally she accepted Tara's need for help, if only to be able to take revenge on Tara. She initiated Tara deeply into her temples and her secret places, and most of all : she started to love her.

No one would expect the love which started to develop between the two. They could learn a lot from each other, and by a greater horror, they could be much saver against the higher levels of horror coming against them both. They had a shelter in each other. Tara teached the White Spider Queen how to fight by her weapons, and the White Spider Queen did the same to Tara. The White Spider Queen was still dignified in all her horrors, but Tara was rude and uncivilized like always. She didn't have any manners or behaviour, while the White Spider Queen had so many etiquettes. They used to hate each others attitude, but now they knew they had to combine them for their own survival, or they would both lose their souls in horror. The horror was hunting and growing outside, and the White Spider Queen knew that her days were counted when she wouldn't integrate with Tara. They were both parts of the same puzzle and the same weapon, necessary to win in the Everlasting War. The White Spider Queen was always so gracious that Tara although she more and more desired this jewel, sometimes just

wanted to cut her skull off to decorate her weapons with it. But they knew they needed each other, and they developed an intimate and tender love-relationship.

The White Spider Queen developed Tara's lust for poetic utterances, and Tara developed the White Spider Queen's lust for stories. One day the White Spider Queen showed Tara a White Spider Stone. It was the stone of blood and lust. By this stone spiders wove their threads. These threads were nothing but slices of slain and damned blood of death. It also developed the slimy airs of spiders necessary to breath in these higher levels of horror. The stone was also called : Blood Slayer as well, especially when weapons were made of the stone. In a hall the White Spider Queen showed the delicate weapons made of such stone, and these weapons were called the blood-slayers. They could cause sudden death and damnation. The weapons were not very tall, but compact. Some of them were fourpointed blades, fivepointed blades, all sorts of strange dreadful spears and knives and some bows.

As for Tara : She had to find a way to forget about this all, as she found out about the forces of Love being nothing else but the forces driven by a repressed revengefull heart coming from the past. These veils of the spider were nothing but tricks to hide the Evil of the Python Stone. A stone she tried to get rid of in the end, but which pierced itself a way to her heart more and more. She more and more found out about the unbearable price of such a python stone, and she couldn't escape from it. She had become it's slave forever.

Sharla the Head Hunter

Chapter 1. Worshippers of Strange gods

Chapter 2. Ship of Fire

Chapter 3. The Deception

Chapter 1. Worshippers of Strange gods

No one would expect Sharla the Head Hunter to return after she was chased away by Tara from Rhodes. But it was only to prepare a harder attack. She went to her kingdom of heads again, where she had the skulls of her enemies on stakes, and even those of the ones she ones loved. She was the horror of the Mitstik River, a huge river-area on the south of Mars. No one could really explain an encounter with Sharla the Head Hunter. She took minds and souls away, to finally take their heads. She was obsessed with heads. She painted them, decorated them with feathers and jewelry, and people said she only grew wilder since the death of her father, the horrible Skeleton Eater. Whenever he was hunting, he didn't care about the meat. He only ate bones. Sharla the Head Hunter's father was a huge skeleton himself, decorated by strange misleading ornaments. Whenever people were looking at him, they lost so much of their lives. He was a strange and dangerous man, even to his daughter. It was like by his death Sharla broke so many chains of herself, yes, she was the one who had killed him.

For years she stayed on her side in the West after she had been defeated by Tara from Rhodes, but after these years she returned to the Eastside of the river. No one could really explain what happened, but she had become so much more powerful. Some said she had eaten the soul of her father.

Tara from Rhodes stood before her cave washing herself by the lake. Warriors of her tribe came to her, telling her that Sharla the Head Hunter had returned. At that moment they heard shrieking. It was Sharla the Head Hunter, coming towards them. Like a monkey she jumped from tree to tree. There was something around her neck, a snake. Tara from Rhodes took her spear, and told the warriors of her tribe to go behind her. But it was already too late. Sharla the Head Hunter had pierced one of them by an arrow. 'Run away !' Tara from Rhodes shouted to the others, but also another one was already pierced by an arrow. Then Tara threw her spear but she missed. Quickly she took an arrow from her quiver and shot it, but missed again. How could she miss two times ? What was going on ? Then Sharla the Head Hunter stood before her raising her sword. Tara took another spear and they had a fight. Sharla the head Hunter smiled. 'If I will kill you, I will kill your tribe after it, do you think that's okay ?' Tara stung by her spear, but missed : 'No,' she shouted. 'I told you already to leave this place.'

'So why ?' Sharla the Head Hunter asked ironically, 'don't you like to see heads all over the place ?'

'Well,' Tara replied, 'most of the time I like to see heads on bodies, but in this case I like to see a headless body.' Then she fiercely tried to hit Sharla's head with a knife. But Sharla jumped aside and kicked Tara against her head. 'Bull's Eye !' she shouted. Then Sharla's snake jumped on Tara and tried to strangle her. 'Have fun together,' Sharla said ironically, 'I will return when dinner's ready.' And then she left the place. Tara had a hard time overcoming the snake. The snake had a tighter grip than the usual snakes, and she tried to smash his head with a hard object in her surroundings. But the snake moved all over, and also coiled itself around her legs. Tara got troubles in breathing, and the snake was very slimy.

Suddenly she heard singing. Someone was washing herself in the lake. It was Sharla the Head Hunter. 'This place will be mine in short time !' she shouted. Suddenly Tara could throw the snake off of her. She threw the snake into the lake, and continued her fight against Sharla the Head Hunter. 'Oh, come on then,' Sharla shouted, 'I will eat you like a shark.' Tara jumped on Sharla the Head Hunter and pushed her further into the lake. Crocodiles from all sides came after Sharla the Head Hunter and she had to fight for her life. But her snake swam towards the crocodiles and took them in a tight grip, while they were slowly dying without having any breath.

These were the days of Sharla the Headhunter. She had many fights against Tara from Rhodes, for she wanted to have her skull and those of her tribe. But one day tragedy struck Sharla the Headhunter, for her snake thought it would be time to add Sharla's head to the collection of heads in the Westside of the river. The snake also thought it would be time to swallow Sharla's soul. No one knew how such a deep friendship could turn over in such a hate, causing Sharla's death. As the warriors of Tara's tribe were in ecstasy about Sharla's fatal friendship with the snake, and as they were feasting the whole night, they didn't know about a greater threat which was awakening, the very snake of Sharla the Head Hunter itself, with the captured soul of Sharla in its erected pride. The snake had only grown stronger, and taller by eating the meat and soul of its best friend. Now the snake had become the Head-collector, but it also collected souls.

The warriors of Tara's tribe didn't know about the danger moving slow towards their wigwams. While they were still feasting the snake slid into the first wigwam, taking some children away. Soon they discovered about the sudden disappearance of the children, and their feasting started to turn into mournings. The snake took the children across the river, and taught them how to hunt for heads. The snake also taught them in the way they developed a rage against their own tribe. When the children had grown up they formed their own tribe preparing so much vengeance to attack their original tribe one day. The children didn't only worship the snake, but they also worshipped Sharla the Head Hunter. They brought sacrifices to her everyday, a great part of the prey. Tara had searched for the children for a long time, but now she was about to cross the river to search in Sharla's territory. Somewhere in a different part of the river the children's tribe was moving towards Tara's tribe. They only wanted to have one thing : heads.

The children who had grown older now had become skilled warriors. They wanted to cause the fall of their original tribe, as they were bitten in their childhood by the snake. He bit them in their skull where he placed a shiny yellow amulet to dominate them. Now they were in its evil hands, enslaved by the tormented soul of Sharla the Hunter. All they could do was giving expression of her rage and hate. These evil children started to slaughter the children of their own original tribe. And when Tara returned to the tribe she was already too late. She couldn't find the children behind the river but she found a shiny yellow amulet like a tall cube. She found it in the temple of the snake, while some puppets of clay were sitting in front of it. She knew enough. That was the sign of domination. Now she finally had found the children it was already too late. She stood on the hill watching that what had happened, raised the shiny yellow amulet and spoke loud : 'I think I already know what is going on here.' The children turned around and when they saw the amulet it was like they were losing all their strength. Tara knew she had to be very careful now, for she couldn't underestimate the works of the snake. But the fact she had the amulet in her hands now gave her much power over the children. The amulet wasn't in the hidden temple of the snake anymore. Tara knew where this temple was, for it used to be Sharla's temple. And in a sense it still was. Suddenly some of the children started to have much pain in the back of their heads. They grasped their heads with their hands, and slowly Tara walked towards the children. They wouldn't have any chance against her, for no one could be really successful against Tara from Rhodes. She was still the Warrior Princess of the primeval, like the black snake. And none of these kids would even think about attacking her. Tara took her knife and started to cut the shiny yellow amulets out of their skulls, as she knew what was going on. She could feel the mighty vibration of the amulet. After awhile she had many pieces of it in her hands, while the children weren't themselves anymore. It was like they were awakening out of a long long dream. Some started to cry, while others stared like frozen to the ground. The snake had done this job when the children were too young to realize what was going on, and he did it while they slept. Tara tried to explain them what was going on, and she did this with all the love she had. Since the children had invaded the tribe the survivors fled away. No one could begin anything against such powers. They had the strength like wild animals. Now one knew that they had been gifted by the snake of Sharla the Head Hunter and her very soul. But now Sharla had been overcome and defeated again. The only thing was : Where was the snake ?

Tara knew they were in danger now, for the warriors of the tribe could return to see what had happened. They were on a hunt today, while the women and children were in the camp alone. What would they do when they would find out that so many children had been slain today ? A dark feeling had entered Tara, something which was telling her that something was going on. She suddenly thought about the snake. What if he had already possessed the minds of the

warriors ? She had to do something with the amulet now. But she didn't know what. She laid the pieces in a circle and started to think. Now the amulet was hers, and she wanted to spare the warriors in their feelings. She knew where they were hunting today, and she hoped that they would stay the night there. So she went there, and fortunately when she came there it was already night and they were all sleeping. She had cut the amulets into many pieces, and by the amulet she wanted to lure them away from the danger. She knew that the snake had bound their hearts and minds by the attack, and she knew that if they would find out about their children, the snake would use them to destroy even more of the tribe. Tara knew the sorceries of the snake, and the danger of Sharla's soul. They wouldn't rest before they had torn the whole tribe apart to devour it. The snake was a possessor of minds, and Tara exactly knew which steps the snake could take to prepare the possession. The snake had almost reached its goal with the warriors of her tribe. Slowly Tara crept to the weapons of the warriors of her tribe, while they were sleeping. In all the weapons she tried to put small pieces of the amulet. She succeeded.

Now the only thing she had to do was taking the children away across the river. They couldn't be in their original tribe anymore. She also had to find the ones who had escaped since the children invaded the tribe. But when she had reached the tribe the snake was there. It would be a horrible fight. All her rage she concentrated on the snake, while she took her sword and entered the arena. The snake had grown so much bigger now since the last time she had a fight with it. She wondered where the children were. Maybe they had already been gone to their tribe behind the river. Tara was in rage. 'I want my amulet back,' the snake roared. 'No !' Tara screamed, 'you will not get it, for your games are over.'

'You do not know with which powers you are playing, girl !' the snake roared, while its tail slammed her in her face. 'By this amulet I will bring Sharla's soul into the minds of the tribe,' the snake spoke loud. 'But the amulet doesn't belong to Sharla's soul anymore,' Tara spoke, while she pierced her sword into the tail of the snake. 'It's her bones, it's made of her skeleton,' the snake spoke in strange delight.

'But now I possess it !' Tara shouted, 'Now I am the master of my tribe, as I am its guard.'

'But the soul of Sharla needs to come alive again, or she will devour the tribe totally, to swipe its souls away from Mars. She will gather her bones by herself, and then come alive again,' the snake roared. And then something strange happened. The amulet started to shriek, and in the distance the warriors of Tara's tribe were coming home. They were in panic, and some were hysterical. 'Our weapons are moving and shrieking !' they shouted. 'It's the amulet,' the snake roared. 'It is time Sharla the Head Hunter is coming alive again.' Then the warriors fell on the ground and worshipped the snake while the snake was coiling around their weapons. Tara knew she was losing the grip on her tribe, and she knew that the only place she could gather her powers again to break this sort of witchcraft was the realm of Sharla the Head Hunter across the river. She now had to make that kingdom hers, or she would be enslaved by its powers herself.

But when she came across the river the children's tribe had possessed the whole area and had become evil again. They even didn't remember Tara. They didn't recognize her. She hoped the children didn't know about the hidden temple of the snake, so she went there, but they also possessed that temple. The kingdom of heads was against her. The children had strange weapons made of shiny yellow bone. It looked much like the amulets, and maybe it was the same : the bones of Sharla the Head Hunter. All the children were saying she would come

alive tonight to gather her bones. Tara started to scream : 'No ! You have been possessed again !' But the children were shaking their heads. They only wanted to have one thing now : The head of Tara from Rhodes.

All of a sudden she got terrible headaches like ringing bells in her head. She grasped her head, but the pain only got worse. It was like a million wasps were stinging her brains, and her body got overheated. She almost fell to the ground, but she could catch herself on her knees, took her knife and cut into her skull where the pain was coming from. Soon she took a piece of the shiny yellow bone out of her head. She screamed and shrieked while she was raising it high. How could that happen to her ? How could such a piece be in her head ? Was it done by the snake ? And when ? Suddenly she heard screaming. The children were grasping themselves and each other. Some of them had pain in their legs or arms. Soon Tara had cut more pieces of the shiny yellow bones out of them. They knew Sharla would also look for these pieces.

Tara wanted to know about the secret of the shiny yellow bones of Sharla the Headhunter. She decided to search in the temple of the snake. A lot of strange altars were here, and strange stakes with totems. A lot of skulls were here. They were carrying strange smells, and were often painted and some had feathers. In the bigger skulls pythons and other big snakes were living. In another room of the temple there were also skulls, but most of them were very small. These could be the skulls of small children or monkeys. In a bigger one a hairy spider lived. The room was full of spiderwebs and behind the room there was also a small room with a low ceiling. Suddenly a piercing voice shouted : 'Tara from Rhodes ! Your friend Sharla has returned.' A huge skeleton of yellow shiny bones was standing in the opening of the small room. The snake was around it's neck. 'Yes, I am Sharla the Head Hunter, but I only need some skin, and I thought, maybe I can use yours,' the skeleton spoke. 'No way !' Tara said loud. 'I will break any bone of you to let it become my second skin. I feel so naked, I need a dress.' Suddenly fourpointed blade crashed the skeleton from behind. It was one of the children. But soon the bones were gathered again by a strange power. 'Go away, kid !' Tara shouted, 'There's witchcraft going on here, you better protect you soul !'

Tara knew she had to find out about this secret or it would enslave her forever. 'By the force of Soms !' she shouted, 'tell me your secret.' Suddenly a wind from behind crashed the skeleton again and a huge skeleton stood in the dooropening, breaking the bones with it's teeth. Then after that he started to eat and absorb the bonemass. 'I have finally come to life again,' the skeleton roared. 'Who are you ?' Tara asked with a loud commanding voice. 'I am the Skeleton Eater, her father. She had killed me and captured my soul for such a long time in the form of a snake. But now I have come to take revenge.' The snake was sliding and coiling throughout his bones. 'But what did your soul do to my tribe ?' Tara shouted loud, 'This snake has killed and possessed so much of us.'

'I was possessed too, by the meat and the soul of Sharla I once absorbed, but before that I was her slave, after she killed me and brought my soul alive again in the form of a snake. To eat her meat and soul was the first step in delivering myself from her,' the Skeleton Eater spoke. 'Now by eating her bones I hope I will break the possession.' Tara wanted to leave the temple now, but he was blocking her. 'Now all I want is your head !' the Skeleton Eater spoke loud. But the kid with the fourpointed blade had returned and crumbled the Skeleton Eater with it. 'Oh, my magical powers will gather my bones again,' the Skeleton Eater roared. 'I told you to go away !' Tara shouted loud. 'These kids won't listen.' The Skeleton Eater stood up, and said : 'I will eat and devour your bones, and I will use your meat and brains as windowdecoration.' The kid was running away again, but the Skeleton Eater ran after it. The snake slid out of

the body and attacked Tara. 'Come Tara !' the child shouted. 'I need to show you something.' Tara kicked the snake aside and ran outside. The child showed a shrine to Tara. 'Here we used to worship the Skeleton Eater,' the kid said. The Skeleton Eater had disappeared. But soon Tara found out he was devouring the bones of the children, leaving their meat behind. 'Why do you worship such a god !' Tara shouted. Then the kid asked : 'Which god do you worship then ?'

'That's none of your business, but try Soms,' Tara replied harshly.

Now she had directed someone to Soms she had to leave the place and the whole domain of where she was born, the area of the Mitstik River. She gave this district over in the hands of Soms, for she didn't know it anymore. It was like she was chained by the tight chains of her youth. She wanted to forget about it all to start a new life. So she moved even more to the south, to the area of the legendary Mokotte Fields on Mars. This was even further in the south than the valleys and gardens where her original tribe had to work for the killer-king Gitdugal in earlier times. She had to travel a few weeks to come close to the Mokotte Fields. Here she would start a new life. She had become very tired of the riddles of the realm of Sharla the Head Hunter. She wanted to escape its grip forever. In the valleys of the Mokotte Fields there would live a lot of sorcerors who could help her further. She had to go there, for an invisible force she didn't know of was taking her breath away and slowly strangling her.

In front of the Cave of Viviktus, the Wild Sorceror, there was a lair of a giantspider. The giantspider was very hairy and even had feathers. Tara wanted to go to him for help, but not much did she know about the horror of that place. No one could enter the Cave of Viviktus than the ones who could dominate it in wrestling. As she was very tired it became a long fight. The giantspider was about to strangle her. It was like this animal was taking her last piece of breath. But after awhile Viviktus the Wild Sorceror came outwards. 'I think I will have mercy on you this time, lady. You seem to have traveled a great deal. Come inside for some warm drinks,' he said. Tara stood up, while the giantspider left her alone. Inside there were halfnaked warriors sitting at bars. Most of them were looking at her. 'Oh, I want to fight against her one time,' one was shouting. Most of them were barefooted, but some of them had very strange boots or shoes. They looked like killerboots. Viviktus, the Wild Sorceror, was leading her along the bars, and soon they were in the arena's. All sorts of wild animals had to fight against the different warriors. Some of these animals she had never seen before. They were monstrous Martian animals. Behind the arena's there were some arena pools. Viviktus told her that if she would defeat all these warriors and animals, he would help her.

Nights of fights followed in which she slayed the greatest warriors. Sometimes she had to fight three or four of them at the same time, and sometimes even a whole group. They called her Tara the Slayer. By the grace of Viviktus not all these warriors would die by her hands or weapons, but she defeated them all. 'There's dread on you,' Viviktus said. 'They fear you like nothing else. I must say I applaud your strength and persistence. You are cleansing your soul from witchcraft here for a great deal.' Then Tara took Viviktus tight by his throat and said : 'You Martial bunch of shatters, you promised me to help me !'

'What I tell you is the truth,' Viviktus continued, 'but I will also give you help by myself. That I did promise and I will do, as I am an honest man.'

'Some souls have reached a certain immortality, and will return on and on, after they have been killed. They have drunk from the sources of eternal death and birth, and they have a

great immunity. Now these so-called immortals prey on mortals. And if they have fixed their mind on you, they can eat you all the way to your inner city, where they can and they will finally enslave you,' Viviktus said, 'It is finally by this eternal slavery you will find the well of eternal liberty, the freedom of the mind.'

'What are you trying to tell me, sorcerer, are you predicting me something ?' Tara blasted. But then she got very silent. After awhile she said : 'So you will tell me that Sharla the Head Hunter will return again to me to finally enslave me ? How ?' The sorcerer nodded. 'I think you are very wise, my girl, and I think you will deal with this as you continue your path. You will find out that my words to you were true.'

And as the sorcerer predicted Sharla the Head Hunter came to stalk her again, and this time she slayed Tara and took her soul to the realms of Lakshor, where she became an enslaved Gladiator.

Chapter 2. Ship of Fire

After Sharla the Head Hunter took Tara's skull, Tara's soul found a fierce fire-ship in the deathrealms of Mars. She knew Sharla still wasn't done with her, and she would hunt for her soul, but on this ship she would have the chance to escape from Mars, as it became more and more a horror to her. On the Martian River of Death she was on the ship, but gladiators kidnapped her. These were the times she felt very weak. But as soon as they heard of Sharla the Head Hunter they became friends with Tara. They had to fight Sharla together. It was a warrior-boat, the one where she was now. The ones of this boat were escaped gladiators and now they were waging war against the tribes along the Martian River of Death to make prisoners for their gods. They first wanted to sacrifice Tara also, but since they had an encounter with Sharla the Head Hunter they knew they could better not touch Tara. She might help them against Sharla's attacks. What they didn't know was that Sharla attacked them because of Tara. If they would find out that Tara was the cause of this all, they would have sacrificed her for sure. They were cannibals of the highest grade on the Martian River of Death, since the gods taught them how to survive on these horrible rivers. Tara tried to escape from them many times, but all these attempts finally failed. It was like they were watching any move of her.

They didn't have much jewelry, but what they had was very precious. They had some python stones, and by that they could capture the minds and the souls of their prey. It also prevented them against any soul-enslavers. Most of the time these stones were planted in their weapons.

The friendship between Tara and them didn't last long, for once in the night Sharla the Head Hunter came to the boat. She killed the gladiators, took their heads, and captured Tara's soul. Sharla took Tara to the arena's of Lakshor where she sold Tara as a gladiator. When she could finally escape from Lakshor she returned to Mars again in search for the warrior-skulls of her friends who got beheaded by Sharla the Head Hunter. She would do anything to bring her friends back to life again. She also knew that their souls had been captured in their skulls, and that Sharla would have those skulls in her collection. So she returned to the area of the river of Mitstik, in search for Sharla the Head Hunter. Tara had now grown so much in skills, in wisdom and in so many other things. She was now ready to finish Sharla the Head Hunter forever to set her friends free.

But when she came there, it wasn't what she had expected. Although she easily found the skulls and used an oracle to talk to them, her friends didn't remember her, and didn't want to have anything to do with her. First she was in great grief because of the answers, but later she knew she first had to defeat Sharla the Head Hunter, because she seemed to dominate their mind and memory. But Sharla was nowhere to be found. Her realms were lonely and wild, almost depressed. Later she asked the oracle where Sharla was. The oracle answered that on the westside of Sharla's realms there was a new city. She would be there to raise it and rule it. The name of the city was : Eliphant City. Eliphant City would be the darkest city of Mars, a breeding place of sorcerors, witches, necromancers, thieves, assassins, soul-hunters and a lot more. Tara had the feeling she would go to the circus. Here Miss Sharla the Head Hunter would have her place now. Or would she be even Mrs. now ? Tara had so many cynical thoughts about Sharla in her head. It irritated her the way Sharla was. Oh how she would like to smash her skull into shatters to hang her brains in the trees.

In Eliphant City there were circuses and even fairgrounds indeed. But also lots of arena's. The City had a great deal of slaves, and there were enough slave-hunters operating from this side. The city also had a great deal of story-tellers and artists. Often they were wanderers coming to sell their art. In many cases they were thieves as well. Hermund Grottenweiler was a man having the most beautiful women in cages. Here they had to dance, sing and strip, but they were never allowed to come out of their cages. They lived in these cages like animals and slaves. No one was allowed to enter their cages. It was a big deal. Hermund Grottenweiler was one of the richest men of the city. He was a drinker of beer, and often he went to prostitutes to have some fun. He was also a gambler, and a lot of people said he was a thief. Men used to throw a lot of money through the bars to let the women do whatever they wanted them to do, although they could never be touched. Tara was watching some of their shows. Sometimes there were more women in one cage, and often it was nothing but brute fights. Tara knew that if she wanted to conquer Sharla the Head Hunter, some of these women could be of good use.

'How much do these women cost ?' Tara asked Hermund Grottenweiler.

'They aren't for sale,' the man said gruff. 'but I can pay you a lot if you want to work here.' Tara took the man by his throat and said : 'You mean bastard, I give you twelve-thousand tanarings for two of them.'

'Twelve-thousand tanarings for two women ? Are you crazy ? You could buy my whole business with that, but okay, I give you two women by choice,' said the man slowly. Twelve-thousand tanarings was a lot of Martian money. If you had a hundred tanarings you were already rich. 'I'll pay you later, bastard,' Tara said, but the man wanted the money now. Then someone else whispered something into the ears of the man, and after awhile the man said : 'Okay, you will pay me later, choose your two women.' So Tara took the best warriors, explained them what they had to do, and then they went on in search for Sharla the Head Hunter.

One of the women was called Lirsja, and the other Spirtja. They were both sisters or more accurate : half-sisters. Tara loved them from the first moment. They were tender, but at the same time they were bloody passionate warriors. They told Tara that they had been gladiators since childhood. It made one part of them very sensitive and another part of them numb and harsh. They had also been prostitutes for awhile, until Hermund Grottenweiler bought them. They told Tara that they had always been slaves, one or the other way. Their parents sold

them to a slave-caravan when they were only three years old. This was because they lived in such a poverty. Their parents thought that when they would become slaves at least someone was taking care of them. And since they were eighteen that person was Hermund Grottenweiler. Tara didn't say anything. They were on a way to a pub, where Sharla the Head Hunter would be, according to some. It was the Great Python Pub. It was already late. Tara opened the door and looked around. The pub was full of half-naked gladiators. Most of them were women, and Sharla the Head Hunter was there also. Tara took her knife and shouted : 'Sharla the Head Hunter, friends always return. How's life, bitch ? What have you done to the gladiator-skulls of the Martian River of Death ?'

Sharla started smiling. 'What are you talking about, dear ? I have done so many things to so many skulls, so what is the deal ?' Also other women were smiling. Tara stepped on a table and smashed a hanging lamp in pieces. 'Now listen you foolish pighead, we are not here to play any games tonight. Game's over, my friend. I'm here to smear your name on the wall like wallpaper. You will not even know your name anymore,' Tara shouted.

'Oh,' Sharla said, 'but who are you anyway ? I do not remember your face.'

'I am Tara the Slayer of Tartarus, Tara from Rhodes. I am the black snake,' Tara shouted in full pride. 'Everyone knows me.' People started to laugh and Sharla said with a tight face : 'It doesn't say anything to me. Maybe our encounter wasn't impressive enough.' Then Tara jumped to the table where Sharla the Headhunter was, and kicked her in her face. Some women at the bar slowly slid with their hands to their knives. 'I have risen from the dead to come in vengeance because of all what you ...' but further she couldn't come. Someone had put a knife into her spine. Tara fell to the ground, while her two women came into action. They took some chairs and started to use them as rods. One of them took a leg-knife and threw it into the heart of Sharla. 'Sorry, I do not know you,' she whispered soft in Sharla's face, 'but it seemed you made a big mess here.' The other woman took the knife out of Tara's back, but Tara felt very sick. Some other woman tried to further protect Tara. Then Sharla stood up like a dead body. 'What a pity now,' she said, while she looked at the woman who had thrown the knife into her heart. 'I do not have a heart.' And then she started to laugh hysterically. Some men had entered the pub. They had sunglasses on, and they started to talk with the barkeeper. Sharla soon directed herself to them. 'Listo and Carshan, you come at the right moment.' The two man took their guns and began to shoot some women. Tara rolled herself under a table, and prayed for strength. She almost never prayed, but this time she had to. She prayed to Soms. The other two women of her had also dived under a table, while Sharla walked towards the door. 'Don't let them escape,' she said, and then she left. It was a horrible fight against Listo and Carshan and some other women. But soon from the arena behind the pub women were coming to help Tara and her women. One of the women took the two men by the throat and threw them through the window.

Later Tara and her two women wanted to leave the pub to search for Sharla again. But the barkeeper took his gun and said : 'You aren't going anywhere.'

What then happened Tara couldn't recall, but she woke up in the fields of Tartarus, while her back was pierced on a stake. Her feet were tied to the stake, and her hands were tied behind her back. She was surrounded by huge skeletongods with wolfskulls, all dressed in black garments. One or two of them were in shiny purple, but still dark. They had voices like speaking mud, and one of them ripped her skin open to take her heart out of her chest. Tara was screaming and shrieking. 'No one will ever defeat me,' she suddenly shouted calm. But

one of the skeletongods took an axe and cut her head off. The head rolled into a valley and doom came all over the place. Sharla was walking towards them 'Wow,' she said, 'now that was wonderful.'

Tara was now nothing but a ghost, so full of rage that she enslaved many souls. She wanted to live for vengeance the rest of eternity. Tara descended into so many unknown realms of Tartarus. Here she would find out about the secrets of Sharla the Head Hunter. Tara would become a horror greater than she ever was, to survive this greater horror. By the unknown squeezers of Tartarus she would have a bit more density, but what if she would only encounter more and deeper shatterers ?

But the only thing Tara encountered in the depths of Tartarus was a machine with so many bloody heads from the decapitated ones. This machine had been called the Machine of Democracy for such a long time. The bloody heads would keep all the souls of Mars possessed. Inside it was a strange arena where the ghosts of all these souls were gladiators. The strange arena brought forth the fluids of Everlasting Damnation. Tara was drinking from this well without hesitation. The fluids were frothing like beer, and Tara didn't want anything else than to drown in it. But suddenly strange creatures were jumping on her head sucking her brains. They looked a little bit like octopi and spiders, but actually these were the heads of decapitated pythons. They were called the brain-slayers. Tara had come into the extasy of slaughter, took a word from the machine and started to slay the heads in a bloodbath. So much strength was coming over her from unknown sources. The heads didn't have skulls, only brains. Also the heads of the strange machine didn't have any skulls inside. They looked like strange rubber or plastic masks. Some jumped on Tara's head, trying to mask her to devour her brains and abundant slaughter. Suddenly she was in a shock, after she had slaughtered many of them. She had also seen the heads of her gladiator-friends who were beheaded by Sharla the Head Hunter, and whose skulls she found when she returned to Sharla's realms. What had become of them here ? Their skull-less heads were now puppets of this strange machine. Suddenly the machine started to spin like crazy. The heads started to discuss and argue like crazy. 'Now shut up !' Tara shouted. She went inside the machine again to see if the ghosts of her friends were in there. Several ghosts came towards her. These were the ghosts of her friends, and now they were very understanding. 'Yes, Tara, we have been imprisoned by this strange arena-machine again,' she said to her. So this was the machine they had escaped from before they went to the Martian River of Dead where they encountered Tara. 'How can I help you ?' Tara asked.

'We cannot escape Tara,' the warriors said. 'We escaped only to finally sink deeper in this machine. This is our fate.'

'No !' Tara shouted rude. 'I will fight this machine, and free your souls from it.' The warriors sighed. 'Tara,' one of them said very tenderly, 'the more you fight this machine, the more it will swallow you. We invite you to come with us. Come with us, you won't regret it.'

'Oh, you lost your head,' she said to the ghost. 'There's nothing I can do for you. I will leave.'

But the ghost took her in his arms and said : 'You cannot leave. No one leaves this place. You can only leave to finally realize you have sunk deeper in it.' She felt the sweetness and softness of the ghost entering her soul. It was like they were seducing her to stay with them in this doom. 'I don't want to lose myself !' Tara shouted.

'You will only find yourself, ... finding yourself back ...' the ghost said, while he showed her his tragic face. 'There's Everlasting War here, and that is our fate.' Tara tried to shake the ghost away from her, but the more she did that the more she felt he was coming over her. It was like he was slaying her brains. Suddenly, and she didn't know where it came from, she had the strength to push him away. 'I will slay Sharla the Head Hunter,' she said with a tight face, 'and then I will return to this place.'

Tara climbed her way up to where she came from, in search for Sharla the Head Hunter. The blood was rushing through all of her veins all of a sudden. But the heads from the Machine of Democracy seemed to follow her in a distance. She had now seen the secret of Sharla the Head Hunter. It was a strange fairground of heads, keeping all the politics in the upper worlds of Mars possessed and by that the politics of so many other planets. But it was lawless politics, a strange arena called Democracy letting the Everlasting Blood of Damnation flow, frothing through so many souls.

But more and more heads from this strange machine from the depths of Mars were surrounding Tara, and she started to lose strength. She remembered the words of the ghosts, and suddenly she totally lost it. The heads seemed to come out of nowhere, and it didn't stop. 'Be ready for the masses of democracy,' one ghost had told her. It was like this arena was giving birth to so many children all beheaded. Tara heard their shrieks in her mind, slaying her mind. It was rushing through her veins. She had mixed feelings inside indeed, like Everlasting War inside, like Everlasting Democracy. She fought, but she remembered : She was fighting herself. All these heads were hers, like her split identities. It was a Psychiatrist deep inside her mind, such a crazy one, but also nothing but a puppet from this strange fairground of Mars, coming forth from the depths of Tartarus, only to sink in it deeper. Tara had lost so many of her good thoughts, and now she was delivered into the hands of this undescrivable being. She had been torn apart by it, but she still wanted to kill Sharla the Head Hunter. But where would it bring her ? It seemed to be a stupid idea, the more she thought about it, meaning nothing, absolutely nothing in the progress of the universe.

As all these puppets were slaves of Sharla the Head Hunter, Sharla was also their slave, and Tara also. Who was really the king, and who was really the slave, when all these masks would be torn off ?

She was just imprisoned by this crazy fairground called Democracy. She had to fight her mirrors, for her mirrors were fighting her, showing up often masked ...

What if Sharla the Head Hunter was just one of her mirrors. She couldn't stand the thought. She would want to slay that mirror, but even more : to enslave it. For there was no such thing as Death. It was only a strange mirror on a strange fairground of Mars, opening the door to so many other mirrors. One day Tara got the shock of her life. She saw her own head hanging between all the other heads of doom. That meant that she had already been a part of this machine, but for how long already ? And this probably meant that also her own ghosts had to be somewhere in the arena inside the machine. So she went inside again, and asked the other ghosts about it. 'I want to show you something,' one of them said. It was one of her warrior-friends she had encountered on the Martian River of Death. The ghost asked her to come with him to a room behind the arena. He opened a cupboard there, where she saw ten to twenty of her own ghosts hanging there at a rope. They were like fleeces. Tara was shocked. 'How do I bring them alive ?' she asked.

'Just by accepting it all,' the ghost said tenderly. It was like Tara was melting inside. She just wanted to let it come over her. A bell was ringing. The fights and wars between the ghosts started again. Tara had to fight against a friend of her. 'Tara, you must accept Democracy,' the ghost said. 'It is the Lawless. It is the Head Hunter and the Head Brooder.' Snakes got born here, as the children of the gladiators. But these children had no bodies ... only heads.

Tara knew that these heads would tear her mind apart again and again. They were brain-slayers, and it would lead her deeper into this strange abyss.

Chapter 3. The Deception

'Blood you deserve, blood to stream out of your body and die !' Someone shouted on a slave-market of Elephant City. Tara had returned to this city, but she was wandering there a bit aimless. She didn't want to watch how this yelling would turn into another bloody fight. Oh yes, she loved fighting, more than anyone else, but sometimes she had hard times in watching it. As she walked further over the market, she saw a young slave getting beaten up by his master. Tara didn't think a second and slaughtered the slave-master to set the boy free. Sometimes she just had such strange impulses. Where they were coming from, she didn't know. She entered a pub. The barkeeper was doing some dishes and brought a beer to her in grace. 'You look thirsty, lady,' the barkeeper said. Tara drank the cup empty within seconds. Then she stood up and walked to the girl-room of the pub. Here some slave-girls worked as whores. A tall young lady with star-earrings stood in the door-opening. 'Anyone heard of Sharla the Headhunter ?' The girl shook her head. Tara saw a newspaper and took it in her hands. Her feet were sweating because of the heat in the pub. It was a hot day in Elephant City. In the newspaper there were many stories about heads and headhunters. The last page of the magazine had some news. There was a picture of a wild-bearded head of a savaged man called Ijupiter who had been beheaded. If someone wanted to use the skull-less head for black magic he would have to call a certain number. Tara's feet started to sweat even more. There were also some smaller pictures of bison-heads, and finally a small note about Sharla the Head Hunter. But almost everything of the note had been torn away. Like someone wanted to keep the information. 'Now, don't mess with me again, girl,' Tara said to the girl, 'Have you heard of Sharla the Headhunter, yes or no ?'

The girl said yes softly, and asked Tara to come with her. They went on a stairs and came into a dark room. The room was a bit colder, and there was also a lion caged there. 'Do you work in circus ?' Tara asked. 'Yes, also,' the girl said. Suddenly Sharla the Head Hunter stood in the door-opening. 'I will not waste my time killing you,' Tara said. 'But I will enslave you in this bottle,' and then she grasped an empty bottle from the table. 'I swear by Soms you will vanish now into this bottle,' Tara shouted. Sharla didn't move, but then she fell forward. A man in a bear-suit was standing behind her, having a strange small machine in his hand like a calculator. Also on Sharla's back there was a strange small instrument. The man took off his bear-mask, and fell in worship before the feet of Tara. 'Oh Tara,' he said, 'I have heard so much about you. I am obsessed with you. I made a Sharla puppet to let her have a double. I also want to make one of you. I work in circus you see,' the man said. He talked a bit confused and Tara kicked him hard in his face. 'Do you really think I have time for this nonsense ?' Tara said unfriendly. But Tara now knew she had to be careful, for maybe the Sharla she met in the other pub was just a double also, made to distract her. Was that the reason why she finally ended in Tartarus that way ? She should have known better, for necromancers often used doubles to deceive and enslave their victims very subtle. Some necromancers had built thousands and thousands of doubles, and then they masked them so

that they could build whole cities. Would Eliphant City just be a trap to let Tara suffer in Tartarus ? And maybe there were even more victims. It all started since Tara was looking for her friends in the realms of Sharla. Here she found their skulls and an oracle. The oracle had directed her to the Eliphant City.

Tara returned to Sharla's realm where the oracle was still speaking. Still the skulls of her friends were there, and the oracle had grown so big now. It had fiery flames, and it was like a well of fire now. How could she trust such an oracle anyway. And how could she further know if something was a double or the original. Suddenly she heard strange marching in the distance. When the sound came closer it was like a strange song. It was a ghost-army full of the doubles of Sharla the Head Hunter. Slaying or even believing such a double could already be very dangerous.

Tara knew that to be immune against an army of doubles you needed to produce your own doubles, so that she could multiply herself. She was kneeling down before the skulls of her friends and she started to brood them. Suddenly they stood before her. The army of Sharla's doubles had to vanish slowly. They were awakening the giants of Tartarus.

They set so many worlds in fire, and she could forget and remember so many things. It was like she was made for this, but her demons always said to her : she created herself.

If she could she would turn everything into doom. She wanted to create a total new world. And if that was her fate : She wanted to do it in Tartarus. She was the vulcano, letting the dogs of Tartarus out. She was of Tartarus, Tara of Tartarus.

And as she was writing in the scrolls of Mars : She slid deeper, descending with her ghosts into the mists of Tartarus, into its ravines.

The Parrot

Gems

They were feared in the whole area of Wirdum Desert. They would sell the boy to a slave-caravan, but first they would do surgery on him. As the boy had been tied to a stake they started to cut him with knives. In his body they were looking for something ... parrot gems ...

When they had found the parrot gems they ripped his further skin off. After the boy stood skinless in the hot sun for hours insects came to eat from his meat. The boy died in horrible circumstances, but when they returned they called his tormented soul back from death. This was how they always used to zombificate their prisoners. Now this zombie had been ripe for slavery. In the distance a slave-caravan was coming. They had smelled some blood Not much later the dirty deal would start.

Tara from Rhodes had wandered through the Wirdum Desert for days. She had found a lake near a small forest. Through the soil she saw something shiny in the distance. As she moved closer she took notice of the fact that these were parrot gems. But what did all these bastards do around it ? She took her sword and started to slay them all in a terrible bloodbath. Tara the Terrible had come. After the slaughter she took the gems and moved forwards.

Tara knew everything about these parrot gems ... Actually they weren't from parrots ... Everyone on Mars would have more or less parrot gems in their bodies. When they would be taken away they were in the danger to become zombificated, which meant they could be risen from the death to be enslaved in their bodies for the rest of their lives. These were called : The zombies of Wirdum Desert.

Ammelgamma was a dealer in parrot gems. He had a shop somewhere on the westside of Wirdum Desert. Tara would go to him. Tara didn't care for parrot gems, but when she found some, she would bring them to Ammelgamma. Ammelgamma was a prophet, a collector of parrot gems. He didn't use any surgeries to zombificate his victims. He only used words. And he had a lot of success in it, for he had one of the greatest slave-caravans of Wirdum Desert. He used to travel a lot with his mass of necktied zombie-slaves. To see such a slave-caravan moving through the desert was always impressive. Ammelgamma used to prophesy and soon his whole audience had been enslaved by his words ... a strange fire, zombificating them to be in his army of everlasting damnation. They didn't fight, they only used ... words ...

When Tara entered Ammelgamma's shop he was just counting his money behind the cash-desk. Tara laid the parrot gems in the desk and slammed with her fist on the desk, trying to get his attention. Ammelgamma looked up, but then he started to count his money again. 'Sorry, lady,' he spoke indifferently with a sore throat, 'I am busy now, can you return another time ?' But Tara jumped over the desk, took him by his throat and pushed him hard against the wall, while she had raised him in the air : 'Listen you barbarian bastard, I do not travel for days to come here for nothing. We know each other, don't you ? You know where I am coming for.' Tara had the desire to throw him through the window and then to eat his brains, but she could control herself this time. The man nodded and said : 'Yes, Tara, I know where

you come from, and where you are coming for, so come with me, and I will show you what I can give you for these parrot-gems.' Then they moved upstairs.

She was now probably the richest woman on Mars, although she didn't care about the money, the tanarings she had now. She just needed it for something.

In the west, upwards, she needed to do something. As she was moving forwards to an enormous stairway in the middle of the desert. This stairway was a chrystal stairway, leading to the high beach behind the desert. No one knew why she came there, no one knew what she would do. They were all staring at her while she moved through the soil. When she was on the beach she could see the bloody sun almost touching the waters. She stood there for hours, for days, as the bloody dark sun was moving slowly towards her. The wind was playing with her hair while the bloody dark sun was roaring and soaring so huge in the distance. 'You have finally come, Soms !' she shouted. 'I have done what you have asked from me.' The huge bloody dark sun was almost devouring the waters.

The next morning Tara woke up, still at the beach. She would now go to Iriptus, the killer-prophet. They called him the prophet, but actually he wasn't a prophet. He was an assassin. He would speak to his audience for hours and hours, and then he would slay them all ... not by words, but by his sword. His house was full of skulls and dead bodies. He killed for the money, the tanarings, ... it was that simple. His house was huge. He was one of the wealthiest prophets in Wirdum Desert.

