

MALLONA

The demise of the asteroid planet

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FROM EARTH INTO SPACE

Many inhabitants of earth, who look up to the starry sky at night, often have the wish to penetrate the infinite space and hurry over to those distant luminous shining worlds, which beautify our nights so brilliantly. To those solar systems with their presumed planets, in order to find out whether on those worlds also human beings live like those of our earth, and whether these are likewise under the laws of the vegetative and intellectual life, which called humans on earth into being. A thousand new questions intrude upon him who has ever made an attempt to solve this main question, the final answer which can probably never be answered in the earthly life that has bound us physically to our planet. Will man ever succeed in finding ways and means to hurry through space in the body? As far as technology will still bring it, the earthly sphere seems to put insurmountable obstacles in the way of every wish for a daring flight by physical means. The art of the engineer and the physicist is weakened by the commanding hold of mother earth, which she calls out to her children who want to escape physically from her womb.

It is different with the spirit, which did not spring from her womb; she cannot bind it, she cannot call out to it: 'I command you to stay within the borders of my kingdom!' A son of God, born from the essence of the universe, he penetrates the universe, his eternal home, from which he originated, and which also, once he has escaped from his material dungeon, reveals all secrets to him. We are in our innermost being spirit, children of God out of the original Spirit of God! In the mirror image of our being we see the essence of the eternal world-Creator, before Whose rule we shudder in awe, but do not tremble in fear for His omnipotence. For we glow in love, the more we recognize, how everything is well done, which flows from the center of His will. We never feel that this universe is hostile to us, if we do not feel that this All is never hostile to us unless we ourselves foolishly oppose it; that it is friendly, helpful, salutary to us when man recognizes the profound truth of the primordial law of all life: Creator and creature are not separate beings, but are to constitute a marriage that yields it's richest fruits in constant perfection.

My spirit also recognizes this intention of the world plan and so I dare to penetrate into the secrets of it's development, to explore a small part of it. I free myself from the bonds of the earthly body, swing myself up into the eternal space, leaving behind the world, place of the earthly sufferings and joys, deep below.

I climb up into sunlit skies. A deep blue arches above me, which gradually thickens into an impenetrable black the higher I penetrate the earth's atmosphere. - Now I have left it behind and float freely in infinite space. Below me, I see the mighty globe hovering, it's circumference shrinking more and more the higher I go toward a destination unknown to me. The sun no longer warms the silence of space, but it still gives it's light, because I do not cross the shadow of the earth, which loses itself as a long cone into infinity. In this eternal silence and wasteland, the human soul trembles. Because it feels here the rule of the invisible deity whose will forces all the shining celestial bodies to move according to the laws which they set up by their own power. I, too, am subject to them, I - to whom it is granted, as a spirit detached from the earthly, to behold all this sublimity, to admire the works of the Eternal.

Higher and higher the flight goes. To my right, a world seems to approach me as a shiny disk that gradually enlarges and reflects the light of the sun in it's reddish glow. I know, it is the planet Mars, which shows itself lying on the right of me in my sight, so near, as no astronomer's eye has ever seen it. Now it also sinks under my feet, because the flight goes higher and higher, towards a star, which is just above my head. Below me I see the disk of the earth, I can still clearly see the spots

that form it's seas, the continents stand out brightly. I recognize Europe, looking like a peninsula of the immense Asia, Africa and at the edge, the continent of America emerges.

Higher and higher goes the flight, made possible by a force inexplicable to me. And now - now the planet that hovers above my head and towards which the driving force makes me steer towards. What is this? Is an image of the earth showing itself to me? I had clearly remembered the country masses of the earth in memory and now I see in similar form the same image? Is this an intention of the creating hand of the Creator which let that planet come into being which reveals itself to my eyes more and more? I can clearly see two separate mighty continents, they resemble those of America, except that the isthmus of Panama is missing and the sea pours unhindered between the two. On the left edge, other continents appear. The flight turns towards them and a further turn takes place - apparently to reach the other side of the celestial body - I now see that this resembles the shape of the connected Asia with Europe. The driving force leads me to the still invisible side of the planet, which, turned away from the sun, lies in the darkness of it's shadow. Approaching more and more it's surface, the huge curvature of the sphere already occupies the whole horizon. Soon I will be able to recognize what it's surface holds, still the distance is too far for the human eye. What is this star, which I hurry to? After the orbit of Mars, which I intersected, the zone of the asteroids follows, after this, the orbit of Jupiter! But it is not Jupiter, I would have to see it's moons also, but this planet seems to possess no satellite like the earth. Is it one of the largest of those asteroids, which run in large number through that space, at whose place a planet was searched for years and was not found, until the power of the telescope first discovered four however only small worlds? It seems to me too powerful in it's mass, the eye does not find any of the comrades in space who share this path with him? Who are you, unknown world, to which I hasten, which now came so close to me that I can recognize colorful gradations of forests, plains, lakes, seas and rivers. Reveal to me your origin, your name! - There it trembles through my soul: "You see the debris of a once great, beautiful world, which are now whizzing through space as asteroids, again joined together to a whole. The former planet, it has risen again in it's beauty before your astonished eyes, for you shall give evidence of it, which no man's eyes before you, ever saw! You shall see what happened on it thousands of years ago, you shall give testimony of the great spirit of the world, who let happen what he did not want to hinder for the sake of the great goal, which had to be reached!"

I come closer and closer - there - deep darkness surrounds me, black, deep night. I have plunged into the shadows of the planet and with frantic speed I am now rushing towards the destination of my journey. I breathe air as if on mountain heights, clouds are parted by me. Dark mountain tops stretch out threateningly towards me, as if they wanted to deny that my foot enters the land and betrays it's secrets, - but nothing can prevent me.

Over mountains, crevasses, smoking and fire-breathing volcanoes, my flight slows down; the thunder of roaring waves strikes my ear, green mats stretch over gently arched mountains, dimly lit by the glow of a wonderful starry world and the first glimmer of a now dawning morning. On such a height, surrounded by flowing mists, which still veil the view of the lower lying land, my wonderful journey from the earth to that distant planet ends. I stand on the territory of Mallona, the once destroyed world of our solar system.

THE ORIGIN OF THE RING

Slowly it reddens in the east. The sun rises majestically above the horizon and chases away the wafting mists that cover the deep valleys all around and still veil the heights of the mountains. It becomes lighter, the area becomes clearer. The landscape surrounding the high mountain, on whose side facing the sea the bold flight had ended, is revealed more and more.

A brisk wind, blowing from the sea and rippling its surface into light, foam-crowned waves, tears apart the last ghostly streaks of fog. Now the landscape lies clear before me in the redness of a glorious new dawn. How completely similar this region is to the earth, only everything is more gigantic and exerts a more powerful impression on the soul.

The mountain, from whose summit I look down, is highly overgrown with trees and shrubs, which also our earth carries. It is the last in the series of an imposing, yet lovely mountain range. It is followed by a mountain scenery of wildly torn character, which, it seems, was formed by volcanic forces not yet extinct and is probably still being modified by them. As far as the eye can see, the sea is closed off by towering, immense rocks that form an insurmountable wall against its floods.

This is urgently needed, because - a strange sight - only a short distance behind the natural defense, the land begins to sink and forms a depression, which lies significantly deeper than the sea. Woe to the land down there if ever the mighty rock wall were to break: irresistibly the floods would pour into that depression and cover everything destructively with the waters of the sea.

Back there on the horizon I see smoke rising; now and then flames twitch up, followed by a low, subterranean thunder. Volcanic forces must be active there, waging a battle with the sea, which cuts a deep bay into the land here and is also separated from the hearth of those eruptions only by that continuous, towering rock wall. I cherished the desire to take a closer look at this place. And behold, light as a feather my body lifts into the air and strives towards the goal of my wish. - -

Now I know the driving force that enabled me to make the journey from earth: it is my will, which is stronger than the resistance formed by matter.

What a terrible sight of wildly raging and unleashed forces of nature presents itself here! There is nothing similar on earth. Now I see that I have entered another, strange world. It is an hellish throat which shows up here. Take all volcanoes of our earth, heap them together on one spot, so you have a picture of what shows up here. There is not only one maw from which glowing lava masses, flames and suffocating fumes pour out.

No, as far as the eye can see, crater follows crater, an active workshop of mighty forces. Here is the true realm of Pluto and Vulcan, here they are unrestricted rulers. But their enemy, the god Neptune, the lord of all waters, shows up in threatening proximity. All land, so wildly torn by volcanic eruptions, shows at the same time the strange depression as we know it also on earth. If it were not for the rock wall that borders the sea, it would have to plunge inexorably into those fiery gulfs. Woe then to this country, it is not to be foreseen what terrible catastrophe would befall it!

I float along the rocky ridge through this region of terror, from whose craters flames and fiery bombs, often bursting in the air with a deafening noise, rise incessantly. Now, rushing through the air at incredible speed, I reach the end of this terrifying landscape. High mountains drop

precipitously to the sea, naked rocks stare along the coast and offer an inhospitable stay to the poor castaway who may have saved his life here. There a promontory jumps far into the sea, a bay joins behind it and look, like a friendly oasis in the desert, a friendly landscape shows up at the area of this bay.

Here it is green and sprouts forth wonderful flowers, bushes and trees, a small paradise reveals itself to the astonished view. It is surrounded by high, steep mountains, from which it seems impossible to descend to the coast; open to the sea side, the paradisiacal bay is protected by a rocky bank that breaks the force of the waves: a natural harbor, where the calm surface of the water reflects the sky-high mountains. Here, nature has created a place of peace, protected from the powerful forces of fire, which at times can be heard rumbling behind the mountains with a muffled thunder, and of water, which is unable to flood the beach with devouring force over the rocky bank.

In the wide semicircle of this storm-protected bay, lush vegetation has developed. Full fruit trees stand around and invite to enjoy; a spring rises at the rock wall and splashes downward to the sea. In the middle of the semicircle, the rock masses, which probably once fell due to earthquakes, have built a kind of terrace, so that it is possible to climb up to a third of the steeply sloping mountain. Here, too, the weathering rock has created fertile soil, everything there is green and blooming in bright colors. This seemingly unworldly corner offers in abundance what the benevolent Mother Nature is able to give. In the meantime it has become light day, the sun pours warm rays over the little paradise. Here it is pleasant, here peace dwells. Are there also people? It seems almost not. But isn't something stirring on the terrace?

That's right, I see a young person there! Scantly clad in furs, he gives the impression of looking like one of the young Germans, as they may once have dwelt in the forests of Germany. The fallen boulders have formed a cave on the terrace, which, densely overgrown with flowering creepers, offers a strange sight. One could believe to see a rock palace formed by gnomes before oneself, to which the magic art of its inhabitants has lent an entrance decorated with fairy-tale flower-splendor. Fragrances and blossoms are all around. Burning colors of the calyxes delight the eye in front of the entrance to the cave, where the young man has now disappeared. A magnificent view of the sea and the bay is offered from this height. Truly a dwelling place that must delight every friend of nature. - Now it stirs in the cave, and leaning on the young man, an awe-inspiring figure slowly emerges. It is an old man with long flowing head- and beard hair. And what a sight! This is the look of a man who is detached from the suffering of existence, who lives only in the knowledge of his God and is able to fathom the depths of creation. This is how they may have looked, the mighty prophets of Israel, who walked without fear of man, fearless proclaimers of the word and will of Jehovah.

A simple, coarse robe enveloping the whole figure - held around the hips by a leather belt - dresses the muscular body of the old man, who, by no means a weak old man, only leans lovingly on the young man at his side. Slowly both come forth; now the old man strides ahead alone, reverently the younger man stays behind. The old man stretches his hands to heaven and kneels down. His lips move in silent prayer. Like a statue, he remains in an immobile position. The younger one also kneels down and bows his head on his chest, his arms crossed over it.