After a few hours Tara came out of his house finally. Most of the time these prophets were only weaponsellers or high bosses of arena's further not caring anything about it. She called them the gamewatchers, lazy jerks. She never had much patience with them. She had only sympathy and love for the prophet-king who was an exorcist in the east of Wirdum Desert. He was called the prophet-herd, but actually he wasn't a herd. He had a breeding for prophets, to finally slaughter them all. He was feared by many prophets, although a lot of prophets didn't know anything about him.

Tara went to his castles ... They were made of python stone ... Some called it the sandcastles As she was sliding forwards through the soil and the sand of Wirdum Desert she saw him on the huge frontwall practicing with his sword.

She became so paranoid, hungry for a greater love, but all she could do was to hate. She hated love and she loved hate, and she knew the bloody sun of Soms wouldn't show up anymore, as it was written in Martian Laws of the Lawless that the bloody sun of Soms would only show up once in someone's everlasting life, as the first and the last time, the Alpha and the Omega.

The revenge of the prophets would drive her to Tartarus now. Here the wolf-skulls were already waiting for her, ready to watch more of her than she ever watched of anyone else, for they once took her own parrot gems away.

The Lawless

As I was sliding along the vast jungle of Tirmis Oracle, a ghosttown in the west of Mars, I met a pirate. Me, Tara, I was willing to know the secret of the Tirmis Oracle. Tirmis Oracle were ten demon-machines torturing so many on the surfaces of Mars, to keep them in deep tragedy and slavery. When he had told me the secret, it was the beginning of a strange travel for me. To me everyone was living in his own world, not capable to really destroy someone else by any law or anti-law. In my eyes death was just the road to the well of eternal death, holding the secret of eternal birth. To me death didn't really exist as it was one of the many stories. The pirate told me that the dark of Tirmis Oracle were guarding this well. How could I set free these ten demons captured in Tirmis Oracle for such a long time ?

There was no real escape from the demon-machines, as the pirate told me. I had to face the fact that only the well of eternal slavery would bring me to eternal liberation. The paradox was a strange machine, the first of the oracle, planted against the huge rock of the ghosttown. If I wouldn't free the demon locked up in this machine, not many would be even willing to understand the treasures of the paradox. This was the only secret the pirate told me, but he didn't even tell me how I could free the demon. I must admit, in those times I didn't care at all. Someone had to do it. Some things just needed to be done.

I came from a free world, although there was a lot of slavery. And it was just like that was all the price of freedom, like these two things belonged to each other, as a heritage of the paradox. Mars had always been a free world, where everything was possible. It was called art, but it also opened the most darkest edges you couldn't find anywhere else. One was always saying that Tirmis Oracle was a heritage from barbarians as well as indians. I was a mix of them, although I belonged to an indian tribe. We were against civilization.

The pirates seemed to know much about the Tirmis Oracle, and that was the reason why I approached them very often. They often went to Tirmis Oracle to gamble there. It was a way for them to spend their times, and another pirate told me about the first demon. He was called Traxwodka, the Python Knight. Some said he was the soul of a child once captured by a

sorcerer. The captain told me that there had to be a bottle in the first machine where the soul of the Python Knight had been locked up. The captain could open the screen, and gave me the bottle. This was one of the most precious gifts I got in my life. However, the Python Knight always hunted my mind in a sense. It inspired me to do the things I had to do. He has probably gone mad by the dark of Tirmis Oracle. But in later times it started to make a bit more sense to me. I had an encounter with a giant. He was a necromancer and he connected the soul to the realms of the dead. He knew the many rivers of the Martian realms of Death and he took me often with him to go on his ship. It was not a big ship, more a boat, and he often took some other friends with him. I will tell you about the journeys through the Martian realms of Death. As we started on the Martian River of Death, we took a river on it's westside taking us deeper into the jungles. We were the lawless, although we had a higher sense for ethics than usual. We believed that the mind was corrupted, and it should be ignored in all contends. Most of the Martians are familiar with these laws, but the greatest of these laws could be found in the Death-realms of Mars.

The mind cannot understand the higher worlds. The passion can. We had to live by that code or we wouldn't survive in the Death-realms of Mars. That was why we had such a strong desire to build a jungle. And that we could find along the rivers in the Death-realms of Mars.

Some of the other tribes thought they had to root us out. They thought we could form a threat against them. Maybe that was our fate. But we only did what we have to do to survive, and to follow our instincts. None of us believed in a heaven or hell. We only believed in Tartarus, the realms below the Death-realms of Mars. Tartarus was the the well of everlasting damnation. Some would call it hell, but to us it was the place of creation by the forces of destruction. Tartarus was our world, our eternal fields. We were against civilization and had established the Martian Laws to survive. It was the Law of the Lawless.

The giant knew the rivers leading to Tartarus very well. He was actually the one who brought me to Tartarus. I could never realize how deep this world would penetrate my soul. It opened me up to so many things. Here the beasts of our dreams were living. We could enter so many new wells in this area. Here the demons were living. I can recall many of them. Oshar was the demon of money. He captured souls to change them into money. Ritswik was the demon of zombification. He could kill souls to raise them up again in their bodies to enslave them forever. He was a dark sorcerer, a warlock. Dikshild was also a demon. He was small and had long hair, walking around with a bag. He turned bones into money and could get money out of bodies. Jeppersla was also a demon, a python-prince guarding the python stones of Tartarus, the most precious jewels awakening desires and sex. Harmataron was a fat one. As it was the law on Mars and also in Tartarus : slavery was very important to give care to those who didn't have enough money, but it was also important to control the dangerous species. It was the way charity and protection worked on Mars as well in Tartarus.

The life on Mars and especially on Tartarus was different like all the other planets. It brought forth the seed of death. The warmest and best place to connect to Tartarus. One of the highest ranks of demons in Tartarus was the rank of the pythons. They controlled Tartarus for a big deal. Wealth was very important to become a ruler of Tartarus. The ones having the most money, tanarings, could have implants. Often they were made of special python stone, the stone of enslavement and of protection against enslavement, any form. Most of the times the rulers had a lot of implants, which was a big deal of money. Some of the implants weren't cheaper as two-thousand tanarings. In Martian money if you had a possession of a hundred tanarings you were rich. The business of implants was one of the greatest businesses in

Tartarus. One of the leading men in this trade was Harold von Drinbard. He was a dark sorcerer and a doctor. All he was ever interested in was money. He believed in the eternal money, a law as brought by the many demons of money in the spheres of Tartarus. However Harold von Drinbard was a foreigner. He came from another planet to Mars. His friends always called him Drinbard, and he was a skilled necromancer and zombificator.

No one knew where Drinbard originally came from, as that was which he always kept secret. Several rich ones worshipped Drinbard. Especially if he would lower the prices of the implants. Some said Drinbard was the inventor of the python stone. It would be made of the trodden and squeezed souls of the damned.

Although one could reduce poverty by the great deal of slave-markets, there were also parts of Tartarus with a great deal of poverty. However, there was a well of eternal poverty leading to the eternal money. Drinbard seemed to know everything about it.

Drinbard had his throne in Tartarus, the Underworld of Mars. He was a drinker, a gambler, but most of all he was a plastic surgeon and a talented businessman. Drinbard had a business in death as he was a dark sorcerer and a liar. Yes, this soul-swindler was a feared warlock in the eyes of many. To the rich he was a friend, someone who helped them to gain more power and control in the dark spheres of Mars. The conspiracies of Drinbard were the greatest of conspiracies in the past of Mars, for without it Mars would be a totally different place now. Drinbard succeeded to lock the soul of the boy up in a bottle. Still there is lots of talk about the boy in the bottle which they always called : The Soul of Drinbard.

Not many know where this soul is located. But I know, since I freed it. Let me tell you this story. Me, Tara from Rhodes, heard about the conspiracy of Drinbard as one of the first. Drinbard called for a circle of the darkest black magicians, necromancers, witches and soul-hunters to make their plans to capture the soul of the boy. Since they had succeeded in imprisoning the boy's soul I visited these dark sorcerers one by one to slay them. Finally I found the bottle and freed the soul of the boy, but then I discovered another terrible secret. Since I freed his soul, he became the tormented object of so many soul-hunters. He lost all the rest he had, since he had become a wanderer, always on the run, as there was a big price on his head. It became such a terrible hunt that I wished I would never had freed his soul out of Drinbard's bottle. He had become so haunted. I would never forget his terrorized, paranoid and haunted face.

I was wearing an amulet with a stone called 'the eye of the cat'. It was a stone which could communicate with cats. Of course these were all sorts of cats, also the wild ones, and those coming forth from the cats. It was a cryptic form of communication, as cats are very cryptic beings. It was the heritage we got from our ancestors, it was a cat-knife able to break the time. Most of the slavemasters had a cat-eye mouth. These were mouths in stones by which they could cause death and by which they could even let souls descend into horrible places.

The Knife of Black Time

Chapter 1. The Eye of the Cat

Chapter 2. The Wrath of Sambara

Chapter 1. The Eye of the Cat

Tara was bathing in the Mistrus River in the South of Rhodes, the catplanet. Actually Rhodes was a solarsystem full of planets. All the planets were called Rhodes, while Tara was on Rhodes IV. Tara was making fun with a friend, and later they climbed on the sandy side of the lake. After awhile a spotted lion, very tall with thin, sly features. The spotted lion started to drink from the lake. Tara wanted to test the lion. She wanted to know if she was stronger than the lion, so she attacked him. Tara got bitten horribly, and she thought they could be friends.

Tara thought she could use this lion in her fights. She didn't see the lion here before, and she was very impressed by it's spots. But the lion attacked her again, and Tara grasped him by the neck and threw him away. But now the lion really got angry and jumped on her ... but suddenly he licked her ... It seemed the lion started to like her.

The lion licked her wound. Although the bite was the cruellest bite she ever felt, she now felt a care she never felt before. Together they were walking into the jungle. Tara knew the spotted lion would protect her with his life.

On her forehead Tara was wearing an amulet with a stone called 'the eye of the cat'. She once got it from a sorcerer who called her the queen of the cats. It was a stone by which she could

better communicate with the cats. Of course these were all sorts of cats, also the wild ones, and those coming forth from the cats.

It was a cryptic form of communication, as cats are very cryptic beings. There was a scar growing from the wound. The spotted lion would now forever recognize Tara as his friend. The lion led Tara to his cave, a very huge cave, where a lot of his friends were walking, sitting, sleeping or working, having the same scar. Now Tara was one of them.

Suddenly the spotted lion started to speak :

‘This is a great day, since Tara from Rhodes has joined our group. She is a warrior and of great use in our search for the knife of black time.’

‘What is that ?’ Tara asked.

The lion looked deep into her eyes, like he pierced his way through her mind. and said : ‘It was the heritage we got from our ancestors, it was a cat-knife able to break the time, to bring us back to Rhodes III our motherplanet.’

Far away from the spotted lion’s cave a mass of slaves was wandering through the desert of fire. Suddenly they had to stop before a fire-lake where they had to drink from the firewaters. Now they had received strength again to work in the desert. They had coloured necklaces like thin small snakes, carrying the energy of black time, a sinister energy keeping them bound to the realms of the dead. If they would only have the knife of black time, they could escape.

They had a slavemaster called Sambara, who was the keeper of this magical knife. He was a sorcerer, a dark one, and he ruled them all by the knife.

Most of the slavemasters on Rhodes IV had a cat-eye mouth. These were mouths in stones by which they could cause death and by which they could even let souls descend into horrible places like the Gorgoon. No one could get such a mouth very easy, for first they had to go to a sorcerer and then they had to swallow such a cat-eye. By that they would first descend in the Gorgoon themselves, and some had to sit there for a hundred years or even more. But if they got too long in the Gorgoon it would spit them out. This would be what some might call the experience of death, and then if it would please the sorcerer he would call the soul back from the realms of the death. But sometimes the sorcerer chose to bring the soul back to the Gorgoon.

The ones with cat-eye gloves, which had many of stings and pins most of the time, often worked in arena's as death-gladiators. These were the ones who had to show up only when a certain gladiator got too much power. The death-gladiators were to bring balance. On Rhodes IV those with cat-eye gloves were often most feared, because they often could bring quick deaths. Most of the time these gloves were red.

One of these death-gladiators was Abarsa. He was still a young man, and before he became a death-gladiator he was someone others used to pick on. He was a very funny boy, but he was unhandy, and couldn't make it on school. All he wanted was to become a gladiator. Abarsa was always a very good and tender boy, but he acted a bit strange, almost like cryptic, and often no-one understood him. And still he had those strange smiles, and he could turn your world upside down by looking at you. Abarsa was always very selective in his work. If a gladiator pleased him, he would offer live to him. But when he saw gladiators who used to pick on others he would raise his fist suddenly because of his old anger rising up, his old pain. Sometimes Abarsa could control this action, but other times not.

Abarsa was feared because of his work, and when there were fights on marketsquares Abarsa sometimes had to go there. When Abarsa showed up they always knew it was already too late, for now there would flow some real blood, and these weren't jokes. Most of the times Abarsa would cause death. Abarsa didn't show up for nothing. This was the reason why Abarsa didn't go to marketsquares just to buy something, for that would be a too big shock. But when he hadn't been to the marketsquares for years he could show up, because a lot of them wouldn't even know who he was.

Chapter 2. The Wrath of Sambara

Rhodes III was actually a dogplanet, the motherplanet. The spotted dogs were the rulers here. There were all sorts of dogs, also wolves. The main capital was Sparta, the city of wolves. The spotted wolves lived in a huge skeleton building surrounded by sand. It was a small desert in the midst of the city. However there were some hills which looked like dunes.

The biggest spotted wolf stood up from his throne. He had a black cape, and looked like a man. 'It is now time we will open the portal between Rhodes III and Rhodes IV. It has been written in our prophesies.' The wolf stared into a chrystal ball, and saw Tara fighting against Sambara, the keeper of the knife. With her there was a spotted lion, and Abarsa, the gladiator of death. The spotted lion had brought them together. Then the spotted wolf sent some of his

big birds to help Tara and her friends against Sambara the evil sorcerer. The spotted lion jumped on Sambara and then he fell, while Tara grasped the knife. 'Hold it in the air,' Abarsa said.

In the crystal ball the wolf could see how his birds started to eat Sambara. He saw how Tara raised the knife of black time, and suddenly there was lightening all over the ball. 'It's done,' he spoke. The portal of time between Rhodes III and Rhodes IV was opening. It happened in the pit and tunnel called the Gorgoon. In its depth the portal was opening.

The children of hell had been set free now, and in big groups with torches they went through the portal to the other side of the Gorgoon. It would lead them to Rhodes III, the motherplanet. The big birds brought the skull of Sambara to the portal to hang it above it. But through the mouth of the skull a red fluid started to stream, and soon there was a flood in the Gorgoon rising higher.

'We have to close the portal again,' the spotted wolf said. Tara watched the knife she held in her hand, and it became weak and soft. It was melting in her hands. 'What is going on?' she asked.

'We have not much time,' the spotted lion said. 'We have to go through the Gorgoon, where the portal to Rhodes III has been opened.'

In short time the spotted lion swam with Tara and Abarsa through the red fluid, searching for the portal. They saw dead bodies everywhere. Deeper the red fluid was thinner, like air, and they could almost walk through it. 'Hold me tight,' the spotted lion said to Tara and Abarsa, which they did. In speed he moved towards the portal which was already closing its jaws. Just in time they got through it. Later on they stepped out of the red fluid, and they were in Rhodes III, the dogplanet. 'We have made it, Tara,' the spotted lion said. The big birds picked them up and brought them to Sparta, to the halls of the spotted wolf.

'We have called for the wrath of Sambara,' the spotted wolf spoke. 'Rhodes III will die. There is only one way to survive : the road to Orion.'

'Where is that road?' Tara asked.

‘Come,’ the wolf said. He pushed a button and his throne moved away while an enormous hole in the floor appeared. ‘Jump,’ he said. Tara slid into the hole, together with Abarsa and the spotted lion. It would be a long trip through tunnels and pits, finally leading to Orion. The spotted wolf was on their side.

When they came in Orion it was burning. ‘It is Sambara’s wrath,’ the spotted wolf said. ‘But here there must be the gate to Mars somewhere.’ The wolf hit the ground a few times by a rod, and an enormous hole appeared. ‘Here it is,’ he said. And again they slid in, and this time they went to Mars in great speed.

On Mars they saw all sorts of black guards walking. ‘Those are the guards of Sambara,’ the wolf spoke. ‘We can beat those.’ Abarsa jumped forward and slew a few of them, and Tara did the same. In short time there weren’t any guards left. They had a great survey from here. They stood on a hill, looking into a new world.

‘Can we be free from Sambara here?’ Tara asked.

‘Yes,’ the wolf said. ‘The rest of the universe is under his growing wrath.’

‘For how long will we be safe against him?’ Tara asked.

‘If we will build our place here, for eternity,’ the wolf spoke. ‘We need to be on the Martian River of Death, which is the most fruitful area.’

At the Westside of the Martian River of Death there was a city called Bear City. Here the soul-swindlers came, people like Sambara. Here the meanest soul-trappers and other sorts of death-dealers came, and many had their homes here. Here the cannibals of the highest grade lived, necromancers, those who played the games of death. They had their boats along the Martian River of Death. ‘Our prophesies say here we must be,’ the wolf said. In the city there were many casino’s, and there were also circuses where the dead had to work. There were also a lot of comicshops here.

The wolf had a tattoo on his body which was a map of Bear City. A red line led them through the city to another hole. This hole led them to Tartarus. ‘There were days when parts of Mars

were one with parts of Orion, which was the planet Wickfin,' the wolf said. 'In the depths of Tartarus, there is a desert, and behind that there is a sea holding the last piece of this planet like an island. There was a huge explosion in history. By my tattoo we get access to that place.'

Then the wolf showed another tattoo of him, which was a scar. The wolf showed his tattoo-scar in the air, while big birds came to pick them up, to bring them to the island of Wickfin. There were only skeletons here.

'We are here for the wrath of Sambara is after us,' the wolf spoke to the skeletons.

'We do not need you here,' the skeletons said. 'You carry the curse of Sambara with you, and you will be a threat against us too. Die in the sea with your Sambara.'

'We ask you for your help,' the wolf spoke.

One of the skeletons came forward and gave a pale green stone to the wolf. 'This is the last stone of Wickfin,' the skeleton said. 'Wickfin is melting. We do not know what is happening. Even our bones are becoming softer and softer. This stone is the only gift we can give you. Please, remember us, and remember Wickfin. The island is getting smaller and smaller. We have nowhere to go, for outside Wickfin we will die. Make yourself safe.'

'Where can we go ?' the wolf asked. But the stone was melting, and the skeletons started to laugh. 'We will all be gone, as there is no medicine against the Wrath of Sambara.'

Tara drank from the water of the sea but it was salty. 'There must be a way out,' she said. But the skeletons were melting before their eyes, and also the island was getting smaller and smaller, while the birds were gone. Suddenly a huge wave grasped them. There were explosions everywhere. The sky was dark and bloody. Finally a huge pirate ship picked them up.

The captain was a cruel man. Some pirates chained them at the wall inside of the ship. 'Who are you ?' Tara asked.

‘We are the pirates of Wickfin,’ they said. ‘Those skeletons.’ And then they laughed. They were the sorcerors of death. They brought Tara and her friends to the first island, where they sold them as slaves. Soon they ended up in the arena as gladiators. Abarsa smiled. He had hoped for this.

All went so fast. Abarsa and Tara were unconquerable, and soon they made Abarsa king of the island, for they all feared him. Abarsa gave freedom to Tara, and she chose to live in the jungle. She started to live close to a volcano always bringing forth blood. These were strange eruptions. Strange white skeletons seemed to live in the volcano.

‘We are the pirates of Wickfin,’ she heard every night.

Finally she could have some conversations with them, and they wanted to make a pirate of Wickfin of her as well, for that would be the only way to get rid of Sambara’s curse. They wanted to show her their captain, and Tara was in a shock when she found out it was Sambara himself. ‘Life goes on after death,’ he said. ‘Actually we never die.’

‘Why grasping at things, while you know they will melt in your hands ?’ Sambara asked.

‘In my hands everything is stone,’ he said, ‘but in yours it melts away. Poor you. The knife of black time cannot be grasped. It can only be earned. See all those stupid souls, these pirates of Wickfin. They still think they can gain something by robbing and stealing Fools They always melt away And everything they take melts away Poor souls They all hope for my almighty touch to grant them the knife of black time by which they can live forever, and hold something forever Would you want that ? There is only one price if you would finally earn and deserve the knife of black time. You will be stone forever, just like the things you hold, and you can never get rid of it anymore. It will haunt you forever. Is that what you wish ?’

‘Then why do you want it ?’ Tara asked.

‘I have it, and I am the only one who can handle it,’ Sambara said. ‘You see, I use the necklaces by which the energy of black time conducts itself.’

‘I have worked hard for these necklaces,’ Sambara said. ‘I am an honourable master.’

‘I want to be free, free from all this,’ Tara said. ‘You have built these worlds, and you keep us all in the grip. That’s why I returned to Rhodes, and that’s probably why I am here.’

‘Well, join the army,’ Sambara said. ‘Be one of my pirates, and when it’s your birthday I will wake you up.’

‘You are a sorcerer, Sambara,’ Tara said, ‘and I cannot do anything about that. But I won’t be your beggar. I will find my way.’

‘How, Tara?’ Sambara asked. ‘As you know I hold all the worlds in my hand. All ways are mine.’

Tara took the amulet from her forehead, raised it against the sorcerer and spoke : ‘In the Name of the Cat, let me and my people go.’ Green radiation came out of the amulet, striking the sorcerer. But this time the sorcerer stood up and walked towards Tara to put a snake-necklace around her neck. It was like Tara was losing her mind. He pushed her into a hole like a pit, and after a deep fall she fell into a desert. The sun was burning in her neck. Strange guards came towards her, attaching a chain to her necklace to connect her to the other slaves. There were lakes of fire everywhere. Here they could drink to receive painful strength. Months of heavy labour in the desert followed. Tara lost all her dignity. She became a savage more than ever. The sun was burning her skin every day, even in the nights.

They led her to a city in the depths of the desert. It was a gladiator city where she had to fight for her life, but she conquered, and everyone feared her. Fight after fight she won, and soon she became the queen of the city. But she had still her necklace. It brought her much pain always.

The more she tried to get the necklace of Sambara off, the tighter it became. It was almost strangling her. ‘Be glad, Tara,’ the necklace suddenly spoke. It was like a snake. ‘Why would you break the curse of black time. You have seen where it can lead you. It lets everything melt.’

‘Yes, when I take the knife of black time without breaking the necklaces, then everything melts,’ Tara said. ‘The power of Sambara is in the necklaces. They are conductors, but when they are broken, then Sambara will turn into stone.’

‘It will be a disaster,’ the necklace spoke. ‘For then everything will turn into stone.’

‘Who are you ?’ Tara asked.

‘I am also a slave of Sambara,’ the necklace spoke.

‘How can I free you ?’ Tara asked.

‘As I said, everything would turn into stone when you would free us,’ the necklace said. ‘There is only one way : red time.’

‘What is that ?’ Tara asked.

‘It is the only thing making us safe against the melting and the turning into stone,’ the necklace said.

‘Where can we find it ?’ Tara asked.

‘In the depths of the desert,’ the necklace said, ‘it is like clay.’

The necklace knew a way to get underground, and showed Tara the place where the red clay was. She had to cover her body with it. She also had to smear it on the necklace, and it started to move again, becoming flexible like a snake. ‘Don’t return, Tara,’ it said. ‘The others need to find out for themselves. Just go deeper through these tunnels, and search for the core of it.’

Here you will get totally free from the curse of Sambara.' Suddenly it was gone. Tara moved further into the depths. There was red clay everywhere. She could breath again.

She was in the land of the red clay now, and she would never return. She got finally free from Sambara's influence. She sank away in the red clay, again and again, but by holding on to some branches she could move forward. The air was thick here. She was in the underground like never before. She was free from slavery.

The End

Jewels of the Octopus

'Can you believe it ?' Tara asked. 'So many children trapped in such a small place.' She was directing her finger at a map, and the others were looking with frightened faces. 'It's really true,' she said. 'We have this thing going on for a long time, these children live underwater, not able to move, not able to see and hear, pressed into each other like siamese twins.'

'I can't belief it, Tara,' one of the boys said, 'how do they breath ?'

'You must see it like this,' Tara said, 'these kids have some sort of stones in them, by which they can breath. It gives them oxygene. These stones are some sort of jewels and they call them octopus jewels. I tell you it's a big deal, for after awhile such a stone comes free, and while it's still alive the child dies. It's like a miniature heart. They can't cut it out, as then the stone would die, so this is their way to get these stones out of the children.'

'Oh, that's cruel,' another boy said, 'why do they want to have these stones. I mean : come on, isn't the life of such a child more precious'

'Shhh,' Tara said, 'don't talk to loud, for they may hear it. We have this map now, and we need to be careful. The map will lead us to the places where the kids have been locked up. But it comes to this, listen : These stones are duplicators when they are on their own and when they would still be alive. They can clone souls and build new universes like this universe, but with a subtile difference. The radiation of these stones have simple access to the brains. This is how they produce natural change and even time.'

'That sounds wonderful, Tara, but why do these kids have to be sacrificed for that ?' the boy said.

'I think it is all a powergame, Huntas,' Tara said. 'The Octopus Queen of Lirmitia wants to rule the universe by it, and she already does that for a big deal.'

'Do you really want to be my mother ?' Huntas asked. 'Since you saved me out of that cave, that idea attracts me.' Tara sighed. She knew that the boys were still in danger. The Octopus Queen would do everything she could to get the boys back.

'Okay,' Tara said, 'I will be your mother, but you must promise me something.' And then there was a long conversation. A conversation by which Tara knew that her life would be changed. The Octopus Queen had locked up and tortured these boys for so long, and they were bearing many secrets in them. But they didn't know anything about the children of the lake. They called it lake, but it was a sort of swimmingpool. And Tara was persistent ... She wanted to help these kids out. But she also knew about the costs of it. There were a lot of dangers, and she knew that without the boys she wouldn't have any chance.

She had stolen the map from Kwibrillis, the killer-thief. He used to go around to kill people just so that he could steal their property. But the domain of Kwibrillis wasn't without dangers. The boys knew a lot about Kwibrillis and his traps, and within a short time they could get out of the place without any troubles.

The boys knew about an elevator leading them into the heart of the place of the Octopus Queen. It was a long trip, but the boys knew how they had to handle the elevator. They used this elevator when they had to go to work. In early years they were part-time slaves of the Octopus Queen. They had some sort of device in their necks which would make troubles if they wouldn't come to her place to do work every day. It was very hard work, and the boys were tired most of the time ... very tired. But since one of the boys had found a way to get rid of the device they escaped, but got caught again by the army of the Octopus Queen. They brought them to the cave, a horrible place of imprisonment and torture. But when they heard about the children of the lake they knew that it was way worse there. In the beginning they thought they didn't have such a stone in the depths of their bodies, but Tara explained to them that they also had such a stone, but that it was still lying dormant there. It had to be activated first. First the boys got excited about the idea that when it would be activated they could live underwater, but then the terror of reality struck their head : If they would fall into the hands of the queen again, then maybe they would become children of the lake too. Tara knew the dangers, and the map explained a lot.

In the heart of the queen's place there were always a lot of mirrors, and the boys never knew why. Tara explained to them that these mirrors were actually camera's to duplicate their souls. Then myriads and myriads of subtle changes got beamed into their heads to let them move and to experience time. They were more or less brainslaves of the queen, but the system had some weak spots.

The queen herself was surrounded by octopus stones, and wore them like jewels. She was like immortal and invincible for a big deal, and by her eyes she knew almost everything. They said her eyes could watch through walls, and she knew what she wanted. Tara knew she had to be very careful. She was wondering what Kwibrillis would have to do with such a map. The map was telling them that when they would be in the heart of the place they had to take the left tunnel. They had to wait for the night, as then the mirrors were recharging, and they were weaker then. But strange watchers were walking there. The boys said that these watchers were some sort of monkeys. They were part of the queen's army. In the distance they saw the queen

sitting on a throne of stones, strange stones, like beating hearts, small hearts, like the hearts of smaller animals, but there were also some bigger stones. The stones were very strange, like they were reflecting so many things. Even watching these stones could let you feel strange.

Suddenly one of the watchers was looking them right into their faces, but it was like he was far away, like he was sleeping or something, or he just didn't really see them. What was going on here ? Suddenly Tara shouted : 'Run !' And they had to run to the left tunnel. It would be a long run, as it was a big place. Tara had to shout, because she suddenly took notice of the fact that big guns were moving towards them. Maybe the watchers weren't sleepy at all, or these guns were just sensitive, operating on their own. 'Dive !' Tara shouted. The boys all did what she said, as the guns started to fire like crazy. Suddenly alarms got activated all over the place.

'Intruders located in front of Certiviks Tunnel,' a computerized intercom spoke, 'Intruders located in front of Certiviks Tunnel.'

Suddenly the queen stood before them. She had some flowers in their hand. How could she move so fast to this place ? But when they looked to the throne in the distance, she was also sitting there. Was it a ghost, or a clone, or just someone else ?

'No, I am the queen,' the appearance said, 'I am just liquid, like the fluids of a jelly-fish. I warn you not to move any further, for the fluids will strike you.' They were now surrounded by guns, guns in the air, moving on rails.

Tara slowly grasped her spear. But the appearance said : 'If I were you, I wouldn't do that, as this is my home, and I don't want to have any fights here. Neither will I kill any of you. But I am in need for some gladiators, so be my guest.'

And then the queen moved towards an enormous stairways downstairs, and made a movement with her hand as a sign they had to follow her. 'Fortunately,' one of the boys whispered, 'we won't become children of the lake.' But Tara watched straight ahead, not taking any notice of the boys' whisperings. The guns were moving with them. They came to a place called Royal Gun Lodge. Gladiators full of rage and hate were staring at them. The boys started to shiver. If they had to fight those big ones there wouldn't be any shatter of them left. There was a man Lactroctus, a man of great and strange power. The queen pushed Tara towards the man, and he hugged her, but then he knocked her head by his head. Tara took her spear and pierced his heart, but the man was only laughing. 'Wounds will heal,' he smiled. Then he took the spear out of his heart, and kicked Tara on her knee, very hard. Tara fell down and he put his foot on her head. But then Tara swung with the other part of her body in the air and took his head between her legs after she had kicked him in his back. The man fell down, but then another gladiator came. He took Tara and freed the man. Again it was like the gladiator hugged Tara, but soon it turned into a killing grip. Tara couldn't breath anymore, and also the other man had her in a grip again. Then a third gladiator came, and while they held Tara in the air by keeping her legs and arms tight the third gladiator jumped on her and then started jumping like crazy. Then the queen pushed the boys towards the men, but they were all laughing at the boys. The boys couldn't do anything against the men. Tara had a tough time with the jumping gladiator. And the boys soon layed on the ground by all the kicks they got, and the piramid was moving to finally step on them. Suddenly Tara felt a rush of strength streaming into her body, and she could move away a bit, while the jumping gladiator fell towards the ground. He screamed, while Tara could free one leg, kicked the other gladiator, and then also the other. She knew

that spears didn't help, but it was like the three gladiators were done now. The boys still had a hard time, for they were still under heavy legs and bodies, but soon they also got freed. The queen clapped in her hands.

'I have observed you,' she said to Tara. 'I think I can use you. Come with me.'

'What will you do to the boys ?' Tara asked.

'You can leave them here, or take them with you, that's in your hands,' the queen said.

'Then I take them with me,' Tara said. But one of the boys wanted to stay as he was afraid he would become a child of the lake. So he stayed, but as soon as Tara and the other boys were gone, the gladiators killed the boy.

The queen took them to an area above the heart of the place. There were a lot of windows here, and they could watch the sea. 'I want to ask you something,' the queen said the Tara. And then a long long conversation followed, something Tara couldn't recall, but when she woke up, she had been tied in a cage full of water, like a box with windows. Only her head was rising above the small waves, but the waves soon became wilder, and Tara had to fight for her life. Where was she ? And where were the boys. After awhile it got calmer and calmer, and Tara could breath again. Some lights were gleaming in the distance. She saw the boys sitting in the same sort cages. 'Hey !' Tara shouted, 'I think you could better stay with the gladiators, as we have become prey for the lake. Although I am not sure if this is the same. Some of the boys were crying.

Then the queen came into the room, took Tara out of her watercage and gave her a towel. 'I am now sure of it,' the queen said, 'you do not have anything we can use, but the boys will stay here.'

'No !' Tara shouted, 'they belong to me. Please take me instead of them. Do with me whatever you want, but set the boys free.'

But the queen didn't have any interest for that. 'I'm sorry, woman, but you don't have anything of interest to me. I will set you free, but the boys will stay here.'

Tara felt very dizzy and didn't know what to do. Some of the boys were shrieking and screaming. She knew that they were destined to become children of the lake. But first they would have to get rid of her. Tara almost couldn't move, like there were strange fluids in her bones. What did they do to her ? Much of it Tara couldn't recall, but when she woke up, she was out of that horrible place, but she knew she had to return.

She decided to go to Sanchez, the shaman, an old friend. Maybe he had some advice. But she also knew that Kwibrillis the killer-thief was hunting for her soul. It was like his spirit-voice was entering in her brain so strong. As she had stolen his map, but now the map was gone, but it was still strong in her head. She would never forget about that map, as it was a horror beyond terms. It would torture her mind for the rest of her life, like a trauma.

It was a riddle begging her to solve it. When she got to Sanchez he was sleeping. She made some drinks for him, and went to his room. She always had free access here, as he was such a good friend. They had a history together, and Tara always called him Snakefriend. 'Hey

Snakefriend !' she said, while she offered the drinks to the sleeping old man. 'Huh ? Now that is a surprise, and what I call the best breakfast in my life !' he almost shouted of joy. Tara took a chair. His house still looked like a castle. She told the story about the boys, and what happened, while Sanchez walked to an old tall cupboard. He took some sort of stones out it. 'These ones are dead. Here, octopus jewels, but they won't work. They are dead. But I use them for they tell me everything,' he said, murmuring. Then he smiled. 'Tara, old friend,' and he took her by the arm, and took her to another room, 'I'm so glad you are here, as I'm sure we can solve this thing.'

He threw the stones on a table, and they even really looked like they were dead. Tara remembered the stones of the queen which beated like hearts ... They were alive and well, but these stones were really dead, although the man said they still had a voice.

'Long ago,' the man said, 'Tara, listen, as this is important. Long ago the queen wasn't a queen. She wasn't even a princess. She was never a princess. There was a fight, and she took it over.'

'You mean she just deactivated the princess or queen and became queen herself ?' Tara asked. 'Yes,' the old man said, while his eyes began to shimmer. There was an old ruler, a king. It was horrible. He had a swimmingpool fool of crocodiles, jellyfishes, octopi, everything, and he used to throw his servants in these reservoirs, and if they would survive, they would become his priests.'

'His priests ?' Tara asked, 'Did he think he was a god or something ?'

'No, no,' the old man said. 'he thought he was a prophet. He had to lead his priests to a sort of god, a crocodile.'

'Oh,' Tara laughed, 'hmmm ...' Tara's eyes started to shimmer also In a strange sense she always liked to hear about crocodiles And the old man continued : 'These crocodiles, Tara, were sacred to him, to the king. He thought that they would choose their own priests. If a servant survived them, then he was destined to become a crocodile-priest.'

'But one day Luceramma, the lady of the octopus, came to his house, killed the king after a long fight, killed all the crocodiles, ruined their temples, and took the priests and their children. After conversations she drowned the priests, but the children she kept, as they would have the so called sleeping stones of the octopus. If these stones would be awakened, or activated, these kids would be able to live underwater. In the beginning she used these children to work underwater, to do research. But later she wanted to use these stones for other purposes. She knew that if she would take the stones out of the children then the stones would die, so she brought them in a project called child of the lake. Well, you know all about that. There is something she fears : Yes, the crocodile. That's why she killed it from the beginning.'

The old man stared at the table with the stones, took the stones, and threw them on the table again. 'The crocodile is a smart animal,' the old man said, 'and she knew the animal would take revenge after the destruction of their temples. There's something mysterious about the crocodile, and she fears it. Not many know this secret, but I can tell you : Kwibrillis knows. He could always penetrate her domains because of his skills It has to do with the crocodile. Kwibrillis was a crocodile-priest in the past. He was one of the few who could escape, but because of all the murders he saw he became bitter and dangerous. And believe me, these crocodile-priests weren't the nicest and friendliest men already. Kwibrillis is now feared more

than ever, but he's carrying some deeper secrets. Some say he now works together with the queen, but no one really knows.'

'Well, we have to find out before it's too late,' Tara said persistently. 'I know some numbers to ride on. Give me the stones.' The man took the stones and gave them slowly to Tara. Tara tossed the stones in her hands and threw them on the table. 'You see, I am not good at this, shaman, but tell me what you see ?' Tara said.

'You are right,' the shaman said, 'there isn't much time.'

On their way to the palaces of the queen, the shaman said to Tara : 'Tara, I want you to know about the secret of the crocodile, and you must carry it close to your heart. It will heal you, and it will give you the key to the queen's heart where you can rescue these poor children.' Tara nodded. She wanted to believe everything the old man said, but something in her told her it wasn't right. What that was she couldn't explain.

In the palace the shaman said he wanted to speak to the queen. After awhile there was some space to do that, and the shaman got permission to enter before the queen's throne. Tara went with him. It was like the queen didn't recognize Tara, or this was just another clone. 'Watch me now,' the shaman whispered to Tara.

'Dear queen of all,' the shaman said, 'you probably know me from all the predictions I made for you, and yes, you see it all got into place. I predicted to you long ago that you would conquer the crocodile-king and his priests and that you would use their children's stones to wrought your dominion. I gave this to you.'

Tara didn't know what she heard, but she thought maybe he was trying to hypnotize her or something.

'Queen, the stones of the octopus, the dead ones, coming out when a child dies before it's time, or when the stone gets cut out, then it's not happening by the excellent way of letting them being released in our most sacred project : the child of the lake, for then the stones would be alive to become soul-cloners, and by that mastering time and change. You gave me the dead stones, to give me a better way of communicating with the dead, but honestly, my queen, I want to do a humble request,' the shaman said.

'She thinks I am her clairvoyant,' the shaman whispered to Tara. 'He died, but when she once saw me, she thought he had returned, so I just act like it.' Tara nodded. She knew how dangerous this all was, and she wondered why he didn't tell her this earlier. Maybe he had his reasons. But now they stood here before the huge throne surrounded by the beating and pulsating, almost breathing jewels of the octopus.

'What is it you want, oh clairvoyant,' the queen spoke. 'You know I would give you anything, even if it would be the half of my kingdom.'

'Do you see this woman here before you ?' he asked the queen. 'Do you know who she is ?' The queen shook her head. At the same time the shaman took a weapon. He directed the weapon to Tara and said : 'What if she is an intruder ?' Tara was wondering what the shaman was trying to do. Was he trying to confuse the queen, or was there something else going on, something which Tara couldn't grasp yet ?

Tara knew that the queen on the throne probably didn't have contact with the queen who prisoned her boys, or she was just playing games. But in a sense the queen here looked like a doll, like a very old person. The shaman just wanted to be sure that she didn't remember Tara, or that she just didn't know Tara. 'Hey Tara,' the shaman whispered, 'This clone guards the octopus-jewels, but you can see what her loss is. There is a big price to pay for someone with such riches.' Tara nodded.

'Show me the secret of the crocodile !' the shaman shouted. Suddenly the throne and even the queen started to split up, and the walls around them started to move away. They were steering into a treasure room full of shiny green jewels like bubbles. Tara was amazed. 'How did you do that ?' she asked the shaman. 'Actually this was a hologram,' the shaman said. 'There is a certain code to have access here.'

'But why didn't you do this before ?' Tara said. 'Did you forget about the children you talked about. I thought you knew it, I mean : all the horror happening in the lakes, you know, those damned swimmingpools of the queen.' But suddenly the shaman was gone. A few moments later he came again, having his hands full of crocodile-jewels. 'These ones are dead, do you know ?' he said, 'but they look shiney, right ? I can predict with these. Come away with me.'

When they got to the shaman's house again, Tara was very confused. 'You are really a riddler,' she said, 'and I still do not know if I can really trust you.'

'Tara, listen,' the old man said, 'feel your heart. I'm serious. It's a certain code. The queen was protecting the dead stones of the crocodiles, let's say guarding, because she is madly in fear of these. When they come alive her kingdom is over. Tara, listen. You and I have a job to do. I hope you can follow this, for it's really all a riddle, but you have to trust me. When these stones come alive, she's dead, I'm telling you : she's dead. She was always in fear that someone would discover these dead stones and find a way to make them alive.'

'What is their power ?' Tara asked.

'Well, when they are dead, they don't have power but only some clairvoyant abilities, although not as much as dead octopus stones. But when these ones come alive, these crocodile jewels, then lady octopus can say goodbye, even with all her octopus stones,' the shaman said, while he smiled. The shaman was very excited about the stones.

'Now, look what I will do ...' the shaman said.

'But the children, we need to save the children,' Tara said.

'We cannot save any child from there without doing this,' the shaman said, 'so watch this, what I will do now is ...' And the the shaman took the dead octopus stones, to put them into a sack together with the crocodile stones. He brought them to a kettle, and boiled some water. Then he threw the stones in the kettle, stirred the liquid mass, and mixed it. Then he took a cup, filled it, drank from it and gave it to Tara. Also Tara drank from it. 'You stupid donkey,' Tara said, 'do you really think this will help us ?' But after awhile Tara felt weak, and had to lay down. Strange powers came over her, and she got a vision that she had a strange ancient armour. When she woke up, she told the shaman about the hallucination. 'Oh, then it's working already,' the shaman said. Tara felt like she was very heavy. She tried to rise up, but

she couldn't. She was still very very dizzy. 'Man, what did I eat,' she said. The shaman was smiling.

'Why don't you feel anything ?' she asked the shaman. 'Oh,' the shaman said, 'I am used to drink these sorts of stuff, although I never drank this one. But later the old man also got the same stuff. He got weak, lay down, and got visions. After waking up, he also felt very heavy. 'Oh, you bastard,' Tara shouted, 'I begin to have pains.' But the man didn't answer, like he was struggling for his life. The day after it was a little bit better with them both. Suddenly there was ticking on the door. It was the queen. 'Clairvoyant !' she shouted, 'My sleeping part on the throne said you came to steal crocodile stones instead of asking.'

'Well, I made a request,' the shaman said, 'and then she said that I could have half of her kingdom.'

'Yes, but then you commanded to open the door of the crocodile. Is that true ?' the queen asked.

'I just did my request,' the shaman said.

'My whole kingdom is based on dead crocodile-stone, and it needs to stay dead,' the queen said. 'Show me the stone !' the queen shouted. The shaman went with her and Tara to the kettle, but there was a big bloody piece of meat in it, like a big muscle or giant-eye. Then the queen looked at Tara. 'I know this woman,' she said, 'but let me think.'

'How are my boys ?' Tara asked.

'You won't get them,' the queen said. 'They are almost ready to release their octopus stones, and then they will die.'