The strange place, the quiet murmur of the sea, which together with the distant thunder of volcanic eruptions only interrupts the other silence - the motionless figures of the two apparently only inhabitants of this rocky cave, doused by the warm, bright light of the ever higher rising sun,

sunk in deep prayer serving their God: this is a picture of powerful impression! It fills me with forebodings of great things that will be revealed.

The old man bows his head deeply to the earth. His upstretched arms cross over his chest. He murmurs soft words and seems to answer a person whom I cannot see. - For a long time this conversation with an invisible being lasts. Now the old man rises, his gaze searches for the younger companion and the latter hurries toward him.

"Muraval," sounds from his lips, "All-Father gave me enlightenments about the destiny Mallona is facing, if a better spirit does not soon change the hearts of those who call themselves rulers of the world. Would you be willing to fulfill the orders Allfather gives me?" - The youth replies: "Father, whatever you tell me to do, I will do, for I know you ask nothing of me that is not in the will of Allfather!"

"Come sit with me," the old man says, turning to a flat piece of rock, a natural bench at the entrance to the flower-lined cave.

Strange, I understand the language of these people, although they speak a completely foreign idiom to me! So it is true that the free spirit is independent of the form of the word, only the concept clothed in it speaks to it and it understands the impression that words evoke, no matter in which form it lies hidden. Now I understand what it means, the word is alive; word is the concept only enclosed by letters or sounds, which is independent of its dead cover; just as I am now independent of my body enclosing the spirit.

"Muraval," says the old man to the young man, "the hour has come in which I may explain to you why the All-Father has made us wander into this region, which I have now inhabited alone with you for seventeen cycles. Today, for the seventeenth time, the sun rose from the sea on the curved rocky shore of this bay, as if that rocky arch drew its path on the firmament. Only once in each year it glides slowly along its edge without casting the shadow of the rock into the bay; what will happen when the eighteenth year approaches?"

Muraval, you know that behind those mountains live people whom we flee. They know nothing of us, yet I have shown you how they are so very different in mind from us. You know what sin is, and that those over there serve only sin. Once I lived in the midst of them, honored and surrounded by all the splendor they can give themselves. But I did not seek the outer glimmer, I found satisfaction only in the search for the noble truth, which does not live in the world tumult, for which in us the good God, All-Father alone has prepared a dwelling place.

I see where it must lead, if not once again the truth is preached to those self-important ones there behind the mountains, a mirror is held up to them, in which they can recognize themselves. Would their hearts then be stirred, their minds changed.

Muraval, my son, know that King Areval now dominates the circle of the earth even more. He has succeeded, through the strength of his commander Arvodo, in breaking the last resistance that the fourth and last part of the Mallona circle has put up against him. He now dominates Mallona completely. An empire, an unrestricted world empire is his. But he is not happy. The pressure that his subjects have to endure from the king's great ones, has long since turned them into slaves, almost into animals. Unspeakable arrogance, hedonism, all the joys and pleasures of life you find with the high, deepest ignominy and humiliation, hunger and misery with the low. Only the army

of the ruler, through which he maintains his power, lives in joys and abundance: everything is for the warrior, he is the true ruler, the violent one who serves the king in order to serve himself.

How so very different it could, should be in our beautiful world. Instead of a place of curse, Mallona would be one of the most sublime joys, had not man become a rejected one, desecrated in himself. Instead of the All-Father, King Areval has thrown himself into the arms of the spirit of darkness. Our task shall be to make the last attempt to snatch him from these clutches. All-Father, I will obey, give us the way and the means."

The young man listens attentively to the old man's words and fiercely reaffirms his willingness to do anything.

Thoughtfully, the prophet looks at the glittering sea and speaks softly: "It is not yet time, but soon it will come and will demand from us much, perhaps everything, which we still have to give. Then do not fear, Muraval, for against the power of the All-Father, that of the King is but a breath, and we shall be safe in the shelter of our eternal Lord and Father. Come now, let us break the fruit from the bushes that we need for our meal." -

The old man rises quickly, the young man likewise, both descend to the beach and quickly disappear among the flowering bushes and trees. I was held in front of the cave with magnetic force. Now I am drawn to see the dwelling place of both, and I enter the cave. It is large, spacious and leads sideways under the boulders piled one on top of the other. There is the lair of both, made of moss and dry leaves. Few household utensils lie orderly around, it is made of the hard shells of large fruits, similar to coconut shells and pumpkins. I also see skins of animals here, partly serving as carpets, partly hung up as curtains at one of the camps, probably that of the old man, as protection against the wind visiting the cave. At their heads I see a larger vessel, decorated with signs that I do not know how to interpret; it drives me to open it to learn the contents.

It contains shiny jewelry, a head hoop with sparkling jewel and on the bottom is a golden ring with large white stone. This is the same stone with an incised head that was shown to me and which I still hold to my forehead, I now recognize it clearly. So it comes from here, here it has rested for a long time in this vessel!

THE ORESTONE

Again I feel seized by the wonderful power that made it possible for me to wrest myself free from the earth, to swing up to this strange world in order to investigate the history of the ring. I am carried away by it through the air, over the high mountains away into the interior of the country. The flight turns to the border of that volcanic region, which has already become known to me. How strange: death and serene life lie close together here.

There on the left, on the distant horizon, I see the raging of volcanic forces. Then follows a narrow belt of barren rock and without transition, a laughing, blooming landscape follows; I can overlook forests, rivers, fields and lakes, beautiful lovely valleys, gently rounded hills, obviously worked by

industrious human hands. But the cultivated areas are not the present goal which I strive for. That belt there seems to be it, which closes the blooming lands from the area of the fire.

I notice that there people, creatures like us, only significantly larger in shape, are active and work diligently. A mine has been created here. Deep passages are bored into the rock, hundreds, no thousands of workers are busy. But how strictly guarded they are and how pressed the workers look, these are not happy people! They are forced to work, not out of free will they have devoted themselves to it. Rough guards, each of them accompanied by two armed men, are driving them mercilessly into the deep rocky passages, from which I see some of them emerge, completely exhausted, with extraordinarily white, irregularly sized stones. They throw the stones from themselves and fall to the ground, breathing with difficulty, half fainting. Companions douse them with water and try to bring them to themselves again. How miserable these people's bodies are, only skin and bones!

In the deep passages they come so close to the hearth of volcanic fire and it's suffocating vapors that they can only extract the white stones there with constant danger to their lives. Along the entire rock belt, which stretches for miles, I see the laborious work of these unfortunates.

What must be the value of these stones that so many people are sacrificed in their extraction? Such work must take thousands of lives. Only violence, the choice between death or work, is the means to force the unfortunates. The gunmen mercilessly use long spears to strike down anyone who refuses to enter the caves any longer. Many prefer this quick death to the slow murder in the thirst of the rock shafts.

The barbarians seem to have done their work as executioners several times. I see there behind the rocks, near a deep abyss, lifeless bodies with still bleeding wounds lying next to those whose distorted faces indicate death by suffocation from poisonous fumes. A picture of horror and terror. Are the people of this globe callous, without any compassion in their chests? - It is so! In any case, the guards and the numerous gunmen no longer possess any trace of human feelings. Laughing, they throw the corpses of the unfortunates into the deep maw that grants them a final resting place. How many may already be resting in the depths, from which a dull water raging resounds? How many miseries, pains and curses have been washed into the sea by the raging waters down there at the bottom of the dreadful gorge! Not far from this place of misery, stands a large building. There all the stones acquired with blood are brought in, carefully examined, sorted according to purity of color and stored in special secure chambers. I suspect that these stones represent the place of money on our earth, that their value measures the value of the other products of this world-body and in any case are considered and serve as a means of payment, as money. The spacious building, built of enormous blocks, resembles a fortress. I enter it and see everywhere hard-working people who, by means of machines unknown to me, split the stones and cut them into more manageable square pieces, which are again prepared into thin slabs and then packed into boxes, which are loaded onto heavy wagons with special locks and seals.

In front of the house begins a most carefully paved, wide road, which has no bumps, it loses itself on the horizon in the indefinite distance. On this road, led by two men, empty wagons approach the building, loaded ones depart. The wagons move by themselves, driven by a force that I do not yet recognize. I only see that at the rear end of the wagons a long pipe protrudes, from which a light haze rises without sound. Lightly, noiselessly, and incredibly fast, these carriages move back and forth. There, from those places of labor and horror, in front of the entrance to one of the rock holes, a loud shout is now heard. Supervisors and workers come from all sides, they surround a

deeply exhausted man who has just stepped out of the passage and is carefully holding something in his hands. Congratulatory shouts are heard, a lively hustle and bustle develops. Excited voices become clearer and clearer and a procession settles for the mighty receiving store of the captured treasures.

He comes closer. A commanding figure steps out of the house, a man with hard, piercing eyes, surrounded by other men; they are his subordinates, he himself is the head of this mining operation. The procession is now very close to him. The man who caused the crowd by his loud shout is led in front of him. Expectantly, the strict one asks, "Are you a happy one?"

"Lord, it was me," the interrogated man answers him, kneeling and handing over a flat stone only the size of a fist, the lower surface of which is colored snow-white, the upper, dark brown.

"What's your name?" asks the strict one.

"Upal!" the lucky finder answers him.

"Upal, you are free and will report to the king where and how you found this magnificent stone, the largest I have ever seen. You know death is certain if you speak to others. Get ready for the ride!"

The superior goes back into the house with his subordinates. The crowd of soldiers and workers disperses again, returning to the places of their arduous work. Upal, with some other officials, who congratulate him lively and look at him with envious glances, goes to another entrance of the house and is led into a room where there is a laid table with food and drinks. There he rests and refreshes his tired strength with the delicacies that are otherwise only available to higher officials.

After some time, a servant enters and asks him to follow him to the highest superior. He is led into a chamber, which is furnished similarly as with us the chambers of the Orientals. Columns, walls adorned with colored stones, decorated with colorful curtains, support the ceiling. Carpets cover the floor, high windows let in bright sunlight, which is reflected on the blank stone walls. The superior wears a robe of Greek style, the shoulders covered by a cloak that reaches the ground. Wide leggings ending in embroidered boots of natural colored leather complete his attire; girded around his hips hangs a broad sword. He sits at a table, in front of him are writings. He looks through them and compares several.

To the entering Upal he now says: "Step closer and listen to the regulations that apply to the lucky finders of the Orestones. You, a former slave of the king, are from now on a free citizen, exempt from all duties that the subjects in the Mallona kingdom have to pay. You will be given the sum of 10,000 tesas and you may ask a favor from the king as soon as he receives you. Sum up your speech well when you stand before the mighty one and confess to him and the great ones how you found Orestone within. Here is the authentication of your find, your charter, and the instruction of your fortune."

The superior gives him three papers, they apparently resemble in their material completely that of our earth, but the characters are foreign, squiggled and curly. Upal thanks him with a frown. He carefully tucks the documents into his tattered work clothes, then bends low and leaves. The superior turns to other work at his table.

Upal strides along the long corridor that leads to the great gate. Now he steps out and looks over the area with a gloomy look, which has been a place of torment and the hardest slave labor for

him for so long. His features reflect what the man feels: Hatred against the oppressors, joy over the freedom he has won, desire for retribution for the torments he has endured. Breathing deeply, the man now stands on the last step of the staircase that leads from the portal to the street, and his eyes gaze longingly at the cars that speed along the road. Now he pulls himself together and goes to a hall where the cars disappear.

Busy life prevails in this hall. It is a room where the well-packed, already processed stones are loaded onto the wagons and thus delivered to the destination that is still unknown to me. A wagon is ready for departure. Upal's entrance has caused some movement among the workers. They all know that he has now become a free and rich man whom everyone envies for his good fortune, while they all still have to remain slaves, serfs of a king who does not spare their lives in order to enrich himself.

"Lucky guy," an official overseeing the loading of the treasures onto the wagon ready for departure addresses him, "you can go home in this wagon, do you want to?"