'Clairvoyant, where is the stone !' the queen shouted.

'I do not know, it was here,' he said. Then the queen grasped in the kettle, and soon she took a stone out of it, and it was a crocodile stone, but it was still dead. 'Thank the gods it didn't come alive,' the queen said. 'How many of them do you have ?' Then the queen also grasped all the other stones out of the kettle and left.

But the shaman smiled, and said he knew she would come. He went to the sack where he had put them in yesterday, and took the biggest one out of it. 'Still have this one,' he said, 'and see : It's coming alive.' The stone was shining more and more, and also beated a pit, and pulsated. Tara smiled. This was where they were waiting for. 'I had a dream this night,' Tara said. 'I wore the crocodile-jewel on my forehead and I could go to the boys. I could save all the children.' The shaman smiled. 'Then, why not let it happen ?' Together with the stone they went to the palace of the queen. The stone was glowing and became hot. 'Lay me on the walls of the palace,' the stone said. When the shaman stuck the stone to the wall near the gate of the palace the palace suddenly exploded. But from all sides watchers were coming, directing their spears at them, but there was fire coming from the stone destroying them all. In the air they saw the left tunnel hanging, and Tara knew they had to be there. 'Throw me towards the left tunnel,' the stone spoke. The shaman threw the stone, and when it hit the walls of the tunnel the tunnel fell down. There was nothing but fire all over the place, and the fall of the tunnel caused an enormous hole in the ground. There was an empty space there, and through the mist

they could walk inside, where they soon found the missing children. They took them out of their reservoirs and told them about the crocodile stone. Soon there was an army of children. The crocodile stone was flying in front of them like an amazing flame. 'You will from now on carry this flame in your heart,' the floating crocodile stone said, 'and it will protect you. There lives a desired stone in you, activated by an evil queen. It is the octopus jewel, by which you lived underwater. But when my flame activates your stones then it will let you master time and space.'

The kids were all in joy as they felt that the flame was coming in them to touch the bewitched stones in them. Now they felt like their soul got free, multiplied so many times, to make the subtle changes they needed. They now could move, they now could see and hear, and most of all : they could speak.

The Spear with the Two Sharkstones

That's none of your business ! Tara shouted to the man. The man left the chessboard. He didn't want to play Martian Chess with Tara anymore, as she didn't want to tell him her secrets. It was torturing the mind of this man for so long, and that's why he invited or maybe challenged her to do the Martian Chess. But soon she found out that it was a way for him to come closer to her heart. In the game he asked her all kind of questions. He came too close to her heart, and finally she pushed him away. That was the end of the game.

On the other hand Tara was worried about him. He seemed to be very intelligent, someone who would sacrifice himself to have some access. He was a man with a certain disease in his head, and many with that disease committed suicide on a certain age. The man almost reached that age, so Tara felt some sympathy towards him, and some suffering on her side. Or was she the one who would have the ability to help him through ? Tara couldn't resist the tension when the night was falling, and went to the house of the man. He lived alone.

Tara knocked on his door. The man was very friendly. He was glad she returned. 'I won't ask you too much anymore, Tara. I have learned my lesson now,' he said a bit shy. Tara smiled : 'It's okay. I was just a bit of worried about you. I'm glad you still like me. Let's have a drink.' A minute later the man came to the table with some drinks for him and Tara. The man stared at Tara, while she didn't feel so comfortable with that. She tried to break the tension a bit : 'So now you want to dig into my secrets just by staring at me ?' she asked friendly. The man didn't say anything. Suddenly he started to cry. 'Tara,' he said, 'you know about my disease, right ?' Tara nodded friendly. 'Tara,' he said, 'and you also know that I'm almost at the age of the death-fight, right ?' Tara nodded again. 'Well,' the man said, 'They will come, the sharks, to test me if I'm strong enough. If not, I will die by my own hand.' Tara knew these sort of things. It was a disease calling for hallucinations about sharks, and on a certain age the sharks would be defeated or would possess the person. Tara was worried about him. 'Say,' Tara said, 'don't you think it would be a great idea that I will stay with you when you have those fights. I'm a good fighter. I will be close to you, and you can call me whenever you want, but please,

don't ask too many questions, as I cannot handle that. I mean, I only tell my secrets on base of trust, when I'm ready, and not because someone's asking. You always go so deep.' The man was smiling. 'Tara,' he said, 'the fight already began. Can you stay with me this night. I have a room for you.' Tara nodded. She now started to think about how she could help him in that fight.

She always wondered about how such a disease could come into someone's brains. It was a demon's sword. 'Can you tell me something about your disease ?' Tara asked.

'Yes,' the man said, 'I got it when I was three years old, when I fell from a high platform. My head crashed on the ground. Now the wound is calling forth these hallucinations. It's like a helmet of demons.'

Suddenly things around them started to move. In the air they heard someone was murmuring : 'Tara, liar.' Tara took her sword, and they both saw a ghost appearing before them. It was an old spirit with a crimson suit. He had a beard and horns. 'Back off, Tara,' the demon spoke, 'he has the scar, so he is ours. Now we will see if he's ready to die.' But Tara shouted : 'He isn't ready to die, and he will not die, as I fight for him. I can handle those demons.' But then a wind struck Tara and she got almost slammed against the wall. Tara took an arrow, took her bow and shot an arrow at the ghost, but he was just laughing. 'How can you fight something which is spirit and soul by a material arrow or sword,' the demon laughed. 'No one knows the secret of the sharks, and you won't either.'

Then Tara grasped her amulet she once got from Soms, and aimed it's radiation at the ghost-appearance. The demon was screaming, but then he shouted : 'I will be back.' Then he disappeared in a flash. That night the man was having terrible nightmares, and felt himself like a little boy. Tara went to his room to hold his hand. There wasn't any ghost-appearance, and Tara had given him the amulet to keep them at a distance. The man was very gratefull, but now he was in such a worry. 'I feel powers moving across my skin, Tara, moving across my arms. I do not want to cut myself, but the forces are so strong, like I'm fighting against sharks. I do not know their weapons and secrets. They are stronger and bigger than I,' the man said.

'Call for Soms,' Tara said. 'I almost never pray to him, but whenever I'm in life-threats I call for him. He's the memory. He shows up once and for all, but that's enough to live by for eternity. He is strong, stronger than any god, and that's why he's mine.'

'So he isn't a good communicator, but a good fighter ?' the man asked.

'He talks through riddles,' Tara said, 'he's a cryptic.'

That night the two sleep close together. Tara held him in a good grip so that he couldn't hurt himself. That morning the man is full of Soms. It's like he has some secrets now, and all what Tara can do is smile. But she said : 'Don't talk too much about Soms. He doesn't like that.'

But the man is unstoppable, and goes to the city like an evangelist. When he comes home and talks about what happened in the city, Tara gets mad. 'I told you not to tell much about Soms. You just don't listen,' she said.

'Ah, you're just jealous,' the man said. 'With Soms I can defeat the sharks.' Then Tara becomes very silent. The man gives her the amulet back, and thinks he can deal with everything on his own now. That night Tara leaves. She's glad that the man has an idea of Soms now, but she doesn't like the fact that the man sees himself as a disciple of Soms, as Soms isn't too much in that stuff. Soms is an enigma.

The man all of a sudden has a lot of power. All the martians around him are amazed. On the marketsquares he is boasting that he's a gladiator, invincible and immortal. He beats the strongest men into the earth, and defeats the strongest beasts. And when the critical age comes it gets away and he's still alive and well. But he still feels the wound in his head, and it's like it's aching more than ever. He feels powerfull forces giving him such strength, but he feels sick. 'Oh, sickness and pain is the only thing you can expect from Soms,' Tara always tells. As that is the only way to develop yourself, and to create eternal strength. It cuts both ends.

Tara is glad the man feels happy now, and he can help so many others on Mars. But at the same time, she's still worried. And she even doubts Soms, as she sometimes has the feeling that Soms leads them all to the traps. Like he's just some sort of trickster. Tara believes in herself.

One night it's like she's fighting against a shark, and he is looking for her sword, and then he changes into some sort of ghost. 'I told you I would return.' the demon said. 'I do it faster than you.'

'Now wait a minute,' Tara said, 'Why are you here, and why do you need my sword.' But then the demon went away. She realized that these sharks were the guards of the memory, and the files of history. They would copy these files into so many that they could freeze the past. They didn't want to change the past, as it was a riddle in their eyes. They needed the sword of Tara to solve it. Tara knew the shark-priests in their temples. They believed in a creature called Most, and he was the god of repeatance and freezing. They knew that only in the Most a riddle would solve itself, and the path to the Most was repeatance. It was said that Most created the crowds. He created the sand of the deserts and the drops of the oceans. And his goal was to make them all one. That was the secret of the sharkstone she once stole, to put in her sword. She knew that once they would steal it back. If Most would succeed in his plans, then time would stand still, and there wouldn't be a future anymore, only that of domination.

It was like Mars was sinking away in the waves of multitudes, all becoming one. That was the reason why she once stole the stone. She knew of it's dorment dangers. In full revenge she went to the evil temples and their priests and slayed them one by one. Their only interest was the past, not the present, nor the future. The past would have it's own future. Now they had stolen Tara's sword they could solve their riddles. But in one of their temples Tara found the sword, but to her surprise she also found the man she once loved. He was now a shark-priest, as he believed that the sharks had initiated him by the fall and the disease. He had survived and was now worthy to be their highpriest. Most of the ones who survived the disease and the critical age became highpriests of such temples. That was also one of Tara's biggest fears, that he would be one of them. To Tara it was all nothing but a conspiracy, but she couldn't kill the man she once loved. He still wore her amulet. 'Give me the sword back, Andrulian,' Tara said. But the man gave her a spear. The spear had two sharkstones instead of one. 'Why don't you go home to contemplate about this ?' the man said. 'I still follow Soms, and his riddle brought me here.'

Tara took the spear, and could feel the forces of the spear. The man was smiling. 'Your not in the right place here, Andrulian,' Tara said, 'these men here are dangerous. I have slain them one by one, but you I will spare.'

'But Tara,' the man said, 'by Soms I will change this religion and make something good out of it. Don't you think that's great ?' But Tara went away. She didn't want to have anything to do with religion, as Soms hated it. Outside there was lightening and thunder. Later she changed her mind, and wanted to see the man again, but she never saw him again. He was gone. No one knew where he would be. The only memory about him she could hold in her hands was the spear with the two sharkstones.

The Strongest Touch

Yes, it was a prison there, this spooky Icel River. Not many would go there, as tormented ghosts were living there. They had been in prison too long, a prison designed by king Oxtacmar the Fifth. But Tara was on her way to it. It all came down to the secret of this river. This river had been cursed. They called it ghost-prison. It was only the king, his daughter and his servants who came there a lot. No one knew what actually the secret was, but Tara did. She knew about the terrible history of the river.

Tara still wore the amulet of Soms, an amulet which always seemed to come back to her. She took it off, and threw it far into the river. 'That will do,' she thought. At the same time she laughed in herself, as she often didn't belief in magic, but in her sword. To her that was the only thing she could really trust.

An old man sat close to the river. He was fishing. Tara watched him closely. What was he doing here ? Or was he just a king's servant ? Tara didn't serve the king. She would rather die. She was a barbarian, uncivilized, but with a beating heart. She didn't care about rules and laws. She lived by lust, as that was what was making someone real, as the flame of existance. To her lust was the subtile voice of her ancestors, although she didn't belief in family. It was nothing but a cage to her. Oh yes, she also saw lust in the heart of the king and his companions, but it was often stirred up by dominion. She only believed in the dominion of the sword.

To Tara lust needed to come forth from fear. That was a strange thought for someone like Tara from Rhodes, but she was a paradox. And that was why still certain Martians loved her. But how long would that love flow ? It was like a last flame surrounding Tara like a warm blanket.

Tara didn't belief in love, as it was an invention of civilization. The spirits of the river lived under the dominion of king Oxtacmar the Fifth. He believed in the many rituals of marriage to bind them all together as one hopeless bunch of shatters. When it became too close he would do everything to set up a liturgy of divorce, which always began in his own heart. He was the one who could bind together and separate.

As Tara's spiritvoice rose up in her, she watched how the amulet sank to the bottom of the Icel River. It was like she could see right through the waves and the waters. There were strange fishes in this river, also the reason why not many dared to come there. The fishes used to jump out of the waters to grasp passengers, to drag them into slow death. But Tara dived into the waters, and wanted her amulet back. She changed her mind about the way she wanted to deal with the river. She knew about this sacrificial river. Hundreds and hundreds of victims had to be drowned here for some sort of religion. Others believed it was an ancient cult by which millions and millions lost their lives. This was a history the king hopelessly tried to cover up.

On the bottom of the river she found a door, and she could open it to disappear in the ground. Not much did she know about the skeleton-king living here. He was friendly to her, and he gave her her amulet back. 'So this Soms you belief in doesn't have to do anything with the ancient cult,' the skeleton-king said.

'I don't belief in him,' she said. 'We're just partners. I do not belief in prayer, only when I'm in real troubles. But sometimes I rather die than to pray to some sort of god. It is wicked. I belief in the sword.'

The skeleton-king bowed towards her. 'You're an interesting girl,' he said.

And he showed her the places where these ghosts lived, and all his further skeletons. It was like an empire under the river. Tara couldn't belief she was here. It was like something beyond her dreams. The skeleton-king spoke about 'the glitter-world above', meaning the kingdom of Oxtacmar the Fifth. It was a luxury he couldn't grasp. The skeleton-king was the head of the shadow-world here. They still suffered under the heavy hand of history.

Tara felt like she was the bridge between these two worlds. She raised her sword, while the river was overflowing. She felt like she was a wizard, although she hated them most of the time. She believed in the sword. This was the man she wanted to give her sword to, the skeleton-king. The skeleton-king gave her his spear. It was a deal which would change the two worlds. They saw Tara as a messenger of the gods, but she wasn't. She didn't belief in that crap. She saw how these ghosts and skeletons were dominated by so many strange religions, and she wondered what the use of this was. She taught them about Soms, the Once and for All. He showed up once in a lifetime, once for eternity, to never return. You only needed to live by the memory, which was a cryptic one, speaking on so many levels. Soms was the enigma.

That day Tara set them free, as the rivers were overflowing. They could now be sown on the fields of the world above, first to become trees, but later to raise like giants in the wombs of the women. They wanted Tara as their king, but Tara was already gone, far away and unreachable. They only had to live by the memory they had of her. She had touched their hearts already Once and For All, and where could they find a stronger touch ?

Cold as Ice

Tara was on her way to Doxin, the smith of a small village. Tara came to let him attach an orange stone to her sword. This stone she found somewhere in Monkey Jungle in the North of Mars. But when she went into the house of the smith some heavy legs kicked her to the ground all of a sudden. It was like they struck Tara from out of nowhere. Doxin ran to Tara and asked if she was okay. No one saw anything. How could this happen ? But then Tara directed her finger to the ceiling. A heavy gorilla hung there between some balks. Suddenly Tara wondered where her stone was. It was gone. 'Hey,' she shouted to the monkey, 'just asking. Do you know where my orange stone is ?'

The monkey jumped down. Roared and ran out of the house. 'Oh Tara', Doxin said. 'I have also such an orange stone. You get that one, and I will attach it to your sword all for free.'

Tara looked into his eyes. It was such a lovely man. She gave him one of her amulets she wore around her neck. 'Oh Tara, you really don't have to do that,' he said. But Tara wanted to reward him. She wondered how Doxin got the stone and asked him about it. 'Well Tara, you really want to know ?' he said. Long ago the monkeys ruled on Mars. In that same period the Ruchons came to Mars, a race of cyborgs. It came to a gigantic war, one of the biggest wars in Martian History. The Ruchons won this war and took Mars over, while they took the most intelligent races of monkeys to their planet, Mainir. They got probably killed there, but I helped hiding some of the most intelligent monkeys in the depths of Mars. It's a long story, but because they were so gratefull they offered me a precious orange stone of Monkey Jungle, one of the rarest forms.

'No, Doxin,' Tara said, 'you need to tell me more about this. I'm interested.'

Then Doxin sat down and started to tell. He told that the most secrets of that period were in hands of a man still living with those monkeys deep down in the underground of Mars. It was a man called Silpar, who was in the Age of the Monkeys the best swordfighter on Mars. Doxin said that he also had to hide Silpar as the Ruchons wanted to kill him. Since the war Silpar didn't want to live on the surfaces of Mars anymore and stayed in the depths of the underground wilderness of Mars together with the monkeys. Silpar always said that Mars was still more or less dominated by secret satellites of the Ruchons. The more Doxin told about Silpar the more Tara became interested in him. It drove her to the edge of going there herself.

Doxin explained to her where the hidden place in the depths of Mars was. And soon she went there on a horse. It was a long trip. She had to travel for days and days. If Doxin wouldn't have explained how she could come there she would never find the place. It was a deep smokey wilderness, with such a strange smell that it almost drove her insane. If she wouldn't have drunk from some strong stuff Doxin gave to her she wouldn't be able to deal with it. This place was strange, and the air was dangerously charged. No one would be able to live here, unless he had a greater help and some insights in the secrets of this place. Tara remembered all the advices Doxin gave to her. They were like the necessary rituals to survive in a place like this. Suddenly she heard the shrieks of monkeys. A man came closer to her. His hands almost looked like satin. When she saw his eyes she got a knot in her throat. She could

immediately see that this man had been under the lovely care of Doxin. Doxin was such a magical man that it was like everything he touched would change into gold. 'Hello,' the man said friendly, 'I'm Silpar.'

'Yes,' Tara said, a bit hesitating. 'I have heard a lot from you from Doxin.' When the man heard the word Doxin it was like lightening came in his eyes, and they almost everflowed with joy. 'You have been sent by Doxin ?' the man said. 'Then you must be good. Doxin is well, he would never send anyone who could be a harm to us. Welcome, friend.' Silpar took Tara to his hut. It was a dark hut with a lot of dust. 'You never clean it here, right ?' Tara said. 'Well, no, not really,' Silpar said. 'It's the forest, you see.'

'Oh, that's okay,' Tara said, and smeared some of the dust on her hand to smell it, 'It's just I want to know about this odor.' Silpar smiled 'It's only here,' he said. 'This had to be a place safe against the Ruchons. This dust is everywhere in the forest, and it is to protect us. It has a certain smell which can kill any Ruchon coming close.'

'Well, if you have a medicine for Mars, and you still know that satellites of the Ruchons are dominating the surfaces, then why do you keep this stuff here. I mean : spread the news,' Tara said, a bit irritated.

Suddenly the eyes of the man started to change. 'No, no, the stuff has to stay here. This nature will die if we bring it to the surface. Only in this depth the dust with the smell can be produced. If we would bring it to the surface it would turn against us.'

'Then what is it ?' Tara asked, still a bit irritated.

'Why are you doing so bitchy all of a sudden ?' the man asked.

'I'm sorry,' Tara said, 'but I am tired, and it seems I don't get it. It's like the smell is triggering something in me I cannot deal with it.'

'Speak it out, Tara,' Silpar said. 'What is it doing to you.'

'It makes me tired and angry,' Tara said.

'It always starts with this, but if you know the secrets, you will be able to deal with it,' Silpar said.

'I feel strange,' Tara said. 'It's like I want to rip you apart, but I also want to give you a hug.'

'Then hug me,' Silpar said. 'It's not forbidden here.' Tara started to hesitate. 'If you come any closer I will tear you apart.'

'Okay, I hear you speaking,' Silpar said. Some monkeys came inside. It was like they were easing Tara's feelings a bit. 'They will help,' Silpar said. 'It's all about your initiations in these atmospheres.'

Suddenly Tara felt weak. By her last strength she jumped on Silpar and took him by his throat. 'Don't play games with me. I'm not here to mess around or to get sucked in all sort of

unknown things I cannot control. Tell me about this stuff, what it is, or I'll push my arm in your mouth to take your lungs out,' Tara shouted.

'Okay, okay,' Silpar said a bit uneasy. His face had turned a bit blue and red. Tara loosened her grip a bit, and he sat down on his bed. 'Sit down on that chair eh ...'

'Tara, Tara from Rhodes is the name,' Tara said.

'Tara ?' Silpar said 'hmmm That's an interesting name.' Then Tara sat down and Silpar started to tell. 'It's coming from a certain stone, the dust and it's strange smell, as an important part of the immunology of the forest. It's a stone of a certain snake and without this stone this wilderness wouldn't exist and we would be traced down by the Ruchons. We thank our lives to this stone. It is somewhere close to a waterfall and it needs to stay there.' 'What kind of snake is it ?' Tara asked. But Silpar didn't want to tell. In the night she went out of the hut when Silpar was sleeping, and she went into the wilderness to search for the stone. Silpar described the place a bit, so it was easy for her to find the place. Here she saw a large blue stone in the water in front of a small waterfall. The blue stone was almost transparent and it was like it was giving light. As she was staring at the stone a snake came forward from behind the waterfall. Such a beautiful snake Tara never saw before. Then the snake went away again. In a strange joy Tara went to the hut again. In the morning she spoke to Silpar about it, and asked him about the snake. 'It's the snake of the stone,' Silpar said. 'It has created our muscles by which we can produce the dust ourselves to raise the immunity.'

Tara looked at her muscles and then at Silpar's muscles. They had another gleam. It looked like they were softer than hers. 'How do I get your muscles ?' Tara asked. Silpar took his necklace from his neck, where teeth and nails hung. There was also a nail of a cat between them, and he pushed it into Tara's flesh. Blood started to flow, and again Tara felt anger coming over her, and irritation with other strange feelings. It was like she wanted to rip him apart again. 'Now go to the blue stone,' Silpar said, and wrap your body around it.

After awhile Tara returned with a smile on her face. 'I feel much calmer now,' she said. 'Your immunity starts to work,' Silpar said. She was now cold as ice. She didn't feel irritation or anger anymore, and neither did she feel the strange feelings she had before. She could finally rest her head now.

The End

Samdoom

Shuffle

Tara awakened in her cave, down in the South of Mars. She lived here for awhile now, in this place called Maradas. She loved the place with all her passion, but she was here for a mission : to free the children of Samdoom. These children grew up in tight slavery in the worst indian tribe ever existing on Mars : Samdoom. Parents didn't have any mercy on their children, but always donated them to this form of slavery. It was some sort of ritual they had to do in these spheres so that they would stay alive. It was a dark religion : the religion of Samdoom. Actually Samdoom was the name of the Southest place of Mars and it was the name for the many indian tribes there. Tara rode on a giant widow spider across the borders of Maradas to Samdoom. Compared to Samdoom Maradas was a paradise. Tara had armed herself with many spears, and her bow with a quiver full of poison-arrows, and she felt herself comfortable on the silky spin of the giant spider. She was on her way to the central tribe of Samdoom, where priests gave money to the parents selling their children. In rage Tara slid from the spider, and threw a spear through one of the priests. Now it was war. Tara took her sword from behind her back and slayed some other priests, while the parents of the children ran away. 'Climb on the spider,' she said harshly to the children. Quickly she jumped on the spider herself who immediately had to run as warriors of the priests came after them. Tara had three children now on her spider, and one of them fell away. Tara couldn't save this one anymore. The child got pierced by a spear very quickly, as on escape the death penalty rested. This was why many of the children didn't climb on the spider.

Soon Tara was in Maradas again, and she asked the two children to tell their story. They told Tara that horrible sticky animals had been laid against their skins. These animals were more or less sacred to the tribes of Samdoom, as they were called the soul-enslavers. Tara could see the scars these animals would cause. Some places of their skin were different than other places. They also showed Tara some piercings they had in some teeth in the depths of their mouths, piercings which hurted very bad, and which had an enslaving influence on their bodies. They felt like they couldn't control themselves anymore. Then suddenly two men came to Tara's cave. Tara jumped through the air and slayed one of them, but soon others came into the cave as well. They were the indians of the Samdoom tribes, and they came with so many that Tara couldn't do anything anymore. She saw how the two children died in front of her eyes by the spear. They had tied Tara very quickly and they took her back to Samdoom. She had to come before a sort of chief in a deep, dark temple. Tara felt helpless, but suddenly her giant spider came in, and attacked her captors in full rage. 'Nomun, thank you for coming,' Tara shouted. And soon she felt the soft skin on her body setting her free. She saw the cages where the sacred animals were kept. And behind a door she saw a lot of children tied to stakes. These children got probably prepared for the ritual, but Tara set them free very quickly. The children told Tara about the older children, who already became men and women, who had to work deep in the underground. One of the children knew the way to that place, and they all followed the child. Tara gave the children same arrows so that they could fight if they needed to. It was a dark passage underground. Because of Nomun Tara knew they had a chance to survive.

Soon they got to the place where enslaved men and women had to work since they grew older. They had been chained by heavy chains, and Tara could see from their faces they lived in deep sorrows. They had to do heavy work : moving stones. It was a sort of mine in which they had to work. The stones grew on the walls and they had to cut them off. Tara thought it was strange that they didn't see any slave-guards, priests or warriors. It seemed to be a lonely place. One of the children told there had to be a unit by which electricity came from, charging the chains, and by the piercings in the teeth deep in their mouths it kept them enslaved. But soon they saw the small sacred animals all around them. The children were very afraid of

these animals. 'Their skins are hot, Tara. They can burn wounds in us which will hurt for a lifetime,' one of the children shouted. Tara knew she had to stay calm. 'Get behind Nomun,' she said. Tara didn't have any idea how to treat these animals.

Then Tara saw how the sacred animals went to the chained women and men, and how these animals started to eat from their flesh, while they were shrieking. The slaves couldn't do anything, but some of the children began to sting the animals by their arrows. Now the animals really got mad, and jumped on some of the children to eat from their flesh. The flesh didn't really disappear but it was a way to suck the flesh from the inside, especially for body-juices. More and more animals seemed to come, and Tara knew that if they would fight them, it would only get worse. She jumped on the spider, and whispered to the children to do the same. 'Tell me where the unit is,' Tara whispered. One of the children knew where it was. They had to go through some cave-passages first. In the unit they saw all sorts of buttons and lights, but no one was there. Suddenly one of the animals came in and jumped on one of the children. There was nothing they could do as the grip of the animal was too tight, and it would get only tighter if someone would attack it. 'Push the red and the blue buttons,' the child who got attacked was screaming. Tara and the children did immediately what he said. Then some green lights started to move on some screens, and after awhile the child shouted : 'Now push all the yellow buttons.' When they did that a sort of elevator opened in the wall. 'Now step in,' the child shouted, like he was the king. Also the child himself tried to creep to the elevator. 'Where will it lead us to ?' Tara asked. The child didn't say anything. Stood up, and touched a certain button in the elevator. The door got closed and they went to another floor.

The child was bleeding a bit, and Tara didn't know what to do, as every action would only cause a worse action of the animal holding the child in the grip. After awhile the door opened again, and they came in an even larger room full of buttons. The room was full of the small animals, and they sat on the machines playing with the buttons. Tara began to understand that not the indians were the slave-breeders, but the sacred animals had all the might and powers. Like rats they were playing in the machines and watched the screens to see how their marionets moved. Samdoom seemed to be one big puppetshow, and Tara began to feel sorry for the tribes. The sight had struck her brains like everything was frozen. There was one machine free, so Nomun took that one. Even Nomun didn't dare to attack any of these animals. After awhile Nomun learned how to use the machine, and could ride the machine through the room along all the other machines, while Tara and the children still stood somewhere close to the elevator like frozen.

'I know how this machine works,' one of the smaller children said. The child was so young that he could hardly speak and walk. 'One of the animals told me when I was very young.' Then the child walked towards one of the animals and said : 'This one.' And the child caressed the animal without any problems. The child took the animal on it's lap and started to push certain buttons and certain switches. Then smoke started to come from other machines, and some screens were breaking. Lots of animals started to shriek and fell dead from their machines like they had been struck by lightning. A computer-voice spoke as through an intercom : 'This building will terminate itself, as the main-frame has made a fatal error. You have three minutes to leave the building.' Tara grasped the children and went into the elevator. 'In the underground we will be safe,' said a boy, and pushed the lowest button, and a certain button for speed. It was the biggest explosion Samdoom ever had, which they survived in the nick of time. Tara and the children reached the underground, but it was like there had been an earthquake. Tara took the children to Maradas and hoped that they would be safe now.

The End

Walking on Mars

Not many know about the horrors of the South-West of Mars. But of course the Martians who live there know it, and Tara from Rhodes, a lonely warrior. When she came to the South-West of Mars she had already travelled to many other parts of Mars. To her it was a dark place with many dangers, more than any other place she had visited before. The trend in these area's was the slave-implant, and most of all the chest-implant. Surgeons would do these surgeries in which they placed strange devices just around the nipples of the prisoners of war and other sorts of slaves. The devices would trigger all sorts of energies from the prisoner, so that it would be donated to a central energy-bank. By this energy-bank they dominated the souls and the minds of the whole South-West. The South-West didn't have a name, for they just called it South-West, although there were a lot of different camps. Sometimes the South-West would attack other parts of Mars just to have more prisoners for energy-donating. It was more or less a zombification-program to turn as many as possible into their soldiers, the war-gladiators. Tara wanted to know more about this program, and once she visited the head-quarters of the South-West surgery-station. She got invited very friendly. When she started to tell about what she knew they denied everything. They showed her many rooms of surgery and what they did, and they said they didn't know anything about chest-implants. Tara was a bit disappointed. She hoped she would find out about what was probably going on in this area. One day she returned to the surgery-station and this time she had her sword with her. They were still very friendly to her, but again they denied everything she knew.

'Let me show you something,' Tara said, and cut some of her skin to show them a strange device in her chest. 'Oh, but we would never do such a thing,' they said. 'We can even take it out if you wish.' In the night Tara returned. A friend of her had explained how she could enter the station without problems. There wasn't a heavy security here. She was searching through some papers in a certain room her friend told about. Then she started one of the computers to search through their files. After awhile she found something which she could project on a large screen. It was about the chest-implant, but when she read the piece about it she came to the conclusion that they didn't have anything to do with it. The piece showed the harmful influences of the chest-implant, and it showed how the chest-implant had a grow-mechanism to let it grow into the heart to take over the speed of the blood. She went away, but a strange man like a white cyborg stopped her. 'I know what you are looking for, Tara,' the man said. 'You are looking for the central unit, but it isn't here. Your friend had been treated here in the past, but since they have a new leader these chest-implants are forbidden now.'

'How do you know all this ?' Tara asked. Then the man took his white cyborg-helmet off, and she remembered this guy. 'What are you doing here ?' Tara asked. 'I thought you were'

'I have traced you, Tara, forgive me, but I had to do this. You know of our equipment, and yes, you thought I died, but my equipment was stronger. It brought me back to life, by all these grow-mechanisms,' the man said. 'But now, follow me.'

Tara was very glad she found this friend back. It seemed he followed her for such a long time, and now he got her on the right track. He seemed to know a lot more about it.

They went to a camp in the deeper wildernesses of the South-West, where indian surgeons would still do these surgeries underground. The man told Tara that the worst part of the chest-implant would grow into the brains to let them deteriorate more and more, to let them get the quality of pigs. The brains would give them signals to go to the underground at a certain age, and they will end up in a breeding. Tara knew she had all sorts of chest-implants, but her friend could comfort her that these weren't the same. That was kind of a relief for Tara. In her life on Mars she went through so many mad machines in which she got so many implants deep in her body that she didn't know if it was right or wrong anymore. She wondered where the good old Tara was, Tara the slayer, the one who didn't hesitate to use her sword, and who was the best swordfighter of all. It seemed like she got civilized through the years under a strange and unknown pressure, and she hated it. Her friend explained to her that one of the worst units of the implant was the part who grew into the brains to create a certain energy-unit called 'unit zero'. It would completely take over the motoric part of the brain controlling and dominating the muscles, and it would do that after a series of epilepsy-like and paralysis-like experiences. The codes of the muscles would be erased into the zero, and would trigger a completely new rythm of stimuli to which the muscles would respond. But they knew where it would finally lead the ones having such an implant : to the breeding underground. And Tara's friend knew exactly where this breeding was. In the distance they heard strange drums. They also saw strange dancers on their way. They wondered what was going on here. Then all of a sudden Tara's friend remembered something. The motoric part of the brain would be attached to the soundpart of the brain by the implant as in a thin ray of energy, and for ninety percent the brain would work by sounds, so that those who had the implant would be more or less soundslaves, slaves to rythms, slaves to music and dance. Tara's friend told her that if he would get a hold on such an implant he would reduce the ninety percent sound-dependency to twenty percent at first. He would give five percent to smell, five percent to vision, twenty to breath, and the rest which is fifty percent he would give to feeling.

It was like heaven was on their side, as they found the main unit in a forest deep underground, and there were no any guards. The wilderness was full of exotic unknown snakes and other predators. It was like an open computer and Tara's friend immediately started to work. He could insert the new codes, and this time he knew so many slaves would get their freedom back. It was like the old heritage of Mars finally found a way to get it right.

The End

The Jewel of Memory

Tara was on her way to the realm where a warlock would live. She had to travel a lot through the snow on the mountain. It was a high place, one of the highest place on Mars, somewhere in the South. The warlock could answer some of the questions she had, but when she came there she found him killed. A strange bird flew away when she entered his room and saw him there, bleeding. It seemed the sorcerer had many enemies, and this time he got killed just before Tara arrived. Tara looked around to see if she could find any traces. Later on a barbarian man entered the room. It was a silent man, and he seemed to be the guard of the warlock. The warlock was already very old and in his life he had made a lot of enemies because of his sorcery. He was a good and wise man who saved many, many from the aristocratic claws.

'Stay with me Tara,' the barbarian guard said. 'The only place I have is this castle, and you can live her too.' The two developed a deep relationship in a short time, and they could learn a lot from each other. Outside it still snowed. The barbarian guard poured some strong drink into Tara's cup, and enjoyed her presence since his old master had been gone. He missed him very much, and he couldn't deal with the pain of it. Tara helped him through.

Deep in the night the barbarian guard challenged Tara to do chess with him, so that they could distract themselves a bit from everything. A fire was burning in the hearth. It was a cold night. Tara looked him deep into the eyes while she was moving a pawn. 'Say, what are your plans for life ?' she suddenly asked.

'Now my master is gone I do not know,' the barbarian guard asked. 'Why not traveling with me ?' Tara asked. But the man wanted to stay in the castle. Suddenly some birds came in, birds of prey. They seemed to be from the old master. One of them made a lot of noise. The barbarian guard could understand the message. 'The bird is telling us that the ones who killed my master are robbers. The birds have traced them to the place they live underground. Shall we go there ?'

Tara nodded. To her that was better than playing chess. She took a sword, and soon they both sat on the backs of some giant birds of the old master. The barbarian guard had his spear with him, and when they got to the place of robbers it soon came to a fight. 'Why did you kill my master ?' the barbarian guard roared. 'I expected aristocrats would be the killers, not robbers, as my old master helped many robbers to stay alive.'

Soon the chief of the robbers came from the dark caves, raised his old hands and spoke : 'Cursed is that Lemeniates, as he has ruined our magic. We were the aristocrats from a long period ago, but thanks to your master we had to live like swines in these places.'

Then Tara and the barbarian guard knew that they were still aristocrats at heart. In short time there was blood all over the place, as they killed many of them while others fled. They knew it was war now. Tara showed the barbarian guard how passionate she was as a warrior. 'You are definitely skilled,' the barbarian guard said. 'Well, you yourself may be here also,' Tara said. Deeper in the caves they found some old aristocratic shields, and old cuirasses, but they

also found an old man in bed. 'Forgive them what they did to your master,' the old man said. 'They do not know what they are doing. They have been booted out of the higher layers of the royals without any mercy.'

'Who are you ?' Tara asked.

'I'm the old king of Lakshuro,' the man said. 'These ones were my servants, but we all have been banned to the underground.'

'Why would my old master be to blame ?' the barbarian guard asked.

'He prophesied to me that my kingdom would fall,' the old man said. 'But he is not to blame. I should have listened to him and go away myself. My years were over. And actually to live the wild life is better than being king of idiots.'

Then two robbers stood in the opening of the cave. 'Father, we' but further they couldn't say anything, as the old man made some movements with his hand. 'They are not to blame,' he told his sons. 'I should have listened to the prophets, and go to the wilderness myself, but now they did it the rough way.'

Tara came closer to the old man. 'We will let anyone pay who were responsible for the death of master Lemeniates. You cannot stop us from pay-back time.' Then without any mercy she slayed the two robbers in a flash of the eye. 'Do what you think is right,' the old man said. 'I know my sons were guilty, but I asked you for forgiveness as great harm was done unto them.'

'If you want, old man, you can live with us in my master's castle,' the barbarian guard said.

'No,' the old man said. 'I will die soon, but I will give you the scepter of my old kingdom. I wish you will destroy the ones taking the kingdom of Lakshuro.'

'Don't worry about that, old man,' Tara said. Then the old man took the scepter from below his bed and gave it to the barbarian guard.

'Deep in my heart I knew my sons had to die for what they did to your master, but those who made them like this are also to blame,' the old man said.

'Come,' Tara said. 'We need to leave.'

Within a short time they got back to the castle, and they played chess again. They both remembered the request of the old man, but in a sense they knew they had to let it be. The old man didn't listen to the prophesy when he was younger, and now he had to bear the consequences. The prophesy would take care of itself. The barbarian guard knew this prophesy, and he also knew that the present order of the Lakshuro kingdom would also fall.

The barbarian guard took the book of his master's prophesy out of a cupboard and went through the pages. He was reading loud : 'After my death a woman will come to the castle through the snow. My guard will take this woman in, and he will love her.'

'What else is written about it ?' Tara asked. The barbarian guard went further through the pages. 'My guard will give the woman some of the tamed wolves in the underground below the castle.'

The barbarian guard looked at Tara, and said : 'Come with me.' He led Tara to an elevator which went downwards, and in the underground there was a large open space with wolves. 'Choose three of them,' he said to Tara. They stayed with the wolves for several days and after these days Tara knew which ones were the closest to her. They were friendly to Tara, and would be a good help in the fight. They brought the three animals to the castle, where they could live awhile in Tara's big room.

One night the barbarian guard and Tara lay in front of the hearth on a large bearskin. The barbarian guard was still reading in the book of his master's prophecies. Soon Tara lay in his arms and tried to distract him from the prophecies. 'Isn't it time you will start your own life ?' she asked the barbarian guard.

'Yes, I think you are right. I need to let go of everything,' he said. Tara looked him deep in the eyes. 'He will not return and you must go on,' she said. 'Aren't you afraid you will misinterpret some of his prophecies. You almost read in it day and night since awhile.'

'I guess it's holy for me, Tara,' he said.

'And this scares me so much,' Tara said. 'I think it's dangerous when you have that attitude. Why can't you just read it as a story instead of letting it have such an impact on you.'

The barbarian looked into her eyes, and then nodded slowly. 'I think you are a wise woman, and I know I need to look for my own wisdom instead of always building on others.'

'You have fire in your eyes, do you know that ?' Tara said.

'And what does that mean ?' the barbarian asked.

'That you are passionate, which is a mix of anger and pain, such a strong lust for the deeper things. It can trick you, so be on your guard. Always be careful, in the passion of fear. That is your protection,' Tara answered.

'Do I need to be afraid of you ?' the barbarian asked.

'I am afraid,' Tara said. 'Afraid of the fire of passion, afraid that it will lead us astray, afraid that we can't control it any longer. You are such a good, good friend, but I never want to be dependant again. We have to live on our own.'

'But we live on our own,' the barbarian said. 'We have our own rooms. Although this is our place together where we come sometimes.'

'I'm more interested to know who of us is stronger,' Tara said when she smiled. 'There are so many things in which we can test and train our strength It's a sort of competition, like chess.'

Then the barbarian grasped Tara in a tight grip. 'Okay, try to get out of this grip.' Tara smiled, made some movements and freed herself while kicking him hard in his stomach. He rolled in speed to the wall, and then he said : 'I already gave up on you. You're not my type. You're way to strong for me. I need someone like a small lamb.'

'Oh, come on, you can beat me at other things,' Tara said. 'You have won with chess a couple of times.' Again the barbarian tried to grasp Tara but this time she grasped him and took him in such a tight grip that he almost couldn't breath anymore. 'Okay, peace, Tara,' he said.

'No, I won't let you go this time,' Tara said. 'You now know there isn't any way to mess with me.'

'I know,' the barbarian said with a small voice. It was like he was in the grip of a giant python. 'Want to play some chess ?' he tried.

He didn't like that she was stronger than him. He was stronger than most of the Martian men, and that was his pride, although it was a sweet man with a good heart. Tara was one of a kind so he could finally come over it. Maybe one time he would be able to beat her, both in chess and wrestling.

Their relationship was like a deep brother and sister relationship, and in a strange sense it never got deeper. They satisfied each other in other ways. When the wolves grew up it was for Tara time to go. She wouldn't feel comfortable if she would live here all her life, and so she left the castle with the wolves, and they would remind her of one of the most precious period in her life. It was like a jewel in her memory.

The End

The Insects

with the Many Heads

Tara heard a woman singing in the distance. When the woman came closer, it appeared to be only a head. Tara remembered this machine, and was in a shock. Suddenly she saw all the other heads. It was the Machine of Democracy. 'Tara,' the woman said. 'We have returned, as we want to be a part of you, and we want to lead you.'

'Go away,' Tara shouted, as she didn't want to have anything to do with this insane machine. After she had defeated Sharla the Head Hunter she didn't want to have anything but rest. But the machine was back, and she knew this was one of the creatures of Sharla the Head Hunter,

maybe the last part of her army. Tara knew she had to defeat this machine in order to come any further. Her friends had been enslaved by this machine, and they wanted her to believe that there was no escape from it. According to them she was doomed to sink deeper into it. 'Never,' Tara thought.

'But we want you and love you,' the woman's head spoke.

'Who are you?' Tara asked harshly. 'I do not know you.'

'I am the woman who represents this machine,' the woman's head said. 'I am the machine, and all the other heads are my slaves, or if you would like to say: other parts of me.' Tara was in a shock. The sight was striking her like nothing else. Suddenly a woman stood before her while she was leaning to her horse. The woman looked like a ghost, and also her horse. 'Yes, that's me,' the head spoke. 'It's my ghost living in the depths of the arena of the machine. I am the master of it.'

'So you let all the other ghosts of the machine fight for you?' Tara asked.

'Yes, oh yes,' the woman said, and then she started to sing again. Tara knew that if she would fight the machine the heads and ghosts would split up and grow in number, so that wasn't an option. More horses seemed to come, and it started to look like a horse lottery. The woman was dealing in slaves. She had a strange amulet around her neck, so strange that Tara just had to grasp it. Then Tara ran away with it. 'I bet this has something to do with it,' Tara said to herself. It was like the woman stood frozen now. Tara put the horse chainlet around her neck, and suddenly she found herself singing. It was strange, for all the horses started to follow her. 'I am lonely,' someone started. Bodies seemed to come out of the heads, while the heads got torn away like they were masks. The bodies stretched themselves out and screamed. The woman still stood there like frozen. 'Run away,' Tara shouted to the bodies, 'or she will bewitch you again.' The bodies jumped and climbed on the horses and soon they all vanished in the sky. The sky got dark and clouded, and it started to rain. 'Run, Tara,' someone shouted. There was but one horse left. Tara climbed on the horse and also vanished into the sky.

She came in a room surrounded by billions of faces all in the distance. It was like they were shooting at her. They came closer and closer while many faces started to fade away. And the closer these faces came the more it looked like they had bodies as well. It looked like another machine. Soon she had been surrounded by a few women. 'You have now reached the center of the machine,' the women said. They took their swords and a fight started. 'The one who wins will be the master of the arena,' the women said. 'Since our leader has fallen, a new

master has to rise.’ Tara also took her sword, and slayed the women one by one, while more women seemed to appear. Tara knew that fighting them would only make it worse. She decided to just take some jewelry from the women. Tara knew how to do that as she was a skilled thief. From some she stole some rings, and from others some bracelets, and then she left, while the women stood there like frozen. ‘Don’t let her escape with the treasures of the horses,’ someone whispered. Tara was on her horse already and reached out to the distance. She saw a huge sword appearing in the sky, and she followed it to the place it was directing to. Here she found a huge altar. ‘Come,’ a voice said, ‘throw your treasures in the fire, as you have defeated the women of the machine.’

‘Who are you?’ Tara asked. A black woman came from behind the altar, and begged her for some jewelry. ‘I won’t give it to you, as I’m sure you want to be the master of the arena,’ Tara said. Then a fight started in which Tara didn’t dare to use her sword, as then the woman would split into more. It became a wrestling in which the black woman tried to take Tara’s jewelry away. The woman wore a ring and some chainlets, and Tara could take these, after which she went to her horse and rode away. She knew this jewelry had to do with the mechanism of the machine. She came to a hill where a lot of ghost-women lay down. Another fight started, in which Tara only wrestled, while she tried to take their jewelry. Again she succeeded, and finally she came in a city in the middle of the fields she was on. It was a small city, and it was full of ghosts. They were all talking about a certain horse stone they were guarding. The stone would be somewhere in a restaurant or shop. And some living guns would protect it. Strange radiation would come from the stone to project faces everywhere. It had some sort of pump by which it could pump up the faces so that they would become heads, and even bodies. But deep within the stone there would be an even more important stone, which was the fly stone. This stone would take care that the bodies would be formed and moving. This stone was like the transformer of it all, producing a strange sort of fire and a strange sort of fluid. Only by the fire and the fluid bodies were able to live. When Tara told them about her jewelry they told her that deep within the jewelry there were these fly stones. Tara smiled. It was for her important to move, so that she could escape, but to be dependant on such jewelry gave also a strange feeling. She now knew why the women couldn’t move anymore since they lost their jewelry, but the feeling that she had to guard the jewelry for the rest of her life made her almost insane. ‘Where is that stone?’ Tara shouted, ‘as I’m going to cut it off it’s place.’ The ghosts started to shiver, and showed her the place where it was. It wasn’t in a restaurant and neither in a shop like they told, but it was in the depths of a cellar, and Tara had to go downstairs very deep. And there weren’t any living guns. When Tara saw the stone she took her sword and cut it from it’s standard. ‘I don’t believe stones should have such powers,’ Tara said. ‘I don’t want to be a slave of a stone.’ From the hole fluids started to stream, and also a strange fire came forward with a lot of smoke. ‘Look, what a well we have,’ Tara said. ‘It will spread into the air to be a blessing for everyone. Stones only make slaves and masters, and they block and seal these abundant wells.’

‘She has broken the seventh seal,’ the ghosts whispered to each other.

‘What?’ Tara said.

‘You broke the seventh seal,’ one of the ghosts said. ‘This horse stone with the flystone inside blocked the well of drunkenness, sleep and oblivion for such a long time, so that everyone had to work hard for every drip. We were all walking with heavy chains because of this.’ Then the ghost could stretch itself and vanished. Also the other ghosts stretched themselves and vanished. When Tara came outside all the ghosts of the city were very glad. ‘She broke the seventh seal,’ they said in joy. Streams of sleep and sweet drunkenness seemed to come over the small city, and brought forth a fog of oblivion. But Tara didn’t know if it was such a good idea to break such a seal. She didn’t realize what she had done. And the stream also wanted to push her down. Well, a bit of joy in life, a bit of rest and a bit of peace can’t do any harm, but she saw more and more streams rising up into the air like a ghost-army. All these ghosts were drunk, sleepy and most of all ignorant, like they had lost their minds. It was such an insane sight. Tara climbed on her horse and rode away as fast as she could. She was heading for the morning, as the night seemed to take everything over in such a speed. After awhile she reached the deserts, and the only memory she had in her hands were the treasures of the strange stones, like a broken seal.

Three drunk men were sitting at a table in front of the deserts, while they were doing some sort of cardgame. ‘You want to play with us?’ the men asked. But Tara had enough of games. They showed her some cards, and it seemed Tara didn’t know this game. Suddenly she was in a shock as she saw also her own face on one of the cards. ‘Where did you get that from?’ she asked. ‘Well, all those who come out of the fields are part of the game,’ the men said. ‘So be glad you have survived the fields,’ the men said. But then the deserts all of a sudden started to burn, and the men changed into skeletons. Tara grasped her horse by its neck and left the place as soon as possible along the borders of the desert. After awhile she came to a forest, and she was still afraid of witchcraft. She took all the jewelry she had, dug a hole somewhere in the ground, and took care that the jewelry would disappear there. She knew she had to be free, not holding on to the enslaving forces of this wicked jewelry. She came to a small lake where she bathed, between the flowers and herbs of the forest, and a new day was luring her. She heard the birds singing in the distance, and she tried to forget about the strange machine. A woman came closer to her, and also slid into the lake. Soon the woman turned into a giant snake, and a fight started. ‘Why do you think you can escape the night,’ the snake whispered. ‘You belong to the night.’ Tara took her sword and slayed the snake. She was glad the snake didn’t multiply before her eyes. But she knew she had to get out of the lake soon. She took her horse again, and went deeper into the jungle. In the depths of the jungle there was an open place where she encountered some wild horses. Because her own horse was rather tamed and because it still reminded her of the machine she took one of the wild horses, and the other wild horses started to run with her also. She hoped to be finally free of this wicked place now. The horses went faster and faster and finally she had to jump off. She rolled through the sand, and then from a hill, while a rock finally stopped her. How long she lay there without consciousness she didn’t know but finally she stood up and went to the first village on her path.

The people there were very friendly and hospital to her. She didn’t expect any troubles here. She got a good glass of beer and some milk before sleeping. In the middle of the night she

woke up from howling wolves. She heard some knocking on the door. It was the son of the people of the house she had a room. The boy said he couldn't sleep. He had to think about her so much. Tara hugged him. 'What is wrong, boy?' Suddenly he started to cry. 'I don't know, but you remind me of something,' he said.

'Do you want to talk about it?' Tara asked. Then the boy told his story. He was once with a lot of other boys in the jungle and they played like they were indians. They tied him to a tree and left. In the night he had still been tied to the tree, while the boys hadn't returned. He heard wolves howling and became very afraid. Then he heard some leaves moving close to him, and an indian girl stood before him. She was shocked and untied him. She took him to her hut where she made some food for him. After a few days he went to home again, but he couldn't get her out of his mind, so he returned to her hut, but the hut wasn't there anymore and neither the girl.

'I'm sorry,' Tara said. 'That had to be really tough.'

'Yes,' the boy said. 'But I didn't tell you the worst part yet. I went there more often, until some of the boys found out, and again they tied me to a tree and left again. Again I stood there at the tree, but this time it took days before someone found me. Fortunately it had rained a lot or I would have died because of thirst but I was very hungry. Indian girls had found me, but this time they weren't nice. The girl I knew wasn't there. These were other indians. They mocked me and danced around me, and started to hurt me. They took me to a hut, while I was still tied, and they kept me in this hut for months and months, until a woman found me and set me free. I would never forget this woman, and she looked so much like you, but she died a few months later.'

'Oh, I am so sorry,' Tara said, and hugged him again. 'How did she die?'

'It was some sort of disease,' the boy said.

'Shall we go there together, to the hut of the indian girls?' Tara asked. The boy looked her deep in the eyes. 'Do you really want to do that?'

'Yes,' Tara said, 'as it seems you have some trauma from their party. So let's make it different now.'

The next day they went to the hut together. Still indian girls lived here, but they were a lot older. ‘Oops, there is that boy,’ one of them said. ‘He has his sister or mother with him.’

‘No, I am his aunt,’ Tara said, ‘or just friend.’

‘Oh, you are his girlfriend ?’ another one asked.

‘Whatever you like,’ Tara said, and then she knocked one of them to the ground. Another one took her spear, but Tara grasped it away. ‘Not so fast, lady,’ Tara said. But then Tara couldn’t speak anymore all of a sudden. One of the indian girls had a big hairy spider in her hands and caressed it. ‘Be careful,’ she said to the boy, ‘if this one spits it’s venom on us, we’re dead.’

‘No, not dead, zombificated,’ the girl smiled. ‘This one doesn’t kill, but enslaves for live.’

Slowly Tara moved her hand to her sword. But then all of a sudden the spider spat in the eye of the boy while the boy started to shriek. In one moment Tara beheaded the girl with the spider and pierced the spider. ‘These ones are head hunters and cannibals,’ Tara said, and then she beheaded the other girls. ‘We have a few minutes,’ Tara said. ‘If I do not suck the venom out of eye you will die.’ The boy was still shrieking, and Tara pushed him to the ground to suck the venom out of his eye. She also took a sting out of his eye. Tara knew how dangerous these exotic spiders could be. Then she spat the venom out on the ground. ‘That will heal,’ she said. ‘Now tell me, were these all the girls you encountered awhile ago ?’

‘Yes,’ the boy said, ‘but I wonder where the friendly girl lives.’

‘Oh, maybe they have killed her,’ Tara said. She could feel how dangerous this jungle was. It smelled like death. The boy bowed his head. Then he hugged Tara and cried. ‘I’m so glad my heart can finally heal now.’

Together they walked home. Then Tara talked to the boy about the machine with the many heads. The boy told her that in the jungle there lived spiders with many heads, and also other

insects like flies. He said that the hunters of his village often went to the jungle to hunt them, as it is very good food. 'My father even sells the meat,' the boy said.

That evening Tara ate from the meat of several slayed insects of many heads, and she liked it very much. She decided to stay in the village for awhile, not only to help the boy through his problems, but also to eat the delicious meat no other jungle seemed to have.

The Ten Princes

of Zkerwat

It happened on a market. Tara got in a fight with one of the ten princes of Zkerwat. These princes were the ones everyone had to go to once in awhile to be responsible for everything they did. They had to tell all their secrets to the princes, and then the princes would mock them and laugh at them to bring them down. Even if someone did the greatest things and had the best jobs, the princes would mock them. This was why the people of Zkerwat always lived in deep shame. Nothing was ever good enough for the princes as they would bring everything down. This was why often people went to the princes' court in shivers. Tara couldn't stand the way the princes were acting towards the people, so when she saw one of them on the market she took her sword and challenged him. The prince laughed at Tara. He didn't want to fight against her, so first he sent some of his guards. But when Tara brought them down so easily the prince finally got mad and turned himself against her. 'What are you doing here in Zkerwat ?' the prince asked.

'I've come for you and your brothers,' Tara said. She knew one of these princes had the key to a part of the castle, a secret part, in which their father, the old king, lived with his harem. The king lived more or less isolated, and gave all his authority to his sons, although he had told them how to behave to the people. The king always seemed to have big parties in his part of the castle. Tara knew that the king would never give the people what they were worth as it was all a big conspiracy. When Tara killed the first prince she searched through his clothes for the key, but he wasn't the one having the key.

When the other nine princes heard their brother had been killed they decided to send one of their greyhounds to Tara. But Tara slayed the dog without problems. Then the second prince

came to Tara. He showed her the key. 'Is this what you are looking for ?' Then he threw the key into the river. Tara slayed him in full rage, and went to the castle. The other eight brothers suddenly were very friendly, but Tara knew it was a trick. She threw a net over them and she dragged it to the river. 'You go to find the key,' she said, and then she threw the net with the eight princes into the river. It was the same place where the second prince had thrown the key. After a minute she took the net out of the water, but no one had the key. 'Listen,' Tara said. 'No games now. When you won't take the key out of the water the next minute, I will throw you in again for five minutes.'

Fortunately the second time the princes took it out of the water and gave it to Tara. First she let them get locked up in some cages and then she went to the castle again. Not much later she stood in the part where the king lived with his harem. Predators stared at Tara, and also the king and his women. They all seemed upset. Tara took her sword and slayed those who came against her. The king bowed his head, and also some of the women. 'How dare you,' Tara said, 'you use your sons to treat the inhabitants of Zkerwat so bad. Two of them I have killed and the rest is in cages. Now I warn you, old men : Your days of fun are over.' Then she grasped him by his neck and took him out of the castle. She also let him get locked up in a cage, and some of the women got free, as Tara knew they had been forced to do what they did. They were merely prisoners and slaves of the king.

That day Tara crowned a new king, and he would do it well, as he had already done great things for the sake of Zkerwat.

The Python

Riders

Tara moved along a dusty road. The sand was burning under her feet. A man with a big car wanted to pick her up, but Tara was not in the mood for hitchhiking. The man cursed and drove further. If he would stay any longer Tara would probably cut off his head. She hated guys with hidden intentions. Behind their smiling and friendly faces there was often a dark world. Tara knew those types of guys. Obviously the man had drunk too much. But then in the distance she saw him returning, he jumped out of the car ran to her with a lasso. 'Am I a cow or something ?' Tara asked smiling. When she suddenly saw a big gun she didn't hesitate one moment, grasped her sword and beheaded him. Blood burst forth from the big body, and got even spouted at Tara. She wiped it away and smiled. 'Bastard,' she whispered. She took

the man's gun and his lasso, and she found out he had quite a bit of money in his pockets, so she could also use that. Then she walked slowly towards his car.

She could use his car. It was hot inside. She was still barefooted, and when she touched the accelerator pedal she almost got burnt. It didn't take long to get to a small desert village. Tara stepped out at the petrol station and bought some drinks and icecreams. The man had a small refrigerator in his car. Then she drove further into the village. She was looking for an old friend, Meridum. She remembered where he lived. Soon she was with him drinking some beer. He offered her a room to get some sleep.

In the middle of the night Tara heard some sounds. She put on a silk coat, and walked towards the window. She saw two bats, but also the head of a snake, a python. She sighed, went back to her bed, and fell asleep again. In the morning she was with Meridum at breakfast. She smiled at him. He smiled back. 'You remember the old days ?' she asked. Meridum nodded.

'We were so in love,' Tara said. 'What has become of us ?'

'Nothing,' Meridum said. 'We kind of went our own ways.'

'Yes, we are individuals now,' Tara said. 'I could fall in love with you again when I look into your eyes.'

'Well,' Meridum said. 'Love is good, but I have some better ideas.'

'I'm very interested,' Tara said. She knew she would never give herself away again, but she just had to visit this old respectful friend. Once in awhile it couldn't do any harm. He was just too creative to get stuck somewhere.

Meridum smiled. He looked into Tara's eyes almost teasing her. 'Yes, I have some ideas, but am I willing to tell ?'

'Oh please,' Tara said. 'I just came to watch your virtues, your talents, I'm sure you have found something new. You're still an inventor, I know, as it is your eternal heart.'

'Yes,' Meridum said smiling. 'That's true. You know me.'

'Okay, so what are you waiting for ?' Tara said almost commanding.

'Yes, officer,' Meridum said. He slowly stood up, walked towards a huge cupboard and took a book out of it. He almost smashed the book on the table, as it was a huge book, very heavy. There were golden locks on both sides, and he easily opened two of them so that he could turn the pages.

'What is it,' Tara asked, almost dying of curiosity. 'You kill me by your mysterious behaviour.'

'It is a book of ... pythons,' Meridum said 'Well, actually python riders.'

'Oh, I can't read this language,' Tara said.

‘It’s an indian native language,’ Meridum said.

Then again he went to the cupboard and took a pack of cards. He smashed it on the table.

‘Let’s play,’ he said.

Tara watched the cards of beautiful indians. They all had their professions, like they were living in a hidden empire, although they were wild. Meridum looked deep into the eyes of Tara. ‘Turn the cards around, Tara,’ Meridum said. On the backs of the cards there were all sorts of aliens, like cartoon characters, like a sweet game.

‘Oh, I know these ones from childhood,’ Tara said.

‘You’re kidding me,’ Meridum said. ‘You had a savage childhood.’

‘No, in dreams I mean,’ Tara said. She threw the cards she had in her hands away and ran upstairs to her room. Meridum followed her. ‘What’s wrong, Tara ?’ he asked.

‘Well I do not want to be reminded of my past, especially not my childhood,’ Tara said. ‘It seems they still follow me.’

‘But aren’t you surprised that these cards are exactly like in your dreams ?’ Meridum asked.

‘No,’ Tara said. ‘I hate it. Now go away or I will become hysterical.’

Meridum knew she was serious now, and when she was in such a mood he better be far away from her, so he escaped from the house. After a few hours Tara came to her senses again. She started to search through the house. Meridum came back in the middle of the night. Tara was already in bed. ‘Can I talk to you ?’ he whispered.

Tara’s eyes were spitting fire. ‘I told you about those dreams long ago, about how these creatures visited me for help, and how I couldn’t help them. It was traumatic, so why did you have the need to draw them, making cards of them and tease me with it ? I have feelings, emotions, so why are you playing with them ? Why aren’t you just clear about it. This is so obscure,’ Tara said.

Meridum was grinning. Suddenly Tara dived on him, and a horrible wrestling started. Soon Meridum was in the grip of her, like in a deadly grip of a python.

‘You misunderstand me,’ Meridum said. ‘Can’t you see I just try to help you overcome these childhood dreams ? I know these were nightmares, but I’m your mate in this.’

‘It’s too fragile,’ Tara screamed. ‘I have trusted you, told you about the soft places in my heart, the treasures of tears, my inner loneliness and hopelessness, and you just throw it on table as a cardgame. How could you ?’

‘I wanted to heal you,’ Meridum said.

Suddenly Tara bit him in his cheek, while blood was flowing forth from the wound. ‘See what you are doing ?’ Tara screamed.

‘They Are python riders,’ Meridum said. He felt weak all of a sudden.

‘I have dreamt of them too, Tara. They are free now ...’

‘What do you say ?’ Tara asked.

Suddenly Meridum fainted. After a few hours he woke up in Tara’s arms.

‘I understand you now. But you are in the lion’s den,’ Tara said. ‘Don’t play with me. So you say you have dreamt of them as well.’

Meridum nodded, while he was still very weak. ‘They ride on pythons, they ride on the roofs, on the tops, they ride in the air.’

‘To do what ?’ Tara asked.

‘To help us,’ he said.

‘I still do not get you,’ Tara said.

Meridum turned away from her, stood up. ‘You’re still the same,’ he said. ‘Dangerous, very dangerous.’ Then he left.

The next morning they saw each other again for breakfast. Tara stared at him. Meridum didn’t say anything.

‘I’m leaving, Meridum,’ Tara said. ‘I don’t want to bring you in troubles. And I don’t want you to bring me in troubles.’

Then she stood up, took her car and left. She was in a bad mood. Everything had triggered something in her, something she couldn’t control. She tried to forget about everything again.

It was hot outside, the roads were dusty. After a few hours Tara stepped out of the car, barefooted, while the ground was almost burning her. The mud was almost hard and hotter than ever. Then she sat down, and later she laid herself down while the sun was burning her. Suddenly she had been surrounded by snakes. The snakes were spitting strange venoms on her body, but didn’t bite her. She took her knife to slay them and wiped the venom away by some leaves. A man stood in front of her with a rifle. He saw the dead snakes. ‘Yes, many dangerous snakes here,’ he said. ‘They are called the spitters.’

‘Oh, I know, I saw them doing that,’ Tara said.

‘Well,’ the man said, ‘you just woke up. You are very lucky. The venom could have killed you, but I guess then it brought only hallucinations to you.’

Tara realized she had just dreamt everything because of these spitting snakes. She didn’t have a car, and she didn’t know a Meridum. It was just a tale displaying in her head. It was actually the man who had shot the snakes and he actually saved her life. He had a big car, a so called ‘python rider’, especially made for the deserts. He gave her a hand, and brought her up, and

then to his car. In his car she fell asleep again, while the man took care he brought her out of the danger zone.

The End

The Monkey

She was like the most beautiful doll in his eyes. Tara's father was fond of her. Well, actually he wasn't her real father, but he once saved her from death. In his eyes she was the best, his masterpiece. He raised her after the fall. He made her. He was a white-bearded sorcerer-like man, a kingly one if it came to that, living high in the mountains. Tara went there as much as she could. She would never forget this man she called her father.

He was a dark man. He kept souls in bottles to make ghosts of them. He was a sinister man, but Tara loved him. She could understand him very well, as they were both against the system. The system on Mars was cruel in their eyes.

Petrilium was his name. The man was tall and old, but still full of wicked ideas. He had trained Tara in how she could use pythons. Pythons were potentially dangerous forces on Mars, so if Tara wouldn't learn how to control them better, they would take her over one day. Petrilium taught her all the tricks to tame them, and he gave her instructions on how to ride them. For this purpose he showed her the biggest sorts of pythons on Mars. He kept them locked up in certain aquaria. Tara was amazed to see such large ones. She had never seen them before. Petrilium bred them here.

Petrilium was a pythonfarmer, a virtuous one so to speak. He also bred flying pythons of the largest sorts by which he could reach other planets in a flash. Petrilium controlled the lightning and thunder on Mars, and he could do that because he knew the many pythonian secrets. Petrilium was a mysterious man often misunderstood. That was why he started to live far away in the mountains. He had some slaves, but they seemed to be well-willing, as Petrilium cared for them very good. They had a lot of money, and bathed in riches. Further they had a lot of freedom, for most of the jobs happened by pythonian forces. There were machines everywhere.

One day Petrilius got very sick. Because he thought he was dying he gave Tara a special key to a most secret library. 'Read about pythons as much as you can,' he said. This was the last time Tara ever saw him alive. She went to this library and read in its books for days and days, weeks and weeks. She also found a bottle in which a pythonian ghost lived. When she opened it the library got filled by red smoke. A huge cloud stood before her.

The spirit was happy. He had been in his bottle for a long time. On Mars when a ghost didn't return to his bottle he would become denser and denser. Tara gave the ghost his freedom, and he would be a dense citizen of Mars soon. She also found a secret tunnel leading her to a huge hall. There were strange signs on the walls. It looked like a dominoes game. Tara could climb upstairs as it formed a sort of frame. When she came on top she could come into a new hall, as there was a huge doorway in the ceiling.

When Tara wanted to return to the library she found out that the signs by which she could climb had closed themselves. It wasn't like a ladder anymore, so she couldn't get downstairs again. A girl ticked at her shoulder. Tara turns around. 'I can bring you there,' the girl said.

'Who are you ?' Tara asked.

'Well, that's a long story,' the girl said. 'But I'm a spidergirl, able to fly, and willing to bring you there.' Suddenly thick glue-like stuff came out of her hands and soon some sort of strong web was reaching downstairs on which they could both climb down. 'Who taught you that ?' Tara asked.

'Oh, Petrilius,' the girl said.

Tara understood he had many more friendships than she knew. It seemed Petrilius saved the girl too one day. She was in a heavy storm at sea. Since then she always stayed close to him. 'What are these enigmatic signs on the wall ?' Tara asked.

'Oh,' the girl said. 'Many of those things are based on time. It works like a clock, and it gives access at certain points of time and at certain occasions. The whole temple is full of these things.'

‘Why do you call it temple ?’ Tara asked.

‘As it is a temple,’ the girl said.

‘Then who do you worship ?’ Tara asked.

The girl started to laugh. ‘We do not worship anything or anyone,’ she said. ‘It’s all a certain science working as long as you have the knowledge.’

‘Ah,’ Tara said, ‘so it is about knowledge. And what kind of knowledge is it ?’

‘Oh, come,’ the girl said, and then led Tara to another library. It was like some sort of restaurant here. There were some transparent brown veils, a sort of glass, and people sat at tables reading stuff. The girl took Tara’s hand. ‘Come,’ she said. They went through a door and came in a corridor. At the end of the corridor there was another library, a small one. ‘Here we have our books,’ the girl said. It was much about pythonian electricity. It was all about the wonderful mechanisms of the temple. Many parts seemed to work together and change periodically all to trigger some sort of hormones and special effects.

‘Interesting,’ Tara said.

‘It’s a complex system,’ the girl said. ‘But if you know how it works, you will see the benefit of it.’

Tara nodded. ‘I see.’

‘Shall I show you my room ?’ the girl asked.

‘Sure,’ Tara said.

The girl took her all the way upstairs into some sort of tower. On top there were several rooms and one of them was hers. It was a very small room, and she had a lot of books. She also had some pythons in aquaria. ‘My name is Lydium,’ the girl said. ‘They also call me Pythonia.’

Tara bent towards the pythons. They were not so big. There were also some living mice and rats in the aquaria, white ones. ‘They eat them, but first they play with them,’ the girl said. Tara looked deep into the eyes of the girl.

‘There is something strange about this room,’ Tara said. ‘I smell monkeys.’

‘Oh yes, we also feed them monkeys at times,’ the girl said. ‘They need it to stay alive.’ The girl opened a cupboard and showed a small monkey in a small cage. There was also another cage with a monkey in a wardrobe.

‘This is disgusting,’ Tara said.

‘Well, we need to sacrifice them,’ the girl spoke. ‘Or the pythons will go mad and break our decks of control.’

‘Oh, don’t worry about that,’ Tara said. ‘They will take over anyway. But you just can’t feed them monkeys.’

‘Why not?’ the girl asked.

‘Oh nevermind,’ Tara said and opened the cages to take the monkeys out. They immediately jumped on her and hung at her neck. They made a lot of noise.

‘Listen girl,’ Tara said. ‘I don’t care who or what you are, but you can do things different you know. There are other ways to raise the pythonian system. I do not know who teached you this. I doubt it was Petriliium.’

The girl bowed her head. ‘It wasn’t Petriliium, just a girl of my class.’

Soon Tara took the monkeys away and brought them into freedom, the wilderness where they belonged.

‘I’m willing to learn from you,’ the girl said. ‘Sometimes things are so tight in my head, like there isn’t another way.’

‘There are many ways,’ Tara said.

Together they walked to another hall the girl wanted to show. They came in on a balcony and could see a sort of trafficlighs downstairs on the ground. It was a pythonian traffic system. ‘This one is producing a hormone taking over Mars. Only the python riders will survive the coming pythonian flood,’ the girl said.

‘Interesting,’ Tara said. ‘Well, I know they have the power to break someone’s mind, the mindwalls, so that they could enter in. It’s some sort of gas.’

The girl nodded.

‘How do you ride a python?’ Tara asked.

‘Oh, I’ll show you,’ the girl said. They had to go to another staircase to go upstairs to reach the higher parts of the temple. They were soon on the highest walls of the complex. It was almost in the clouds, and a lot of flying pythons were here. ‘Pick one,’ the girl said. Tara took one of the pythons and sat down on it. Also the girl took a python and together they flew away. It wasn’t so difficult. They both had lots of information on how to ride such a thing. Tara realized how important that was, as the pythons were about to take Mars over

completely. The degree of pythonian poison in the air was already very high. Many on Mars already went insane by the pressure of it. Mars became a pythonian planet more and more, and Tara and the spidergirl were more or less pythonian agents. But Tara knew where it would all lead to. Tara knew that the pythonian connection would only trigger a much higher energy : those of the indian flies. She knew that the pythonian matrix was nothing but a preparation of that, a sort of doorway. The spidergirl was talking about it all the time, as she wanted to become a flygirl. She knew that only flygirls would be able to stand when the pythonian floods would come. And she was thinking a lot about the indian fly floods. Those would come after the python. Mars would be a totally different planet.

Tara and the girl became tight friends, and she taught a lot of martian martial arts to her. The girl taught Tara much about pythonian electricity. One day a strong light was coming forth from one of the python systems. And soon also another pythonian system opened up to bring forth this strong light. It was like a lightvulcanoe. The girl said it wasn't pythonian anymore, but it looked like flylights. 'The flood, it is coming,' some men were shouting. They seemed to know much about it. A soft gas was coming from the light, coming in layers, and it was a bit moisty.

'Mars will soon be totally in the hands of pythons and flies,' the men said. They had big books under their arms and were dressed like preachers. On the cover of their books there were triangles. 'From what kind of religion are you ?' Tara asked.

'Oh, we're from the temple. It's just about science and knowledge,' the man said. Tara was watching the triangles on their books. They looked like wigwams. 'All we must do is to ride the pythons,' the men said, 'and only the fly can do that.'

Tara remembered the aquaria of Petriliium. He also had some in which he kept the biggest sharks and whales. Tara asked the girl if she knew if Petriliium also kept flies. 'Oh yes,' the girl said. 'Come with me.' By an elevator they could come deep underground where caves were with the biggest aquaria Tara ever saw. The air was moisty and hot, and inside the aquaria there was also this tropical climate. She could see amazing sorts of flies. It was enchanting her eyes. She got hypnotized by the sight. The flies almost looked like flying people. To her amazement she also saw savage people there. They just lived among the big flies. They looked like they were indians.

'Why do those people live here ?' Tara asked.

‘Oh,’ the girl said. ‘They just want to live close to this energy. There are even monkeys here.’ Tara understood that these people were afraid of the pythonian outbursts. ‘More and more people want to live here,’ the girl said.

‘Why don’t you just open the aquaria so that the flies can spread themselves on the martian surfaces?’ Tara asked.

‘Oh Tara,’ the girl said. ‘That would be very dangerous and unwise. Petriliium kept them here for a reason. They need to grow up first.’

‘What would be the danger?’ Tara asked.

‘Oh Tara,’ the girl said. ‘You don’t know these species. There are some libraries deeper underground with a lot of books about them.’ Soon they went to those libraries together, and Tara started to read about them. Tara grasped her head. ‘I’m glad I was behind glass, but how can those savage people live with them?’

‘They have a certain immunity against them,’ the girl said. ‘Their bodies have been smeared by a certain substance, and it is now in their bloodstream as well.’

In a secret part of the library there were bottles full of the substance. ‘Once smeared we can never return to the surfaces of Mars. We need to stay in the aquaria leading to the depths of Mars. Then we need to stay in Tartarus forever,’ the girl said.

‘Oh, that’s a deal,’ Tara said. Together they smeared each other by the substance, and Tara felt like she was burning inside. Her blood was boiling, and her body got the strength of a bow and arrow. Soon they were in the aquaria among the flies and the savage people.

In Tartarus the weather was hot. There were a lot of beaches and deserts. Pythons were from a high rank here, but an even higher rank were the flies. They had strange tongues, and they had the power to freeze someone’s mind. Some of them had uniforms or even outlandic clothes.

Their tongues were thick and could become tall. They could smell by their tongues, and they had a lot more senses in it.

Suddenly Tara woke up. It had been just a dream. Petrilium was still living, and she was in the room where she always slept when she would visit him for more days. She was staring at the books in a cupboard close to her bed. She always loved these books. She remembered the delicious dinner she had with him and his monkeys at one table. He always used to call it dream food, as you would get dreams from all the exotic drinks and foods. And those of the purple capes were also with them. They were some sort of preachers living with Petrilium, a sort of monks. Whenever Petrilium sent out some magical seeds into the depths of Mars, in Tartarus below the kingdom of death, he would also send some of them of the purple capes to take care of the seed. If the seed would be grown to its heights they would bring it to Petrilium. Petrilium called this seed his children. They would never really grow up, as they would always stay with the things of childhood. Many of those children lived in a cellar below Petrilium's place, where he visited them often to play games with them. Also the purple capes played a big role in this. They had to show the children the funparks on Mars, as a part of their education. They had to go with them to the fairgrounds. Petrilium had a thing for that.

The purple caps were the teachers of the children, to prepare them for their great tasks. Petrilium had big plans. The purple capes had a strange faith. The leaders of them had a big fairground by which they travelled through Tartarus. You could never really see their faces as the capes were dark and large. However they had a lot of monkeys with often blue faces, and some said their faces were just like them. But nobody knew. When the children grew up some choose to work with the purple capes in the fairground, travelling throughout Tartarus. This fairground was actually a machine by which they saved lost souls.

Some said they were dangerous vampires. Petrilium was a much hated man by many. They said he was strange and dark. And no one knew exactly what those purple capes were. It was actually by this fairground Petrilium saved Tara when she was in the tight grip of Tartarus. Many knew that Petrilium was ... a saviour. Petrilium hated Tartarus. One of his biggest plan was to build a funpark in the very core of Tartarus. He wanted to deal with the hypocrite leaders.

The fairground would play a big part in that, and of course the church of the purple capes. It wasn't a church at all. It was a trick. One day one of the purple capes took off his cape. It appeared to be a monkey. He appeared to be the chief of the purple capes. Suddenly his face turned into a longhaired man with a beard. Tara knew they were sorcerors and werewolves, as they could also turn into wolves. Strozalks they were called. He directed his finger at a large cross which suddenly turned into a winged stake. Pythons were holding the stake tight, but suddenly the winged stake turned into a fly, and the snakes into weapons.

‘The bow, Tara,’ he said. And gave the bow to Tara. ‘It’s the Qesheta. It will come alive. It is a woman. It has become an object, but it is alive.’

Tara felt the hot handle of the bow in her hand. She stared at it. ‘See we have become animals, trees and objects,’ the man spoke. ‘and we hide under purple capes.’

She watched the man with the blue face. They had been frozen into so many things, and now they were so creative. Tara wanted to give the bow back. ‘No, it is for you,’ the man said. And then he left. When she came to Petrilium’s room she saw Petrilium lying on his bed. He was dead. The man with the blue face came out of the bathroom together with some purple capes. ‘Yes, we have killed him,’ he said. Then they left.

The End

The Beasts of Orion

Chapter 1. Tara and the Hippo Queen

Chapter 2. The Amulet of the Pterosaur

Chapter 3. Marit the Ratwoman

Chapter 4. The Sea of No Return

Chapter 1. Tara and the Hippo Queen

At the surfaces of Orion there was a lonely warrior. She tried to make her way by cutting by her sword through the overwhelming chaos of snakes, slime, fleeces and dirt. Her name was Tara from Rhodes. She had a good survey at the deserts of Orion. There were three thrones on Orion : the lion throne, the blue throne and the white throne. These thrones were like floating slippery islands. Tara had to be on her guard against the blinding lights of Orion, which could show up easily, like striking winds. They could easily blind someone.

After awhile she came to a misty palace. The walls were of reddish flesh, decorated by skulls and nails. It looked like a dragon castle. Tara went in holding her sword up high. Inside there were meaty webs and many fleeces. By her sword she cut a way through it. Lights tried to strike her, but she had her eyes tightly closed. She was sweating. It was like she was in the jaws of a monster. In front of her was a lake full of white spiderwebs and slippery fleeces where spiders swam. She also made her way through the lake. Then she came to a sort of spine, but it was made of reddish meat and dark bones. She climbed on it upstairs. She was almost bathing in sweat. It was like someone was grilling her. She found herself standing on a gigantic skull.

This was Orion TV, a strange intestine, sucking them all in, by winds, fleeces and dirt, overwhelming them by lights. Tara had overcome it, and stood on the skull as a conqueror. She raised her sword and shrieked. This was the place which kept a hold on Mars for such a long time. It was a strange creature, but Tara had survived. Then she pierced her sword into a soft button on top of the skull. The skull started to shriek. It was now shrinking.

There were falls of fire here. On muddy stairs Tara climbed further. She could feel the moisty earth again, like it was clay. Tara shouted as hard as she could. Two eagles came to her, big and dark. 'Bring me to the white throne,' she said.

The white throne was a city made of rare lionstones, and it was floating at the surfaces of Orion like an island. Tara jumped off from the eagles and slid deep into the city. The lionstones had been covered by webs and dirt. There were fleeces everywhere. In the city

there was a strange machine called the Machine of Monotheism. From the machine dark dancers came, mostly women. They were the belly-dancers of Turet. They had been armed by all sorts of weapons. They were the guards of the center of the city, which had been called Turet. Here a skeleton lived having the same name. He was the upper emperor of Orion, and at the same time their religious leader.

The belly-dancers were made of a sort of bronze and brass, and they were also cannibals. Tara had to be at her guard. They radiated such a heat that they could easily grill her. It was like they came right out of an altar. Tara raised her sword and slew a few of them. But the skeleton of Turet already ran towards her. Soon she was in the grip of a few other belly-dancers. Turet smiled. It was like Tara was already burning from inside. Tara fell down, and woke up in a dungeon. Turet stared at her. 'Seriously,' he said, 'what are you doing here. I have grown this way. I can't be saved. This is my fate, and what I do to others is their fate. I can't help it.'

'Tell me about your bosses,' Tara said.

'Skeleton-indians,' Turet said.

'Who are they ?' Tara asked.

'They are the ones who once skinned me, and took me to Orion,' Turet said.

'Where do you come from ?' Tara asked.

'Originally from Mars,' Turet said.

'See,' Tara said. 'They do this to many from Mars. They are abductors. And they transform their victims into the most horrible monsters.'

Turet nodded. 'But you can't set me free,' he said.

‘Why not ?’ Tara asked.

‘I can’t return to Mars,’ Turet said. ‘Orion is too deep in me.’

‘How do I reach those skeleton-indians you talk about ?’ Tara asked.

‘Oh, just follow the jaws of Reactumat. There is a small car riding into it’s jaws and then you travel all the way through his body,’ Turet said. ‘I will bring you to it.’

It seemed Turet was a very nice guy. Soon they both sat into a car close to gigantic jaws. Turet pushed a button and there they went. There was fire everywhere. Turet turned the speed up. Then everything became dark. Tara fell asleep by the smoke, and when she woke up they were there. It was a strange world with the smell of ham. There were fleeces everywhere. It was a white wilderness. It looked like ice, but it was actually warm here, very warm, and soft.

‘They guard the stone of the lioness,’ Turet said. Suddenly dreadful indians came out of a jungle. ‘Why are you coming ?’ an indian woman asked.

‘Meet Tara, a friend of mine,’ Turet said to the woman.

‘Don’t come any step further or I will cut your head off,’ Tara shouted. ‘He’s from Mars originally, so you have a story to tell to me.’

‘Yes, we have a story,’ the woman said. ‘It’s true we have abducted him and even zombificated him. He doesn’t want to return to Mars anymore. We have given him the real life here.’

‘And what is the real life ?’ Tara asked.

‘Come with us,’ the woman said.

Tara went with Turet and the into the jungle. In the depths of the jungle there was a small white sandy hill. They showed her the stone of the lioness. 'This,' the woman said.

'What is it doing ?' Tara asked.

'It's an ice-transformer,' the woman said. 'Look around you. Everything looks like ice but it isn't. It is actually warm and soft.'

'Okay, but what does it do besides that,' Tara asked.

'Oh, it hunts, it kills, just like us. It's a predator,' the woman said. 'The abductor.'

Behind the hill there were rivers of blood. There were many lions swimming here, and many lay on the shores. 'Behind the rivers of blood,' the woman spoke, 'there is the lion tower. Those who want to become kings of the universe always go there. They will make the dangerous journey through the tower to the top. The higher they come the thinner the tower is and the more fragile. Besides that, it storms there. There is a small throne on top of the tower. No one who gets there stays long, for the winds will blow him off after awhile. He will crash on the ground, and the lions will eat him. There is no real king of the universe.'

'No one who knows the lion tower dares to sit there,' another indian woman said. 'The winds rule on top of the lion tower. Some said they saw a mysterious fly sitting on the throne at times.'

'And some say the flies rule the winds far above them,' another indian woman said. 'Their bosses fly without wings.'

'So the lion tower you talk about is a trap ?' Tara asked.

‘Some sort of,’ one of the indian women said. ‘And the true rulership of Orion and the universe is a mystery. Why would someone rule the universe ? Why not letting it be done by the universe itself.’

‘Well, I’m thinking about those flies you talk about, and also the wingless flies,’ Tara said. ‘So they are the actual rulers ?’

‘No one knows,’ the woman said, ‘but some think that they are. The lion tower connects Orion to the sky, and they rule in the sky. Rulership is a mystery. And when you become a ruler, something else always takes you over. That is the secret of the lion tower. There is actually no rulership. There’s something above that.’

‘And that is ?’ Tara asked.

‘Imprisonment,’ the woman said. ‘You lose yourself and become grilled and zombificated by the powers of the universe you have grasped.’

‘Oh, I see,’ Tara said. ‘I’m here to free Mars from this satellite called Orion who seems to control it for a big deal, but what you say here interests me. And this is the reason why you have the stone of the lioness ? To transform all those extremes ?’

‘Yes,’ the woman said.

‘What can you do for Mars ?’ Tara asked.

‘I can’t do anything for them,’ the woman said. ‘I can have them abducted to let them stay around the stone of the lioness, but she’s kind of selective, you know. She has an army. She’s a trainer. She zombificates you to become a part of it, and then she will guard you. She is the one who planted the Lion Tower to test the abducted. Many go there to look for adventure, finally to become kings, but those are food for her lions. They look for entertainment, but they end up in the intestines of Orion TV. They get plugs in their livers and become addicts of nothingness.’

‘But what is the meaning of life on Orion,’ Tara asked.

‘The meaning of life on Orion,’ the woman said, ‘is to transform the extremes by following the stone of the lioness. We worship her. We approach her, face to face. There are no laws. We are the lawless. It is not about ‘yes’ or ‘no’, but about ‘how’, so of course there are a lot of rules. You need to know ‘how’ to do something.’

‘We are all zombificated by the stone of the lioness, Tara,’ another woman said. ‘We are her robots, but we are alive. She has raised us. In this we are safe.’

‘We however also worship the Lion Tower, for it is our guard,’ another indian woman said. ‘But we can never enter it. We can’t even come close to it. It needs to be at a distance. It is a trap for our enemies and betrayers.’

‘Okay,’ Tara said, ‘so ‘yes’ or ‘no’ is not important anymore, only ‘how’, also in the sense of ‘where’ and ‘when’.’

‘Yes,’ the woman said. ‘The lioness stone is our clock and map in that.’

‘But who made the lioness stone ?’ Tara asked.

‘The flies did,’ the woman said. ‘The wingless flies of Orion who live above the skies.’

‘Where exactly do they live,’ Tara asked.

‘In blood,’ the woman said. ‘They live in a realm called the Blood of Orion.’

‘How did they come there ?’ Tara asked.

‘They stayed away long enough from the Lion Tower, and got ascended,’ the woman said. ‘The wingless flies are just indians. They are on the eternal huntingfields, the red skies of Orion. They are elite indians. They have Blood-TV, which is actually a heart, the heart of Orion. Some say it is the heart of the universe. It is the biggest butchery of all time.’