"Gladly I will," Upal replies, "be sure of my thanks!"

"Come, then, sit with me!"

The official climbs onto the front seat of the car, which offers comfortable space for two people. He takes a broad shield from a man standing next to him, who wears it on a chain around his neck, and hands it to Upal, who hangs on to it.

"You know why!" he whispers to him.

AT HOME

The road loses itself in the horizon in a dead straight line in the unforeseeable distance. On the right and on the left it is bordered by a strong wall up to half the height of a man. After the wagon has left the departure station, the road immediately narrows in such a way that only two wagons can drive side by side; a narrow elevation separates the road into two halves: on the right for the departing wagons, on the left for the returning ones. At distances that may correspond approximately to our earthly kilometer, I see guard houses alternately on the right and on the left. These are populated with soldiers who keep a sharp watch on every wagon, namely those coming from the station. The guards are armed with long spikes, which would knock down such occupants of a wagon who are not marked with a shield, as Upal and the officer are wearing, despite the fast travel. In addition, portcullis are attached to each guardhouse, through which it is possible to quickly close the road.

By means of peculiarly shaped signal figures hoisted on high masts, the individual sentinels are able to communicate with each other. Should a fugitive pass by a house, these signals set a goal for his journey at the next guard house. In this way, the acquired treasures are safely led to the distant capital of the king. There is no possibility for them to be taken away unnoticed, but also no possibility for the numerous workers to slip away unnoticed! Because on the constricting walls, soldiers patrol! You can see it in their faces, they know no mercy.

Silently, the ride goes towards the capital. The officer has focused all his attention on driving the car. Upal is lost in thought and apparently averse to conversation. The road begins to make twists and turns, soon there are slopes to be climbed, soon downward slopes to be negotiated at incredible speed. The wall on the right and on the left becomes higher and higher and does not allow a view of the shut-off country from the car anymore. The road now passes through more populated areas.

Although no dwellings can be seen in the immediate vicinity, traces of human activity often begin to appear at a certain regular distance: cultivated fields and dwellings of the kind that are common in our Orient. No-one is allowed to cultivate in the immediate vicinity of this state road; not even an inhabitant may venture near it, his life would be forfeited.

A city appears on the horizon, the destination of the long journey. According to our time, this may have lasted about two hours, however, a distance was covered at least once again as far as an earthly express train can do it in the same time. The area is beautiful, the city is imposing. It lies on a wide river and spreads out partly like a terrace on a gently rising mountain spur, surrounded by an enormous wall.

A wonderful castle rises on a hill in the middle of the city, the royal castle of the mighty ruler. Everything looks so earthly related and yet strangely oriental. The homes of the ancient Babylonians may have looked like this. Perhaps I see before me a kind of copy of the old Babylon, in which Nebuchadnezzar was enthroned, no less mighty, feared and - rejected, as he was.

The carriage now enters a vaulted hall on the city wall and stops. Cyclopean masonry piles up all around. As far as the first glance can see, one finds oneself in a well-guarded fortress that is capable of defying all violence. It is the treasure house of the empire, where all treasures flow that are won outside. Numerous people are busy here, a lively hustle and bustle can be seen everywhere. I am interested in the clothing, which consists of a short tunic for the workers, similar to the ancient Greek costume with which we are familiar. The higher officials wear besides this still coats, the feet are protected by high laced boots.

Upal and the official have now entered the interior. He thanks his companion and turns to a door that the latter has pointed out. He opens it and enters a wide room where many men are sitting, apparently busy writing. The head of this writing room takes the papers that Upal hands over and tells him to wait. It takes a long time for him to come back; now he leads him into another room. Upal is alone; no change in his features shows any excitement. He is quietly introverted, only the eye flashes furtively at times, but the man's iron willpower tames any telltale stirrings. A servant enters and asks him to follow.

He leads him into a chamber where several high officials of this treasure house are sitting, looking at him with interest. They talk to him encouragingly. The chairman of this council once again announces full freedom to him and hands him a number of papers; at last, with particular emphasis, a document that entitles Upal to collect from the royal coffers the large sum that is due to him as the finder of the orestone. Upal is now rich, very rich. It is impressed upon him to be attentive of being summoned to the king any day. He agrees to this, affirms his willingness and is released.

A servant leads him out, down a long corridor; now he stands again at a door that bears an inscription in writing unknown to me. He opens it. It is a cash register, a vaulted room, separated

by a wall with small windows, behind each sits a man. Upal passes his bill in at one window and receives a number of pouches, which he conceals in his robe.

He opens a bag, it is filled with narrow, square white plates, each bearing a sign, - it is the coined gold of Mallona, which he staked his life for to obtain more than once.

I have to laugh. So these little stones are money, money like ours, what is their value, where does it lie? Yes, where does the value of our gold lie, is it not also a phantom, a conceit, which deludes us that our coin has value? If one would value this money here, we would receive only a bread crumb for the square little stones. What we should value, the honest, useful work, has long been devoured by the self-made idol of the money phantom. The appearance, the imagination won and created the treasures which the rust and the moths eat!

Upal has moved away from the cash register, and further, a mysterious force compels me to follow him. He now steps out of the mighty building and sees himself inside the city wall in front of a free square, which he quickly crosses. The man breathes a deep sigh of relief, involuntarily grasps the treasure in his robe, casts another farewell glance at the building he has left and hurries quickly through the alleys of the suburb in which he will soon find himself.

Strangely built houses I see everywhere. I can only compare them with those of the Orient. Flat roofs like there, but they are covered throughout with wonderful flowering plants, like the floating gardens of Semiramis. The windows are high and wide, one sees through them into airy rooms, curtains veiling many window openings. Glass seems to be unknown here, but I see everywhere rolling curtains, of a transparent, solid, to me unknown fabric, which seems to provide the services of glass windows. The houses are not built into multi-story barracks, but are only two stories high, elongated, and usually have side wings enclosing a garden. Mild air blows everywhere. The people I see are all very muscular, strongly built and tall. This must be due to the peculiarity of this planet, whose physical properties must be different from those of our Earth, due to its greater distance from the Sun and different rotation time. I notice now that the atmosphere here seems to be a denser one, the air pressure is greater. I will try to explore this later, because I am interested in penetrating deeper into the secrets of the universe that are opening up to me.

Upal has arrived in an area that has far smaller houses, it takes little observation to realize that here is a place of poverty. The houses are low, narrow, many only a kind of hut. In front of one such, he now stands still and looks around scrutinizingly. The alley is empty, no people are to be seen. He knocks on a low door made of strong wood. A voice from inside asks who is causing the disturbance. When he calls his name, a suppressed cry rings out and the door is hastily opened from the inside. An old, haggard-looking woman, whose distress and worry speak from all her features, opens and looks with the expression of highest unbelieving surprise at the arrival. Then, when she sees that the unbelievable is truth, she cries out and falls around his neck. The mother's heart is the same even in this strange world!

Upal gently disengages from the arms of the mother, who is crying loudly with joy, and carefully leads her to a half-opened door, from which one hears anxious questions resounding as to what has happened. Both enter and quickly Upal strides to a campsite where a frail old man rests. The same scene is repeated here. Upal kneels at the bedside of his sick father. Now begins an endless questioning without end. Upal explains, and joyful amazement forces the two old people to silence when they hear that he returns rich as a finder of the orestone.

Upal takes out his treasures from his robe and shows the instruction that entitles him to raise far more. The joy of the old people is great, for now all the bitter misery in which they found themselves has come to an abrupt end. The father looks at him questioningly. "Did you do as I told you?" he asks softly, as the mother is hurrying to bring some food. Just as quietly, the son replies, "I did, only to you I owe the find, but later on about that!" Upal gives his treasure to his mother and asks her to get the best food, while he wants to stay with his father. The woman gladly agrees and with many caresses she leaves to get the best. Father and son are now alone. The old man has risen from his bed. A mighty force must once have filled this body, now shattered by illness and hardship. Now that the joy of possessing the son again refreshes the extinguished powers, one suspects what the old man must once have been like as a youthful man. Upal is very much like his father, but in spite of all his strength, he is not the youthful image of him that involuntarily arises in me when I look at this old man.

The old man reaches out his hand to his son and pulls him lovingly to his side: "Have you suffered much during the long time you spent there? - he asks in a worried tone. There is a wild flash in Upal's eyes. All the long-held hatred is reflected in his face and from the deepest, bitterest soul he cries: "I suffered unspeakably, but the chastisement is not given to them, they shall still atone for it on a day that may be given to me by the All-Father. All of them shall pay for it, all of them!" - "My son, whoever avenges himself, deprives All-Father of vengeance. Only He takes vengeance in a just measure. The pain you have suffered is still too fresh in your heart; let time soothe it so that peaceful thoughts may enter your heart."

Upal restrains himself and looks down mutely in front of him. The old man continues: "So many things have changed since my youth that I should not be surprised to hear from you many things about how things are now in the caves of Wirdu. In my time, when our last good King Maban was still alive, it was an honor to search for the precious Orestone: a heroic feat undertaken for it's boldness and for the powers the stone possesses. The white rod is also found in other places of Mallona, but only here the precious Orestone is found in it.

Never was Rod and Orestone so greedily sought earlier, never was a man sacrificed because of it. The bold free men defied the danger then out of love for the people and the king. Now the prisoners of war and the citizens who cannot pay heavy taxes, are pushed in and forced.

"Oh King Areval, when will your greed be satiated!"

Upal grits his teeth when he hears this name and with excitement the words sound almost hissing: "Never will the greed of this monster be satisfied! Curse this head of Mallona, who sucks the land, murders the citizens, who led me into those gullets for the sake of wretched taxes that we could not pay. Curse him until every debt he incurred is paid!"

The old man straightens up, with a sad look he looks at his son and in a reproachful but loving tone he says: "Upal, King Areval has murdered the dearest thing I had: your sister Fediah. And I did not curse him! All-Father says: 'the vengeance is Mine!' - Do not let Areval rob you of your faith in Him, the World ruler, who in His wisdom still leaves such a king on the throne, who let you find Orestone and lead you safely back to the father's house! My son, my pain was great when I saw Fediah die through Areval's fault. It would be even greater if I would see your soul die, destroyed by him."

Upal grasps his father's hand and places it on his heart as a sign of deepest devotion. In a calm voice he says: "Father, faith in All-Father alone has sustained me; without it I would not be here. I know I am yet chosen for great deeds, and by my life, I will perform them!" With flashing eyes he has spoken, and anxiously the old man asks him: "You are hiding something from me, my son, what are you up to?"

"I hide nothing from you, my father, you shall know everything, everything! I must tell you what I learned in the caves of Wirdu. When at that time my fate was sealed, that I would have to search for the white rod like a serf for the compensation of the unpaid taxes, you, my father, made known to me your experiences, which you once had in the caves of Wirdu; perhaps they could be useful to me. My father, how richly your care has been rewarded in me, for that deepest cave, which you reached and whose existence you hitherto closed as a secret in your breast - knowing well how little happiness the treasures would bring, which were hidden there - I found it again.

It was not easy to find your way there. Innumerable passages have been bored into the rock until those natural galleries, wide caves and ravines are reached, which the fire created and in which the white rod finds itself injected into the rock. All the artificial passages still come, as in your time, to a subterranean river whose surface is steamed by the embers of the nearby fire and which you know as a boundary of life from death. The enormous rock hall through which it flows is still unchanged: the only gate to the terrible depths, which are filled with suffocating swells and hold the treasures of Areval, the white Rod and the Orestone. I had heeded your advice to calculate the times of the sea exactly, because the danger of the swells is closely related to them. In a few days I knew that it would be possible to reach the greatest depths only if the high-tide sea did not prevent the poisonous vapors from escaping to the inaccessible crater region of Marda, the seat of the evil demon Usglom, which is Areval's greatest wish to defeat.