Then what was the road to this Red Zone of Orion ? The Python Tower. The Python Tower was like highways into the the sky. It was a dangerous trip, but it was honest at least. They showed Tara the road to this tower and then she went on her path. In the tower of the Python there were all sorts of tall venomous python-tongues hanging. Touching them would mean death. Tara had to be at her guard here more than ever. However the Python Tower was an experiment. No one was the ruler of it. The tower ruled itself. The ones who died here became a part of the tower itself. They got absorbed and sucked in by the walls, and got torn apart and frozen. Tara would never forget these ghosts. They were haunting. They tried to scare her, and begged her not to go further. They were draining her. It was a nightmare. Whenever she slept in the tower she could hear these ghosts making their conspiracies against her. The further she came into the Python Tower the weaker her body became. The winds were sharp and cutting, almost tearing her apart. There were biting fluids like venomous milk trying to bite her skin away. Further on she had to fight the worst pythons. They were tall and big. She needed to escape their tight grips. She had never felt such heavy creatures before. These were the Pythons of Orion. Higher in the tower it was full of flies, and it was very cloudy. Tara had to cut herself a way through it by her sword. Suddenly there was Turet in his Machine of Monotheism. ‘Hey, Tara, are you in for a ride ?’ he shouted.

‘Pick me up,’ Tara shouted. ‘It’s so slippery here.’

By the Machine of Monotheism it was easy for them to get to the red zone of Orion. The place was full of belly-dancers. There were enormous dragons here, covered by flies. By strange lightening the red became pale all the time. Whenever it became white it streamed downstairs, to the white zone. It looked like milk, and it seemed to become white by the belly-dancers. It seemed to flow forth from them. They were transformers. ‘It’s actually called white blood,’ Turet said. ‘It’s the secret of the lioness stone. She has brought forth the belly-dancers by which she can transform the ice, and by which she makes everything soft.’

‘What kind of blood is it ?’ Tara asked.

‘Python Blood,’ Turet said. ‘Long ago there was a fight between a lioness and a python. The fight didn’t seem to end. One day the flies came and turned the lioness into a stone, and the python into blood. The stone brought forth the belly-dancers who would turn the blood of the python into white blood.’

‘So you mean to say that the ice was originally the product of a fight between a lioness and a python ?’ Tara asked.

‘Yes,’ Turet said. ‘But without the perpetual flow of red blood the white blood will die, and the ice will take over again.’

‘Who takes care of that ?’ Tara asked.

‘The belly-dancers,’ Turet said.

Tara now understood why the stone of the lioness was of such importance, and the importance of the guards of this stone, the skeleton-indians of the white zone. And who were the mysterious wingless flies who seemed to have made this all ?

‘The wingless flies become skeleton-indians after awhile,’ Turet said. ‘Then they come down to guard the lioness stone.’ Turet directed his finger towards stairs of light. These lights were moving. It was the stairs of descension, made of white blood. Turet showed her a lot more falls of white blood.

‘The secret of the belly-dancers of Turet is that they are actually mammoths and elephants,’ Turet said.

‘So they can actually change into women and also back into mammoths and elephants ?’ Tara asked.

‘Yes,’ Turet said. ‘Actually the truth is that after the skeleton-indians have guarded the lioness stone long enough they get swallowed by it and they become the belly-dancers.’

‘That looks like a circus to me,’ Tara said.

‘No, Tara,’ Turet said, ‘it’s the wilderness. Actually when they have been belly-dancers long enough they go to the path of the elephant.’

‘What is that?’ Tara asked.

‘It’s a path to meet the wildest creatures of Orion,’ Turet said. ‘When they return they become hippo’s and they will be the leaders of the belly-dancers.’

‘This looks like school,’ Tara said.

‘No, Tara,’ Turet said, ‘it is the wilderness.’

With the Machine of Monotheism they went to such a hippo queen. She lived in a high place, in treasures. It was a dark indian woman, and there were jewels, satin, velvet and the finest materials everywhere. The woman had earrings in, and had been adorned with many more rings. The riches of the white blood were here. Her slaves seemed to bath in it everywhere and drank from it like milk. It had the taste of cacao and cocosmilk. They used it for making bread and crèmes. Wild unknown creatures were her guards. In other realms and planets these creatures had died out, but here on Orion they could survive. On Mars they would have been described as prehistoric, but here they just lived on. Orion was the only place in the universe they could do this. And to Tara this was a special event. She wouldn’t forget this too easily. On Mars they could never live on because they were too savage. Orion was a savage world more than Mars, so here they could develop themselves. And this could happen all because of the lioness stone. She was there mother, their warm womb. They could all live because of the elephant path. Here they had their place. And now this hippo queen had them in her care. She was a cruel queen. Tara thought it looked like civilisation, but she knew it was the wilderness. The queen was both cruel and good to her guards. They just had to obey the rules. The creatures were very destructive, and were a threat to the whole universe, so the queen had to protect herself.

The hippo queen and her slaves rode on them whenever they visited the jungles. They also rode on mammoths. She trained all of them to become belly-dancers, as that was how she formed her armies. She could use the belly-dancers for everything. They learned how to change into women, and how to change back into animals. They also learned how to use their weapons. There was a man named Skeipnir who trained many of them. He was one of her highest slaves. He knew the tricks of transformation and he was even her personal guard.

Whenever he wasn't training the belly-dancers, he stood at her door. Skeipnir was a major source in raising her army. She raised this army to abduct beings to Orion.

'Welcome Tara,' she said. 'My invisible threads have finally brought you here.'

Suddenly Tara saw the slimy, slippery tentacles on her head. It was by a strange light she could see them all of a sudden. Had she been mind-controlled ? She had headaches for such a long time. Did they guide her to this place ?

The hippo queen showed her machine from which the tentacles and fleeces came forth. They were only visible by the strange light. 'These are the elephant winds,' the queen said, 'easily turning into storms, easily turning into lightening and thunder.' Then the queen started to laugh.

'What is your purpose ?' Tara asked.

'My purpose is to abduct, test, and turn them into belly-dancers. The rest will be food for the lion tower,' the hippo queen spoke.

'Oh yes, I have seen that,' Tara said, 'but what is your purpose with me ?'

'You are very special my child,' the hippo queen said. 'I have watched you from the day you were born to this day. I have seen your birth. You are a good fighter, and you would be a good trainer. I want you to meet Skeipnir.'

'I highly appreciate your belly-dancers,' Tara said, 'and I highly appreciate you. I can teach you swordfighting. But please, show me the real secret of Orion.'

'I will, Tara,' the hippo queen said. 'If you teach us swordfighting then I will give you this stone, which is the secret of Orion, the bestkept.' From behind the queen took a reddish transparent jewel which was like a ball. 'Tara, I will give you this stone, for I know Orion is in good hands with you,' the hippo queen spoke. 'Please stay with us. Don't return to Mars.'

‘What kind of stone is it?’ Tara asked.

‘It is the stone of the Beasts of Orion,’ the hippo queen spoke. ‘I will bring the stone into your sword, so that Orion will be forever safe in you. With it you will have access to the savage zone of Orion, where all secrets will be shared with you.’

Chapter 2. The Amulet of the Pterosaur

It was a dirty place in the savage zone of Orion. She had never seen so much dirt before. There were falls of dirt here, and rivers of dirt, and the most horrible creatures and the largest beasts. On Mars these animals could only exist in a prehistoric world, but here on Orion they were more alive than everywhere else. Savage Indian tribes were living here, again races which would be prehistoric on Mars, but this was Orion. They were carnivores and cannibals but they were also like ballet-dancers.

These worlds were not like the history-books on Mars. These worlds were crueller, more dangerous, filled with dirt and stench to the extremes. It was more savage. There was no any form of civilisation here or thought. Here there was chaos. There were no laws. It was an untamed world. There was no gentle traffic here. However, the strange ballet Tara saw among the tribes showed a certain pattern, but these patterns were wild. This was the ballet of death.

Tara found out soon that it was nothing but a war-dance, trying to take minds away, and every form of balance and security. It was a psychological warfare. They tried to put fear on their victims, and insecurity. It was like a spell to break off the immune systems of their prey. Tara knew she had to be on her guard. She knew it had a high price even watching this ballet.

Later she found out that by this ballet they could turn themselves into beasts, or to get possessed by the beasts. They lived double lives. Also the beasts themselves could do such ballet. It was all to protect themselves.

The air was filled by strange haunting battlecries showing no thought but intelligence. It was like these beasts and savages had been caught by instincts triggered by each other. It was like

fire eating the fire. They had become insane by each other. They lived by fear. There was such a drama here, no thought, no shame, but fear. There was no shame as the fear had eaten it all away. And the fear had been raised by the ballets. There was no escape from this. They had all been caught in a trap. One ballet would stir up the other, and the fear would only rise more. It was a world of dread, shameless dread.

Tara was looking for their leader, as she knew all these ballets could hide something. These ballet-dancers could be the guard of something.

The strange stone at Tara's sword started to talk and gave names to all the sorts of beasts here : 'Tiguran Ballets, Tangaran Ballets.'

'What is the leading sort ?' Tara asked.

'There are no leading sorts,' the stone said. 'This world rules itself.'

Then the stone continued : 'Cynognathus, Allosaur, Ceratosaur.'

There were also elephant-like beasts here with jewels on their heads. These seemed to be huge organs of smell. The stone could tell Tara all about it. Many of them were hairy like mammoths. There seemed to be huge cattle here. Some had large heads like horses, and some heads even looked like rabbits. But it was all savage. These beasts were big and different. They were very strange, and they were certainly no easy prey. Actually they were predators. There was also smaller cattle, most of the time having white bodies with swarms of black spots, and big heads like cows and horses. They had the sizes of grown up calves.

The cynognathus looked like he was from the bear family, and the allosaur and the ceratosaur looked like they were from the alligator family, all hunters. There were many different sorts of them. Tara could line out those families, also the huge family of the elephant. The first animal Tara could approach was the cynognathus. Although this beast was friendly to her he bit her a few times to drink some of her blood. It was still a wild animal. The stone told Tara that these were a sort of marks of friendship. If she wasn't a friend the beast would have killed her. The cynognathuses went out for hunt very often, most of the time in groups. They led Tara to some of their caves where they lived. They were bloodthirsty animals, and although they were big meateaters they also kept cattle just to drink from their blood. Tara knew she had to be at her guard. She started to hunt together with them to show them her bondage to

them. There was no innocent cattle here. There were only predators, and hunting was in this place just a defense, a movement of war, necessary to survive. This was savage cattle. And the instincts went further than she ever saw before. These creatures didn't just hunt and kill. They made prisoners of war. They kept cattle.

Often it was for blood. They would milk their cattle everyday for that. The cattle they trapped in that sense were often bloodslaves. Also the other cynognathuses had bitten Tara for blood, and she hoped it would just be the marks of friendship. She had to wait until they would change into indians, something which had to do with the movements and positions of some of their moons.

The stone translated all the conversations she had with them. Without the stone she wouldn't have any chance to survive here. More and more they accepted her in their group.

She also saw the different catlike families. Some of these cats were horned. Some of the catlike beasts were small, and others were huge like elephants or even huger. It was by the stone she could approach these animals finally.

By the stone she also could ride the many elephant-like beasts here. By the stone she got easily accepted.

There were also a lot of pterosaurs which were flying reptiles. At the shore of the huge River of Doom there were ramphorhyncuses. They ruled the seas and the waters. The small ones couldn't fly, but only dive from rocks and trees to soar in the air, but the bigger ones could fly and were like giant reptile bats. Behind the River of Doom there was something which looked like a civilisation. One of the ramphorhyncuses brought Tara there. An indian called Untak came to her. 'Welcome Tara, we have waited so long for you,' he said. Tara was surprised that he spoke in her language. He seemed to come from Mars as well and made the same trip she made. 'These people are very civilised,' Untak said, while directing his finger to a village in the jungle. 'But it's still the wilderness. They taught me how to change into a reptile.'

A few pterosaurs flew above the village. They had tall necks, wings like bats, and were very huge. Some of them were black, others red, and there were also some white ones. 'They care for the jungle, Tara,' Untak spoke.

'How do you know my name ?' Tara asked.

‘Well, they told me,’ Untak said.

‘Who ?’ Tara asked.

‘The pterosaurs,’ Untak said, ‘the flying reptiles. They are the birds of fire.’

‘I knew you would come. You are welcome,’ Untak said. ‘You will love it here. These birds are the secret of nature. They protect the jungle.’

Tara heard the sounds of the pterosaurs in the distance. Untak told her that he could communicate to the pterosaurs by a certain stone. The stone lay in the center of the village in a sort of fountain. Everyone in the village could talk to the pterosaurs by this stone. Untak led Tara to the village and showed it to her. The stone would translate the sounds of the pterosaurs, and would translate everything the people said to the pterosaurs. The pterosaurs seemed to know a lot. They knew why Tara came here, and where she came from, and they were willing to tell her the secrets of this place. They were also willing to show her the jungles and wildernesses here. One day Untak gave her an amulet by which she could communicate to the pterosaurs wherever she was. It was a precious present. She could easily call the pterosaurs by the amulet. It was a necklace.

Chapter 3. Marit the Ratwoman

The pterosaurs showed Tara how often these beasts had a lot of smell organs in their bodies. This was how they communicated very often. It was also their immune system and their warfare strategy expressing itself in bloody hunts. This was to prevent themselves from becoming a victim themselves. They had been dominated by fear, making them insane, a prisoner of themselves and their instincts.

There were also a lot of cynognathuses here. They seemed to have eyes which only worked by smell. By this they were very accurate, and could see a hundred times better than most of the animals. They had eyes of fire.

The insectian world was very dramatic, much crueller than anything else. They had hives in which they locked up their prey for blood. And they could make anything of the blood. They could even let the blood clot to stone, and they made huge cities of these in the depths of the jungle. These were the cities of blood. They also called them candy cities, because of the sweetness of the blood. It was some sort of honey. Tara sailed with Untak along all these cities to watch them. It was like she saw the eyes of hell. Tara saw the double side of this story, as somehow they were all prey of this world. There seemed to be no escape as not any piece of this world would survive beyond the borderlines of Orion. It was a trap, and it seemed to be the only safe place for them. But now Orion was in the hands of Tara. She told Untak about the stone, the stone of the Beasts of Orion. She wanted to know what to do.

‘All other worlds will die,’ Untak said. ‘This is the only safe place. The rest of the universe doesn’t have a way to transform all the extremes, the ice. They will be eaten by it, and sink away. Also for Mars : this is the only safe place. It is a cruel place, but that is the price to pay. There is no other way. There is only one lioness stone, and only one stone like you have. I saw it in dreams, and it has been in my heart always. That was the reason why I came here. It led me to this place.’

‘So you think all those who have been abducted to Orion are lucky ?’ Tara asked.

‘They have been given a chance,’ Untak said. ‘but many become a prey of the lion tower. Those who are led by the stone of the Beasts of Orion will be led to this place. They are the chosen ones. They communicate with the skulls of the savages. On Mars they would call them ancient ones, but here they are alive. They never died out. On Orion there is a place for them.’

‘You see, Tara,’ Untak said. ‘The other worlds outside Orion they are based on chemicals, artificial smells. They are not savage, but doomed. They have put their trust in kings. The things necessary for their existence and survival, necessary for their further evolution they called dirt and stench. They drown in their cosmetics, ruining their lives, but the stone you have is an eye working by dirt and stench, working by the savage smell, the breath of Orion, of the wilderness. It is the last flame of life, which is the eternal life.’

‘The stone promises a way to freedom, a way to space, although it is a way through time, a cruel substance. However, we can trick time. We can survive time. We are winners,’ Untak said. ‘The stone has been given to you, a present of the hippo, as the hippo queen gave it to you. Use it well, Tara.’

‘How can I use it?’ Tara asked.

‘Believe in it,’ Untak said. ‘It is the best faith there is.’

Tara watched her stone. She laid it against her eye and could see a new world through it. She saw her own face in it, like the face of an angel.

The River of Doom ended in the deserts. The rulers of the deserts were the skeleton-snakes, who made a lot of noise by the movements of their bones. They were bigger than the usual snakes very often, and they formed houses in the deserts for lonely visitors, wanderers. They would lure the wanderer deeper in the house, and then they would start to move very slowly to turn the lives of the wanderers into living nightmares. By their huge and tall bodies they could become the walls, the ceilings and the floors, all perfectly camouflaged. But they would lead the wanderers into a trap, and then the rats would come to eat from their flesh. By the horror of these houses they made the blood of their victims sweet, and turned them into candy, toys or just dolls. The snakes would break the bones of their victims one by one. Whenever the victim started to find out that something in the house wasn’t right, it was already too late. A woman called Marit was the ruler of these houses. She was actually a rat, and her women could also change into rats. They were the only ones who could safely live in the houses. The deserts were full of these doom towns, and whoever didn’t know about these traps would fall into it.

‘Never go there into such a house,’ Untak said to Tara, ‘for the toymakers come there, and the candymakers, those who have deals with rats, and they turn the lives of wanderers into eternal nightmares. The skeleton-snakes will begin to move, and soon the house will be hell. The house will crash down and it will feed on the inhabitant, fastening him against a heap of bones, and then the rats will come. Toymakers, candymakers, dollmakers and butchers will finally take the victim away for sale. Don’t think it is civilisation. It is savage, it is the wilderness.’

‘Where does Marit live?’ Tara asked.

‘Oh, she lives in the depths of the deserts,’ Untak said. ‘She’s the ruler there. When they are in need for more victims they abduct children from other planets to let them grow up in such a house first. When they become full grown the house will create more and more troubles, and then finally fastening the victim and showing it’s true nature. The rats do all this. They go out to abduct the children, bring them to the houses and being friends to them. They can change into women, you know.’

‘Where can I find Marit?’ Tara asked.

‘Come with me,’ Untak said. He knew a path through the desert to her house. When they came there she stood before the window. She looked like a doll. When she saw them she turned into a rat immediately and ran outside. A fight started. Tara had raised her sword. The rat jumped at Untak and bit him horribly. Tara quickly pushed her sword into the back of the rat. ‘That will be enough, Tara,’ Untak said. ‘You have hit her in her sensitive spot.’ The rat fell down. It had a broken spine now, and it was slowly dying. ‘Oh, not when I eat from this candy,’ the rat screamed, and grasped one of the legs of Untak to bite a piece out of it. Immediately the rat straightened its back again. Then the rat ran into the house again. ‘It heals itself by eating meat,’ Untak said with a painful face. ‘You will heal also,’ Tara said. ‘Let’s go into the house.’

‘You know what kind of house it is, Tara,’ Untak said. ‘It can be dangerous.’

‘We need to go in,’ Tara said. ‘We do not have another choice.’ Then Tara ran in, while immediately the walls started to ripple. Tara ran through the corridors, and saw the woman sitting on a throne in a huge hall.’

‘That is kind of dumb,’ the woman said. The walls started to move closer and closer to each other. Untak was on the roofs at that moment, and threw a rope through a hole between the bones. ‘Take the rope,’ he shouted to Tara. But Tara crashed the walls by her sword to have another opening, and then she ran upwards to the throne. Again the woman turned into a rat, and this time she jumped on Tara. They had a wrestling on the ground. The rat bit Tara a few times and she started to bleed. By her sword she could shake the rat away from her and then ran to the throne again. There was a mirror between two jewels on the seat of the throne. By her sword Tara destroyed the mirror. ‘I know this is the source of your power, witch,’ Tara shouted. Tara knew this because the stone she had in her sword had told her this. But the mirror healed itself again. ‘As long as there is meat to eat the mirror will live on,’ the rat screamed. Then Tara lay the stone of her sword against the mirror while the mirror exploded, and its two jewels were melting away.

The rat was changing into a woman again. She had become weak. She almost crept towards her throne and settled down on it again, but she had lost her powers. ‘Jump away, Untak,’ Tara screamed to Untak who was still sitting on the roof. Tara dived away through the opening she had made by her sword. Then the enormous house crashed down to become a heap of bones.

Years later Tara and Untak visited the heap of bones again, and Marit the ratwoman still lived there, on her throne, but the throne and also herself had become old and poor. Everything had been covered by spiderwebs. 'You don't have to be afraid of the house anymore. It's over now. It's not the same anymore,' the old woman said. 'But don't you know my throne has been made of skeleton-snakes, and I have been made of them too. Don't you know that after great draughts they always rise up again ?'

'Yes, we know,' Tara said. 'And that is why we command you to leave the desert with your skeleton-snakes, and to leave Orion.'

'But you know I cannot live outside Orion,' the old woman said. 'Then I will die.'

'You will live at the borderlines,' Untak said. 'That must be enough for you.'

'But I need meat to get through the night,' the old woman spoke.

'There's meat enough at the borderlines of Orion. Go there for a hunt, and put your houses there,' Untak said.

And thus the borderlines of Orion became a dangerous place, but Tara and Untak had to do it for the sake of the savage zone of Orion. The stone had decided it this way. And it was true, the woman rose to the heights of her powers again, but this time not in the savage zone again. She had lost her place at the River of Doom, and she had lost her deserts there.

Chapter 4. The Sea of No Return

To Tara it had become clear now. She would stay here for a long time. There was a path to the other side of the Deserts of Doom now. But all Tara could find was more doom. Here the wild

cats of Honor lived, at a strange beach ending in a forest. Again these wild cats could turn into women and they could make someone deaf by their shrieks and cries. Whenever they had caught a victim they would give the victim no rest and no food, finally to put the victim in a small box, which they used for their hives. They were beekeepers, all for blood. In this sense they looked like those of the insectian world. They used the blood to build their cities, candy cities. They mixed it with honey and they transformed parts of it into white blood for creams and making bread. In that sense they looked like the belly-dancers of Turet.

The wild cats of Honor had many ways to get their victims. They had arenas, and further all sorts of traps. They also visited the battlefields after the battles. One of their best tricks was to turn into nursing, motherlike types, in which they could create a hospital sphere. They were very clever in misleading their victims. And still it was no civilisation. It was savage. It was the wilderness. There was no care in Honor. All care was nothing but a trap. They needed blood donors for their hives. They made the most beautiful cities by their bloody candy. They used to make these on the edge between the beach and the forest.

Honor was a strange world. The wild cats covered it all up. When Tara visited Honor she was in a fight immediately. In rage she slew many of these corrupted women. She wanted to dominate Orion. She had help from tall snakes, called by the stone. It was an invasion that day. The sky had turned bloodred. It was like the wardancers had come. It was a revolution in the sky. This time the wingless flies were also in the sky, helping her, turning the wild cats into skeletons. Tara didn't send them out of the savage zone, but she sent them to the borderlines of the savage zone.

Through the forest Tara reached a place near to an enormous beach where the Sea of No Return was. Between the forest and the enormous beach there was a guard named the Man with the Million Heads, for he had a million heads. Tara had a fight against him for two days. Whenever she cut off the heads they grew again. The only way to return was the Stairway of Fire. Those who would finally reach the sea could never return. The guard used to throw his victims on the stairs, by which they fell back. But Tara threw him on the stairway of fire, by which he fell into the depths.

Within a few hours Tara was on a raft on the Sea of No Return.

The Python

Stone II

Chapter 1. The Mark of Bellatrix

Chapter 2. Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter

Chapter 3. The Wrath of the Python Stone

Chapter 1. The Mark of Bellatrix

The White Spider Queen was honoured to have Tara from Rhodes so close to her. They developed a very deep friendship, but on the road it started to become irritating. The White Spider Queen gave a huge attic to Tara, on top of one of her towers. Here Tara could live. A coldness started to come up between the two. Tara more and more felt the need to draw herself back, and she started to live a lonely life on the attic. There was a love hate relationship between the two, but finally they could forget about each other. They both had different places. But one day the White Spider Queen died, and Tara got the whole palace. There were many veils throughout the huge palace, many hidden places, with much weaponry. There were a lot of snakes in the palace, which were the guards, and they now had to learn that they had a new boss : Tara.

The White Spider Queen was a painter. She painted by blood, but also by venom. One day Tara discovered a hidden room in the palace with a lot of her paintings. There were also skeletons here who she had painted. A lot of painted skulls hung at the wall. It was dark and dusty here, and snakes lived in the skeletons and the skulls. The room smelled like snake slime. A lot of the palace had been made of python stone, a dangerous stone. It looked like the walls were moving. The rays of the python stones could easily penetrate brains, to change the senses, sight included. They could stimulate illusions. Tara saw the many different patterns of these stones in the palace. If she would stare too long at it, her sight would get shifted, turning, like she had double sight. She had many surveys in the palace.

In another room there were Python Knights, dangerous demons, but the White Spider Queen had stuffed them. They didn't move, and their armories were dusty. The room was full of spiderwebs here, and big chubby spiders seemed to live in the armories of the Python Knights.

Deep in the palace there was a hall with a stairway of blood. When Tara went downstairs she came into a strange place. Her feet were bloody and she stared at a man with a huge cape, dressed in a garment. There were rivers of blood here, and dead bodies were everywhere, or parts of bodies. There was a strange smell. 'Hello,' the man said. Tara didn't say anything. When he took his sword Tara kicked his head real hard before he could do anything. In a flash she took her knife and beheaded him. She knew she had to be on her guard here. She stared around her, almost paranoid. It was a place of death.

She got lured deeper and deeper in this place, and it also trapped her deeper and deeper. She began to see the riches of the python stones more and more, and she realized that the White Spider Queen had really stored them here as in a collection. They were here in all colours, the most beautiful stones.

Inbetween the stones there was a giant egg with some small holes through which snakes slid. There was coming blood out of the holes, and the egg was already cracking. A giant came out of the egg, totally covered by slime. He had big snakes around him everywhere, as if they were strangling him. But they seemed to be his friends. Tara didn't hesitate one moment, jumped on the giant and pierced her tall knife through his throat. The giant threw her away, and stood up. The man began to sing. Tara took a stone and threw it at him. But the man started to laugh. 'Do you know who I am ?' he asked.

'No,' Tara said. 'But all I know is your ripe to be killed.'

'I am Karsa,' the giant said. 'Born of Orion, Betelgeuse.'

'I see you are a slayer,' Tara said to the man covered by blood.

'All paths of python stones lead to Orion,' the giant said. 'It is the place of eternal rebirth. What is death ? Isn't it all to be reborn ? Death is a safe womb.'

‘Go away, you creepy guy,’ Tara said.

‘Ah,’ the giant said, ‘I see you are not ripe for rebirth yet. What if I would make a lollipop of you. The animals here would love to see some meat hanging here.’

Tara grasped her sword and walked towards him again. ‘If you like death so much, then meet my sword, your guide to it,’ Tara said. Then she pierced her sword through his belly.

‘Born of Orion I am,’ the giant roared. ‘I am the womb of the Universe, Betelgeuse, and to hang in my lollipop shop you would do good.’ He grasped her at her neck and threw her against the ceiling of the cave where they were. Then Tara fell down. Karsa took her again chased a hook into her flesh and hung her at a rock. ‘See there,’ he said. ‘Just wait for the predators.’

Tara had lost consciousness and hung there for hours and hours. She was lucky no predators came to lick from her meat. A man finally set her free. The man seemed to know about Karsa. He told Tara that Karsa would prey on eggs, creeping in them to eat the unborn, and then he would rise from the egg. At times Karsa stayed for months in the egg, just to make sure he fed well.

Karsa was the dark guard of Betelgeuse, where the path of the python stones would end. There he had his domain made of snake-tongues, all stretched out. He guarded the Python Eye. It was nothing but a butchery, but not a normal one. It licked you to death. Karsa was a dangerous predator called the licker. The further you would come on the path of the python stones, the more it would break off, trapping you in all sorts of ways. The best and safest way to go there was by lianas. Fortunately the man knew the way. They went from tree to tree by the lianas.

The Python Eye was an oracle made of python stones, like a wheel, guarding the other paths of python stones to the other planets of Orion. By the Python Eye Karsa dominated the Universe. The vehicle in this oracle was Kzumin, his chariot by which he hunted and by which he could open the gates. The Kzumin was his key of power by which he could move the fastest.

Under the might of the Python Eye the universe lived in slavery. Whenever a soul had been abducted by Karsa it would end up in Bellatrix into the claws of a metallic beast called Aam,

where they would get printed with the patterns of the python stones. They would get the mark of Bellatrix to let them be raised up as zombies.

Chapter 2. Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter

There was only one way to escape : to become like these rulers of Orion. And there was only one way to become them, and to stay being like them, without falling into guilt and shame : cacao.

But Tara wanted to help them. When Tara finally approached the Python Eye it changed into a dangerous mill. Behind the Python Eye was a gigantic jungle. The Python Eye started to spit fire. The eye started to shriek and roar also. Suddenly Tara saw Karsa on his vehicle inside of the mill. 'I know you just want to escape all this,' Tara shouted. 'You can be anyone. I know a better road than this : go with me to the palace of the White Spider Queen. She died, and you can be my soldiers.'

'No, I know a better place,' Karsa roared, 'Saiphe, the desert planet.'

'What is that,' Tara asked.

'I need to open the portal by some sort of game,' Karsa said.

'What kind of game ?' Tara asked.

'It's a game of coffee, tea, chocolate and juice,' Karsa said.

'And what do you win with it ?' Tara asked.

‘It opens the portal to Saiphe,’ Karsa said.

‘To do what ?’ Tara asked.

‘Then I will become a beast like Aam,’ Karsa said.

‘Metallic ?’ Tara asked.

‘Yes, living Python Stone,’ Karsa said.

‘You need to return,’ Tara said. ‘You cannot handle all those powers. It will finally blow you up.’

But Karsa laughed at her. In the distance an enormous beast was coming to them. It was Aam.

‘You both are too far gone,’ Tara said. ‘There would be a good place for you in the palace of the White Spider Queen. I know the way to it. But here you will finally erupt.’

But the two just laughed at her. Suddenly there were explosions everywhere. Behind Tara the other man stood with an enormous gun. ‘Forget about them, Tara,’ he said.

The name of the man was Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter. ‘We need to return, Tara,’ he said. But also the Python Eye was exploding, and many stones were falling down blocking the way. The Kzumin was a strange vehicle, like a motor. Lars grasped it quickly, stepped on it, took Tara and flew away with it in the air.

Again and again Lars had to shoot portals open. Tara didn’t know who he was, but he seemed to be her saviour. But the more and more python stones seemed to fall down, surrounding them. It was raining python stones. They seemed to be alive. Some stones had their mouths wide open, and most of them had only one eye. They started to bite Lars and Tara.

‘It’s Aam,’ Lars said. ‘We are already in it’s beak.’

‘How do we get out ?’ Tara asked.

‘They have surrounded us,’ Lars said.

‘What does that mean ?’ Tara asked.

‘That we will get eaten,’ Lars said.

‘Can’t you do anything ?’ Tara asked.

Suddenly Lars pushed a button on the dashboard of the Kzumin. Gunbeams came out of the Kzumin, and the python stones began to melt, but more and more they changed into snakes. ‘We need to step deeper inside the Kzumin,’ Lars said. ‘There we will be safe.’

But also from the depths of the Kzumin snakes seemed to come forth. Tara felt becoming weaker and weaker, while Lars had to carry her inside. Then Tara fell asleep. Inside the Kzumin there was a small computercabin in which Lars began to work. Soon he could let blasts come forth from the machine. They could watch it through a big thick window. Outside there was fire everywhere. Aam was roaring. By the computers of the Kzumin Lars could reprogram Aam. But they were still in the enormous stomache of Aam. Suddenly hard stones were clashing against the window of the Kzumin, and soon the window broke open, while fluids started to enter in and strange smells. Lars grasped Tara tight and swam with her outside. Karsa was sitting on his machine again, and he was laughing at them.

‘The portal of Saiphe is opening,’ Karsa said while laughing. ‘I’m going to be Python Stone too, living Python Stone to increase my powers.’

Suddenly they all got swallowed by an enormous gate. Tara woke up again. 'What is going on?' she asked Lars.

Sharp pieces of python stone pierced themselves into their skins. 'Ha ha ha,' Karsa shouted. 'Isn't this amazing. We become python stone.'

Strange fluids streamed everywhere having a delicious smell, luring them to drink. 'Don't drink it,' Lars said. Tara held her lips tightly on each other. Karsa was drinking and drinking. 'I'm becoming python stone,' he roared. Then he exploded.

There was a hole in the walls by which they could escape.

'Are we out now?' Tara asked.

'I hope so,' Lars said.

As for Tara : she wanted to forget about the python stone, but it seemed to follow her everywhere.

Chapter 3. The Wrath of the Python Stone

Lars took her to a cave where many snakes were. Everywhere there was snakeslime and the strong piercing smell of it. Lars took the slime and smeared it on his body. 'Do the same,' he said to Tara. 'This is the only way to be safe against the powers of the python stone.' Tara immediately did what he said.

Behind the cave there was a large cave with a small lake, with rocks with many spiders and crabs having eyes on their backs. Again there was much slime. 'Do it,' he said to Tara. 'Smear it on your body.' Tara did immediately what he said. Lars was sliding into the water. 'Follow me,' he said. He swam to the other side. There were many slimy webs hanging here.

‘Breathe it in,’ he said, which she did. ‘Follow me,’ he said. He swam into the depths to a light cave underwater. Tara followed him. In another cave they stepped out of the water again. It was a dry place here with dry sand. By a tunnel they came into a dark cave, very huge. Here a lot of men stood in black armories and with black helmets. Lars and Tara hid behind a rock. Close to them there was a cupboard where they could take an armory for themselves. Soon they stood close to the others.

‘I want you to know,’ their leader spoke, ‘soon there is no way back to the python stone anymore. We have something bigger. While the python stone will be a trap more and more. We do not have any time to lose. You all know which substance is bigger than the python stone. You all know the substance which will trigger the powers of the python stone, and it will be the only thing safe against it. The universe will blow itself up. It is the eye of orion. We have come all our way from the Pleiades to find it here, and we found it. Soon we will be the rulers. We will build a new universe by the eye of orion. And the python stone will be nothing but some dynamite to clean it all up. Romustar, activate the python stone, and let me show you how the eye of orion will protect me, will protect us, against it.’

A man stepped forwards having a small machine in his hand with a red ball. He pushed some buttons like a code and fire seemed to come forth from the ball. Then the leader showed them a blue eye in which he blew air. It became bigger and bigger and turned brown and red. It was like a fleece now. Then he took the small machine from which fire seemed to come forth, put it into the fleece, while the flame was dying. All men were clapping in their hands. ‘See,’ the leader said. ‘The python stone can’t do anything ...’ but then there were explosions everywhere. The men got into panic. ‘It’s the wrath of the python stone,’ the leader was screaming. Then he was burning like all the other men.

‘See how important the slime was,’ Lars whispered to Tara. Tara nodded.

‘Follow me,’ Lars said. They went through another gate and it seemed they were back in the palace of the White Spider Queen again. ‘Who are you?’ Tara asked. Lars gave her a hand and said: ‘I am the guard of the palace of the White Spider Queen. I have found you, and I have been given to you as your guard as well.’

‘As a gift of the White Spider Queen?’ Tara asked.

Lars nodded with a smile.

The End

Sharla the Head Hunter II

Chapter 1. Bellatrix Casino

Chapter 2. Crocodile Tower

Chapter 1. Bellatrix Casino

She had been called the skeleton-brooder. She could bring them alive by caressing their skulls. 'I believe you, Tara,' some women were shouting. She could raise the dead. But sometimes it just didn't work, like there were some bigger powers in the game.

In the distance there was an egg between huge spiders. The spiders were very hairy and they had jewels all over their bodies. The evil witch was standing up again. A small crocodile came out of the egg, and suddenly turned into Sharla the Head Hunter. She was dressed in a garment with a cape, while smoke was all around her. With quick steps she ran towards Tara from Rhodes, raised her spear, threw it, and missed.

There was a fight for three days against Sharla the Head Hunter. Sharla finally left. She visited her old home again, a place no one knew, a place along the river. It was a hidden place, surrounded by dark trees. The bushes and trees grew tightly together so that no one could come through. Sharla made some soup of some old bones. When she drank it she came to her powers again. In this land she just couldn't die. Her mouth was full of spiders. Pale white skulls were staring at her. She poured some of the soup on the skulls and suddenly knights stood before her, her knights. 'I want you to bring down Tara,' she spoke.

The knights were roaring and were changing into black panthers. They ran out of the hut and smelled where Tara was already. They could smell her bloodline. Tara however could dominate them by her sword.

Finally Sharla went to her main realm at the Westside of the Mitstik River, where she had her largest collection of skulls. Sharla always had her cycle of coming alive again, and in this Elephant City played a big part. It was a city in the west of her area, a city she dominated. In secret she drank all sorts of blood here to get her strength back again. The cycle was like her oracle speaking to her. It was her heart. Under her skin there was always a snake sliding, her father, the Skeleton Eater.

Tara had her own cycle : the black snake inside. Tara smelled blood, in such a sense that she knew that Sharla was on top of herself again. Sharla's return was soon big news in Elephant City. Her newest trick was turning others into killer-pigs by some sort of mixture of blood. She would put these predator-pigs into arena's or in her army.

Later Tara heard that Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter, an old friend of hers, had killed Sharla the Head Hunter. Soon he came to her on his motorcycle. He had saved her a few times, and she believed him. Especially when he showed her the head of Sharla. 'Want to buy it ?' he asked.

'Yes, I would hang it at the wall of my cave,' Tara said.

'Good,' Lars said.

Tara was very glad she saw this old friend again. She knew that she could always count on him. But as you could expect : Sharla's headless body found them soon. 'Ah, a headless chicken,' Lars said. 'I forgot to cut off the rest.'

'Okay, be careful you won't touch any of the bottle she has in her hands, Tara,' Lars said. 'It's probably the stuff by which she breeds her killerpigs.' Lars jumped on his motorcycle, grasped Tara and drove away.

'Oh, I will get you,' Sharla shrieked. 'No worries.'

'There is not any way to beat that witch,' Tara said to Lars.

'Oh, I know something,' Lars said. He brought Tara to his house, and showed her his many mysterious weapons. 'I have an army,' he said.

'So has she,' Tara said.

'I'm better,' Lars said with a smile on his face.

'Show me,' Tara said.

Lars grasped a gun from the wall. 'Let's go,' he said. Soon they had her in sight again. Lars loaded the gun and fired. The headless body fell on the ground. Lars shot again, and it exploded.

'Simple,' he said.

'You don't know Sharla,' Tara said. 'She always returns. She has a cycle.'

‘Yes, but she becomes weaker,’ Lars said. ‘Her cycle has called for me, finally.’

‘Who are you ?’ Tara asked.

‘I am her nemesis,’ Lars spoke, ‘her destruction.’

‘Are you for real ?’ Tara asked, while she pinched him in the arm.

Lars nodded. Suddenly blood came out of Lars’s mouth. ‘Lars, what’s wrong ?’ Tara asked.

‘She’s in me,’ Lars said. Then he fell down. ‘She’s in me now,’ he said. ‘I will fight her now inside. Please take my keys and my house.’ Then Lars died. Tara knew he had sacrificed himself. She was sad. She took his motorcycle and drove to his house, as he said.

There were strange objects in his house, many skulls. In a sense he looked a lot like Sharla. Then Tara heard laughing in her head and something in her head stang her. She woke up in hell, while Sharla’s head was in front of her, laughing at her. Suddenly she also saw Lars.

‘Am I dead ?’ Tara asked.

‘In hell,’ Lars said. ‘The only way to fight Sharla.’ Wolfskulls were surrounding them, piercing them, and soon they both hung at rocks where birds began to eat from their meat. They were in the burning sun. ‘It’s like she’s invincible,’ Tara roared, ‘like the dying and the rising sun.’

‘It’s a pretty and good example of rebirth,’ Lars spoke. He was moaning because of the pain. Then everything got dark. Sharla was teasing them by feathers, and even in this position she kicked them and beat them. She showed them her hell motor-cycle to make them jealous. ‘When everything is in fire, with this thing I always escape,’ she said. She took a wire and bound at around their necks. Then she acted like she was strengling them. ‘Oh, the snakes will come after awhile to do the same,’ she spoke.

Their souls were burning in hell, tortured, until their ghosts slid away. They were both nothing but shadows now, winds of hell. 'Hold my hand,' Lars said. Tara's hand slid to his. 'I've been here before,' Lars said. 'This is my cycle.'

'In the Bellatrix Casino we rise again,' Lars said.

'What is that ?' Tara asked.

'A beach,' Lars said. 'When there is flood, it's a casino.'

The beach was full of heads, all waiting for the flood. The flood would be like a stairway, like lights taking them higher, until they would be out of hell. But if they would lose, they would be drawn deeper.

'I'm not a gambler,' Tara said. 'I hate those games.'

'Play for your life,' Lars said.

But they ended up below the beach, where a mill was spinning. Here they became nothing but air.

'I am a cloud,' Tara said.

'The coffee will wake you up,' Lars said.

'What do you mean ?' Tara asked.

‘Oh, there will be coffee for all losers, giving them another chance,’ Lars said.

‘I’m sick of these games,’ Tara said.

‘Play for life,’ Lars said.

In the distance they heard Sharla laughing.

Chapter 2. Crocodile Tower

But again they seemed to lose every game, and they only slid and sank deeper and deeper. ‘Do you still work in the palace of the White Spider Queen?’ Tara asked.

‘Yes,’ Lars said, ‘but not in the weekends. Well, it’s good you bring that up here, for I know a secret path to the palace.’

‘Ah, like you did before,’ Tara said.

‘Yes,’ Lars said. They came close to some sort of machine behind glass. It was a coiling elevator, working by a strange sort of fire. ‘My way to get density again,’ Lars said.

‘What is it?’ Tara asked.

‘You will see,’ Lars said.

It was a crocodile tower. Lars pushed some buttons, and they got density again, while they were coiling upstairs. Soon they got into the palace of the White Spider Queen.

But when they saw Sharla the Head Hunter there sitting on the throne of the White Spider Queen Lars almost couldn't say anything. 'Come here,' Sharla said, 'and show yourself to your master.'

'You aren't master of him,' Tara shouted. But Lars slowly moved towards Sharla like he was under her spell. White creatures seemed to jump forth from the throne. 'Throw him into the crocodile tower again,' Sharla shouted.

'No,' Tara shouted. But a strange machine was taking Lars by his arms and his legs, moving him towards the crocodile tower in which they threw him. 'I am your queen now,' Sharla shouted.

'No way,' Tara said. 'Guards, throw her also into the crocodile tower.'

But Tara grasped a sword from the wall, and kicked the white guards away until she reached the throne. Sharla stood up while lightning came forth from her hand slamming Tara against the wall. 'You can't begin anything against me,' Sharla said. 'You are nothing.'

Lars came up again in the strange machine. 'T..T...Tara,' he stuttered. 'She has taken the crown of the White Spider Queen. If you get it, she will be defeated.'

Sharla began to laugh. 'There is no any way you can get this crown.' She took it from her head threw it into the air while it was changing into a white bird. Tara grasped a bow from the wall, took an arrow and shot the bird while it fell into her arms and changed into a crown again.

'P...p...put it on your head, T...Tara,' Lars stuttered. Tara did what he said, while Sharla fell down in front of the throne. 'I am lost,' she shrieked. Then she disappeared in a flame. Quickly Tara helped Lars out of the machine. 'I will lead you to the White Spider Queen's private room now,' Lars said, 'to show you all the objects of her powers. They are yours now.'

It was a major room with a huge veiled bed, and many objects which once had made a queen of the White Spider Queen. Most of these objects she gathered from her defeated enemies. The most beautiful treasures Tara could find here. She fell down on the bed, and thought she could use some sleep. Lars of course would watch over her.

The End

The Gladiators of Lakshor II

Chapter 1. The knife of Gitdugal

Chapter 2. Emperor of Tantalos

Chapter 3. The Eye of the Cobra

Chapter 1. The knife of Gitdugal

Tara walked towards Gitdugal. She had found a sharp branch like a stake. But Gitdugal took her above his head and smashed her against a tree. 'Dream of me,' he shouted at Tara. Tara bowed down and fell at his feet. Again he took her high above his head and this time he threw her far away. Again Gitdugal ran towards her and this time he took her into a tight grip. He tried to strangle her. He also bit her. Tara lost it completely and he threw her into the river again, where she was more dead than alive. Then Gitdugal dived into the river, and wanted to drown her there. Tara dived underwater by her last strength, swam to his leg and bit him. Blood was streaming into the water. He grasped her and pushed her under even more. At his belt a sheathed knife hung. She grasped the knife and ripped his stomach open. That was the end of Gitdugal. His grip got weaker, and soon she had beheaded him. She raised his skull into the air and shouted to the slaves in the gardens : 'It is done. You are free now.'

It was a beautiful day. Her tribe was free now, and so many others.

The knife of Gitdugal she would keep forever, also his skull. She brought them to her cave, where they would have a place. She would stay around her tribe to protect them.

She didn't talk much about the knife of Gitdugal. She kept it hidden in her cave. One day the knife had been stolen, and I saw Tara losing her powers more and more. After decades she found it back. This is the story. She had a confrontation with the pirate prince, an evil commander of the gladiators of Lakshor. The most evil men came to his ship, which some would call a spaceship. The ship was full of skeletons dressed in garments and capes, giving advice to the pirate prince. They kept women locked up in the ship as well. The skeletons used to play many games, which they used as oracles to hear what the gods had to say. They listened to the winds. They got the mission to steal the knife of Gitdugal from Tara's cave.

One of the skeletons had to guard the knife of Gitdugal. The knife was important because of its sleep-inducing powers.

It was a ghostship. The women and girls who had been locked up in the insides of the ship had their own rooms. In the nights they would wander through the ship, but they could never leave. Their hearts had been chained by the knife of Gitdugal. The knife of Gitdugal always drowned these hearts, so the women were often shrieking, especially in the nights.

Some of the women were Vikings and had been kidnapped out of other boats. Those Vikings often worshipped dark skeleton gods. Most of these women lived on the planets of Gemini.

Erator was the Viking ruler of Gemini, but he also had to bow down before the knife of Gitdugal. They skinned him and hung his skeleton at the front of the ship. Further they decorated the ship by the bones and skulls of the kings of the planets of Gemini : Castor, Pollux, Wasat and Alhena, but the Viking king of Mebsuta they couldn't beat. He finally called for the help of Tara from Rhodes. Tara was very glad that he knew where the knife was, and she would help him getting his women back.

Together they went in a boat to the ship of the pirate prince one day. Tara was a good swordfighter, and so was Mebsuta, but the pirate prince they couldn't beat. They ended up chained at a wall in the depths of the ship. The pirates were cannibals, knifelickers, and first Tara and Mebsuta had to eat a lot to become fat. But the food was so awful that they vomited everything out all the time. In the middle of the night one of the women found them and unchained them. She knew where the knife of Gitdugal was. The guard was sleeping. They took the keys out of his pocket and opened the door to the room where the knife was. Quickly Tara grasped the knife. They freed the other women and escaped from the ship.

They swam towards an island, but because of the many crocodiles many women died.

And on the island there were nothing but pirates who didn't let them enter the island. In rage Tara and Mebsuta killed many crocodiles and built a ship of it. They used everything they could find.

There were times the pirate-gladiators of Lakshor really gave them hard times, but finally a man called Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter built a control-panel to trap them. He could use them as marionets, and built an army of them. Lars more and more started to show up in the Tara's life to show himself as her guard. He was a technician, and could find a way to Tara's heart.

He also helped Mebsuta to raise Gemini again. It became the biggest Viking Empire in the universe.

Lakshor was like a deep pit worse than hell. Tara knew all about it. But by the help of Lars she could take it over. Lars installed a clock there, which was the clock of change. Tara was so grateful to Lars that she gave him the knife of Gitdugal.

Chapter 2. Emperor of Tantalos

In the depths of Lakshor there was a realm called Taroon, also called the road to Tantalos, the world of hunger. Lars finally became an emperor there, all by the help of Tara. Tara was almost in love with this man, who had such a soft heart. There was something in his eyes which made her melt, but savage as she was, she wouldn't answer his love. She repressed it. She chose for the lonely life. Taroon and Tantalos were in his hands now, so she had fulfilled her mission. These two areas had always been the secret of Lakshor, and now these were in good hands. Lars was also a man at his own. It was here he finally built the greatest warship. He called his ship the flyslayer.

He raised the gladiators of lakshor here and gave them a good life. He raised himself an army of which he was the captain. There was no warship but the Flyslayer. The gladiators of lakshor were in good hands now. The flyslayer terminated a lot of fly-rulers of lakshor.

Lars was a man at his own. He had a great heart, and taught Tara a lot about love. But savage as Tara was, she became irritated. She taught him about the savage life, and thus a deep friendship rose. Lars was such a gentleman, almost civilized, but Tara knew he had to be that way, for he was a spy. He was the guard of the White Spider Queen palace, a palace connected to so many worlds, a palace to which he always returned.

Lars made of many gladiators of lakshor also guards of the throne of the White Spider Queen, so that they could live a double life more or less. Some became guards like him. Where Taroon was the world of riches, Tantalos was the world of poverty, but Lars would switch them. He built the switch deep in the heart of Tantalos, which he called his world. The world of Lars Hemmerlitch-Richter was a big world, a righteous world. He was the one playing with the switch, but it was attached to a clock. He actually called it a time-bomb-clock, as it always brought a lot of destruction.

It was actually all switching between a red light and a green light, and the rhythm made everything soft. Lars used it to open portals.

Lars was a prophet with supernatural gifts. He always used to amaze Tara with his knowledge about things he naturally couldn't know. But she could expect that from the guard of the White Spider Queen palace. She understood why she had chosen him.

Chapter 3. The Eye of the Cobra

Tara loved to see how Lars used the gladiators of lakshor as marionets. They were part of the time-bomb-clock, and when they exploded he would bring them to life again. They were all robotic, and became his knights. Lars was an expert in Python Stone Technology, and knew

exactly how to use it without falling in the trap of its trickery. It was the trickster stone, without a doubt, but Lars had learnt to deal with it. He had learnt to balance its energies, and to use it for the good.

But there were things in the depths of Taroan and Tantalos Lars didn't understand. Taroan was the history of Lakshor, the old part, with unknown mysteries, holding things they called the dragon candles, shapeshifting objects guarding the secrets of this history and of its life. These ones were sorcerers, called the pirates of Taroan, the older gladiators of Lakshor. They had been made by Diabrillis, who was a dollmaker. Diabrillis was the one who had built Lakshor with all its secret depths.

One could only come to the eternal riches by the eternal hunger, where the pirates of Taroan originally came from. They were the secret of the living cobra stones, the only way to survive the dangerous forces of the python stone. The pirates of Taroan were the guards of this world, and they actually dominated Lars. Lars suffered from hyperventilation at times, and from stuttering, all because of the weight of these pirates. They lived in his heart, and they wanted him to become initiated into the forces of the cobra stone. Lars was their marionette.

These guards stood on walls too high for Lars. These walls were the walls of fire, spread throughout the universe, all coming forth from the domain of Diabrillis. They needed to keep the secrets of the cobra stone, but they had an interest in Lars. One day they took him to the realm of Diabrillis. It was a place he wouldn't forget too fast. Diabrillis was like a black and white octopus transmitting red beams. But he could take many forms as he was a sorcerer and a shapeshifter.

'Why have you brought this unworthy man to me?' Diabrillis roared to the guards.

But the pirates didn't say anything. 'Well, have you lost your tongue?' Diabrillis asked. Diabrillis moved closer to Lars, who was still in his machine, a strange vehicle attached to his arms and legs making him bigger.

'You look like you are in a wheelchair,' Diabrillis said to Lars. Lars pushed some buttons and a fire beam clashed against the skin of Diabrillis. Diabrillis started to laugh. 'What do you want with your wheelchair, invalid man. There's no place for you here. This has all been designed for me.'

Then Lars pushed another button, while red lights went on and missiles and rockets came forth from the machine. There was some smoke, but Diabrillis still had fun with it. 'Why not using your crutches? I bet you can hit hard by them.'

Diabrillis came closer and started to break the machine by his tentacles. Lars understood the pirates of Taroan weren't glad with their boss. Maybe they wanted him to do something about it. Quickly he tried another button. It was an ice beam. Diabrillis froze immediately, and got into a shock. 'Guards, do something,' he shouted. 'I can't move.' But the pirates of Taroan climbed on the machine. 'Go through the red door on the left,' they said to Lars. Lars could move his machine through the door, while the pirates followed him. But Diabrillis already started to melt. 'You won't come far,' he shouted.

Lars stepped out of his machine, took the knife of Gitdugal he once got from Tara and threw it into the heart of Diabrillis. It was the sleep-inducing knife leading to death. But the tentacles

of Diabrillis seemed to grow, turning into enormous pythons. Another machine came forward, with a pirate of Taroon in it, an old gladiator of lakshor. It was a scorpion vehicle with scissors. Quickly it began to cut the pythons' heads off, and more scissor machines seemed to enter to do the same.

'Don't tell him the secret,' one of the pythons roar. But the pirates of Taroon were merciless against the pythons. They opened other red doors. Cobras seemed to come forth, and they formed a circle around Lars. 'No, not the wheel of the cobra stones,' another python roared. The cobras formed a tight wheel which started to spin. 'It's the key of life,' a pirate of Taroon said. 'It opens all the gates of survival. It's the eye of the cobra.'

Lars lost consciousness and later he woke up in a bed, while Tara was holding his hand. 'You have done it, hero,' she said. 'You have freed the pirates of Taroon by defeating Diabrillis. You have freed the old gladiators of lakshor.' Some pirates stood close to them, smiling. 'And we will tell you all the secrets,' they said.

The End

The Clowns of Trigidad

Chapter 1. The Coded Gun

Tara was on her way to the prince of Trigidad, a city on Mars. When she came there the prince was desparate. He told Tara about a gang of clowns terrorizing Trigidad. They had big machines by which they could mess with the minds of the citizens, and they made a lot of noise. No one knew what to do against those clowns.

Tara watched some of the pictures he had. 'There is nothing we can do,' the prince said. 'We really need your help. People have the feeling they are drowning in themselves, taken over by strange devices.' The prince sighed. He was happy Tara finally came. He trusted her. She was almost almighty in his eyes.

Tara took some of the pictures and went outside. There were strange orange and red rays in the air. Quickly one of the clowns came down from a machine, and took her in a grip. 'What do you want to do about us, lady,' he moaned. Tara slammed him against a tree. She took his gun and aimed it at him. 'Listen, you dumb piece of plastic,' she said. 'Go back to your toy world.' She shot him in the head, but the clown was only laughing, and then went away. It seemed the clowns were immune against their own weapons.

The gun started beeping, and soon it got very hot. Tara had to drop the gun. The gun was coded and didn't recognize Tara as the owner. Tara ran away and dived, while the gun was exploding. She hid behind a tree. She saw the clown running in the distance, and she decided to follow him. The clown went into a forest, and after running for a long time she followed him into a strange sort of domain. She hid behind a wall, and heard some of the clowns talking. They talked about taking over Trigidad, but first they needed to destroy it's prince. Tara felt a strange fire in her bones. She knew the prince was in danger. From her back she took her sword, and then went to the clowns to cut off their heads, but the clowns were only laughing, and took their heads in their hands. Their faces were halve white halve black. 'We are just holograms, lady,' one of them said. They smiled at her. 'Our true selves are on Reticuli, the Dark Constellation, you're fighting a projection.'

They took Tara in a grip and locked her up in a prison made of red rays. Whenever she touched a ray it burnt her skin, and the rays were moving. After awhile the rays moved closer to her, while she heard the clowns laughing in the distance. Tara roared because it was burning her flesh away. 'No !' she screamed. She took one of her knives and brought it between her teeth. The clowns were holding a sort of device. Then Tara took the knife from between her teeth and held it into the rays until it was burning, and then she threw it at the device, while it exploded. Tara was free now, and ran away from the clowns. She ran into another hall where there was a big machine. She knew that by this machine their holograms came here. She stepped into the cabin after she had pushed some buttons on the computer. Within a few seconds she was on Reticuli, on one of the main planets.

She stared at some clowns with black faces, and they stared at her. This time she could behead them as these weren't holograms. Behind the machine room there was a huge hall with frozen people like dolls. She wandered in this hall for hours, and she realized that all the other worlds were just holograms. Finally she found herself and realized that she was a hologram herself. She could step into herself and it was like she was coming alive this time. It was like she had finally found her powers. Then after awhile she found the prince of Trigidad. She laid her body against his body, and she could melt him a bit. He could move, and breath. 'Tara, I ... I ...' the prince said.

'It's okay,' Tara said. 'Let's start a new life here.' She explained him a bit what was going on. They could find the exit of this hall, and came into a huge wilderness. A black chief dressed with leopard skins looked at them. 'Oko bok lulu,' he said. Then a young woman came forward. The people here were very friendly. Soon they realized that they had escaped from a dangerous institute. This was the real life.

Tara was among the panthers now. They walked freely here among humans, and they were hospital. She loved to stare into this huge wilderness, so many layers of forest and jungle. It was intoxicating her mind and flesh.

Tara woke up in the palace of the prince of Trigidad. It was just a dream. He had an empire in the jungle, and Tara was his guest. 'Have you slept well ?' he asked Tara.

'Yes,' Tara said. The prince was surrounded by panthers and snakes, and well-dressed with leopard-skins.

'Have you had strange dreams ?' he asked. 'You know, we have drunk a lot yesterday, exotic drinks, and they can play with the mind. It's actually all information, symbolic information.'

'Yes,' Tara said. 'I dreamt of the clowns.'

'The clowns ?' the prince said. 'Oh yes, they were dangerous zombificators of the past. They ruled our people but we are free of them now.'

'Where are they now ?' Tara asked.

'Under the ground,' the prince said.

'I also dreamt that I found my powers back,' Tara said.

‘Oh yes, you will find them here,’ the prince said. ‘I have waited so long for you, and I will share with you the secrets of your existence.’

‘What do you mean by under the ground,’ Tara asked.

‘Well, they came from under the ground, and they returned to it,’ the prince said.

‘They were savages, and they just used white masks, all to build their empire, their city, and they kidnapped us to that,’ the prince said. ‘From dust they came and to dust they have returned. It’s finally ours now.’

Again Tara woke up. It seemed to be a dream within a dream. She was staring into the face of a clown. ‘Where am I?’ she asked. ‘Trinidad,’ the clown said. ‘Don’t you remember anymore?’

‘No,’ Tara said, ‘how did I come here?’

The clown showed her a strange fluid in plastic. ‘A snake-bite,’ he said.

‘Am I dead?’ she asked.

‘No,’ he said, ‘but you are fighting against it. You are in delirium. Your body is making antidotes at the moment. You will be okay. Snakes are just the holograms of their spirits. They live in the underground. They are clowns. You are with us now.’

Chapter 2. Fallen Angels

I wondered where I was. I was in Snake City, in the depths of the underground, where the clowns lived. Their holograms lived on the surfaces as snakes, just to distract others from Snake City. They had sent their omens to the world above, programmed with a message of Judgement and Doom. It was the last invitation to come to Snake City by the means of complexed rituals or just a snake-bite. I, Tara, seemed to be their prisoner. It was a strange cult, a strange religion. The clowns were black, but painted themselves in white very often.

But more and more I realized that I was still dreaming. Did I eat something wrong, or was it just a long long night. I woke up and saw flashes of spiders, very intense. Or was this just a vision. Was it spider venom, and did they keep me in these dreams ? It seemed I couldn't wake up anymore, like I was in a coma. The spiders had pink spots on their backs. Was I hallucinating ? It looked so real. I could feel them creep across my body. It was burning me. Suddenly I saw flashes of flies, strange exotic flies, and they started to come down on the spiders to eat them, and lay eggs in them. The baby flies grew up very fast and lived from the flesh of the spiders. Strange electricity moved through me. I stood up, and I was pretty sure I had fallen into a nest but now I was rising up again, still intoxicated, like I was drunk. A warrior stood before me with a bandana. I asked him who he was. 'Come,' he said. 'I will lead you to my camp.'

They were very friendly to me, and very hospital. But then I woke up in the palace of the prince of Trigidad again. It was like I had walked in a circle. 'Clowns, Tara,' he spoke. 'Here, drink from this, and you will stay awake.' I drank and stood up.

'Who are the clowns ?' I asked.

'The clowns of Trigidad are flies,' he said. 'I have saved you from them, but their poison needs to come out. I just gave you some stuff, so it will do.'

'Did I fall into their nest ?' I asked.

'Yes,' the prince spoke.

'Who are you then ?' I asked.

‘I am their prince,’ he said. ‘But they have fallen away from me. They are mere fallen angels.’

‘Are you God then ?’ I asked. ‘Am I dead ? Am I in heaven or hell ?’

But there was no one anymore. I stood in the jungle, and there was such a sweetness. I was close to a nest of exotic flies. I pushed some leaves into my nose. I couldn’t afford myself to smell it again. Then I walked away from it as far as I could, and continued my journey.

The Killer-Dreamer

Chapter 1. The Sword of Malot

There was a sorcerer living on the hills, holding the land of Malot in grip by a bewitched sword. In the night voices came from the sword to torment the minds of it’s victims, so that they couldn’t sleep. Tara visited the sorcerer one day. She went for a journey on the hills, called Fire Hills, where the sorcerer lived. He stood high on one of the tops. His castle was like a cloud.

The sword flew forth from his hands, and it was filled with voices, filled with souls. The souls didn’t seem to have any rest, and they were screaming. Tara raised her shield, but they broke it off. The souls were like dogs, but they had mouths like lions.

Something struck her head, and suddenly a whisper said : ‘We are the boys from the lion, locked up in a cloud city, but we do not want to leave, for there is no other way.’

‘Come with me,’ the sorcerer said. Tara was like hypnotized, and followed the sorcerer. The land of Malot just seemed to be an illusion, all to veil the cloud city. ‘Do you want some tea?’ the sorcerer asked. Around him lions appeared. They had such pretty mouths. Tara was still hypnotized and sat down in one of the chairs of the castle.

‘You were already hypnotized,’ the wizard said. ‘I’m just breaking it off now.’

‘I feel like I’m drunk,’ Tara said. ‘Where does the city path lead to?’

‘It leads to the lion,’ the wizard said. ‘It is the power of the sword, and it has the power to heal itself. That is why it created the illusions, to veil itself, and hide itself against dangers.’

The wizard led her to a huge portal. In the distance she could see a statue of a lion. The lion could move, and stared at her. ‘Come,’ it roared. When she came closer, the gigantic lion took her up in his claw. Then he put her on his back, opened his wings and flew.

Tara woke up in one of the houses of Malot where she had slept. It was a dream. She felt like she was on the waves of dreams and illusions. She smiled while watching the ceiling. ‘My powers are getting back,’ she said. At the wall a sword hung.

But she was in the hands of the wizard, playing with her soul. He had struck her a long time ago, and her life was just an illusion. But his eye was on her, he seemed to like her.

One day he called for her, he called her in a dream, and she found herself between the pillars of a huge portal, huger than she ever saw. The wizard sat on a throne in a sort of bedroom. Snakes were sliding, and lions were on both sides. ‘Come closer, my darling,’ he said. ‘I want to give you the Sword of Malot.’ He reached out for her hands and gave it to her. ‘The sword reflects the bond between the king and his daughter. I could only reach you by fragile stairways of illusions, but now I have you here with me. The sword has called you forward. Rule the world with me, ... daughter.’

Tara smiled, and accepted the sword. The killer-dreamer she was.

Father had many angels. They all had their parts in bringing her back. She was still hypnotized. She got an armour, and two winged lions rose at her sides. 'My powers are getting back,' she said.

'Yes,' Father said. 'You are a goddess.'

She raised her sword while lightning was striking it. Old men sat themselves down next to the wizard, the king. Then a spirit appeared before the king. 'Esdul,' said the king. 'Spread as many illusions around this place as you can, so that this place will be hidden for eternity. The king has reunited with his daughter.' And the killer-dreamer went out that day, to cause a massacre, and to let them all live on in illusions. He was a strange assassin, bringing life and death at the same time. Tara loved the boy, this spirit. He kept them safe. He seemed to be the riddle of the sword. He belonged to the family.

The boy seemed to be very creative, more than average.

Chapter 2. The Legend

When he got older he became more sinister, and he was the dread of the castle. He was still the giver of Life and Death, but also of Tragedy. But these were all webs to protect the castle, all illusions. And there was tea dripping from the webs, called the lion's tea, and people got drunk of it. It hypnotized them, while they became one with the Sea of Dreams. It was from this sea Tara came forth to finally meet her father and her brother.

Through the years the lion's tea got wilder and wilder, like a lion searching for its children. He would find them, and bring them in. Through the years the lion's tea started to burn brighter, hotter, faster, like it was saying : We do not have much time left. There was only one way out : Tara's path.

Only by the Sword of Malot there was hope to finally wake up. Often the Sword was wildly and mightily moving above the Sea of Dreams, looking for a delicate harvest. Esdul became a winged creature more and more, still holding his boy qualities, but he was an old man now, having a gospel to preach. Of course he was a swindler, a liar and a trickster, but he was a riddler as well, offering truth to those who were ready. He made ships for them in the dangerous sea, and gave them vehicles to fly with. He became a sailmaker and a wingmaker, and he loved to use colors in layers, like fragile stairways of illusion between the several

waves of the sea of dreams. He gave them stories to fly, fables to heal, legends to be safe, he built towers in the sea, like an echo sent out from home, but went astray and false in the wind. Esdul was a legend himself, only to be trusted as a riddle, the riddle of the sword. He built a city in the sea, and he became it's king. He created it's tall beaches, as a way to bring them in. The beaches were always burning, and there were always lions around, like it was a huge oven.

It was a summer city, and the Sword of Malot reflected so much of it's brilliance. To spend one night in this city was an experience you would never forget, and those nights were much discussed. It was a veiled city, but the veils were always torn.

The End

The New Order

Once in awhile it happened that at some places on Mars wizardboys got born. They were called the boys from lynx, and they could form a real threat in the future, so there were a lot

of boyhunters around trying to keep Mars safe from possible terror. Often boys died without reason, because of the risen paranoia. People feared the boys from lynx almost like nothing else, and often also innocent boys had to suffer under that. Sperewer was an assassin, a hunter sent out to search for the boys from lynx.

Tara was very sceptic about it. Parents often lost their boys without reason, dying at the hands of those assassins. Sperewer seemed to be the leader of those assassins, and one day Tara visited his place deep in a forest. It was a veiled place, he lived there in a castle, a fortress. Mystery was hanging in this place. Tara took an arrow out of her quiver and made her bow ready.

She saw Sperewer sitting on his throne. In this hall there were many cages full of boys.

‘Sperewer,’ Tara said, when she walked forward, directing the arrow at him. ‘Look at what you are doing. You don’t know what kind of boys you have in your cages.’

‘No,’ Sperewer said, ‘but they are here for research.’

‘You know why I am here,’ Tara said. ‘This has to stop. These kids do not have a life in all these researches. You destroy more than that you rebuild. You are much worse than the boys from lynx themselves, whoever they are.’

Sperewer stood up, and said : ‘Listen, lady, you do not know anything what you are saying. When one of the boy from lynx would be able to reach manhood, it could mean the end of Mars.’

‘How do you know that,’ Tara asked.

‘Well,’ said Sperewer, ‘haven’t you read the history books. Even a young boy from lynx can be dictators controlling many countries and areas at the same time. Have you read about their works ?’

‘Sperewer,’ Tara said. ‘I am not dumb. You work for money. You have been hired by the aristocracy because they want to make sure their control will stand tall. Have you read about the works of the aristocracy. It has always been a mean game, and now the parents of these innocent children suffer under your hand.’

Tara walked towards the cages and opened some of them. ‘These kids belong to me,’ Tara said. ‘I have promised their parents I will not return without them.’

The children ran wildly through the castle, making their way out, and started to climb on the roofs.

Tara had still her arrow directed at Sperewer. He could hardly breath.

Since that day the nights were darker than ever, but at least the children were free. The boys from lynx often gathered on the roofs of the houses in the middle of the night. The older ones had motor-cycles.

An old man showed up as their father. Some called him sandman. The old man taught the children about a lot of things, but many people thought he was crazy. He often walked in his pyamas. Some thought he was a wizard. He slept when it was day, and was up at nights. He had also a motor-cycle. The children loved to watch it, and to ride on it.

‘It is time to bring the light on Mars,’ the old man said one day. ‘You will be it’s saviour.’ Soon the boys from lynx got the high positions on Mars and brought many aristocracies down, all for the new order. They had powers to raise the dead from the graves, and to heal the terminally ill. They were the wizard children. They were a new religion.

They were like sons of the dragon, like wild cats. They moved to the seas a lot, where they used to go to the beaches on their motor-cycles, and they gathered along the rivers. They preached an aggressive gospel, as the only way for Mars to survive.

They became the new dictators of Mars, and no one could really do anything about it, even not Tara. So she struggled with the fact that she had set them free. But she realized more and more that Sperewer made them like they were.

One day she approached one of the thrones of the boys of lynx, where many of them ruled together. They were staring at Tara, realizing she was the one who had set them free.

‘You do many good things,’ Tara said, ‘but are you realizing what you are doing. Some things are just too much. You are the terror here more than ever.’

‘Tara,’ one of the boys said. ‘Many of our race have been killed at the hands of the aristocracy. We are lost already in hate and vengeance. The bitterness is eating us. There’s no hope for us, and no hope for this planet. We are in a vicious circle and that is okay.’

‘So you even contradict your own gospel?’ Tara asked.

‘No,’ the boy said. ‘This is the only way. What we do has to be done. It is our fate, and the fate of the planet. A new planet will rise.’

Tara saw the despair in their eyes, the sadness and the anger. ‘Can I do anything for you. This is not the way,’ Tara said.

‘Tara,’ one of the boys said. ‘We have a stone in our hearts, the stone of the dragon. If you remove it, we are dead, but then all is lost.’

‘I do not know,’ Tara said. ‘I think what you are doing now is the way to lose. Join me, stop with your aristocratic ways, stop with this dictatorship, or you will have an enemy in me. I can be a good friend, but a better enemy. Do you want to meet my sword? It’s almost against you, and then there is no way to get it right.’

Some of the boys were laughing at Tara, while others were very serious, and knew that Tara was also very serious.

‘I see you have different opinions among you,’ Tara said.

‘Yes,’ one of the serious ones said. ‘I guess Tara is right. Maybe there should be a sifting among us. Who wants to join Tara, join her.’

But no one chose Tara’s side. After awhile Tara left, and went to the other thrones with the same story. At the end of the day she had only one boy from lynx joining her, but he was still doubting very much.

‘Tara,’ he said. ‘We can never be what you want us to be. We are savage, full of mystery and strategy. We have to do what we do, all to protect Mars against something worse.’

That night it was Tara’s sword against the boys from lynx. They weren’t against her, and didn’t want to hurt her, but they just didn’t want to choose her side.

‘Go for Sperewer, Tara,’ one of them was shouting. ‘Maybe he can help.’

‘Maybe I will do that,’ Tara said. ‘If there is no other way.’ But she knew Sperewer would be a bad choice, and besides that : he was locked up by the boys from lynx.

Tara had mixed feelings about the boys from lynx, and again there seemed to be nothing she could do. But the level of terror on Mars was rising more and more, even to the extreme and beyond. She had to do something. So one night she went to one of their castles, climbed through a window, and saw three of them lying on a bed. She tied their hands together and their feet. Then she took a knife, made a cut in their chest to put her hand in to search for their dragonstone. Soon she had three dragonstones in her hand. The boys were awake because of the pain, but they could easily remove the ties, and they started to laugh. Their wounds healed very fast. ‘Dumb, Tara,’ one of them said, while smiling. ‘A dead boy from lynx is more alive than a living boy from lynx. This is our secret for ages, and that’s why we have always survived.’

Then other boys from lynx stood in the door opening. Then Tara couldn’t recall what happened. She woke up in a coffin, and started to scream. After awhile she could open the coffin, and when she stepped out she was in a room full of glowing dragonstones. A boy from lynx stood there with the biggest dragonstone in his hand. ‘The secret of the survival of Mars,’ he said. ‘And the secret why our race has always survived.’

‘Become one of us,’ the boy said. He had a knife in his hand, while another boy entered the room. The other boy took the knife and wanted to make a hole in Tara’s chest to insert the stone. But Tara grasped his pulse. Tara ran out of the room. ‘Follow her !’ the boy shouted.

Tara ran upstairs, and climbed out of a window to come on the roof. Soon she could climb to the ground by a tree. But soon she had been surrounded by many boys from lynx. ‘Insert the stone,’ one of them shouted.

‘No,’ Tara shouted.

She woke up in her cave, sweating. It had been all a dream. But there was a boy standing in the opening of the cave. ‘Welcome to the boys from lynx,’ he said, and disappeared. Tara took her bow and went out of the cave, but didn’t see anyone. Before her feet lay some red glowing stones. She took them up. They were warm. She thought she knew already what was happening. She had drunk from a river full of hallucination flowers. Maybe their seed was already ruling in the river, and these flowers which grew there abundantly were also called the boys from lynx.

The End

The Arms of Sleep

The flower-prince had them all in his grip. He had poisoned their hearts, and kept them in hallucinations. Tara once visited him. She aimed her sword at him. ‘Tara, you are already in my dreams, it’s just a dream, you can’t do anything,’ he said. Tara knew she couldn’t begin

anything against him with her sword. The flower-prince started to laugh. It was like the flowerseed was dripping in her head. It was like there was a flower growing in her, totally controlling her.

She raised her sword, and then threw it at the prince. Then a wrestling started. The prince turned into a snake, playing with her mind. Tara woke up in sweat. The air was sweet. She stood up, and walked out of her cave. The flowers were so pretty today, and they stood tall, almost forming a fence. She went to the river to bath again. She wouldn't drink water here, as many hallucination-flowers grew here. It was in the waters already.

But deep inside she knew she was still dreaming. The wilderness was too pretty here. The flower-prince slid into the river. 'No escape from here, Tara,' he said. 'It is all in your head, so why fighting, why not giving yourself over to me.'

'What will I win by it?' she asked.

'Nothing,' the flower-prince said. 'It's not about you, but about me.'

'Why?' Tara asked. She felt herself so weak in his presence.

'I am the flower-prince,' the prince said. 'I know how to make art.'

Tara knew she couldn't escape. She hoped the hallucination would stop soon, but what if it had damaged her already. She knew that some substances of wild river-flowers could really possess you, and take you over step by step. Maybe she was already in that process.

The prince laughed. 'We will slowly bring you down,' he said.

Tara decided to drink again, maybe that would wash it all away. She let herself slide into the river, and it was like the river was taking her away, accepting her. She came up again. The flower-prince was gone. She stepped out of the river, and went to her cave again to sleep. She was so tired, while she knew she was still dreaming. She felt helpless in the arms of sleep.

She woke up in a strange temple full of flowers. Many statues of dreamgods were here. 'Am I dead?' she wondered. 'Is this heaven or hell?' There were some small thin rivers along the walls of the temple. Tara drank from the water again. She could even see the fishes swimming in it. The water was very bright, and full of flowers. 'Where am I?' she wondered. She felt so much peace. She stepped in a sort of boat, and then woke up in a paradise, among beautiful flowerfields. The wildest flowers were here. Seed was dripping from them, like honey.

Something was spitting her out, it was a huge meat-eating plant. She had a long wrestling against it, in its insides, in which she was almost completely taken over by it. It seemed she had won the fight, or the plant simply couldn't digest her. She had survived the jungle-cocoon.

The End

The Court-Wizard

Tara came in the Land of the Horseflies after a long journey. It was on a strange planet which she reached by her airsailer. When she stepped into the jungle two boys were staring at her. They shot something in her eye, and she fell asleep. She woke up in a palace, under a soft blanket made of feathers. A man in black, with a skeleton, stared at her. They offered her some fruit. She started to eat. Then the two boys came in the room. 'Good job, Arsan and Ramit, good job,' the man in the black dress said. 'Kemit Matuja Horso Ron,' one of the boys spoke, and left again.

'Do you know where you are?' the man in black asked.

‘Not really,’ Tara said. ‘All I know is that I was on my way to the Land of Horseflies.’

‘You are there,’ the man said. ‘Kata Hari Damar Sa Romu,’ the other boy said, and left.

The man went to Tara and cut a small piece out of her head. He showed her a chip. ‘Here, this was in your head,’ he said to Tara. ‘It is a colour-chip. It was your brains ruling the colours, but now your nose needs to do, as we all do.’ Then he made a cut in her nose, and pushed another even smaller and thinner chip into her nose. ‘It will totally blend with your body,’ the man said. Tara took a deep breath. The colours began to change. It was like she could watch deeper now. It was like she could even see the temperature now, and the differences between it.

‘Welcome to the Land of the Horseflies,’ the man said.

A man with long hair came in, with some monkeys. He had a spear. ‘Cynthies Merches Samir Samis,’ he said.

‘This is our court wizard,’ the man in the black dress said. ‘He wants to take you on some trips on the rivers.’

‘We lead you to Bai Sarum,’ the sorcerer said. He raised his spear. ‘More panthers than you have ever seen,’ he said.

Within a few minutes they were on the river. On both sides there were jungles. The wizard pushed something into her arm. She fell asleep again, and woke up in a place full of panthers. It was a place with veils everywhere. A man was sitting on a throne, clothed in leopard-skin. ‘Is that Tara?’ he asked.

Tara fell asleep again, only by hearing this voice. It was a chief-wizard. When she woke up she was surrounded by monkeys. She felt their soft skins. ‘Am I in paradise?’ she asked.

‘Give her something to drink,’ a voice spoke.

Soon she felt tasteful thick liquids streaming through her mouth. Someone held his hand on the back of her neck. Warm streams entered her body. ‘Breathe, Tara,’ someone said.

‘Where am I?’ Tara asked. ‘I know I am in the Land of Horseflies, but where?’

She fell asleep again. She was still on the river, in a boat, while a red-orange light appeared next to her. The river was misty. ‘Keep awake,’ the wizard said. ‘We go to the fortress.’

When the wizard laid her hands on her they were suddenly in a place full of purple veils, but she couldn’t stay awake here. It was like déjà-vu. She remembered this place, but what was it?

It was like the boat was becoming one with the river, and she slid into the water, while the waters stirred up the hallucination. She saw flowers at the riversides, like they were fences. They had deep roots, tall roots, and they were all over the place. She was in the hands of a wizard. Huge dragonclaws were in the sky.

A dragon was whispering to her, words of love. It was like a rebirth. She was approaching an Indian pyramid. She felt a motor-cycle under her, she felt like racing in a car. But she didn’t want to go to a city. She wanted to stay a savage.

‘Take it,’ the dragon said.

Finally Tara gave over. She was entering a huge city, high pillars, high towers, all reddish, like a night city. She stepped out of a car, having high heels. It had rained. The air was moisty. There was a huge building, like a giant skull. She went inside. It was a hotel. Someone gave her water, and led her to her suite. There was a piano there, and some poles. It was a bit like a ballet room. There was another woman there. She didn’t say anything but started to play the piano. Then she went to one of the poles, and danced. Tara drank from the water. There was a bed in the room. She sat down on it. Then she went to sleep.

The next day she was in the jungle again, deeper than ever. She was in the mud, like a rebirth. She slid to the river. She was like drunk. She knew it was all because of the flowers. It was in the waters, and she had drunk from it. The city was inside, and she could only touch it lightly, finally to enter deeper into the wilderness than ever. The city was a hot stone she could only hold for a second. The city was a red glowing stone in her amulet, burning in leather around her pulse.

If she would have stayed in the city any longer, she would fall away from her gods. These gods were savage. They would judge her for living in the city.

But the dragon sent her back to the city one day. The city was a deeper jungle to her. He had put a new colour-chip in her head. She was like a traffic-light. She would just stay here for one day. No one knew who she was. She had a savage look in her eyes. And monkeys were with her. All she did was walking through the streets. Finally she fell asleep, and a friendly man took her to his home to give her a room. He gave her some water, while the dragon took her out again, for the day was over.

But after a week he sent her back again, and then again, until she could stay a little longer. She found work in a circus. She worked with leopards. Everyday she heard the voice of the dragon, but he never showed up to her. She loved to work with leopards. They loved her and adored her. She had a room somewhere. She lived in the city. Her neighbour was Robert McDanen, an ambitious man. He was an author, and a maker of comics. He often went to the circus to make pictures of her with her leopards. Then he would turn them into paintings. He was also an excellent painter. One day he invited her to come look at his paintings. But this time the dragon showed up, together with fire. The fire, to destroy the paintings, and the claw to take Tara away.

Robert was confused by this experience. He wondered where she had gone all of a sudden. He knew she loved the jungle, so he went there to look for her. After searching for days he found her. She was in a cave with gorillas.

‘How did you leave so quickly ?’ he asked.

Then Tara told him all about the dragon.

‘Are you a slave of the dragon ?’ Robert asked.

‘I just can’t live the life you are living,’ Tara said. ‘It’s just something inside.’

‘But I need to have you with me,’ Robert said. ‘I can’t live without you. Plus, who destroyed all the paintings. I love you.’

But again the dragon-claw showed up, it struck Robert, and he lost consciousness. After a day he woke up. ‘Where am I?’ he asked.

‘With me,’ Tara said. ‘You have to go home. I just don’t belong to your world.’

‘I understand that now,’ Robert said. ‘But thanks for the good times.’

Then he left. But in a strange way Tara just couldn’t forget about him. One day she went back to the city to visit him. Other people lived in her room now, and also Robert didn’t live there anymore. She asked some neighbours where he lived now, but they said they didn’t know. One of them said he would probably live in the jungle now.

Tara searched for him for many weeks and months, and finally she found him. He lived also with gorillas, and seemed to be their king. He smiled when he saw Tara.

‘Why do you live here?’ Tara asked.

‘You inspired me,’ Robert said.

‘Why don’t you write, why not making comics and paintings,’ she asked.

‘Oh, I do that, in the depths of my cave,’ Robert said, while he smiled. ‘Come, let me show you where I live.’

It was a long trip through a tunnel, until they came in his cave, where he had all his books, comics and paintings. He showed her some paintings of her. 'I hope they will survive your stare this time,' he said.

'Actually I like them this time,' Tara said. 'Friend, I feel comfortable about the way you are living now, can I visit you ?'

'Whenever you want,' Robert said smiling.

Then the dragon-claw took Tara away.

The End

The Spider Seed

Chapter 1.

Tara sat in her tree, while under her feet there was her hill of spider seed. Often she would only come into a bloody arena. First blood needed to flow before she would come, a lot of blood. Suddenly Tara slid from her tree to the spider seed, ripped the skin off of one of the men. Then she quickly killed the skinless man. Then the spiders came to devour the meat of the prisoner, while strange lullabies from Tara's hills were taking their souls away, but now oiled by spider seed. It was like chained in a strange way, and it gave them so much control over themselves back. They were grateful to their goddess that she would give them such

freedom and having them possess their own minds. The warprisoner who had to die today was the one wanting to possess their minds for his evil purposes. They imprisoned him in the war against his dark tribe, but now Tara had dealt with him, like they couldn't. For she would also take his soul to her realms to devour it and capture it. That was the price someone had to pay who wanted to mess with her. That night Tara descended again from her hills to accept the sacrifice. Tara was a cruel goddess tormenting her victims on the fields of Tartarus on Mars. She didn't live by her mercy, but just by lust. Lust was in her eyes a good gift from the skeleton-gods. Every night she taught them how to fight and conquer. She taught them how to fight by the powers. Tara preached liberation to her followers. She preached everlasting damnation and everlasting war not as a punishment but as the well of eternal life and peace inside. It was the well of everlasting creation. Tara was the goddess of no taboo. She was the Lawless. All the other roads were to her just traps in which the corrupted mind could grow, divinity, of someone who wanted to possess their skull to give it a mind. Tara hated the mind. Only a mind driven by lust could mean something, because it came from the streams of the primeval. Tara believed in instincts for these were coming from the higher ways. But these instincts always needed to be purified and directed in the pools of everlasting damnation and everlasting war. She preached baptism in such pools for salvation. But Tara hated the men who never went to such pools. She called them unclean.

The spider seed was a way to Tara to keep clean. It would protect against the black powers of civilization. Often these were spiders themselves, and she often smeared their bodies with snake-slimes. She was aware that many of them were nothing but slaves. Often they were roaring in the night, looking for more victims, slaves making slaves. She realized she was on both sides, as a paradox. She was the black snake. She was devouring it, and coming alive again, infiltrating the depths of legalism. It was a dark hole, and she was even darker. No one dared to come closer to her house, this house in the tree. There were some flashes and some shrieks, and suddenly Tara had kicked some monkeys to the ground. A fight started, in which she soon raised their skulls. She was roaring. The serpent seed slid across her skin, mixing itself with the spider seed. She was a chameleon. She was a savage queen in her own rights. Soon the spider seed had totally devoured the monkeys. She was the queen of the jungle. No one had any chance to take her crown. She was on both sides. She was a spy, an infiltrator. She had a legalistic smile. All she wanted was to come out of her box, out of her tree.

The spider seed was in the air like a red hot wind, like howling wolves, making them all prisoners of a legal system. Tara made a sudden switch. It was like she was taking off her mask, and they stared into a face of a skeleton. The spider seed was mixing itself in the air, and soon the chains were tight. It was flowing from a strange bush, a heart, like a nest of bees. It was making them insane. The winds were whispering, shrieking, altering their minds. It was a poison in their brains.

A dark man was holding the skull of Tara. He was the leader of the dark tribe. He had dipped her head into poison, in a golden bowl. He was laughing, mocking her like a hyena would do.

'Merge,' Tara whispered, 'I know you would do this.'

The spider seed was torturing her brains. It was deceiving her, giving her all sorts of illusions. 'Can you stop now,' Tara said. 'I feel so delirious.'