I found the place you had indicated on the underground stream and, with heartfelt gratitude, saw the unnoticed little sign you had once dug in the rock, not knowing at the time how it could become a savior for your son. Opposite this place, on the other bank, almost buried, I found the entrance to a rock passage which you must have once entered, but which was ignored by the other fellow slaves who, like me, were condemned to forced labor. A numbing haze hit me from it, a proof that this passage must lead deep into the interior, so that I had to go up at first to penetrate there. Soon, however, I realized that only at the time of high tide, the haze disappeared from the passage, and that except for these hours, it was safe to enter it for the duration of almost half a day. I wanted to dare it, because if I was at the right destination, then freedom must beckon me. You had once found the Orestone at this place as a free man, but you did not recover the entire find, but had left a good part of it behind, driven away by the rising swells. Now the task was to find it; success would mean freedom and wealth.

Well provided with manga, tools and with food - which become abundant to him when the serf declares to undertake a death journey for the purpose of discoveries - I went down, worried that no-one observes which way I take. I had chosen the time well. It was almost the end of the high tide when I reached the entrance to the rocky passage, from which only a light haze was rising. Soon it subsided completely and fresh, clean air flowed towards me as I entered the passage. Only by crawling did I get further, boulders blocked my way, and with great difficulty I had to clear the obstacles to the side. Finally, the steep path leading into the depths widened, which turned sharply to the opposite side, as where one generally looks for the treasures.

The passage divided into two arms, I chose the one branching off to the right; after all, you had told me that the other arm led to an endless gorge, from which no escape was possible for the one who fell. Again I had to crawl through narrow crevices and now reached the wonderful little cave you described to me, where the white rod peeked out of the rocks. You said that at the end of the cave there was an abyss from which the poisonous vapor rose, whirled away by an inexplicable draught of air, and was sucked up as in a chimney to a height which it was not possible for you to see. I saw the abyss, but no more vapors rose. The subterranean forces of fire and water had created changes in the course of the years; quietly and calmly the deep abyss lay before me. When I looked up at its edge, a star shone down on me from a tremendous height. It was the sunlight that shone through a crack in the rocks and dimly illuminated the dreadful depth. I recognized where I was. In a place from which the fire was once driven out by the force of the water that I could still hear rushing in the depths: in a cooled cauldron, snatched from the fire-god Demon Usglom, who, here defeated, left his treasures in one of the rare places that - free of vapors - effortlessly give the discoverer the accumulated riches.

Here, I no longer had to fear the fumes that once came through that sunlit crack high above and drove you away, because the rushing, high-flooding water in the depths made the countermove impossible. Therefore, I had time and leisure to examine exactly the location of this cave. After a short search, illuminating the walls with manga, I found the place from which you broke the orestone, and also the other half still tightly wedged in the rod, which Usglom did not allow you to take with you. I took the find, and when I delivered the stone, I put a fragment in my mouth, hoping to save it for you. May it bring you health, father! I do not consider it worthy to be a thief of the king's property, but he has stolen much more from us. Upal placed a small dark brown stone, which he took from his dress, in front of the astonished father, who took it eagerly and looked at it with shining eyes.

"Yes, this is it, the rare and precious stone, which can and will restore my health. Hide it well, my son, even I do not consider it a crime that you steal it for your father's sake; for I have well a sure right to this find."

"Had not the astonishment at the surrendered orestone been so great that no thought was given to examining me on the body, it would not be yours," said Upal, smiling. "But listen further. The desire to examine the abyss more closely arose in me, because it seemed to me almost certain that this must still hold far more of the treasures than the cave in which I was. I found a descent, tied myself to the rope I had brought with me, this to a boulder, and dared to lower myself further into the abyss. At a short depth, I found a wide crack in the steep rock wall, crawled in, and entered a large round cavity.

Father, all the splendor of King Areval is not able to give only a glimmer of what the demon created here. A throne of Prince Weiskee opened up to me. Thousands of crystals reflected the light in my hand. The ceiling, the floor were covered with precious stones, which the solidified rocky ground gave birth to here. And further, deeper and deeper I could walk into this never-seen cave of Wirdu, which probably for the first time, a child of Mallona entered.

The white rod, the orestone, lie in this treasury in uncounted quantities, the most exquisite stones that adorn the crown of Areval, you will find in thousands. This wealth in the possession of one man, makes him master of the world." -

"And you kept silent of what you found?" asked Upal's father gravely. -

"I did, nor will I tell Areval; he shall enjoy nothing of what I have discovered. Did not you too once have to promise the king, the wise Maban, to keep silent about your death journey? He knew well how little happiness lies in the riches that only the small cave known to us alone holds. How much more would he impose silence on me if he were still alive and heard about what I found. No, Areval shall never know, never! Oh, let him but stand before me, the proud king, let him but ask! He and his trackless chancellor, they shall receive an account of the death journey, which will never, never let them find what I have seen."

Shuffling footsteps are heard in the hallway. Upal's mother returns with the food she has bought. The men quickly exchange an understanding glance. Upal hides the brown Orestone in his garment and loudly praises his mother, who joyfully digs the food out of a basket to offer it to the hungry.

From the past of the Mallona kingdom, the power which led me here seizes me again and leads me away from the hut of Upal. I had the desire to find out what destinies are hidden in the family that Upal's father and this one mentioned. When the desire became a will in me, I feel myself lifted away and now see vivid images arise before my gaze, which give me the answer. Let me look, I must be silent, in order to be able to grasp the fast changing and in itself connected events, and then I will describe them.

A long time has already passed when King Maban, the father of the now ruling King Areval, ruled. It was he who founded the great Mallona Empire, for before him several kings ruled the four main parts of the planet. These four main parts are called: Nustra, Monna, Sutona and Mallona. The king of Monna was the last of his tribe and by inheritance, Maban also became king of this part. However, both kingdoms were separated in the way Asia is separated from America. And it was easier to reach Monna from the third part of Nustra - which was connected with Mallona like Europe and Asia - than from Mallona; similarly as the way from Europe to America is nearer than that from Asia; on this planet, moreover, the distance was a still shorter one than the Atlantic Ocean of the Earth implies.

It was in Maban's interest to enter into a close alliance with the king of Nustra; if only for the reason that the mighty empire of the Sutons under their tyrant Ksontu, strove for sole rule - and long bloody, most cruel wars had been fought over it between Maban and the king of Sutona. This alliance was created because the people of Nustra had become weakened and indolent. They hoped to live more peacefully under Maban, unmolested by Ksontu, since in their opinion, the three kingdoms together could force the frequent disturber of peace, to rest.

But Ksontu, conscious of his strength and power, did not fear all three kingdoms together, and presumed high and costly to either usurp full dominion, or to perish. His country was poor in treasures, such as Maban extracted from the soil of his empire; but the people of the Sutons were mighty, without need, though crude and ignorant.

War broke out. When Maban concluded the alliance with the kingdom of Nustra, Ksontu attacked the new, enervated ally from his southern (similar to Africa) empire and quickly defeated him. Maban rushed with enormous war power and for a long time, the fortunes of war wavered back and forth. The superior, skillful warfare of Maban succeeded in mastering the primitive bravery of Ksontu and his hosts - and vanquished, Ksontu was tributed. Maban appreciated the bravery of the defeated king and people. He feared possible later uprisings and thought of means to

peacefully achieve a brotherhood that would reconcile the tribes, regardless of the power of the sword.

He married Ksontus' daughter, raised her to the rightful queen and won the former enemy by this step to a full friend. For according to the laws in the four kingdoms, succession was full not only in the descending line but also in the ascending line, if descendants did not exist. Ksontu, by this step of Maban's, first rose to the rank of heir to the throne until heirs sprang from the marriage to his daughter. He enjoyed the full confidence and representation of the king and was thus an effortless co-ruler for the rest of his advanced years.

He recognized the benevolent intention of his son-in-law, and since he, himself considerably older than Maban, had no heirs except his daughter, he gladly complied and remained a good friend of the energetic Maban, except that his hot blood often made the now autocrat in Mallona uncomfortable.

Maban did not have to be lenient with Ksontu for long, for the king, accustomed to warlike undertakings, to rough manners, simplicity and even privation, shared the fate of many past despots on earth, who throw themselves into the whirlpool of pleasures and vices unknown to them before, after which they exchanged the former simplicity for the accessible luxury. Ksontu's vigorous nature, striving for deeds, soon sank into the mud of pleasure, and in the midst of all sensual pleasures enjoyed in excess, death surprised him.

Maban was now the undisputed lord of the entire planet, and the name of his kingdom became its name. From Maban's marriage with the daughter of Ksontu sprang two sons, Muhareb and Areval, both unequal in character. The elder, Muhareb, inherited the noblest qualities of his father; he was serious, inquiring, animated by deep religious feeling, of unshakable rightness and justice. Even at a young age, he surpassed all his peers in intellect and judgment. He could weep violently at the misfortune of others and felt the greatest joy at the happiness of those closest to him and even strangers. His education was such as befitted the future heir to the mighty empire, but it was useless to try to teach him the tricks of so-called wise politics in the course of the years. His sense of right and truth disdained all dodges. He wanted to act openly and truthfully, to the frequent horror of King Maban's advisors, who had gone quite far in all sorts of dodges to achieve their ends, especially since Maban was not averse to the principle that the truth must sometimes be concealed in order to achieve a goal all the more surely.

The government of the vast empire was difficult. To administer the four mighty main kingdoms, equivalent to the four continents present on Mallona, required wise division. Each of the three affiliated kingdoms had a viceroy who was totally dependent on Maban, not appointed for life, but dependent on the ruler's favor. Maban could dethrone and crown at will. The revenues of all states were administered from his capital.

Wisely, he gradually arranged it in such a way that an empire, except his own, was never led by citizens of his own country in the high administrative offices, but always by officials who had been hereditary and born in another country. He prevented the formation of local interest by constant change, and after a certain time, he willingly sent home those officials who felt a longing for their homeland. In this way, he ensured that government officials had only a limited interest in their place of work and were not in a position to treat the people with particular care, because of local interests. The authority grew, however, and with it slowly a tighter regiment, which, if put into wrong hands, could grow into the most terrible consequences. Maban knew this and believed that

through his completely autocratic position of power and through the meticulous character training of the dignitaries appointed to high positions, he could prevent all possible bad consequences for the future.

He forbade the acquisition of land as private property, everything belonged to the state, which distributed the landed property to worthy citizens; but not as property for their own use, only as upper inspectors of the individual communities, to which they were superior and for whose welfare they had to provide. They were great administrators of the estates, who, it is true, paid their subordinates in abundance according to the value of the work done. But all the products of their realm they collected, so that no inhabitant could receive anything from the hand of his neighbor, but always had to turn to the great local storehouses, which were erected by the state and ensured an equally good supply of all needs. In every town there were storehouses and workhouses, which were administered according to precise laws. Mallona was the model of that social future state which is striven for on earth by certain parties.

Already at that time the white Rod, which Maban introduced, was considered as means of payment, that white stone, which was found mainly in Maban's actual kingdom of Mallona. This stone was considered in former times only as a natural rarity, as long as the actual rich finding place was not yet known. Maban found the rich deposits in his country and introduced the rod as a means of payment. To make the possession of the money as a wandering coin impossible and to establish and protect the work of the individual as a measure of value, he found the following means of information:

Every citizen who did something, delivered his products to the storehouses or did necessary work in the state factories, even in arts for the amusement of citizens, was compensated by the public coffers and multiple pay offices of the rich. For every citizen was a state employee. The plates of the Rod, of various values, given to him for any service, were drawn before his eyes with his name and mark by means of an indelible ink, both of which were officially registered in the residents' registers. The value of his work was conditional according to the state-established valuation, so that injustice was excluded. In addition, unpleasant or dangerous work was valued higher than work that did not require too much effort.

The wages received were only of value to the person who performed the work, because only he could obtain necessities for his plates at the issuing offices of his place of residence. If he wanted to travel, he was entitled to do so, but without an official confirmation of his home town, he could not receive anything at other cash points. The Rod received as payment, was collected at the cash points and sent back to headquarters, where it was cleaned of the ink drawn on it (production and removal thereof was a state secret) and continued to be used.

These money relations created very special living conditions.

Each house belonged to the state, the citizens rented their living quarters and paid the rent from their earnings. The free cultivation of a garden belonging to each house was permitted, so that the inhabitant could provide himself for his daily needs. As on earth, there were cities, which became the seat of industry; and just like the earthly peasant, the rural population took care of the cultivation of the country's products. The state evaluation of work, which everyone could choose freely, and the general recognition of the equal usefulness and necessity of all work, hardly allowed class arrogance to arise. This was also prevented by the public schools, because these were freely accessible to everyone and thus generally ensured the same education of the knowledge and skills known on Mallona.

Old age was also honored. After a certain period of work, citizens had the right to free care, but only the sick and the weak made use of it. For it was considered dishonorable to spend one's time lazily, especially since the work of older people was better paid than that of the younger ones, who could still work more easily and quickly in full possession of all their powers.

These main features of the state administration, which Maban introduced, met with strong opposition at first in the realm of the effeminate Nustrans. They were forced by these new laws to give up their slack lives and do serious work. Dissatisfied people tried to rebel against it, but Maban did not tolerate joking and dealt with the rebels with iron severity, so that the intimidated people soon complied. In a short time, the people of Nustra felt the blessing of work, and since the character of the people was one of gladly following custom in the even life, it was Nustra, especially in later years, that stubbornly held fast to these institutions when the slack hand of Areval again destroyed the work of his father.

Maban recognized very well that a creation could only last if he steeled the character of his subjects and especially that of the country's great men; if he saw to it that the rising generation fully absorbed his principles; if happiness and comfort prevailed in the vast realms and thus need and want remained unknown. To the domination of the latter enemies of all happiness, the nationalization of all labor and valuation set a sure goal, hand in hand with the peculiarity of the introduced means of payment.

The education of the characters was however a far more difficult work! He tried to accomplish it by uniting in his immediate environment often all the men to whom he had given or intended to give the most responsible positions in the empire. By his example he tried to influence them and to impress his principles firmly on them in direct interaction. The three viceroys of the kingdoms that had fallen to him often had to remain at his court for longer periods of time in order to give him precise insights into all the progress of the national government. He often convinced himself quite unexpectedly of the true state of affairs by traveling far and wide. He was then relentlessly strict, finding irregularities in the administrative districts during such auditing trips, but appreciative and rewarding toward the least of his officials who carried out the often laborious work with diligence. No wonder that he was loved and honored everywhere, even praised as the realizer of eternal peace.

In order to raise the character of the people to the spiritual height of refined education, to train and preserve courage, bravery and personal efficiency of mind and body, special festivals were celebrated, which offered competitions of mind and body similar to the Olympic games. Consequently, poetry, oratory, and the performing arts were highly developed, and physical dexterity became a main condition of youth education as a result of these festivals.

Everyone could win a prize at these festivals, which was always received from the hand of the king, brought honor and manifold advantages. The winners received the right to ask for a favor from Maban according to their special inclinations, which was always fulfilled, as long as what was asked for seemed feasible. Special academies existed for the execution of new inventions, which were made in the empire. Everyone was given the opportunity to test the value or invalidity of the ideas he wanted to realize, to make models and to carry out experiments. No serious inventor was at a loss for funds, for the state workshops supplied him with everything as soon as an idea offered only the slightest prospect of its possibility of execution to the committee, which by no means

examined the incoming applications pettily. Maban had ordered to exercise the greatest tolerance in this direction and thus achieved tremendous success in the field of technology.

Geniuses on earth all too often suffer from the impossibility of executing their ideas for lack of money. The earthly government is not easy on unrealized ideas, on unproven projects that can only be brought to success by multiple experiments. Here it was different: On Mallona, even seemingly hopeless projects continued to be experimented with, since important new discoveries had been made by chance, as a result of failure of the actually intended experiments. (Because also on Mallona there were not seldom involuntary inventors like Böttcher, who wanted to make gold and invented porcelain!)

The most outstanding discovery for Maban was the invention of tremendously fast moving wagons that connected everywhere on special graded roads. The art of engineering had managed to disregard obstacles related to terrain difficulties. The individual villages were always connected in the straightest possible line by roads on which wagons of various sizes could travel back and forth at incredible speed. Of course, this railroad was also state-owned, the wagons were supplied to the communities, and their use was free to anyone who had to make a shorter or longer trip.

Navigation on the sea was almost non-existent. It was unnecessary to connect the kingdoms of Nustra and Monna, which were separated by water. For the sea in some places had many islands and without great depth and had been conquered by Maban's engineers, who built giant bridges from one island to the other, thus connecting both parts of the world at various points. If the planet Mallona would have been exposed just like our earth to the abrupt change of the seasons, if equally violent storms would have stirred up its waters in spring and autumn, then also the highly trained art of the engineers would have failed soon, because of the resistance of the elements. Mallona, however, possessed a different axial position than our earth, whereby the zones appeared more evenly and the seasons less changeable; although enough in order to separate summer and winter, rain and sun-time very substantially.

Simultaneously with the discovery of fast-moving cars, an expert chemist had invented an explosive with which tremendous effects could be achieved. However, its composition was kept as the greatest state secret and its production was ordered only for special purposes by order of the king. This secret made Maban insurmountable for all enemies, because by virtue of the enormous explosive power, he was able to devastate whole stretches of land with one blow! In the last war he had destroyed a not insignificant mountain, which was crowned by a fortress, by means of his terrible explosive, so that resistance against him as an enemy, who was armed with such weapons, became impossible.

Strangely enough, this discovery had not led to the construction of firearms, whose destructive power, seems insignificant compared to the destructive power of this explosive. However, as a result, powerful drilling machines and special tools that work fast like moles for the production of underground mines, were invented. Then there were centrifugal machines that could send the explosive from a long distance to a target, which, exploding, destroyed everything in a wide radius like a bursting crater.

Maban guarded this terrible secret with all diligence, he knew very well that it had helped him to his limited power and secured it. It was also under his reign that the value of the orestone, which was rarely found embedded in the Rod, came into being. As a product of fire, it was found only at great depths, especially in the subterranean caves of the cratered region of Marda, already

described. Its extraction was associated with great dangers. Courage and strength belonged to it, and for this very reason Maban put great rewards and the achievement of special honors on its delivery, in order to possess another means for the steeling of the characters by this defeating of the dangers practiced as a sport. The orestone was considered a magical means that conferred health, promised the owner strength and long life. Powdered, it was supposed to cure any disease. It was natural that this belief attached to the power of the stone, was able to do many things that the stone itself was certainly incapable of. Maban knew this very well, nevertheless he supported everything that could serve his reputation, because he paid homage to the economic principle: Create a highest value and keep it at the highest level, then you have a safe measure for the evaluation of any work. The exaggeratedly high value of the Orestone indeed initially favored the good intention, but later became its undoing.

Years had passed since Maban's reign began, and his aforementioned sons Muhareb and Areval had become grown men. Maban placed all his hopes on his worthy eldest son and heir to the throne, Muhareb, while Areval, more like his hot-blooded mother, often developed character traits that reminded his father all too much of his father-in-law Ksontu: traits that he did not like, but which, in view of the assured succession to the throne, seemed less dangerous to him than they were.

Areval was clever but deceitful, addicted to pleasure and yet again abstinent out of prudence. He envied his elder brother and feared in him the future ruler. He wished to be ruler himself and sought to surround himself with loyal followers who were firmly attached to him. Gradually, as his father grew older, a certain plan took root in his soul. He was suddenly seized with piety and played the most ardent admirer of his plans to his father. He succeeded in keeping up the mask so well that Maban gained more and more confidence in him, believing that only the foaming youth had formerly led him to aberrations which the maturing man now recognized as such and despised. He gave him the administration of a district close to the residence city, and Areval knew so well to win his satisfaction, that he, after the course of a few years, appointed him viceroy of Nustra. That was what Areval had wanted, his imperiousness had been satisfied for the time being. In his residence, he was no longer the benevolent ruler he seemed to be, even if he was compulsorily subject to the administrative laws created by Maban, but a man who remained self-willed wherever he could, who selfishly and passionately knew only one goal, to serve himself and his desires.

The times he had to spend at his father's court seemed like punishment to him, because then he was completely subjected to his father's will. He became all the more licentious each time he returned to his kingdom. It was not difficult for him to find followers of his life among the Nustrans, who, as is well known, tended to sensuality and hedonism. They wanted nothing more than to have Areval as their constant ruler. His immediate surroundings also faithfully ensured that Maban remained in the dark about his son's actual activities, despite many reports brought to him, while Areval's dissolute life laid the first seeds of a creeping disease that shattered both body and mind.

The antagonism between the two brothers, Muhareb and Areval, had intensified over the course of time, when it became increasingly clear that Maban's state institutions could not produce the hoped-for results unless the population reached a high moral ideal. However, it was still far from that. At first, it bowed only to the all-crushing will of Maban, who knew how to carry out with an iron hand what he knew to be just. The party of those made great by him, without distinction of rank - and ancestor worship, which in former times played as great a role in Mallona as now on

earth - clung to their king with rapturous love. However, the nobles, deprived of the privileges of birth and ancestral rights and of many advantages, who were no longer at the head for lack of special merit, nourished in themselves a hidden hatred, which they also transmitted to their descendants. To the latter, the lost rights of their fathers, the impossibility of property and dominion, equality and, above all, the necessity of work in order to be able to live, appeared as non-entities, which were the most desirable goal to be eliminated.

No change was to be expected from Muhareb. His deep reverence for his father and recognition of his good intentions, were far too deeply ingrained in him to ever reject his institutions. In the circles involved, they knew this hopelessness. It would be different, the heads of Maban's secret opponents hoped for Areval to once able to ascend the throne. He knew how Areval was gaining more and more secret followers, but he was not able to tell his father about the evidence of the conspiracy against him. He knew too well that his father would not hesitate to sacrifice the blood of his second son, if necessary, to save his creation.

Muhareb had to wage a tremendous struggle within himself, from which he emerged with a joyful sense of victory. He was determined not to lead the peoples toward a mighty civil war, not to hand his brother over to destruction, but to firmly trust in the supreme power that had allowed Maban to achieve such great things. This would also let him find means to preserve and protect what he had achieved.

In Mallona, it was the custom for men to marry very late in life. It was demanded that each man had first given proof of his energy and character, before he was considered worthy to lead a woman home. The reason lay in the religious feeling of the peoples, which in this respect was the same in all four great empires. The godhead was imagined as separated into two principles: good and evil, but not mutually hostile, but complementary. The most ancient teaching said: 'What rests in the bosom of the godhead is life and power to fiefdom. The activity of life is the will to live. Everything that serves this activity, is an outflow of divine power. If it happens that this outflow is stopped, the deity will die one day.'

According to this doctrine, an evil deed was also the result of divine power. One submitted to it as wanted by the deity, one did not feel strength enough to prevent it. In this respect, one saw even in one's enemy as victor, the outflow of God's power and submitted to him without grumbling until the self-confident power of the oppressed was able to shake off a yoke. On this rested to a large extent, Maban's success.

The good - i.e. everything that was pleasant to man, was worshipped in the form of the beautiful, namely as a female principle; the hard, energetic, which could also appear as evil, in the form of the man. A beautiful woman was respected as especially graced by the deity. In her, one saw the epitome of the one to be worshipped as a visible sign of your work.