'No,' Merge said. 'You have wished this on yourself by killing my main man.'

Tara sighed. She was confused. She was so deep in this dark, dangerous temple, this jungle temple. Merge was staring at her. He was the chief and leader of a huge tribe. He had her locked up in a labyrinth.

‘Can someone get me out of here?’ Tara shouted. Dark voices were surrounding Tara. It was like everything went darker, lower and slower. ‘What is this spider seed doing,’ Tara shrieked. ‘What is it.’

Merge was holding some tubes in his hands. ‘The dragons know it,’ Merge said. ‘They used it against you, to get you here.’

‘It’s burning in my head,’ Tara said.

‘You have drunk from it,’ Merge said. ‘And now you are here.’

The sleep, a mechanism in the temple of Merge, to keep them all away from the secret he guarded, the secret of his power. Tara fell asleep again. She had been struck by pain, she had lost her consciousness. Merge was smiling. She was his doll. He would raise her in his army.

He dyed her with the colours of war, and gave her the most beautiful clothes. She was under his spell. It was a product of total zombification.

The floods of spider sperm were in the land. The people were melting away. The snake had once slided to bring all these souls, but now they were all melting away.

Merge was like a statue. After many years Tara could break free from him. She raised on her hill again, on the skulls of all these dead men who were in Merge’s service. But again she woke up in Merge’s temple. She had no control over herself. It was a long wrestling in which every freedom was a deeper trap. One day he found his dragon heart, and she pierced it. But it set free the winds of the tormenting desert. It brought her down, more than ever before. They dragged her to a cave, and slowly she was sliding into a pit.

She was calling out for Merge, for there was nothing but darkness here. She had mixed feelings about him. She found in his heart the hives of spiders. He was the brother of Gitdugal. The smell of candy was here. It drove her insane. She was almost forced to eat from it, as she was so hungry. She became part of his heart, there was no escape.

He made her general of his army. She commanded his hunters. They were all part of his heart, a heart of glass. At one point she was so one with him that she started to realize she was Merge. She was the sister of Gitdugal. At this moment she realized she had a split personality, and she had to accept it. The more she struggled against it, the more she became aware of it.

Chapter 2.

Tara realized she was part of this allpowerful bloodline, the spiderseed. It was breaking her down and building her up again, on this gigantic beach. She raised her sword up, and became doom. She was her own enemy now, she had survived. She took advantage of it to the fullest extends. She had taken over his army by becoming him. She was endarkened, darkness being

the only light. She saw the reflections of her face in her sword. It was like a skull. Death and life were hers now.

She had fought her way through this poison, this dark tribe. She had lost herself in order to find herself back. She realized it was Merge's desert she was in. And doom was her mission. The bones of Merge were dry in the sand. All his bones broken apart from each other. She saw a misty palace in the distance, where the spider lived, his soul. Here the knights of darkness and nightmare dwelled. But it was far away from her. The house was moving to the sea. It was all drowning. The poison was now her weapon, it was shifting. First it was aimed at herself, now she could aim it at her enemies. The poison was now her friend. She died in it and came alive in it. It was the snake spirit of Merge, a woman named Mercury.

She took possession of the palace, the ghost palace of it, which was coming closer to her. The woman Mercury was veiled and slid towards the highest tower of the palace. Suddenly there was lightening everywhere, and auras with strange sounds. And the poison was her cure. It had led her through the realms of death, spoken about the secrets. It had shifted before her eyes and gave her visions.

There were secret lights in the palace, all blinding, all triangles like jewelry. The palace was a place of eternity. The battle was psychedelic, there were no logics but the test. It was a palace made of the purest candy and the purest money. She found there the secret knowledge of not only candy and money, but also of love and estheticka. She held on to these gnosises as to her heartbeat. It was a rich esotericka. Finally she saw the spirit of Merge sinking away. She was holding his scalp. There was no any just battle without this esotericka, this hidden knowledge. She found the tree of hidden knowledge in the middle of the palace. There were a lot of snakes here, half women. She craved to be one with this tree, to be a part of it. The money was just a weapon, a hunter's tool, flowing from the well of eternal poverty, from everlasting doom. Those who had not been here wouldn't have any part in it. Those who had not defeated Merge could not see it's lights. It was the secret of a stone full of tears. The money was a fluid here. There was a giant woman living in the tree, guarding the secret of honey. The tree would lead to a giant world. The woman was very big and jumped on Tara. If Tara wouldn't defeat her she would not get any step further. Tara took her sword from behind her back and beheaded the giant woman, all in a flash. The woman was shrinking, while Tara got the most beautiful exotic wings, like those from foreign flies. She flew up on the tree, and reached giant world.

There was another gnosis here, the gnosis of war, and of hunt. Those who didn't go to the depth of it would not survive in a place like this. It all led her to a cave, where women lived. They were a lot huger than her, but they began to feed her. She had to eat the flesh of a lot of unknown creatures, often cattle. The horned ones were a danger here, and the predators were often horned as well. The women told her that she had to go through the fields, until she would reach the land of cattle. Here she would finally find rest. Still Tara was haunted by the

ghosts of Merge. They were like the mists around her. The chains of the spider seed were tight. The women protected her, and taught her. They also taught her of the gnosis of death and torment, and Tara seemed to get more insight in her life. There was a savage knowledge she had to follow, a savage gnosis, named the nipoid. It was a native gnosis, leading her back to her own bloodline, the serpent seed. Merge was roaring while she raised her shields against him. But finally he was too strong again. It looked like a demonic possession. She could do nothing but embrace it, knowing she had a part in this bloodline as well, and it could be of use. Merge was a part of her.

She was like the weresnake, chained by spider seed, led to the gnosis of the predator and the gnosis of the cattle, finally to find peace. In this she met the prince of all predators, a yellow man with golden bands around his upper arms. He was very fast and had a piercing odor. He seemed to be a man after her heart, a man of lightening. He shared with her a lot of secrets. He was a man of balance and extremes, a wereman, and the more she got to know his characters, the more she understood him. He seemed to be her guard against the predators, and it was him who finally led her to the land of cattle. She could sleep here and rest here, finding a deep peace. She realized there was a number on their heads, 666, and this had brought them a lot of suffering. It was the work of Merge. Everyone who received that number became cattle. Tara realized when she was watching into the reflections of her sword that she had also this number on her forehead, but a fire was roaring within. Suddenly there was milk sweeping through the air washing the numbers away. Tara was now dyed with the colours of war. Again she realized that she was in the hands of Merge, playing with her.

‘What do you want from me?’ Tara shouted.

‘You’re in the labyrinth, Tara,’ a voice spoke. ‘The labyrinth of spider seed.’

It was tearing her apart. But here the liquids of money was flowing more than ever. It seemed like it was coming from the cattle.

‘Money is meat,’ a voice said. ‘Come closer.’

Tara felt like a jester, a joke. She felt weak. She raised her sword, and called for the prince of predators, but this time the prince of money came to her. ‘What do you know of money?’ he asked. He smelled like candy. ‘Become an adept, Tara,’ he said, ‘instead of making such a drama about all things in your life.’

He took her to his temple. The money here was sweet. It was hot as well. 'I'm about to bring floods of money, and we will see later who will survive,' he said. Tara was bowing for him. She had pain. It was like she couldn't do anything else.

'Please ..pl ..please, help me out of here,' she spoke.

The prince of money took her up and said : 'There's much for you to learn.' It became a long fight against the prince of money, a fight in which she was forced to worship him, but resulted in her victory. She beheaded him. His scalp would always be with her. She had the feeling she would not come any further without it. After defeating the prince she entered a hall with a lot of statues. Eyes were staring at her. They were the elements of the gnosis, the secret knowledge. Behind a next door there was the tree again, this time leading to a soft world. The people living here were like cloud people more or less. In a hall there were huge brains from which animals came forth. A voice spoke : These are the fallen ones. They live from the brains. Start the hunt.

Then there were animals coming from a huge stomach. The voice spoke : It won't take long now anymore. These ones come from lust and love, from the dark heart, send out to eat those of the brains. Choose.

Tara got blindfolded and someone span her around. She lost all her orientation, but she chose the path of the strongest smell, the unknown. It was a huge area. When she was in she soon wasn't blindfolded anymore. The people here had strange spots on their bodies, like nipples. They were all over, especially on their backs. 'These are the sensitive ones,' the voice spoke. 'But there will come a shift. The unsensitive ones from the brains will get sensitive as well, and they will see and feel what they have caused. They have always been the predators, but they will be the cattle. And like they have suppressed others, they will be suppressed as well.'

Tara got a bow in her hand. 'Now hunt,' a voice said. 'Only the hunters will survive this place.' A huge white fire was rising, like floods, and all predators became cattle. Soon Tara was in abundant slaughter. The blood was streaming all over her body, and she was screaming in rage. It was like she was in a war. These brains were the guards of the hidden knowledge, and finally she was tearing those veils down. The tree came to a climax here, and a flower grew on top. It was the most beautiful flower tara had ever seen, like the jungle flower. There was so much order now in the chaos. The flower was like the inventory of the hidden knowledge. 'Drink from me,' said the flower. Tara was growing and growing, becoming like a giant, while the animals of the brains became smaller. She stepped into the huge flower and started to climb. It was like a stairway. She had so much survey here but she kept staring at the top. A man totally covered with nipple-like spots came towards her, and took her by the

hand. She was drinking from the fluids from the flower. There were small waterfalls everywhere, in special colours. Huge cats were staring at her.

‘You want to know about the gnosis of love ?’ a voice spoke. ‘Fight for it.’

Chapter 3.

A dark hairy man fell on her, like a monkey. She had a huge wrestling but she couldn't defeat him. She tried to reach her sword, but he wouldn't let her. Soon he had her in his grip, and held her arms behind her back. ‘I do not understand this,’ Tara said to herself. ‘I feel so weak.’ The man tied her and neckchained her, and took her up. She didn't know where the other man was all of a sudden. A voice spoke : ‘All those who have come this far need to know, bondage is the pressure of the unknown. If you use your brains now, you will escape, but it will lead you all way back to the start, and all those of the brains are prey, even more than before. You might be bigger, but you will be cattle.’

Tara felt the powers of the brain. She didn't want to use it. She could if she wished, to get rid of the chain. But she didn't choose to. The man led her further up. Here a queen sat on a throne, with huge white feathers. She was like a peacock. ‘What do you want in this flower ?’ the queen asked.

‘The gnosis,’ Tara said. ‘The secret knowledge, that is all what I long for.’

‘Then lose your brain,’ the queen said. ‘Guards, let her drink something.’

They came with a huge bottle, and Tara started to drink. She felt like getting drunk. It was like colourful smoke in her. She saw faces of cats around her, and huge snakes floating around her.

‘Don't you know,’ the queen said. ‘Those of the brains will be eaten.’

‘Yes,’ Tara said.

‘Give me your hand,’ the queen said. Tara stepped forward and gave her hand. The queen stared in it. ‘I see good days for you coming. Days in which you will find true love. And your hunger will be satisfied. Welcome to the land of satisfaction.’ The queen moved away with her throne and a portal came in sight. Tara was staring through it. Tara entered through it, and became free. Another man came to her, this man was covered by all sorts of sores. He tried to attack her, but Tara took her sword from behind her back and beheaded him. Then another man attacked her with sores, and she did the same. Soon she was surrounded by more of these men, all growling. A weakness came over her again, and they tied her to some sort of spiderweb. Spiders were creeping across her skin, and soon she had some sores as well. This was a land ruled by spiders. She remembered how the spider seed was in her. Another queen approached her, also on a moving throne. She had a huge spiderweb behind her. She was the queen of spiders. ‘I wish you to become sensitive, my dear,’ the queen spoke. ‘That’s the job of the spiders. You better have it now, rather than when the white fire comes.’

‘What is that,’ Tara asked.

‘Don’t you know,’ said the queen. Tara fell asleep. She couldn’t hold the pain anymore. When she woke up she was covered by sores all over. ‘They protect you,’ said the queen. ‘Against the ages of the brains.’ It was like someone had marked Tara. She looked like a leopard now. She was growling. The queen dyed her with some colours, like the patterns of snakes. The sores more and more started to look like scars, like nipples. ‘These are the spots storing the gnosis,’ said the queen, ‘the nipoid.’ Tara grew more and more like a predator. She got her own room, in a cave with dark statues. Her scars were like a communication system. On the top of the flower there was a flame. It was all interactive. She didn’t want to return anymore. The spider seed was like her jewelry here and her lingerie.

Skeleton

Wings

Chapter 1. The Elephant Queen

Tara from Rhodes, she stood before the skeleton-king. He was laughing, mocking her. She was chained, two black skeletons having her in a tight grip. They were stronger than ten black lions at the same time. Sweat came from Tara's face. 'Wait till you meet the emperor,' the king roared. An enormous panther was appearing, coming down from a huge stairway.

Tara fell down, like she had been struck. The panther had red rays coming from his eyes penetrating her skin. Tara was shrieking. 'Wikzilius,' the king said. 'Bring this lady to the skeleton-emperor.' The panther took her on his back, spread his wings and flew away. In a huge forest the emperor lived. The thinnest skeletons were his guards, and they were also pretty tall, although some of them were short.

'Can I call you mocking jerk,' Tara said, when she stood finally before a laughing skeleton-emperor. The skeleton grasped her head, then pushed her to the ground. 'You can call me whatever you want,' he said.

Tara had lost her consciousness by the push and woke up in a dungeon. She had to eat strange food. She was almost hallucinating. In a distance she could see red glowing stones. In her prison she met Davilir, a woman. 'Have you heard of the emperor's sword,' the woman asked. 'I know where it is, and it will get us out if we get it.'

There was also a man in the prison. Also very confused. 'Help me,' he said all the time, laying his hands on Tara. Tara kicked him away. 'Look, I cannot help you, bastard,' she shouted. In the night Tara could dig a hole under the door. The ground was pretty soft. She escaped. She ran outside into the forest.

After a few hours she came to a sorcerers house, close to the desert. It was a bare wilderness here. The man spoke to her about the skeleton winds. 'What is that,' Tara asked. 'I have no time for superstitious games.' The man looked like he wanted something from her. Tara grasped her sword from behind her back and beheaded him. She lived in his house for several days and then moved on.

There was one force bigger than the skeleton-emperor. It was the God and the Goddess of the skeletons. They grasped her tight as by winds, and brought her to a temple. Meanlooking skeleton-priests were laughing at her. They showed her a rose completely made of meat. 'That's how you will end up,' they said. Then they led her to a place where trees of meat grew. They showed her a box close to the trees where women and men lived. As soon as the red rays fell on them they turned into skeletons, and a blue ray made them look like humans. They seemed to live in skeleton love. They all lived in this box as friends. 'These are the chosen ones, Tara,' a skeleton said. 'And you have to serve them. Let me lead you to the mill where you will become a rose of meat.' The skeleton grasped her. There was another box, close to the other. He pushed her inside. Sharp objects came out of the walls wanting to rip her apart. The box became smaller and smaller. Tara took her sword, and could hit some objects away, but they fell on the ground, and moved towards her very slowly. The box became transparent, and Tara could see another box coming closer, a black box, in which it's prisoners fought against each other. It was the box of skeleton hate. Black radiation came forward from the box causing death. It was silent all of a sudden, and the prisoners slowly turned into skeletons. Suddenly Tara hit the ceiling of her box, which was coming closer and closer to her. There was a huge hole now, and she could easily climb out. 'Well done,' a skeleton said. 'You are skilled.'

They took her and pushed her in the hole of a rock. Powers of the skeleton came over her. Inside she raised her sword and started roaring. Then she fell asleep. Soft angels took her up in the hole of the rock, towards the top. 'Bring her to the seven winds of skeleton,' one of them said. They brought her to a cloud, where she was as a baby. Seven winds started to possess her, and raised her up. She was in a cocoon. Tara was reborn in the sky. She had now the powers of skeleton, being a skeleton moderator, which had equipped her with the skeleton fire, an object by which she could boot skeletons. The second item was the black field, an artifact by which she could kill masses of skeletons at the same time. She got a vehicle, and of course she caused a lot of hell, for she had been repressed by the skeletons for such a long time. And she had the red fields to wake up the lost skeletons, a blue ray to make them look like humans, and a white ray to make them look like flowers.

She started her moderating works, while the seven winds of skeleton moved through her. It was like a sword in her hand. It made her like a goddess, having survey over so much communication. She had an all-seeing eye now, and she was like it's prophetess. However she got lost in the wildernesses of this cyberspace of death. There were powers she did not know anything about. It was all like an optical illusion. She heard someone laughing. A skeleton came closer, with a high hat and tall grey hair. 'What a deal,' he said, 'you serving the illusions we made. But the best vehicles are the crashed vehicles, for they will go through the walls of skeleton.'

'What are you talking about,' Tara screamed, and tried her buttons on him. But it didn't work. 'Which powers do you have which I do not have,' she asked him desperately.

‘Sword of the emperor,’ the skeleton with the hat and the long grey hair said. Tara realized that it was the second time that she had underestimated someone. She bowed her head. There was something like glass around this skeleton. She couldn’t begin much against it. A strange fire was tearing her down. She wished she had listened more to this woman called Davilir.

There was a war in cyberspace, the skeleton cyberspace, the one of death. It was Tara and her ghosts against another army. In this battle she met Davilir again, who could tell much more to her now. She actually had found the sword of the emperor already, so she could be of good use. The sword of the emperor showed them that it was all a game. It was some sort of a joystick, with many more powers. The joystick looked like meat, all coming forth from a skeleton. It was like the fruit of death. There were game masters living inside, ghosts. They had powers to lead them in the war. They could win the game with them. It was indeed a temple. The items were sacred, only to be used by priestly hands. The joystick was in the middle of the temple. She was staring at the joystick, while skeletoncraft was flowing into her body. A woman named Yasmine told her about the skeleton gnosis, as the power beyond all things. Tara was more and more getting stuck in a labyrinth, the unknown. She didn’t know anything of the things happening to her, and it was like she was dying, leading her to hell. She was realizing that it was just the fact that something unknown was being her hell, and that understanding would lead to enlightenment. Or did she need a greater endarkenment. She found herself in a cocoon of mint. She was covered by cocos, surrounded by monkeys. She saw Yasmine holding a injection-needle. ‘You,’ Tara said. ‘What are you doing to me. Feeding me drugs or something, keeping me in your fluids. I feel so weak.’

‘Dream,’ Yasmine said. ‘It’s good for you.’ Tara was sliding away. She didn’t indeed understand all these powers. She felt cold. She was floating in a skeleton temple, where all the dimensions were shifting, where the skeleton gnosis looked like a pillar of salt. ‘I want wisdom, I want knowledge,’ Tara whispered. ‘I want to have some stamina in this quicksand labyrinth. I’m drowning.’ Tara was floating towards the joystick on top of the saltpillar, which was a lot smaller now. The joystick looked like a golden sword, the sword of the emperor. Tara grasped and missed, like the sword was transparent, transcendental, beyond her senses. Yasmine started to laugh. Tara asked who she was, and why she was laughing.

‘I’m not laughing, Tara,’ Yasmine said. ‘You just experience it as laughing, for your vibrations are changing. You have a projected image of me in your head which is now changing, because you are shifting as well.’ Small moneys were around the salt pillar. It was getting smaller and smaller, and the joystick became denser and denser, and finally Tara could grasp it. More monkeys seemed to surround her, and she was like in a virtual jungle all of a sudden, in bright sunlights. ‘It is not the sun, Tara,’ Yasmine said. ‘It is the Safra, the central soft spot of the universe.’ Learn about the tides of the safra, the safraris and the safrasets. It is not the play between day and night, but between the soft and the hard.

‘Where am I ?’ Tara asked. ‘I feel so soft, it’s like I can breath for the first time in my life. I’m flexible more than ever.’

‘You are queen of the monkeys now, Tara,’ Yasmine said. ‘I am queen of the elephants.’

‘What is the use of this ?’ Tara asked. ‘Am I a more powerful moderator now in this skeleton world ?’

‘Yes,’ Yasmine said. ‘And one day you will be queen of elephants, like me. You need it to survive here, and to come deeper into the skeleton gnosis, the hidden knowledge.’

‘Who are you ?’ Tara asked.

‘I am your guard,’ Yasmine said.

Chapter 2. The Black Triangle

After a few years Tara was indeed a queen of elephants, like Yasmine was. There was living a burning triangle in her now, called the eye of the elephant. It had made her powerful like never before in this world. She was now indeed a guard of the skeleton gnosis. Yasmine was proud of her. Together they could boot a lot of skeletons, and soon they were a feared duo. But hackers brought them down, and soon they were prisoners on a pirate ship. The skeleton-chief stared at them.

‘Women with powers,’ he said. He pushed them in a cage with silver frames, and soon they were sweeping above the waters. ‘Food for sharks !’ the chief shouted. Tara asked Yasmine who they were. ‘Oh,’ Yasmine said. ‘They are favored by the skeleton gods. They have special tools.’

‘Who are they,’ Tara asked again.

The cage was touching the waters already, and soon there were sharks everywhere, and all sorts of unknown fishes. They looked hungry. Suddenly the floor of the cage broke open, while the pirates were laughing. Tara and Yasmine slid into the depths of the sea. Tara was following Yasmine, who seemed to know the way. They swam into a cave. In the cave there was a bubble of air. Tara wondered why the fishes hadn't bitten them. 'No, Tara, it is a trick,' Yasmine said. 'We are in a safe shapeshifting moderator-field. They have found us.'

'Who are they?' Tara asked. Yasmine led her to a tunnel, and the tunnel led to a huge skeleton-temple, huger than the one before, and this one was in a cave underground. A skeleton sat on a throne here, totally dead. Close to him there was an ark, with fire coming from it. Tasmine stepped in the ark, and Tara followed. They were in an elevator now, going deeper. It led them to a white room. Bright white objects were lying on a table. 'These are the new tools,' Yasmine said.

'What are they?' Tara asked.

'Tools of the fall,' Yasmine said.

'The fall? What kind of fall,' Tara asked.

'Listen,' Yasmine said. 'The skeleton world is full of empires against empires, gods against gods, gods stealing angels, etcetera, so a fall can be of use at times.'

'I understand,' Tara said, 'so it means to escape or so.'

'Yes,' Yasmine said. 'It's storing the silver moderator powers. It means it is far beyond anything. It's pretty solid.' Tara laid her hand on an object, and fell powers streaming into her. 'Use it,' Yasmine said. Another triangle was growing into Tara, a black triangle this time. 'What is it,' Tara asked.

'Skeleton time,' Yasmine said. 'It can shapeshift anything.' Tara felt like she was winged. Suddenly they were both in the sky. They could see the clouds below them. They had more

survey now than ever before, and the triangle produced a fluid like paint by which they could shapeshift everything. ‘Build a new world, Tara,’ Yasmine said. ‘This is why I am here. I am frozen. I miss a heartflame, and the battle between fire and ice is not going to help. This is why I led you to the safra, the center of the universe. In the other spheres the sun is the center, and it causes eternal battles between light and darkness, fire and ice. But here there is a battle between soft and hard, and that will bring up the key, awakening the deeper flames. I am dying, Tara, please help. You are the only one who can do that.’

‘Why am I so special,’ Tara asked.

‘Because you have the soft key inside,’ Yasmine said.

Tara’s head was in a skeleton temple, slowly spinning around, while the skeleton who had beheaded her was staring at it. She was in delirium, she was dreaming. The skeleton enjoyed the pretty colours. It was like a lullaby displaying in his skull. Tara was in the jungle and got attacked from behind by this skeleton. The vision had been granted by Soms, her god. She was aware of it. He only seemed to help her when she really needed it, like a death after dying. She thought about the black triangle, the skeleton time, blew upon it, in the hope that things would shift back. She turned around, and saw the skeleton attacking her from behind, and raised her shield to block him, then she beheaded him.

She thought maybe the skeleton time could do some more, as time had make a mess on Mars. Faces were surrounding her, while she was blowing on the black triangle again. Mars was not a prisoner of the sun anymore. It came in another orbit, around the central soft spot, the safra. A flame was in Tara’s hand, and she was remembering Yasmine. ‘Yasmine, this is for you,’ she whispered soft.

Queen of the

Eagles

Tara walked into the castle where Miloup the vampire lived. He could turn into a skeleton and a dragon. He had the meanest weapons and had his powers by the head of a girl he kept in a ball of transparent stone. Tara fell down, as struck by a spell. Miloup's spirit was descending into her, mocking her. Tara stood up, raising her blade-sword. She ran towards the throne of Miloup, but as soon as she reached it, it disappeared. She was in a bewitched castle. Someone was laughing. Tara got very angry. Then out of the nothing she got kicked, and fell down again.'Miloup,' she said, 'I am not here for games.'

Miloup came forward in a purple garment. 'Why are you here ?' he whispered.

'We have to make a deal,' Tara said. 'I want the head of the girl.'

'Never,' Miloup said. Tara knew the girl and she knew her parents. She came closer to Miloup. 'I can give you a lot of money,' Tara said.

'You cannot buy it with all the money of the universe,' Miloup said. 'It is the very source of my power.'

Tara saw the tall rod with the stone on it, in which the head of the girl rested. 'You torment the child,' Tara said.

'Why do you worry about that ?' Miloup said.

‘Take me instead,’ Tara said. ‘And give the head of the girl back to her parents.’

‘I have you already,’ Miloup said. ‘You will not leave this castle alive.’

Tara took her bow, aimed an arrow and shot. She hit the ball, and it fell to the ground and broke. Miloup was screaming. ‘Look what you have done,’ he said. He took up the ball again, and his hands started bleeding. Tara took another arrow and shot the head of Miloup. Quickly she grasped the head of the girl, but she froze. Miloup started laughing. ‘That happens when people try to steal my property.’ Spiders came out of the head of the girl, coming all over Tara. ‘Enough, Miloup,’ Tara whispered, and by her last strength she took her blade-sword again and beheaded him.

The walls of the castle started to move like mills and came closer to Tara, ready to cut her. But then she pushed her blade-sword into the heart of the vampire. She tried to find her way out of this castle, but the doorways started to shift. She had been locked up in a labyrinth. She held the head of the girl tightly to her chest. Finally she found the way out. It was snowing outside, and ghosts were in the air. When she came to the house of the parents of the girl they were very glad. Now they could finally bury it. The spirit of the girl got free. ‘Watch over this grave,’ Tara said to the parents. ‘Let no one ever steal it again.’ But the father of the girl had a better idea. They would burn the grave and would throw the ashes in the sea, so that no one could steal it ever again. It was a great day. The parents were so grateful to Tara that they gave her a ship. It was a huge ship. With this ship she would finally leave this country where she had lived for so many years. How could Tara know it was a ghostship which she couldn’t leave anymore. She became a ghost herself.

It was always like this with the royals. They didn’t lead normal lives, and now Tara had become an adept to it. They lived behind glass, unreachable, in strange chains, and Tara was now one of them. She was part of a pirate army now on this huge ship, and one day they took her skull, and bound her at the front of the ship. She hung there for a long time, until her spirit became the gold and the silver of the ship. She was dripping. In these days she met the spirit of the girl she once set free. They were together over the waters, and the girl started to tell her tales, many tales. Tara could see it was a special girl.

Tara was zombified now, tied to the boat, but her spirit gave wings to the ship, like a swan. The ghost-pirates had painted her skull on their flags, but they were more and more fading away, only to show up in their most terrible forms at nights. Tara’s spirit had to dance with them, wage war at their side, but the girl gave her hope. The girl knew a way out, it was a savage road. Tara became a mystery, something which the pirates couldn’t grasp. They were losing her, losing her touch, as the ship flew higher, the girl was her hope. The girl was her smile, and it was a smile of death.

Demons were living on the ship, it was an old royal heritage, an old warship. Soon they had imprisoned the spirit of the girl. They put the spirit of the girl in a doll, but she had such a bright smile that she could enchant the demons and ghost-pirates and became their captain. She had a body again. She could also set Tara free. But soon Tara and the girl found out they were nothing more but marionets, as the ship was a demonic machine triggering the old bloodlines. It was a heritage in which dark secrets were stored. Storms were raging, and the hugest ghost-eagles took their place on the ship. The ship was led to a city somewhere in the sea. It was a ghost city, guarded by angels. They crowned the girl and made her queen of the eagles. The old curses were finally breaking.

Weapons of

Torture

Tara was in a wrestling with a huge snake. Her ancestors were appearing, she thought she was dying. But suddenly a huge eagle came down and grasped her to take her to it's nest. It was a huge black eagle. It took care of her wounds. There was a savage treasure in the nest, the jewelry was almost blinding. Tara could use these amulets, and the eagle granted her access to take of it what she wanted. It was a spirit of her ancestors. An indian one. It appeared to be a chief. The tribe was still alive in the sky. Wolves were howling. Tara could reconnect to the strength of her bloodline.

She wore the chainlet of the pink snake, and her body was changing. It was a new torment, like the new inquisition, for she was the first human who had touched it. It was a poison breaking down all her cells and atoms and building it up again. Her mind was shifting and breaking, and in this she felt her heart coming up, and her female powers. She felt cold and then so hot. Suddenly the nest was moving. A huge pink snake entered. It almost looked like a

dragon and had a very tall tongue. It had wings and could fly like an eagle. The pink snake was the leader of all eagles. It was like hidden sources in Tara's body were opening up, like a snake was gliding through it, opening her senses. She felt a softness, and at the same time a hardness, tightening her up. The snake came closer to her, and a small sun came out of it, and soared in front of Tara. Then it went into her heart. Then some more small suns came into Tara. 'These are the treasures of the pink snake,' the pink snake said.

Tara wakes up on a pirate ship. A mean laughing pirate holds a knife against her throat. She doesn't know how she came here, but obviously she had been hit by them. 'Bird in a cage,' the pirate says while grinning. Tara realizes that she is tied. Then the pirate walks away. It is sunny. There are many pirates on the ship. She sees their weapons and instruments. They are of torture. She doesn't remember anything. Close to her a young boy and girl sit. They are also tied. She wants to help them, but she can't. Then the captain appears. A huge man with a black jacket, almost like a garment. He has a huge hat. He is laughing. Then Tara falls asleep again. When she wakes up it is storming. She gets hit again, but this time by something falling on her. All she knows is that a big bird is grasping her, then she falls asleep again and wakes up on an island, while the bird is staring at her.

The Needles of Pill-A

Chapter 1. The Eye of Tears

'After traveling a lot through the atmosphere which looked like a desert, I came in my spaceship to the planet of ducks. It was full of sex houses and drug stores. I went inside of a drug store and got me some duck drugs. I injected it in my veins, and smiled. This was good stuff. I smiled even more, and took a deep breath. I felt like my muscles were dying, and my nipples were taking over. All was in orgasmic rhythms, my brain muscles were like dying. It was like a fist in me was rising. The ducks were like humans here, just more sensitive, and women and men seemed to be equal. Males were not the stronger race. I took another shot, and started to hallucinate. Something was taking me over. Soon I looked into the eyes of a she-duck. She took me to her house, where she started to undress me, and she covered me with jewelry. I was far from nude, yet it was like my skin could breath better, and it was better visible, but not in an untasteful way. I actually liked it. She girdled me. I felt nothing but sweetness from her, no threats. I had the feeling she wouldn't abuse me. She was full of attention and full of love, and then she ran away. The house soon didn't exist anymore, and I woke up. I was still in the drug store. They told me if I wanted the experience to endure I needed to have my body produce the drug itself, as a hormone, from a special duck drug organ, the DDO. They showed me this pink organ, which looked like a heart, but it had to be

implanted in the stomach. I protested against such a surgery, but finally they convinced me, and I knew I was in good hands. I went to sleep, and I was with her again. Now I knew she would stay forever, as I had the organ. I could stay in this dream, and I was happy. But something happened. In my dream she got shot, and even though I did not wake up anymore, and even though I was still in her house, she was not with me anymore, and I faced her funeral. I only remembered of the criminals as black shadows, and they still danced in the backgrounds of my mind. In my dream I tried to find the drug store again, and they told me the DDO needed to get updated often. It often needed extra installations, and there was a risk the DDO could die. I was shocked, as I didn't expect this. I needed a perfect DDO. A DDO could become old, and not working properly anymore. I wanted my girl back. I wanted to go to the dream as it was. They brought me to a memory bank, where I could get my memories back and live in them. But there were many risks. Even worse problems could show up. I needed the perfect drug. They told me it was very complicated.

I treasured my DDO, I was in love with it. Things seemed to work out, and I got my girl back again. I visited the drug store daily for updates, and so did my girl. The DDO was like my heart. The secret of the DDO was the duck sun, which would be the source to eternalize the DDO. We wanted to travel to the duck sun, me and my girl, in our spaceship.

It directly activated a ray called Pill-A when we reached a certain zone around the duck zone, a ray penetrating the muscles and brains of earthlings like needles, inserting a poison to paralyze them, so that the DDO also could grow into them. It was because I had the earth DNA in my history files, and it could be beamed straight through it to reach the earth zones to do its job. We could follow this all on screens. At the same time duck warriors were approaching the earth. Even the heart muscles had to be penetrated like this. The duck sun was taking over. It would shift all the realities of earth, and there would be a shift from the Musclian Age to the Nipplian Age. The ducks were about to bring childhood back to earth, and all the adult behaviour would die. They used the duck drugs for that.

After this they would have to take over the black brain sun and the black muscle sun, which seemed to be the sources of the whole musclian age.'

A captive woke up in a camp of native american women. He had been a prisoner here for awhile. The women seemed to be insane, claiming he had committed an unforgivable sin, and therefore he was their prisoner of doom. They had put him in an arena where he had to fight, and where he actually got partly paralyzed and spasmic. Now he was laying there, in a tent, inbetween some native women, waiting for the everlasting torment to come, as a punishment for his wicked deeds, of which he didn't know what it was. He felt misjudged, but his dreams at nights seemed beautiful, deep, haunting, as was this place.

He felt a hand on his shoulder. A woman stood before him. It was Tara from Rhodes, his saviour. She led him out of this place. She brought him to her home, somewhere behind rocks, in a sandy cave. It was raining outside. She took care of his wounds. The women with their evil grins still tormented his mind, but this woman was so different. She gave him a sword and a knife, but he was still paralyzed and in spasm. But when he held it, soon power streamed through his body. 'What is that ?' he asked.

'You have been chosen by the gods,' Tara spoke.

'For what ?' he asked.

She didn't speak. After awhile she said : 'Just believe it.'

He admired this woman, so he believed what she said. She had saved him.

'Please, don't let me have to go back to where I came from,' he begged her.

'You are safe here,' she spoke. Two wolves were licking him. Outside he could see a river where crocodiles were. On the sandy shore there were also some leopards.

'The animals keep you safe,' she spoke.

'I dreamt about ducks,' he said

'Forget about them now,' Tara spoke. 'Think about the wild animals, the savage ones.'

He sighed. He was still trembling, but she caressed him and calmed him. He was in her arms. He fell asleep and dreamt about the drugs of nature, the serums of paradise. Spiders were stinging his muscles, and they were like dying, and an organ in his stomach took control, soft powers, guided by an unknown sun. In his dreams he saw the lovely face of Tara.

He woke up and knew that everything was but a dream. He was still the captive of these native american women, savage indians, who had his heart. There was red lace tied around his hips. These women seemed to be very organized as there were more captives with red lace.

One day he had to appear before their queen, who was painted in red, and he asked her what he had done wrong. 'First of all, you are a male,' she said. 'Second : you have muscles. Third : you have brains.'

'But you have them too,' he said.

'No,' the queen spoke. 'Just advanced nipples.'

'Can I have them too ?' he asked.

'No,' the queen said. 'It is unforgivable that you have been like this, and that you have used it. It is called abuse, you have abused your powers, your false powers, you have used your muscles and brains against women.'

'No, I have not,' he said. 'I have never used my muscles against women. I have never hit a woman, only maybe for self defense.'

'You are starting to get insecure, by saying : maybe,' said the queen, 'and what about your brains. Didn't you use them to humiliate women ?'

'Never,' said the man.

'Is that all you can say ?' asked the queen. 'Here females are above males. You have to get used to that. Here we rule. No one comes against us. Spiders will feast on your muscles. You will be a good snack, then a good slave.'

'You have to give me a second chance,' said the man. 'A chance to let me be more like you.'

'Never,' said the queen. 'You will never be like us. Deal with that. You belong to the everlasting torment and the everlasting arena.'

The man watched the cruel faces of the other girls who were with the queen. They stood there merciless. He knew that every escape from here would just be a dream. They didn't let him sleep much, but sometimes he just fainted.

'There is no hope for creatures like you,' the queen said. 'Neither for your children.'

'That sounds racistic,' said the man.

'I don't care what you think,' the queen said. All captives were allowed to see the queen only one time in their lives, so the queen took the time for him, but he couldn't get through to her. Slowly she turned into a python, and went away.

It was like she had stung him, and he felt like he was dying. He knew there was nothing left to do but to accept that he was in this place forever, and that he had comfort in his dreams. It was not all that bad, as he could sleep and faint. He led a double life, and he knew that these two lives would form and transform each other, until he would have a satisfying point of view on them.

In his dreams he dreamt about the nipple sun, with nipplian warriors, invading everything. The creatures on here were wild, beyond the duck sun. The nipple sun was like a mind police, beheading the giants of the muscle age. Cobras took their bodies over, and showed their heads on their bodies. Tara from Rhodes was big in his dreams, and she made his terrible life with the native women look like fragments. It was like it was all just a few seconds of the day. All flashes. he fainted more and more, entering his dream world, just different frequencies of life. He could tune in and out.

The source of Pill-A was on the nipple sun, where he also found a substance called Pill-B, nipplian seed. This seemed to be the secret of Tara from Rhodes, the secret of her power. She ruled over the illusions with her sword, taking him in.

She took him to Mars, and to it's core, Betelgeuse, to which the nipple sun was just a key. Here nature and life was good. The crocodiles were big. The rivers were of blood. It was hell. She was a sharp voice in his head, the voice of the python, whispering. She showed him the key, a solar key, of so many suns, of a solar stairway, transforming him, and bringing him into the depths of Betelgeuse, absorbing all the other experiences he ever had. Here the hippos were. It was the core of Mars. The flies ruled here. The Eye of Tax was soaring here. Tara said it was the last enemy to be defeated. It was the creator of the muscles and the brains, as in a conspiracy, as it made captives.

'How to defeat it ?' he asked.

'Only a female can do it,' Tara spoke. She told a vague story about a yellow pyramid which would lead to the yellow sun, a good security against the Eye of Tax. In the distance a stairway seemed to be burning. Tara spoke that the yellow sun was a key to enter deeper into Betelgeuse. She said that in the depths of Betelgeuse the yellow sun would release substances

which would trigger a doom in the universe to transform everything. This was why the yellow sun was an important path or elevator in Betelgeuse.

Some said the yellow sun was the sun of tears, while others said it was the sun of jokes and the sun of laughing. Fact was that anyone who would approach the yellow sun would stop aging, unless the yellow sun would not let them through, then they would age even faster. There were of course ways to age in the depths of Betelgeuse, but it was just more controllable.

The laugh gas of the yellow sun made people happy, although that was what it looked like, when Tara took the man on a trip. But it was scorn, and it led to tears. There were many tear lakes in the depths of Betelgeuse, which was like a hot desert area. Tara gave the man a ring on which his oxygen statistics could be seen, and it was to be controlled from there. The yellow sun was like a train into the depths of this desert, guided by tall paradise birds. He needed to control his oxygen, or he would die here. He needed to learn how to breath. She led him along the pee-lakes of monsters and beasts, where they had peed, wells of healing. She taught him the secrets of nature, there, in the depths of Betelgeuse. His mind broke free from so many restrictions, but he also had to worship the goddess. He had to live in devotion to her. And for the sake of nature he had to be sacrificed to her, and her wrath had to be poured out on him, as in an eternal punishment. He had to be rejected, as a religious experience of doom, he had to feel the everlasting torment.

It was Betelgeuse's Theology demanding this, and there was no escape. There could not be an everlasting bliss without this everlasting damnation. There could not be an everlasting peace without an everlasting war. There was such a balance here, by such a split. There could not be an everlasting marriage to the goddess without the everlasting divorce to the goddess. Tara said that this was the reset of the chip and it was nothing but a game. She told him that the goddess loved him very much, and that he was chosen by her for this game. She wanted to heal his past. She would arm him through this ritual.

The Eye of Tax was still soaring above them, looking like an insect. It looked like a big swollen muscle, through which slime was streaming. It was very slimy and greasy. Tara took the man into a lake of monster-pee, where the pee of beasts was mixed, and the pee of dragons, and it seemed to be a healing well, but after awhile it caused trauma. But there seemed to be no other option. The man was confused, and so was Tara. The Eye of Tax was after them. It stalked them. The traumas seemed to actually protect them against the Eye, as otherwise it would enslave them. They both felt a pressure on them. Tara was fighting for her life, and at the same time she had to protect the man, but it was hard on her. They heard noises in the distance. Gigantic dragons showed up, but they could begin nothing against the Eye of Tax. Suddenly the Eye of Tax swallowed Tara. When it spat her out she was under slime, as in an egg. She felt like she was burning. She was screaming. The man got stung by the Eye and got paralyzed. He remembered this feeling. It was like his past was taking over.

Cream came forth from the Eye, covering them both. They were both like burning, as in a flame. Soon they were surrounded by males with big breasts and big muscles. 'The splinters of Fragma,' said Tara.

'What is that ?' the man asked.

'These men are just parts of this Eye,' Tara said. 'They are the workers of it's foam, Fragma, his spirit. It keeps them drunk. They do not care, only for their pleasure. They live in jokes, lies.'

They both fell into an enormous depth, while the Eye of Tax seemed to be feasting on their flesh. 'These men are guards of another world,' Tara said, 'but they will soon die.'

'I hope so,' the man said. 'They are evil.'

Suddenly they were gliding into the tear lakes of beasts, monsters and dragons. It was like their traumas were soothing. 'it works,' Tara said. 'Whenever the Eye of Tax stalks, it leads us to these lakes.'

'What will happen ?' the man asked.

The lakes were like burning, but it was also calming them, as there was a softening substance in it. The tears were very neutralizing. It attached itself to their bodies, and started to heal the wounds.

'Manerka,' a voice spoke. There was another man in the lake. Soon they saw beasts, dragons and monsters appearing. The Eye of Tax was shrieking. The tears were on them like foam and jewelry, like fleeces as lace. It was enslaving them for war.

'I can breath !' the man shouted.

'Welcome to the army,' the other man said.

On a dragon a queen-like woman was riding, sitting on a saddle. She was covered by lace and leather, as in a traditional armor. She had horns, and she was partly veiled, and had a short skirt. She was moving towards them, but then fell away.

The Eye of Tax was spitting fire, but the tear lake was swallowing them into it's depths. The man lost his consciousness. He felt like dreaming, and suddenly he could shake so many worlds off of him. He watched his dreams shifting in a huge pearl. The pearl was slimy and greesy, very steamy. 'Don't touch the pearl,' a voice spoke. It was the queen-like figure with the horns. 'I am here to intoxicate you, you need the witch,' she said. 'Here all the realities shift.'