The man, who had to be active in order to show that he was striving to be an image of the godhead, was therefore considered worthy to marry a woman only if he had given proof of his energy. One consequence of this view was that especially the beautiful woman was very much subject to the snares of vanity. It was enough for a girl to be beautiful in order to be held in high esteem. It is easy to explain that in the whole life of the Mallona-people, the woman had to exercise a power that was capable of conjuring up the greatest dangers of hedonism, sensuality and venality were to take the place of modest morals.

Furthermore, in the temples, a cult was found by which the beauty of the woman was celebrated, which - in the morally pure times of the empire - took place with dignity and mindfulness of the actual meaning, but later degenerated into wild orgies. A phenomenon, as it also was done in ancient Greece.

The highest men in the state could unquestioningly take the poorest girl in the country as their wife. These cases were very frequent, but the man had to be content if the girl would reject him. The decisive factor for the girl was the fame of the man, which he had acquired in his circles. She feared nothing more than that the man of her heart could make himself ridiculous through any act. Victories at the public games were considered by her as an outstanding honor of the beloved.

Once marriage was concluded, it was indissoluble, also the man was allowed to have only one wife. This again due to the religious view that the duality of the godhead working in one would never separate again, as soon as it had developed the will in itself to the activity and from it always new deeds arise. The woman as principle of the latent life, the man as that of the active life force, were not allowed to separate again, in order not to destroy again the awakened will to live.

Muhareb had looked around among the daughters of the land, and quite secretly he had found a girl who became to him the ideal of what he had longed for. It was the sister of Upal, the lucky finder of the orestone.

An intimate feeling of pure love had arisen between Muhareb and Fedijah, but Fedijah did not know who Muhareb was. He had hitherto concealed his high status in order to be sure that he was loved for his own sake. In this way he had convinced himself what a gem of purity of heart, virtue and devoted love he had found in the girl. He was of firm will to raise her to be his wife. There were no difficulties in carrying out this wish. The qualities already described, entitled every beautiful girl to the union with the most respected man of the country, and Fedijah was perfectly beautiful.

On a festival, which was called the birth festival of the deity and was considered the highest of the year, the most beautiful girls were designated to worship in the temple. Fedijah was given the ceremony of igniting the sacrifice. On this occasion, she saw Areval, who was spending the usual time at his father's court, and felt a deep passion for the girl. By means of his loyal followers, he soon inquired who the beautiful sacrificer had been, and one day Fedijah disappeared without a trace. Muhareb, standing by his brother's side, had heard Areval's admiring exclamation about Fedijah's dazzling beauty and immediately became suspicious of love, knowing too well his brother's virtuous mask.

Areval returned to his kingdom immediately after Fedijah's disappearance. Muhareb, sure that his brother was the robber of his bride and intended to drag her by force to his kingdom, hurried ahead of his brother on the speeding chariot and gave the necessary orders to stop Areval's troop in a sparsely inhabited place.

Areval arrived in a magnificent covered carriage. Enraged by the sudden disruption of his journey, he was about to rise imperiously against the men surrounding the chariot. Then he found himself face to face with his brother Muhareb, who, sword in hand, entered and searched his chariot alone. Lulled to sleep by narcotics, he found Fedijah in a hidden part of the chariot in a state that proved to him that Areval disregarded the most sacred sentiments of the people, which they associated with female beauty.

Furious with rage and pain, he raised his sword against his brother and would have killed him, had not the latter, in his fear of his brother, who was far superior to him in physical strength, used the trick of throwing himself behind Fedijah's body in a flash and using it as cover. A few moments sufficed to restore Muhareb to his senses and to prevent him from committing fratricide. He ordered Areval to obey him and not to leave the wagon. When he seemed to resist, he jumped on him and tied him up by force. He then gave the order to return to the capital. Areval's and Muhareb's faithful had noticed that a quarrel had arisen between the brothers inside the tightly-bound carriage, but none of them had dared to enter it. Silently, Muhareb's order was accepted and in a rush, the journey returned. –

Not a word did the brothers exchange during the journey; Fedijah remained in a deep stupor. Arrived at the destination, Muhareb handed over the still lifeless one to a faithful servant, who brought her to the parental home. He himself forced Areval to follow him to Maban and speak before their father. The father was appalled by his son's deed, which was a more than shameful act according to the prevailing standards, but he tried to reconcile the brothers for the sake of the terrible sensation it will cause among the people. Muhareb insisted on full public accusation against his brother, because according to his conviction, only by a strict punishment the custom of the people could be saved, which was undermined by Areval in his circles. With foresight, he realized that only by eradicating the evil, could the incipient decay of old faith, the disregard for sacred sentiments, be prevented.

Maban, who had grown old, was of a different opinion: he was concerned with saving the outer reputation, he believed that the inner damage could be removed without alarm. Muhareb presented all the dangers to his father and proved to him where his forbearance had already led the souls in the kingdom. Maban stuck to his decision and even ordered his son to be silent and to forgive Areval.

No sooner had this command come from Maban's lips, than Muhareb straightened up high, glanced at his father and the triumphant Areval, bowed silently, and left. From that hour, Muhareb was gone, and soon after, Fedijah also. No-one saw either of them again. Years passed. Maban aged visibly, the grief for his firstborn ate at his heart. He died and Areval became king of Mallona.

KING AREVAL

The images of the past have passed by my soul and again I see the capital before me, the home of Upal, the former seat of Maban, the residence of the present king Areval. On a mountain height stands a shimmering palace, its walls shining like bluish colored milk glass. Splendid arabesques of the most meticulous work adorn window-openings and cornices. The roof shimmers golden, rises rather obliquely and carries a golden lattice around the flat final corner. The whole building is of considerable size, contains wide halls and dominates from its point of view, the whole terraced city at the foot of the mountain.

A wide staircase is the only access from the first city buildings to the forecourts of the castle. A strong triple wall, crowned with battlements and triangular towers, girdles the royal seat.

Everywhere I see soldiers, the king's bodyguard, who guard the grand staircase and make it impossible for a stranger to enter the palace. I am not hindered by the guards, no tightly closed gates command me to stop. I hurry through magnificent halls filled with the assembled great men of the empire, wide halls and corridors, and arrive at a series of highly vaulted, sumptuously furnished rooms. My gaze glides only fleetingly over all kinds of equipment, precious glittering showpieces, weapons and ornaments, because the force pulling me does not allow me to take a close look around.

Now I find myself in a wide room, under whose open window, on a resting bed between soft pillows, lies the restlessly tossing and turning body of a sumptuously dressed man. A diadem with a large, sparkling stone adorns his forehead; the expression of his face is disturbed, the man is obviously suffering. It is Areval, the powerful king of Mallona. In front of him, stands a tall man dressed in a long gown, who is motionless, his eyes fixed firmly on the king, his hands hidden in his wide sleeves, watching the king's condition. The sick man groans and suffers pain, his eyes suddenly stare into space and seem to see something unusual. Hastily, he makes defensive movements, straightens up and calls out: "Get rid of the grimace before my eyes!" -

The tall man quickly approaches, places his hand on the king's forehead, mumbles incomprehensible words and offers him a drink from a bowl. He greedily sips the cooling drink and sinks back into the pillows, exhausted. The king closes his eyes and slumbers; a look of contempt and scorn appears on the face of his comforter. Then the latter lifts the curtain in front of the open window, bends over the sick man and whispers soft words to him.

Deep breaths soon indicate the king's sound sleep, and satisfied, the helper retreats. He goes to the door, opens it and orders two servants waiting outside to guard the king's sleep. He then passes through three long halls and enters a room where soldiers and servants guard the entrance to the king's innermost chambers. The soldiers look at him with awe and expectation. In a calm tone, which nevertheless sounds pointed and sharp to the ear, he says: "The king is tired, no reception today!" -

Two of the servants go into the adjoining great hall, where the great men of the empire had gathered to announce the cancellation. Another one pulls back a curtain from a high door; one sees a long corridor which opens into an open room. The tall man passes through this and greets a phlegmatic looking man in the round room, who looks at the coming man calmly and friendly. It is the viceroy of Monna, who waits here for Karmuno, the high priest and first confidant of king Areval.

In a confidential tone, the viceroy asks, "How is our brother and master?" He is given the quiet answer: "Better than hope. The disease progresses slowly. The head remains clear, though the thinking power sometimes darkens. Lord, the time is not yet near when it is necessary to act!" - A shadow flies over the viceroy's face. Then, smiling calmly, raising his hand in greeting, he says: "We can wait! Karmuno knows his friend and will trust him. Monna is prepared in case our brother and master goes to the people of the dead."

Cautiously, the high priest approaches the viceroy: "Areval will not be able to hold the council of the country today or in the near future. Take advantage of this deadline. I seek to determine the king to appoint you as deputy, this will bring us closer to the goal. Can you trust the commander Arvodo completely? In his hands lies the power of the army in Mallona, if you are the co-regent of Areval. There is danger if you are not sure of that man." -

The viceroy deflects and says sullenly: "Karmuno, I know you are no friend of the commander, but the mistrust goes further than it should. Arvodo stands firmly with me, I trust him completely, for he is faithful, but he does not know what plans connect us. Nor shall he know it until the hour approaches."

A slight defensive smile slides over the priest's gaunt face: "I fear Arvodo will not be deceived. Woe to us, should he awaken and play false and ambitious plans in his breast!"

The viceroy rises and says briefly: "We are cautious and vigilant, Karmuno, so are you, so we will not lack the success."

He salutes with his hand and strides out to the door into the large reception hall. For a moment the priest remains in the hitherto submissive position. Then he rises to his full height, looks venomously at the departing man and murmurs soft words, then follows him.

The reception hall has become empty. Two men are standing in a niche. One is in full war armor. A kind of shining scale armor covers his upper body, a flowing white cloak with embroidered decorations hangs from his shoulders, a broad sword at his hip. He is an ideally handsome man by our standards, powerful and smart looking. A light, full beard frames the noble face, his eyes are clear. The slightly compressed lips, the somewhat lowered eyelids indicate that he is striving with great self-control to conceal any inner excitement. The smaller companion standing next to him, dressed almost identically, shows a striking resemblance to him; I recognize that they are brothers.

The viceroy walks past both of them, raising his right hand with a friendly smile. A greeting that is only given to friendly persons. Both thank him by lowering their right hand to the ground and bowing their heads.

Karmuno now approaches the two and addresses the bigger one:

"May Arvodo always keep friendship for me!" The addressed one answers obligingly: "Karmuno knows how happy he makes his friends through his love."

Sighing, the priest says: "The king's condition does not allow him to give the commander new proofs of his trust today. The king is very ill!"

"Karmuno's art will know how to banish his illness, as it has often done. In his hand, Areval is well protected."

A lurking glance of the priest and doctor meets the speaker, who, however, looks him in the eye with a binding smile. Weightily, he then says: "Arvodo should be appointed today as the Chief Field Lord of Mallona - in his care, King Areval will be able to sleep safe from all enemies."

Affirming, Arvodo places his right hand on his chest and says in a serious tone: "To our lord, king Areval, belong my services and my life. His enemies are mine!"

Karmuno knows nothing to say in reply. He greets him and leaves. The two brothers exchange a look of understanding, then they too, turn toward the exit of the hall and leave the palace.

As they both stand on the steps of the grand staircase, Arvodo gazes at the city before him and the magnificent mountainous area that surrounds it. He looks seriously at the wonderful panorama and says softly to his brother: "A region, splendid and lovely, and a city, testifying to the strength of our people. And yet only a seat of degenerate souls! Will I be able to lead them back? I am afraid of the task and the happy success."

Without waiting for a response from his brother, he quickly descends the steps. At the bottom of the stairs, outside the guards, Upal stands in a waiting posture, eagerly looking at Arvodo. Upal's steady gaze moves the commander to look at him more closely. A peculiar tilting and at the same time circling, unobtrusive movement of the head, which Upal executes at his greeting, obviously surprises Arvodo. He beckons him to approach and quietly asks: "Who are you?" Joyfully, Upal looks into the noble face of the commander and whispers: "Sir, a servant of the unfortunate! Upal is my name."

"You want to speak to me?"

"Yes, Lord, but in secret and to you alone!"

"Come when the evening sinks."

Upal puts his hand on his chest and silently departs.

Arvodo now quickly turns sideways to his brother and whispers to him: "It is a faithful one!" - and quickly goes to a place where a number of similar small carriages are standing, as I saw them on Upal's journey to the capital. The brothers board a sumptuously decorated vehicle led by one of Arvodo's servants, and it quickly hurries through the broad, crowded streets of the city.

The not very high houses are decorated with flowers, everywhere on the flat roofs, are artful gardens. I see all kinds of unfamiliar, broad-leaved climbing plants in tubs, arranged in leafy corridors that offer shady resting places. Towards the street, there are often colored curtains, drawn to protect against prying eyes. Everything shows prosperity, even wealth of the residents. We are in the neighborhood of the wealthy, who do not have to struggle with the worries of life. Arvodo's car now stops in front of a larger building. The two brothers get out and enter the house; it is theirs. They are received by servants and led into the inner chambers.

Arvodo gets rid of his armor; he puts on a wide, cloak-like house garment, similar to the Roman toga. His brother has done the same and now they go to the roof of their house, where they can talk without being overheard by scouts. A narrow staircase leads upwards, it is closed at the top with a grid. Arvodo closes it and both brothers are now undisturbed in the roof garden, a work of art of horticultural taste. Blooming flowers, arbors all around, the plants planted between artificially assembled stones; nowhere unsightly pots, everything dainty, faithfully imitating nature and yet not burdening the roof of the house too much. Arvodo sits down in his arbor, from which the rise to the roof garden can be observed; his brother looks at him anxiously and lovingly. Silently, the commander's gaze glides over the fragrant flowers of the neighboring gardens. A sinister wrinkle has settled between his eyebrows and, sighing, his gaze now meets that of his brother.

"Your thoughts are not joyful - why?" the younger Ruser asks him.

"How could they be when I am inhibited in everything! Areval knew how to seize all the treasures in such a way that nothing remained for the exhausted people. We, the great ones, also depend

only on his grace. He can turn anyone into a beggar by a word of power and has already done so with many who dared to oppose him. The army is for the most part devoted to him; it leads the idle, luxuriant life only through its treasures. Yes, if the treasures of Wirdu belonged to me, how soon it would be over with this king, who led the people so low, as once Maban made it great!"

"Does my brother forget altogether that he is the hope of the army, that he is looked upon with pride as the most able commander covered with martial glory?"

Arvodo laughs: "A beautiful, a glorious glory, to go with a superior force against a rebellious people of Nustra, which is tired of the burdens, can no longer pay the taxes and therefore revolts; an even greater work to defeat it. A shameful work, however, to punish it and to play the executioner. From our father we learned the principles and the aspirations of Maban. With a shudder I realize how low we have sunk. With pain that perhaps no return is possible and that the peoples of Mallona have been shattered and destroyed by this king whom the curse of the Godhead has given us. I have sworn to try to bring about change. My life is at stake, but I will not dare to be useless."

"Why so despondent, the viceroys of Nustra and Sutona are on your side, they are faithful."

"Certainly, and if only faithful so as not to have to serve Areval any longer. Nor do I fear the slack king of Monna. The days of the viceroy of Nustra are numbered; he is old and will soon go to the gods. If I can initially succeed in ruling Monna in his place, my brother will know how to keep the place I give him."

Rusar's eyes light up at these words and leaning toward his brother, he whispers: "No power can separate me from you, with you I will die or live to save king Maban's legacy."

"Perhaps it means death," Arvodo says gloomily. "If the surprise coup does not succeed in first obtaining the treasures of Areval and thus feeding the army, we are lost. You know how vigilant Karmuno is, this ruler of the sick, outlived king, who rules in the land and shows such a humble mien to all who he deceives most. I know what he aspires to. He wants to win the hand of Artaya in order to secure the right to the throne through Areval's daughter, once married to her."

Fiercely, Rusar says: "Artaya, the wife of the vile Karmuno, nevermore!"

"Is Artaya also so close to your heart that the thought upsets you so?" asks Arvodo. "Brother, you all misjudge the girl! She has taken after her father; falsehood is not foreign to her."

"All-Father wants you to speak the truth, but guard your heart. For a long time I have seen that your eyes do not look at her indifferently. But say, brother, if you could win her hand, you will become in a peaceful way what I can achieve only by force, namely ruler of Mallona. For you, the choice is between your brother and Artaya."

"As if I did not know that Areval would never grant me the hand of his only daughter. Even if he wanted to, Karmuno's resistance cannot be overcome. Only force can bring me to the desired goal, too. If my brother is the ruler of Nustra, he will soon be the ruler of Mallona. From his hand, I would then receive the wife."

"If she herself wants it, certainly."

Rusar looks at his brother in discouragement. "Or shall I not also reclaim for the people the freedom of decision granted by Maban to the woman, long since undermined by Areval?" -

"Forgive the stirring of selfishness in me," replied Rusar sheepishly, "but you are right as always."

The sound of a bell resounds from the lower rooms. Arvodo straightens up.

"We are disturbed, be still!"

At the last steps before the closed lattice, a servant appears. He announces that Arvodo's distinguished guests are waiting for him in the lower chambers. The brothers quickly open the door and go down. In a sumptuously furnished room, whose wide, open windows allow the mild air to enter unhindered, six great men of the realm stand and are greeted by Arvodo with friendliness and majesty. The oldest of them, a man of apparently middle age, comes forward and speaks in a tone of devotion: "Lord of the people of war, by order and in the name of the king, our sovereign, I present you with the sign of power, which you are now to wear with the king. His treacherous illness today denied him the pleasure of presenting you this badge of honor before the assembled great men of the realm, but it is his will to no longer withhold it from you. He hereby places himself under the protection of his commander, who shall wear it as a supreme in Mallona!"

The speaker hands a ring to the commander. It is the exact replica of the one we already know; I cannot discover any difference between it and the other one already seen.

Arvodo remains cold, he accepts the ring, puts it on the fourth finger of his right hand, clenches it into a fist and stretches it up. "Areval shall not have given the power he gives me to an unworthy man. I wait for the moment when I may lay my thanks at the feet of the king himself! Tell him his commander will keep faithful watch from now on!"

Those present bow deeply and shout at the same time: "We honor in you the power of our king Areval, hail to you and to him!" In the most polite phrases, Arvodo and his brother now speak to the emissaries, who show the greatest devotion to the now most powerful man: the king's deputy, the commander of all the armies in Mallona, who is endowed with royal power and is responsible to no-one but his sovereign. The emissaries left again, then the brothers are alone. The younger Rusar can no longer wear the mask of indifference. Embracing his elder brother excitedly, he shouts triumphantly: "The goal is reached!"

Arvodo looks down gloomily and says dully: "Yes, achieved! But the price is high, I sacrifice my own self, my better self. What the father taught us - honesty, faithfulness, truth and openness, they have become shadows in me for the sake of the goal. Will it be possible to reap delicious fruits from this seed of deceit one day, to save Maban's legacy?" -

Rusar says lightly: "My brother will be able to do that, now just go ahead and don't brood!"

A look of firm determination appears on Arvodo's face, he stands up tall: "Yes, I will be able to do it! But what has moved the king to take such extraordinary steps, to send me the sign of royal power? It has never been the custom in our country to confer power in person, other than before the assembled people and court. I must go to him, I must know the reasons, and I must fulfill my duty to give my thanks immediately. Follow me to the king."

In a sumptuously furnished room, King Areval sits at the side of a young, wonderfully beautiful girl. It is his daughter. They are completely absorbed in playing a strange game, similar to chess. Areval seems to have overcome the seizure, for nothing about him betrays that he was ill. Now the daughter makes a decisive move and, laughing brightly, declares her father defeated.

Areval nods and leans back, breathing a deep sigh of relief, into the cushions of the resting bed. His eye rests pleasingly on Artaya, whose splendid yet cold beauty indicates that in this girl's heart, the mind is poorly formed. Artaya is conscious of her dazzling exterior, but inwardly calculating, cruel and lustful; always ready to enforce her desires at any cost, no matter what the consequences; subject to her whims, without inner structure, a worthy offspring of her father.

A servant enters and informs the king that the commander Arvodo is ready to hear his wishes. Areval's tired eyes suddenly twitch, he smiles and gives the order to lead the waiting man to him. Artaya rises, slowly puts aside the game with the figures and shows concern for Areval. Apparently, she wants to gain time to greet the expected man, although it is customary for women to leave when a male visitor is expected.

Only if the latter are already received by the master of the house, they have access, if they are invited to do so. The heavy carpet in front of the doorway is pulled back and Arvodo's tall figure, clad in shining scale armor, becomes visible. A desirous glance from Artaya meets Arvodo, not unnoticed by him, then she quickly slips into an adjoining room. Arvodo stops at the door, deeply bending his arms to the ground. The king looks at him sharply and makes a movement that he should step closer. It happens. Suddenly, Areval rises and says: "Arvodo, you are my first commander, you have the duty to protect my life with yours! Are you willing to do this?"

Arvodo answers: "My king knows!"

"I gave you the seal of my power, you wear it as I do." He raises his hand and shows the ring on his finger. It is the same as the one Arvodo was sent. "Will you never abuse it?"

"If my king doubts, I will return what I received!"

Arvodo makes a movement to remove the ring from his finger.

"Leave it!" - Areval's voice drops to a whisper. "Nor do I know what I want. Come closer, very close. - Now listen. - I know you, Arvodo, as a man of your word, and I trust you alone. You are to protect me from this priest on whom I depend and yet whom I hate! You are amazed? You did not expect that. Do not interrupt me. I could kill him, I hate him so, but without him, I might not live. He is a good doctor, I owe my life to his strength alone. I live because of him. When it grips me, raging pains rage through my body: his word, his hand, banish them! When wild figures, grimaces and the ghosts of the past appear, your sword, Arvodo, cannot destroy them. For they are shadows, intangible, invulnerable to the weapon. Thus his word alone is powerful only to banish them. - I, the mighty king of this world, am hopelessly in his hands. I know what he is striving for. He wants the hand of Artaya, he has indicated it, and my will, which is firm only when he is not here, begins to slacken. I still resist him, who knows how long? You - you shall save me, Arvodo, you hear, your king, your lord, he begs you!"

Areval's face contorts in fear. He looks at Arvodo, who is staring in breathless amazement, listening to the whispered words.

"Artaya loves you, I knew it long ago, you shall become her husband, you shall receive the throne after me! You are the most worthy of all the flattering creatures, which bend before me. In you I want and I will regain the power that I seek. Hahaha, they shall then tremble before me again as before, the scoundrels, who now mock me and laugh at me, because I have become sick and weak! The spark still lives in me which you will kindle to flame, you shall be the arm which my will guides."

Areval breathes heavily from inner excitement, suddenly he stares into a corner of the room: "Look there, there, it billows up again in black mist, faces look out with glowing eyes. I know them, that is my brother and Fedijah and others who cursed me! Arvodo, protect me from them, they are coming closer!" Fearfully, Areval clings to the commander and seeks to hide behind him. Arvodo jumps up. Frenzied thoughts shot through his head as he realized the situation, and befitting his determined character, he seeks to become master of the situation.