'I do not know what is real and what is not,' said the man. 'I do not know what to trust and what not, I do not know the truth.'

'Come,' said the queen, and led him to a hall behind them. The hall was full of beastly warriors. They formed the elements of animals. They looked like rhinos. 'The watchers of Doom,' said the queen. 'They are waiting for their hour.'

'Who are they, and what are they going to do ?' asked the man.

'They are eye-eaters,' said the queen. 'They are going to eat the Eye of Tax.'

'Who leads them ?' asked the man.

'Tara from Rhodes will lead them,' said the queen. 'I sent her to you, as you have been chosen by the gods. She is the Law of Tax, the opposite force, waiting to blind the eye, and endarken it.'

A darkness fell upon them. The hour was almost there. Tara from Rhodes soared above the rhinos, as if she had wings of light, but it was darkness. She had a trumpet and a viking helmet, a horned helmet.

'Who or what is Tax ?' asked the man.

'The thief,' said the queen. 'But if the thief is not bound to the law, then the thief is evil. The thief needs to be legal, stealing back what others have reaved.'

'Oh,' said the man, 'sounds interesting.'

'Interesting, right ?' said the queen. Then it was silent for awhile. The man lost consciousness again. he knew he was in the tear lakes. It felt like his whole body was crying, and like his eye was dying. It felt like he completely lost it. He was blind, and the only light was the darkness. The Eye of Tax was a criminal and a murderer, but Tara arrested it.

In dreams he saw her and he worshipped her, as she was the harmony. She was the paradox. He wanted to know this Law of Tax. He wanted to be on her side. But he also knew inside there would always be an eye, so he had to search for the right eye. He fell into a field of bison hunters. The eyes of the bisons were red. They had the eyes of tax. He could see this empire in the distance, where bison hunters ruled. He knew the only eye who could set them free was the Eye of Tears. He knew they worshipped it in the empire, he just knew. It was like a vision went right through him. He saw angels on horses, but then he fell away again. The Eye of Tears in him was like a drug.

Chapter 2. The Dark Side of Betelgeuse

The Eye of Tax was a machine of snobs, men who thought they were superior, an elite. In the depths of Betelgeuse there were the starvation farms, where men were turned into those who had the weakness of little babies. They were prepared to become slaves of the Eye of Tears. Soon the man was there as well, all other visions were dying. He had to live in a tear. The tear would feed them, although not too much. It was a sort of milk to make them even weaker. The tear would give them power, but not too much, often by spasm. They lived by strange contractions and hyperventilation. The theology was that they had to become weak and empty to be able to receive the power of the Eye of Tears, the goddess. And this theology demanded also that they went through the divorce with Her, and to be completely rejected by her, to be doomed by her, living under her wrath as an eternal punishment. In this they would reach enlightenment, by the depths of endarkenment. She was a cruel goddess, only to show them the flashes of grace. There was no grace for those doomed by Her. They were nothing but her milk-cows. But it was to awaken an extra sense. He felt like a weak child, stung by spiders, he felt like a fly guided by strange power. He was not able to hold anything. Everything slid through his fingers. He was bathing in milk lakes of monsters, beasts and dragons.

He had seen the dark side of Betelgeuse, where the females were the stronger race, and the males the weaker, where the eyes were the seals of drugs. And the breasts of native women, savage indians, were the taps of the milk of confusion. There were no answers, no one was

helping him, and soon he was thinking that it was all an evil conspiracy, and he accepted the evilness in his life. There was no other way. Resisting it was pointless.

He was sinking away in the experience, while death was calling him. He found an oracle like a disc, like a wheel, and he held it tight. 'The male represents youth,' said the oracle, 'while the female represents growth and death. And you have to go into the depths rather than fighting at the surface. But we are all children after all.'

In the depths he saw the beauty of death, all colours torn apart until there was only white and red. He felt it as a rebirth. Everything moved by death, by falling from great height, by huge pain, but at the same time there was bliss and softness, as the softness of feathers. Only pale colours came through, yet it was intense. Here the Eye of Death was soaring, as a tap of the fluids of extasy. These all came as pale lights. It was all painted by thunder and lightening. The beauty of death was an ingredient the cook of life used.

The Ghost Cup

The Elephant Cup was an item most wanted by warlocks, necromancers and sorcerors. It was highly guarded in a deep cave, by big wild cats in all sorts. Tara started to slay them one by one in order to reach the cup. Long she had desired to drink from the cup, as it's fluids would lead her through the underworld and would make her invincible. She grasped the cup, but then shivered as if she had touched something holy. She fell backwards, and a man came from

behind her to grasp her and to lay a bloody knife against her throat. 'What are you doing here ?' he roared.

'Who are you,' Tara asked.

'You have no rights to come here,' said the man. Suddenly Tara made a movement and could throw the man off of her, but then two gorillas grasped her, and tried to choke her. 'Illunias !' she shouted. And soon a giant bird came to slay the two monkeys and the man. Again Tara fell backwards. A strange power was striking her, as she had touched the cup. She felt like drunk, but tried to get to the cup again. The cup had fallen to the ground, and its fluids were wasted to the ground. Tara knew that touching the cup again would be her death. Soon she was drinking the fluids from the ground, mixed with dust, sand and slime. 'I am ill,' she roared. She lay down somewhere, trying to forget about the cup. But it was as if there was now a strong force around her head as an iron band. 'No !' she roared.

'You have touched the food of the gods,' a voice spoke. A hooded man in a garment came closer. But Tara beheaded him immediately. She wouldn't take any risk. She felt powers sliding through her, making her able. 'Why am I here !' she shouted. She grasped her head. 'I am going insane,' she spoke. Her voice was echoing through the cave. 'I am a mere shadow now, but powerful, more than ever. I have found access to the underworld to become immortal.' She felt like she was becoming invisible, and her eyes could see ghosts now. 'The sorcerors want what I have !' she shouted. 'I will not trade any of this !' There was a strange smell in the cave. Her feet were sweating, and soon her whole body. She saw the ghosts wailing in the wind, suffering under the mystery of a stone, the stone of the twelve cats. These were twelve sorts of big wild cats, and they were united in a master stone, an amulet. But it was an amulet of slavery. She fell down again. 'I see the underworld !' she shouted. 'What do you want from me !'

'Free us,' the ghosts wailed.

'Why would I,' she said harsh.

'We are doomed,' a ghost wailed.

'So what,' she shouted, 'We are all doomed.'

'But you can help us,' another ghost wailed, 'and we will pay you richely.'

'I am not a helper,' she shouted. 'I cannot be bribed, I can only make things worse.'

'Please,' the ghosts begged. 'Let us at least be your slaves, so that we have something to live for.'

'I will be more terrible than your master,' Tara shouted.

The ghosts fell at her feet and cried. 'Eternal growing damnation is what I give,' Tara said while drunk. Then she fell again. She stood up and raised her shield. She was bleeding, and soon she was bleeding from her eyes.

'You have drunk from the Elephant Cup, my dear,' the ghosts were wailing. 'We can help you.'

'Shut up !' Tara was shouting. 'I am sure I will be fine too.' The ghosts were in the dust, hitting themselves, chaining themselves, in the hope that Tara would take them, so that they could leave from their master. Suddenly there were lights everywhere. It was the stone of the twelve cats appearing. Tara could see it, as she had drunk from the elephant cup, and now her eyes were opened for it. It was another dimension. The lights were striking Tara.

'Why have you touched the cup,' the stone spoke.

'None of your business !' Tara shouted.

'Oh it is, believe me,' said the stone. 'And you will pay dearly for it.' Tara took her sword again and tried to cut the stone appearing before her, as in a revelation.

'You will be my servant, Tara,' the stone spoke.

Tara grasped her head, and felt weak all of a sudden. 'I am trapped,' she said softly. Again she fell down. First on her knees. 'No, no, this cannot be true,' she said.

'You are too late, Tara,' the stone spoke. 'Someone already had drunk from the cup, and filled it with the fluids of slaves, for you to become our slave.'

'I don't believe you,' Tara said. 'Who drunk from it then ?'

'Us,' the stone said.

'Who are these ghosts ?' Tara said as if she was struck again. She felt like a panick was coming over her.

'They have also drunk after us, they came too late, and soon you will be one of them,' the stone said. Tara heard laughter, and she came into a rage, but the panick was much bigger. Soon she was shivering with fear, trembling. But then she spoke again : 'I cannot believe you.'

'Oh, you will see,' said the stone. 'You will see.'

It was like heavy chains fell upon her, and she started wailing because of the strange pains. Soon she was baptized in a river, the river of hell. It was a river of lamentation.

'No, this cannot be true,' she shouted. 'I just have to hold the cup, I have to.' She tried to come back to the cave, but couldn't find it. She was in the river. She tried to reach the coast, but there was no coast. Everything was moving away from her, and strange small sharks were biting her. 'Hell no !' she was shouting. She was rubbing her eyes, and saw the Elephant Cup again. She would now grasp it and hold it, and not letting it go. Soon she had the cup in her hand, and then in both hands. She was trembling again, but didn't let go. And she started to drink. She drank like never before. Soon cats were all around her. Big black cats like panthers were licking her. 'I made it,' she spoke. She knew the cup would now lead her through the underworlds, and no secret would stay secret for her. The cup brought her in a cave of Elephant Gems, where she adorned herself. The gems were all strung together with feathers. She was holding the cup and raised it. 'I will conquer the seven seas of death with it, and the seas of hell. All will bow for me !' she shouted. She tied the cup to her belt, and flames were surrounding her. On the back of a bison she went through the underworlds. In the last

underworld she met a king. The king immediately started to talk to her in unknown language, but Tara beheaded him immediately as she didn't want to take any risk. In her paranoia she became full of prejudice, for her own protection, but one day she met someone who told her that the elephant force was such a savage power, and that it could only be brought to balance by the Mammoth Cup. The person led her to this cup, but it confused her even more, bringing her to the depths of insanity. 'If this is my fate, so be it,' Tara spoke. The Mammoth Cup had opened her eyes for too many dimensions at the same time, which was now overwhelming her, but this person said that Tara would finally reach the surfaces through all these waters of chaos. Tara had the feeling she was only sinking deeper, but some supreme power became master of her, and finally she became master of it. In the depths of chaos she had planted her throne.

The Bones of Traxmarut

Tara was walking on a path through the jungle. Suddenly she was surrounded by spears. Soldiers were watching her, soldiers of a strange sort. They took her to their queen, the queen of Salvabridge. 'What are you doing in our place ?' the queen asked. The soldiers looked confused, as if they were under her spell.

'Since when is it your place,' said Tara. 'The jungle is of no one.'

'You can take a bet on it is mine,' said the queen. 'Soldiers, throw her in the crocodile dungeon !' she shouted. 'What a bliss,' thought Tara. 'I'm at least not killed.'

In the dungeon there were some dead crocodiles. Soon Tara was eating their flesh, savage as she was. But she felt like she was going insane by it. She heard laughing outside of the dungeon. Soldiers were watching her. 'The meat is poisoned,' they said.

'Bastards,' Tara whispered. She knew she would survive this poison. She had been poisoned before, but her body was always strong enough to survive.

After a while she had to appear before the queen again. 'There is something about you so strong,' said the queen. Suddenly Tara grasped a many-pointed blade-knife of a soldier, and attacked the queen. Soon she had the queen in a strangling grip, and then beheaded her. 'No one rules the jungle !' Tara shouted. Snakes were gliding close to Tara, and soldiers began to run away.

'Cowards,' she whispered. A man in golden clothes stood close to Tara. 'You will pay for this,' he said. Man-eating plants came forward, but they didn't harm Tara. They started to eat the man, who started to scream. It seemed Tara had broken a huge curse. 'The skull of Neveroth !' the man screamed. 'It will make you pay !'

Tara didn't know what he meant. Soon the man was dead. Monkeys were surrounding the dead body, but then they joined Tara. It was like all the animals had approved of her actions. The palace was already a ruin. Tara went to a room behind the place of the throne. There was a green skull on a small pillar. An old man sat close to it. 'What is it ?' Tara asked.

'No one knows,' said the man. 'It is a strange thing.'

'Who are you ?' Tara asked.

'I am it's priest,' said the man. 'I was a captive of this queen, but she let me free in order to become a priest of this skull.'

'Strange,' Tara said. The queen seemed to have mysterious powers by which she enslaved others, but she was dead now.

Suddenly the skull started to speak. Lightening and smoke came forwards from it. 'Neveroth is my name, paradise is my game. I started the tree, and made the creations breath.'

Tara and the man stepped backwards, as darkness began to come forth, and the lightening was getting brighter. 'Who has killed the queen ?' asked the skull.

'I did,' said Tara.

Thunder came forth from the pillar, and a beam struck Tara, while she could raise her shield just in time to ward it off. 'See, crazy you are,' said the pillar. 'Just that you do not rule the jungle doesn't mean you can kill the ruler.'

'Well, for your information : She doesn't rule the jungle !' shouted Tara.

'We will see,' the pillar said. 'Now run, or I will kill you.'

'I won't run for anyone !' shouted Tara. 'Miserable creatures like you I despise.'

'You do not know with which powers you are messing,' said the pillar. 'There is only one ruler, dead or alive. You cannot kill her soul. You only killed her body. It was a wrong put in the game, for now she ... hahaha.'

Tara came close to the pillar, then struck it by the many-pointed blade-knife, but she almost became electrocuted and was thrown on the ground by the mysterious power.

'Now, do not touch it,' said the pillar. 'You might hurt yourself.'

'Who are you,' asked Tara.

'I am the skull of Neveroth, the skull of a warrior,' the skull spoke. 'I have seen the seven seas of death, the tragedies of hell, and the traps of the gods. I am the blood-god of Israel, the keeper of its veils. And she was my goddess.'

'You know what,' said Tara. 'You are just confused.' Then she struck the pillar again, at the root of the skull, and again she was thrown to the floor.

'Give it up, Tara,' said the skull. 'You will never break through.'

'Never,' said Tara, and struck the skull again. This time it was giving light, and broke off. A flood started to come through its mouth. 'Not smart,' the skull said. Tara had to run now, as there was water everywhere, and it didn't seem to stop. Soon she was swimming. She didn't know where the old man was. 'The curse of Neveroth is on you !' roared the skull.

'I am drowning !' shouted the skull. 'You have broken my cup !' Tara swam to the highest tree of the jungle, where she would be safe. She climbed very high. Some monkeys were following her. One of them had the skull in his hands, although the skull didn't have light anymore. It was all dark. 'Throw it away,' said Tara to the monkey. The monkey did, and the skull was sinking soon enough. It took a while before the water was lowering again. When all the water was gone after a long time. There was somewhere a deep hole in the ground close to the ruin. Tara went down in the pit. She found the skull there in front of a realm of cages underground. The cages were full of children. Tara worked her way through the cages and came in an open place where sacrificial items were. Some priests stood at the other side of the place. 'Did Neveroth send you here ?' they asked.

Tara didn't say anything. Suddenly she grasped her blade and beheaded them. Panthers came forward and started to lick her. It seemed that nature was on her side. But soon more and more priests came. 'The wrath of Neveroth is on her !' a priest with a high headcover shouted. It seemed like the highpriest. He had jewelry all over. Soon she was surrounded by spears. 'Throw her in the fire !' the man shouted. They grasped her, and took her blade away. But some of the panthers started to jump on the men, and Tara could run away. From one man she had taken his spear. She went deeper into the place, until she came in a chamber where veiled women were.

'What have you done to the children,' Tara spoke. The women didn't speak, but looked confused. She went behind some veils and came in a deep cave where black panthers were. A skeleton started to laugh. 'You should never have come here, woman, you are trapped,' he said. Tara started to become dizzy. Black huge eyes stared at her, like a white monster. 'Grasp her,' the skeleton said.

'No, I can't,' the white monster said. 'She is the queen of the jungle.'

'She isn't, now grasp her !' shouted the skeleton.

'That the rain of the gods may destroy you, woman,' the skeleton shouted, while huge gems started to fall down on Tara. She got hit so hard on the head that she lost consciousness. She woke up in a white place. Panthers were all around her. The white monster was staring at her.

'Where is the skeleton ?' asked Tara.

'He is dead,' said the white monster. 'I killed him.'

'Thank you,' said Tara. 'Where are the children ?'

'In the cages,' said the white monster, 'prepared for sacrifice.'

'To what ?' asked Tara. But the white monster didn't answer.

'There is no one like you,' said the monster. 'You are beautiful.'

'How do you know ?' Tara asked.

'My master said : one day there will come a woman, the queen of the jungle, and she will ask for the savage children and the animals, to set them free,' said the white monster. 'Me and my master lived in captivity. My master was killed after he revealed about the queen of the jungle. He described you, and you perfectly fit the description.'

'Where are we ?' Tara asked.

'In my palace,' said the white monster. Tara looked around her, and inbetween the white pillars there was an open space with a pond of crocodiles. 'My powers grow more each day,' said the white monster.

'What do you know about Neveroth ?' asked Tara.

'Not much,' said the white monster. 'Just that he is our breath, and that he can take it away.'

Suddenly Tara had the feeling she couldn't breath. Soon she fell down.

'Now Tara,' the white monster said. 'Neveroth is never wrong. Some say that maybe, but I will show you.' After awhile Tara could breath again, and he led her to a white hall. An enormous skull was in the hall, as the skull of a giant, and it was the skull of a monster. 'This is my father,' said the white monster. 'He is impersonated a lot. Now you are not going to believe what I am about to say, but this skull is the ruler of blood. It drains and gives. It pumps.'

It was like the skull was breathing and pumping like a heart.

'Then why is your father not rooting the priesthood out who keep these animals and children imprisoned ?' Tara asked.

'Because the priests of my father stole his bones, and they used it to generate a false skull,' said the white monster.

'Where are these bones ?' Tara asked.

'I don't know,' said the white monster. 'But my father is fading. The skull is perishing. If it has dried out completely, we will not breath anymore and die.'

'Abarath is the one ... the priest who stole the bones,' said the white monster. The white monster led Tara to the cages again. There were white tall dogs walking around there with strange spots. Tara was struck with terror and became very exhausted all of a sudden. The white monster took her back to the palace where she started to get all sorts of nightmares. She was sweating a lot, and the white monster held her all the time.

'Tell me more about Abarath,' whispered Tara.

The white monster became like intoxicated, like drunk, and his black eyes became white, and his skin grey. 'I can't Tara,' he said.

'Do it !' shouted Tara. 'I need to know or he will kill us all !'

'He is a witch,' said the white monster, 'a bad witch, a religious witch. He calls himself the Traxmarut, the Christ, and children have to be sacrificed to him. He steals them, then takes them to the underground. 'He's a butcher, also calling himself the king of swords, or Lord of the swords.'

Tara fell asleep again and had even worse nightmares, until she woke up screaming. 'Bring me to the cages,' said Tara. The white monster took her up, and led her to the cages. She grasped a dog, and a wrestling started. Tara tore the flesh of the dog apart, while other dogs were starting to attack her. 'Do you want to know where the key is !' Tara shouted. 'It's in the heart of these dogs !' Again she tore the flesh of these dogs apart, while she got terribly bitten. 'Take me away !' she suddenly screamed to the white monster. The white monster grasped her, but there were money dogs who had put their teeth in her flesh and didn't want to let her go. It was like she was bleeding to death.

'I see Traxmarut !' shouted Tara. 'The one who is guarding the Gate of Death ! I am dying ! I see his golden coffin with the red covering and the golden cross on it ! I see him !' Suddenly

the dogs let her go, barked and ran away. The white monster had come closer to the white palace with her.

'They can't stand the white palace, as there is Neveroth's real skull. They fear it,' said the white monster.

'The bones are in Traxmarut's coffin !' shouted Tara. 'It is somewhere in a church, a cathedral.'

'Below the cages, there is a cathedral,' said the white monster.

'Then let us go there,' Tara said.

'The dogs will eat you,' said the white monster.

'Then we go with the skull of your father !' shouted Tara.

The white monster ended up putting pieces of the skull of his father in Tara's armor, because the giant skull was much too big to take it with them.

The dogs were crying when they saw Tara. They started to melt away, while the white monster led Tara to the cathedral. It was exactly how she saw it in her hallucinations of death. She went inside in search for the golden coffin, which she found in a deeper chamber. A ghost came up from the coffin, saying : 'Who touches these bones inside, will die,' while it was also written in the air. There were rings at the sides of the coffin, golden rings, which kept the coffin covered by a golden plate which was covered by a red covering.

'You cannot open the coffin Tara, you will die,' said the ghost. 'You don't know with which powers you are playing.'

'You are religious scum !' shouted Tara. Suddenly the whole place was in fire, and Tara had to run out of the cathedral. 'It's killing me !' she shouted. The white monster took her to the

palace again, where he quenched the fire totally. 'I cannot do this. These powers are too strong,' said Tara.

'Then we will all die,' said the white monster.

'What can we do ?' Tara asked.

'Ask my father,' said the white monster. Together they approached the skull again. 'Father,' said the white monster. Tara wanted to ask you a question.

'I already know what she wants to know,' said the skull. 'And there is only one solution. She has to enter through my nose holes, and enter the chamber deep inside my skull, where the powder of intoxication is in a white coffin. It is the powder of time. She has to smear it on her face and on her body, and go back to the cathedral to get the bones. If she will not be back here with the bones in short time, she will die.'

Tara climbed on the skull her way up to the nose-holes, and went inside where she found the chamber a while later. When she went inside and tried to open the coffin, a white ghost stood there. When she put on the powder she was suddenly in a shock and very paranoid. She suddenly didn't trust the skull anymore, but on the other hand she knew that if the skull had spoken the truth, she needed to be fast now. She ran outside to go back to the cathedral. She ran towards the chamber with the golden coffin, and could open it very easily. When she touched the bones, nothing happened. She took the bones with her. They were not that big. When she came back to the skull, the skull was very mad. 'They have shrunk my bones !' he shouted. 'Bring them in my chamber.' The skull then wanted the bones to be put in the white coffin.

When Tara had reached the coffin and put the bones into it, she suddenly fell backwards, where the floor opened itself, and she slid into a deep, tall pit, where she ended in a dungeon. 'There is no escape from anyone,' roared the skull. 'I have my bones back, and look where it is leading us. Now you are locked up in me forever. I do not know how to get you out from there. Tara was surrounded by strange moving bars.

'Father,' said the white monster, 'maybe you have missed a link.'

But the skull didn't speak anymore. Tara came into a deep sleep. The skull was fading more and more, and started to lose its density. When Tara woke up the skull had completely disappeared, and she was free. 'Maybe your father is finally free,' said Tara. The white monster nodded. When they went to the place of the cages, it didn't exist anymore. They hoped the children were finally free as well.

Desert Queen

She had tied her men, while strange insects called 'spanish spears' were stinging them. By the venom they were slowly turning into cattle. The spanish spears not only inserted their venom, but they were also bloodsuckers. They sucked the blood and the juices out of the men, leaving them weak. They had to go through all sorts of marriage rituals to bring them down, and after that they had to go through the rituals of divorce. The cattle was good for work and transport.

Tara from Rhodes, a lonely warrior, stops her journey through the desert when she comes along this bright realm of the desert queen. Quickly she finds out what is going on here, and she starts a massacre, finally to behead the desert queen. With the head of the queen she holds by her hand she sits on her throne. 'Spear not the cattle !' someone is shouting. But soon a spear goes through the head of this person.

She loves the cattle but she is not aware of the curse of the desert queen. An army of sand-people is soon surrounding the bright realm in which Tara thrones now. They walk slowly towards her, coming from the sand, and soon Tara is put into a torture cage in the depths of the desert. The cage goes down as by an elevator. It leads to underground worlds below the desert, where the spanish spears rule.

The queen of the spanish spears could also turn into a woman. She came close to Tara. 'Well, well,' she said to Tara, 'so you have defeated the desert queen, right ? Just know that the desert will always exist, and replace these queens with something even worse. As now I will become desert queen.'

Tara was allowed to come out of the cage, and the queen of the spanish spears took her place. Soon the cage went up as by an elevator. Tara is alone now, but she is glad she is free at least.

Meanwhile the queen of the spanish spears possessed the men in the desert realm, living inside of them, living from their meat. Tara wanted to know the mystery of the desert, the secret of it, so she went deeper underground. She came into a tunnel leading to the Ocean of Blood. There were strange smells here. When she finally came on its beach it was very dark and bloody. There were strange insects looking like chains. Another sort of insects looked like

knives.

She starts swimming in the ocean of blood, and after a while she reaches an island where pigs live. They are chained by the chain-insects, and the knife-insects are living close to them as well. To Tara it seems that these strange insects live from the blood of the pigs.

Further on the island, women lived, huntresses. They lived together with hyenas. They kept men in cages who they had starved. When Tara asked about it, they said that they had let the men get stung by the venom of divorce. Tara felt compassion for the men. When the women slept she opened their cages and took the men to the ocean of blood. Together they swam to another island. Here many fruit trees were, and Tara started feeding the men, who were very weak. When the women woke up, they were in rage. Soon they found out that they were with Tara on another island. Tara would protect the men with her life. She knew the men were still in danger. Not only because of the women, but also because of the strange insects who could turn them into cattle. Tara wondered if there was an anti-venom against it. She became very protective over the men, and was looking for a medicine.

One day the queen of the spanish spears visited them. It seemed she had changed a lot. Tara asked her if she knew of an opposite force against the venom. 'Oh yes,' said the queen. 'Servil sugar. That is a sugar living in certain big fruits. They are also here on this island.' Then the queen led them to such trees, and gave them to eat from the sugar inside of the big fruits. It was a sugar to restore marriages, and to turn cattle into men again. The queen took care that the men got their women back, and that they had happy marriages again.

The Ghost-children of Pendilot

In the depths of Orion, Dagva had his slaves, who he had pierced in their teeth by strange implants. This was how he controlled his slaves. They were remote devices. He wanted his slaves to build pyramids for his empire. Dagva was a zombie under the wrath of the gods, but he had built his own religious order. They were called the Zamgda. By the pyramids he had the powers to dig deep in the depths of Orion for a substance used as money, the Ontragolin Metal. This was a soft metal which could become hard by certain processes. It could also live in the people to control them. They could get possessed by it.

The Orion pyramids were huge and gigantic, and in one of these, Dagva lived. One day he was visited by Tara from Rhodes who immediately attacked him. Blood was coming from his eyes, and he turned into a dragon. The dragon spouted flames at her, but she could block it by her shield. 'I know what you want, Dagva,' Tara shouted. 'But you are not going to get it.'

Then Dagva all of a sudden stood before her as a skeleton, while blood was still streaming from his eyes. 'You shouldn't have come here,' he roared. He grasped her neck and tried to strangle her. Tara slammed him away by her sword, but then he came back, turning into a bear, and then into a lion, to spit fire at her again, which she could block by her shield again.

'Your games are over,' he roared, while Tara felt weak all of a sudden, and later she woke up in a dungeon cage. He had done something with her head. She had a terrible headache, and she found out that she had strange implants in her teeth. No one would control her like this, but there was nothing she could do. Some dark weeks followed in the cage. Tara began to feel hopeless.

When she was allowed to come out of her cage, Dagva wanted to sacrifice her in a pool of fire, which was like an oven underground. She was led to the edge from which she would be pushed. She was tied, her hands behind her back. She was also blindfolded. They wanted to hang her, and let her sink into the flames. The rope was already around her neck. Suddenly a little boy showed up, who shouted : 'No !' Dagva seemed to be upset. 'Go home, child,' he shouted.

The little boy came from a stairway, and ran to Tara to hug her. Then the guards of Dagva, the tooth-piercers, tried to grasp the boy, but the boy ran away and disappeared into the nothing. 'Those silly, stupid ghost-children,' Dagva roared. 'Hang her now !'

Suddenly many more ghost-children appeared, took the rope off her neck, and led her away, while a strange smoke was blinding Dagva and his guards. 'Don't let them escape !' Dagva shrieked.

Suddenly Tara was in a white smoke. She wasn't tied and blindfolded anymore. Lions were surrounding her, and on the back of the lions she and the children were brought to a dark castle, the castle of Pendilot, where the children were living. 'It is a great day !' one of the children was shouting, a boy, when they had entered the main hall of the castle. 'Dagva has lost it this time. His empire is falling.' All the children were joyfully shouting. They had once suffered under his hand, but now they were free, and helped to free others. They were the ghost-children of Pendilot. They were the souls who died under the cruel regime of Dagva and the tooth-piercers. The lions always took care of them.

'Am I dead ?' Tara asked.

'No,' said a boy. 'We saved you before that could happen.' Suddenly the castle dematerialized, and disappeared into the nothing, and Tara found herself in the desert. She wondered what had happened to Dagva. In the distance she saw the army of tooth-piercers. She wouldn't be able to begin much against such a big army. But then it faded away. Someone was laughing in her head, which sounded like Dagva's voice, but then it faded away also. Tara was very thirsty and sat down. She still felt very weak. She wondered if she was safe.

Suddenly from the sand a skeleton came forth. It was Dagva. He grasped her, and pulled her into the depth, like in shift-sand. Everything was tumbling in Tara's head. Suddenly she woke up in a bed in the castle of Pendilot. A boy was staring at her. 'Am I dead ?' she asked.

'No, you just slept,' said the boy. 'Maybe you had a bad dream.'

'Well, you can say that,' Tara said. 'Am I safe ?'

The boy nodded.

'What happened to Dagva ?' Tara asked.

The boy didn't say anything, and then left. A while later another boy came to Tara, and asked how she slept. Tara told him about the dream. 'It wasn't a dream, Tara,' said the boy. 'Dagva is after your soul.'

'How can we terminate him ?' Tara asked.

'Well,' said the boy. 'Dagva's power is in the Ontragolin Metal. He could make it hard and use it as tooth-piercings. It is a ghost. There is only one way to stay safe against this ghost. We still get tortured by this ghost when we are asleep.'

'What is the only way ?' Tara asked.

'Well,' said the boy, 'the only way is to find the Hyena Tower, a powerful ghost tower in the depths of the Pendilot desert, but first we have to find the portal to the Pendilot desert. It should be somewhere below the castle of Pendilot.'

'I think I was in this desert,' Tara said.

'Really ?' said the boy. 'Tell me about it.'

'It was only for a short period I was there,' Tara said. 'And I met Dagva and the army of the tooth-piercers. Dagva grasped me, and together we sunk into shift sand.'

'Did you see the tower ?' the boy asked.

'No,' Tara said.

'There is a place of shift sand in the underground of the castle, deep down below. No one dares to go there, because it is a haunted place, but I think we have no other choice then,' said the boy. 'I think the shift sand is the portal to the desert then.'

Together they went there, and slid into the shift sand. Soon they both stood in a huge desert. There were pyramids all around them. Behind the pyramids there was the huge Hyena Tower, like a stairway into the sky. But no matter how long they walked, they didn't come closer to it. It seemed like the place was bewitched.

'Maybe the clue is in the pyramids,' said the boy.

But the pyramids seemed to be unreachable as well. The only thing they could do was go back to the place of the shift sand, and return to the castle. That was which they did, and later they told about it to the other children.

'Maybe the tower can only be reached by another way,' one of the children said.

One of the children had found out that the tooth-piercers had found their fortress. They were already knocking on the doors and the walls. The children got upset, and knew that they had to go downstairs now. Suddenly Dagva stood before them and tried to possess their minds. Some children fainted.

'Run for your life !' one of the boys shouted. Soon they were surrounded by tooth-piercers, but Tara and a few boys could escape to the place of shift sand. Again they went through the shift sand to the desert. They knew they couldn't return anymore. One boy soon found a sort of elevator hidden under sand. They made the portal free, and soon they reached the Hyena Tower. There was a lot of white smoke here, and lions. Soon they ran up the stairways.

The tower started shaking, and they heard laughing. Soon they stood eye to eye with Dagva again. It seemed he was the one laughing. 'This tower is mine,' he laughed.

'No, it isn't !' one of the boys shouted. Tara took an arrow from behind her back, and aimed at Dagva. Then she shot right through him. He caught flame, but he was just laughing. 'Let me grasp you now !' he laughed. The boys shrieked and ran downstairs again. Tara wondered if they were at the right place. And if they were, there would be a battle to get what they wanted. The tooth-piercers were already running upstairs also. There was no way to escape. Tara soon was hit on her head a few times, and later she woke up in a dungeon, together with the children. 'There must be a way,' one of them said. Some dark weeks followed. It seemed the children were trapped.

'There is no way for us to survive this,' cried one of the boys.

'Let's be glad we are all together again,' said Tara. 'We are still alive.'

The children began to sing songs to comfort each other. They feared they would be sacrificed.

Soon they were all led to the court hall of Dagva to be judged. They were surrounded by tooth-piercers who slowly turned into the most horrible predators. Some of the children started to shriek. Suddenly it was like the skies were tearing open, and the ghost-lions of the children were appearing. They were spreading a red smoke, by which the tooth-piercers started to melt away. They took the children and Tara on their backs, and disappeared. They took them to the wilderness, to a place of hyenas. The hyenas would care over the children now. The place was called Hyena Tower, but it was not a real tower. It was a jungle. Here all sorts of exotic plants, trees and flowers grew. It brought forth a honey to let the Ontragolin Metal piercings melt, and restore the teeth. Tara hoped they were finally free from Dagva now.

She took him in the grip. He was the seventh king of Scatorix, guarding the jewels of the tigers of Scavahl, the main city of Scatorix. These jewels kept the secrets of how so many women were enslaved to this king. It was a land and domain of female slaves. He kicked Tara off of him. She screamed. 'When I get my hands on you a second time, you won't survive !' Tara shrieked. As by a storm Tara was swept away. There was a lot of sorcery on this man. Black sorcery with the riddles of time. A sailor stood there, near to his ship, while Tara ran away from the king. She felt like she was wounded by a strange power. The sailor was smiling. 'What are you laughing at ?' Tara yelled. Soon she had his head in a grip. 'Easy, lady, what is wrong with you ?' he said with a painful face.

'I have had enough of bastards like you !' Tara said loud. 'You are just laughing because of having so much power over women. I mean your empire here. I am sure you are coming here to trade your female slaves, or getting new ones.'

'I ... I am sorry,' stuttered the man. 'If you could see in the depths of time, you would know what our secret is.'

'You will tell this secret now,' Tara said with a harsh voice, 'or I will break your neck soon enough,' while taking his neck and head into a tighter grip.

'Sail to Bershevah Island, and visit the time sorcerer, Emulatas. He can tell you more,' the man said with a weak, fading and painful voice.

'You better be right,' said Tara with a voice full of rage, and pushed the man to the floor. His head was bleeding, and blood was also coming from his mouth. Tara didn't care. She went to his ship, and told the workers and the slaves to head with it for Bershevah Island. They obeyed her immediately.

She had to be with this time sorcerer. Some of the workers knew where he lived on that island, and guided her to him. They took a few slaves with them. Tara was loudly knocking on his door. 'Who is there !' a dark voice almost growled. 'It doesn't matter who is here !' Tara

shouted. 'Just open the door, or I will destroy your door. Simple. It's time that these games are over. It seems you are bearing the secrets of female slavery all over these lands. Is that true ?'

'That could be true, lady,' the man said while he opened the door.

'Simple, dreaming,' said the sorcerer. 'Those tigers possess jewels which can bring people in a dream, a dream empowering males and weaking women, until males think they are the superior and stronger race. They can make even women believe that through these dreams. You know, the tigers of Scavahl in Scatorix, ruled by the seventh king. Darius is his name.'

'What about Antharax ?' Tara asked.

The mouth of the sorcerer opened a bit. 'How did you know about Antharax ? He is the hidden religious leader ruling the king.'

'I knew it,' Tara said. She moved closer to the sorcerer, and grasped him by the neck. 'Listen, you bastard. You will tell me exactly how to get those jewels, for whenever I approach the king, some strange power overwhelms me ! And don't play any games with me, or you will regret it dearly.'

'Antharax will soon be revealed to the whole of Scatorix,' said the sorcerer. 'He will make them all shiver, because he will tighten the laws.'

'Tell me how to stop him, and how to take his jewels !' shouted Tara, while almost growling.

'By hate and greed,' the sorcerer said. 'These are two stones, two spirits, the only two spirits in the whole universe being able to deal with Antharax and the jewels of the tigers of Scavahl.'

'Where do I find these stones !' shouted Tara.

'In hell,' said the sorcerer.

'How do I get there !' Tara shouted.

'Come with me,' said the sorcerer. He stood up, while Tara let him walk. He walked towards a cellar, to a deep stairway downwards. Tara followed him closely.

'Look for Ervadus, the muscle man,' said the sorcerer. He opened a door at the bottom, and they came into a huge cave. He took a torch from the wall and gave it to Tara. 'Be well,' he said.

'Where does this Ervadus live ?' shouted Tara.

'I don't know,' said the sorcerer. 'But you will find him soon enough. Everyone does.' Then the sorcerer went up the stairway again. After a long time of walking through the cave some sort of monstrous man with a lot of swollen muscles came to Tara. It was almost painful to watch. 'I am looking for the stones of greed and of hate !' Tara shouted. 'Can you help me with that !'

'Oh, yes,' said the man. 'I am glad to see someone here. I live in pain all the time, as if my muscles are exploding. They are so swollen. Hardly anyone comes here.'

'What kind of stones are they !' Tara shouted.

'Oh, they are messy stones, I will show them to you. My name is Ervadus,' said the man.

He led her to another cave, a smaller one, in which there was some sort of cave-cellar where a lot of stones were stored in a sort of cupboard. It was very dusty. 'The stone of greed, oh only the wise will be able to bear this one. When fools touch this stone, it will destroy them. When they bear it, it will burden them forever, even when they lay it down. That is my fate. I took it once in greed, and now I am doomed forever. My muscles always grow to explode, and then they grow again, which is very painful.' He showed her a green, slimy stone, glowing in a strange light.

'I need it to defeat Antharax !' shouted Tara, while her eyes almost became red. A rage was coming over her. She grasped the stone, while she screamed. It pushed her away. 'There is hope for you,' said Ervadus. 'The stone has not burdened you. You need the stone of hate now to become it's rightful owner.'

He showed her a black stone, also very slimy, with some white ghostly light surrounding it. 'Stone of Hate, in the middle of hearts you were, to eat them away, for they had sinned against you. Only the wise will find you, but the fools will be hunted down by you, while they will be stalked by you forever, not knowing where you are.'

Tara grasped the stone. It was light in her hands. Then she took the stone of greed. Two ghosts stood before her. They had swords. 'Now, come with me, child,' said Ervadus, 'I will lead you to the eternal circle. From here the two stones will be sent to do their job. You own them now, so you can tell them what to do. Command them, and they will obey.' Ervadus took her to a small wilderness behind the cave, where a dusty circle was drawn in an open space. She brought the stones there, while the two spirits were soaring over them.

'Speak your wishes, child,' said Ervadus.

'I want you to destroy Antharax, and the seventh king of Scatorix, to take the jewels of the tigers of Scavahl and bring them here. I want you to set the female slaves of that land free, and to make sure that their oppressors will die !' shouted Tara.

'They cannot kill, child,' said Ervadus. 'They can only torment. And when they torment, they do this forever.'

'Can they set you free from your torments ?' asked Tara.

'No, child. This is my fate. Their torment never stops. It is too late. I should never have touched the stone of greed, but I became it's guard,' said Ervadus.

'Now do your work, stones !' shouted Ervadus. 'The child is waiting for you.'

Suddenly the stones started vibrating. They were striking Ervadus a few times, and then left, while shrieking. The two ghosts followed the stones, also shrieking. There was a lot of smoke they left behind. Ervadus was wounded terribly by the stones, but that was the price he had to pay. Tara took care of his wounds.

'No one has ever come this close to me, since I touched the stone,' said Ervadus.

'I want to thank you,' said Tara. Now she had to come over the fact that this man would be tormented forever.

'I am a demon, child,' said the man. 'I deserve this punishment, because my heart is black. Only rotten demons like me can do the things like I did. I lived a very bad life, and now I am a slave by it forever.'

Tara sighed. This man was so disturbed. Soon the shrieking ghosts came back with the jewels, with Antharax, the seventh king, and the oppressors of women. They had also taken with them the women who had enabled these men. There were cages coming out of the ground around the eternal circle. These were the cages of torment. There was a lot of fire in these cages. All the prisoners of the stones were put into these cages. Ervadus pushed on a button, and the cages started to move around the eternal circle, while they went faster and faster. Screaming came forth from the circle. The whole circle was in flames. The ghosts moved slowly to Tara. They gave her the jewels of the tigers of Scavahl.

Tara went back to Scavahl, where the tigers submitted to her because she had their jewels. The female slaves had been set free, but many submitted to Tara because of gratefulness. She became the queen of Scatorix.

Door of Darkness

Through the ice masses she walked straight up to the bear king, while she held the spear of time. He laughed at her when he saw her. 'I am the great creator of all oceans,' said the king. 'I am the pillar and foundation of all oceans. Who are you and what do you want from me?'

But Tara had no time to talk to him. She aimed her spear right at his heart, and threw it. She didn't miss. Soon the king lay on the ground bleeding with the spear of time through his heart. The great bear king with his illusions had fallen. Slowly she walked towards his body. Quickly with a firm pull she took the spear out of his heart, ripping him open even more, for the spear had some hooks.

Bats flew all around her. Bears came to her from all sides, as she had defeated their master. They licked her, and submitted to her. He had been cruel to them for such a long time. This was how she became the bear queen. She took the metal knight mask from the king, with on top of it's helmet a black feather. She also took his robe. He was the black disease, a virus in the hearts of many men.

Their lungs were his throne, and their heartbeats was he pounding the drum. He controlled them. He made them eat whatever he liked. It was a greedy man, a heart disease. His pumps made women weaker, and men stronger. But now he had fallen. Soon rats ate from his flesh.

On the seas his ships were sinking. A great storm was taking over the oceans, making them wilder than ever, while his face appeared in the red sky. He was a ghost now, a trauma. He tried to awaken his men again, his machines, by speaking his spells. His powers were from a book. It was the book of cholera.

The book of cholera was a woman. She could paralyze people. Because of fear they submitted to her. She used to come in the nights. The ghost of the bear king found a shelter in her. But

she was screaming at him. She was mad, because he had fallen, and he came as a ghost. She started mocking him, and it turned into a bitter fight in which she tore his ghost being apart.

Tara took the book, and started to tear it. She found it in the depths of a dark chamber of the bear king. It made her invisible. That was the price to pay when tearing such a book. But Tara survived. She held the torn book up in her hand, and called for the winds of fire, which took it. Her hand was burning, but soon it went back to normal, and she also got her body back. She became more dense than ever. She was very physical and present. Bears were licking her.

Then the storms took her up and brought her above the oceans. She was the queen of the oceans now. Her body was enchanting them. They took her up on the throne of the bear king. It was surrounded by spider webs. It was a long stairway to reach the throne, like an open door of light to enter into another world. Slowly she disappeared through it, coming into a world of darkness and fog, in which she slowly faded. No one ever saw her back.