He pulls his sword out of the scabbard and speaks firmly and loudly: "See, King Areval, so I chase away in nothing even your invisible enemies!" Then he strikes powerful air-blows towards the corner where the king saw the figures, and laughing joyfully, he places himself in the farthest corner. Turning to the king, looking him firmly in the eyes, thrusting the sword into the scabbard, he exclaims: "I have won, King Areval! Show me where there is still an enemy, that I may destroy him!" -

Areval's face shows amazement and admiration. "A miracle, Arvodo, a miracle you are!" Stammering, he whispers: "He has the same power as Karmuno, the spirits flee from his sword. He will protect me - protect me." Areval's eyes grow tired; as after every seizure, need of sleep now enters him. Arvodo hurries closer and beds the king on his resting place. Areval murmurs, "All right, all right. Tomorrow I'll see you again, you hear, tomorrow!" Then he falls asleep. -

Arvodo is about to turn to the door to give orders to the servants outside, when the curtain is quickly pulled back and Artaya rushes out. Glowing and radiant, the beautiful girl stands before the commander and says with a smile: "Do not worry about father, his sleep will remain undisturbed, I will see to it. Has Arvodo no answer to my father's wish?"

Arvodo politely replies: "Lady, the king is ill, tomorrow I will see him healthier, then perhaps his wishes will be different."

Artaya looks at him unwillingly: "No matter if his desires change, mine remain, and I want you!" Passionately she rushes toward Arvodo and throws herself into his arms, "Do you hear, you I want, you, you will not resist me!" She quickly embraces Arvodo and kisses him: "Now you are mine, with this kiss I am consecrated to you, if you spurn me, fear my vengeance!" Artaya quickly slipped into the adjoining room, leaving the half-stunned Arvodo behind. Voices sound from there, and in order to avoid those coming, Arvodo quickly leaves the chamber and the royal palace.

TO THE CAVES OF WIRDU

Arvodo has arrived at his palace in a daze. With a relieved heart, he hears that his brother has left the house. It is pleasant for him not to have to speak now, he wants to be alone and think about what to do. Withdrawn to his lonely study, he looks gloomily at the floor, while the most conflicting sensations run through his chest. He sees his brother in spirit, who he knows loves Artaya, searching in the bonds of fervor when he opens to him what he is experiencing. He sees himself at the goal if he yields to Artaya and the king's wish, both of which he despises. The grinning face of the high priest Karmuno smiles at him, who himself aspires to rule and exerts an enormous influence on the people through the priesthood in the country. They believe to see in him the man through whom the deity makes known its will to the king Areval.

Arvodo does not feel secure enough for the success of a bold coup d'état, but he has only to choose between this and the newly opened way to become Artaya's husband. For the former, he needs the unconditional allegiance of the army. How much this, however, depends on the means which he can grant to the army spoiled by the treasures of Areval, is only too well known to him. However, in this world-empire, no name is more respected by the army than his, but this respect alone is of no use to him without treasures of his own. Arvodo has no authority over the keepers and guards of the treasuries in the king's capital, nor over the numerous occupants thereof; only Areval and Karmuno have authority here. Arvodo's fortune is not nearly enough to pay the king's bodyguards for a single day, as their pay is three times higher than that of all the other soldiers in the kingdom. He shudders at the thought of being Artaya's husband, whose beauty does not dazzle him. He would be subject to her according to the laws, since he is not of royal blood. She would always remain his mistress and would soon be forgotten in the arms of his favorite. A connection with her would be to him a sure annihilation of his sacred duties against the secret of Maban, which was entrusted to him by his dying father.

His father's face appears before Arvodo's eye. He relives how his father's dying gaze rests on him in the sure hope that the son will accomplish what he did not succeed in doing. Deeply engraved in his memory are the words with which he pronounced the weighty vow to the dying man. He is determined to keep it. Arvodo jumps up, determined to continue on the path once trodden. The means to reach the goal must arise.

It has become darker in the meantime. Arvodo goes to the window and draws back the curtains so that the warm evening breeze passes through the room. After a few moments, a servant enters the room and places a metal tube on the table. It carries a shiny globe that emits bright yet mild light, sharply illuminating the room in the dark parts. It is a manga lamp, which, burning without a flame, can emit a light stronger than any of our earthly artificial light-sources only through chemical properties.

The servant tells Arvodo that a man wants to speak to the commander because he has summoned him for the evening hour. Arvodo remembers the meeting with the faithful man and shortly gives the order to lead the waiting man to him. Soon Upal enters and stands reverently at the door. Arvodo sends away the servant who accompanies him, telling him to see to it that no disturbance occurs. Looking firmly at the now well-dressed Upal, Arvodo says to him: "You gave me the sign of the faithful, I have never seen you before, teach me to recognize you!"

Instead of any answer, Upal reaches into a secret pocket of his robe and hands the commander a sealed letter. Arvodo receives the letter, opens it and reads it for a long time with increasing astonishment. Then he turns to Upal in a friendly tone: "Through this letter, I have truly recognized you as belonging to the League of the Faithful! You could not have a better advocate than the writer of this letter. I believe you. I now know that I can trust you, but tell me about what - according to the letter - you want to communicate to me alone."

Upal takes a deep breath and begins to tell his life story. He describes how his missing sister was kidnapped by Areval and freed again by Muhareb. He confesses his ardent hatred for the king, who, after the disappearance of Muhareb, unleashed all the fury against his family and did not rest until they were thrust into the greatest poverty; how his father escaped Areval's persecution only by devoting himself to temple service in the lowest grade of servants. As a sick man, however, he was also dismissed there and became unemployed. Having become old and weak, he lived only on the meager support of Upal and some compassionate friends who remained with him from better times. Upal now vividly describes how he became a slave of the king in the caves of Wirdu, because he could no longer raise the taxes, and how he found Orestone there, which made him rich.

"Didn't Areval recognize you as Fedijah's brother when you gave him a report of your find?" asks Arvodo.

"Lord, I have not seen the king, Karmuno heard my report, the king was ill! Also, many years have passed since he last saw me; my name is changed, Areval does not know who Upal is. It is the task of my life to hide myself from him, to destroy him. That is why I have long been a member of the faithful. To destroy him is everything to me, and you, lord, will also avenge my sister - my house - on the wicked one."

Upal has sunk down before Arvodo and bows his neck deeply as a sign of his irredeemable surrender before him. Arvodo steps to him and lays his hand on his head. "You bow down to me! Well. I accept the sacrifice, Upal. Be now mine, bound to me even unto death!"

Upal seizes the hands of the commander and whispers in a choked voice: "Thank you, lord, for accepting me! But the slave can already show gratitude, and by the Shodufaleb, lord, I will!"

Upal now tells the increasingly astonished commander what he discovered in the caves of Wirdu. That it is not so difficult to lift the enormous treasures. That he could show him the way and that it must be easy for Arvodo to secretly collect an enormous fortune, greater than that of the king, with the means at his disposal. He tells him how, by means of the flying machine and with a favorable wind, he tirelessly explored until he found the enormous crevice that reaches deep into the interior of the caves. How he then dared to descend with the apparatus and made tremendous discoveries.

Almost horrified, Arvodo looks at Upal: "You dared to take to the skies? Truly, few there are in Mallona who are so bold as to mount the flying ships. We fear the uncertain element of air as well as water."

Smiling, Upal says: "It is not so perilous as the people and the great think: I did not meet any restraining demons to smash the flying ship. Great was the spirit of the master Mirto, who found

the means to force the ether, but too small is that of the people to appreciate what he gave us. But good to us, lord, that this is so, otherwise how would you lift the treasures."

Cold and calm, Arvodo stands there, then suddenly says: "I want to see the treasures. Are you willing to show them to me, to take me down in the flying car?"

Delighted, Upal exclaims: "Lord, I knew that you would entrust yourself to me, you alone yet resolutely dare to do that which no-one but I has ever accomplished. Command, I am ready."

"Where is your flying car?"

"It lies well hidden in an inaccessible area in a place known only to me. It is easy to get close to it in the chariot."

"How long will it take you to bring us back?" "Lord, it would be good if you would sacrifice two days for this, because only at night can we travel the way unseen."

"Prepare everything for the journey tomorrow night. Wait for me at the great lake, where the road runs nearest it's shores. I will come as soon as the sun sinks. Now go, the journey is far that we have to cover. What more I have to ask, I'll save for tomorrow." -

Upal greets silently with a fervent look and leaves. Arvodo remains deep in thought, boldly flashing his eyes, his lips trailing: "I will have almost reached the goal, if what this man told me, is entirely true."

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It is a starry night. In the west, the luminous glow of the setting sun still shimmers, a warm evening wind breathes balmy over the fields. In the sky, two moons shine as a wonderful sight in the zenith and on the horizon. They show different phases. In the course of the night, the third moon will also rise as a brightly illuminated disk. But these moons are smaller than the one of our earth. Even together, they do not give the brightness which our moon gives to the earth. In the east in the distance lies the city, surrounded to the south side by forests and meadows, the north side dominated by the proud king's castle.

High mountains rise on the horizon, blurring in the deep blue of the night. A wide lake stretches between a chain of hills and the city, it's clear tide unmoving like a mirror. A wide path runs along it's shore from the city. It is the highway that connects the capital of Areval with the next more important city of his kingdom. It runs next to the state road described earlier, on which the treasures are brought from the crater region.

Sublime peace is spread over the whole landscape, on which brightly shimmering stars of the firmament look down. Close to the lake is a high bush of flowering shrubs, which lower their branches to the earth. In the shade of these, Upal rests hidden, only raising his head temporarily and looking attentively along the road to see if Arvodo is approaching. The hour indicated by the commander has already passed, and fearful doubts as to whether obstacles will make his coming impossible, run through his soul.

A black dot appears on the road below and quickly approaches. It is one of the fast-moving cars used by Mallona's inhabitants. Now Upal knows that his waiting has not been in vain. He jumps up and stands in such a way that the owner of the car, who is approaching at incredible speed, must notice him. The car slows down. Upal recognizes Arvodo, wrapped in a dark cloak, and a servant, the leader of the companion. The carriage stops, Arvodo greets the waiting man and orders him to sit down with him. Upal gets in and quickly, as if driven by an invisible force, the vehicle flies back along the road.

Arvodo remains silent. He tells Upal that he does not want to speak in the presence of the servant, who, although loyal to him, does not need to know the destination and purpose of the journey. Upal has quietly announced to Arvodo how far they must travel. The servant receives the necessary orders from the commander and now the vehicle rushes towards its destination.

Hours have passed according to our time calculation. There the carriage stops between high mountains. The road here leads through a lovely valley, at the end of which a plain appears and a number of houses. It is a village called Resma, the first important stop on the road. Upal and Arvodo get out, the latter gives his servant the order to expect him in Resma after some time and to behave exactly as his master had already told him before the departure.

The vehicle disappears down the road. Upal strides ahead, turning left off the road into the nearby forest, Arvodo following. Upal takes his way along barely visible footpaths that stretch under the trees. He looks around to see if there are people nearby. Then he takes from his robe a strong staff, lifts its sheath and bright light shines from this magic torch, brightly illuminating the paths and surroundings of the forest. Soon both of them are among rocky debris, then Upal says: "Lord, the machine is hidden up on the heights. No-one can find it, but the way is very difficult. From here there is a path to the plain along this rocky path. If you go this way, I can pick you up later from the plain with the flying ship. Otherwise, you will have to climb these rocks with me."

Arvodo says briefly: "Go ahead, I fear no trouble, and follow you."

Upal nods and turns to the foot of a densely overgrown mountain, whose torn rock walls stare threateningly into the night. Holding hands often, they climb over tree roots, go through brushwood and between piled rocks, the untraveled to the top of the mountain. Upal helps the companion, illuminates the places where he can safely set foot, and finally the summit is reached. It is a bare rock that dominates the area and offers a magnificent view left into the valley, right on a massive mountain range, behind which must border the volcanic area, the destination of the bold men.

The top of the rock is wide and torn. The rocks form a tangle, as if a wild force had thrown them together. "Step aside," Upal says: "here you stand safely, I must open the cave!" He points to an open space in front of a huge pile of boulders piled on top of each other, giving the commander the safest position for his intended action.

"Is this where the flying ship is?" asks Arvodo.

"Here behind that boulder in the cave, I discovered!" --

"How will you remove it?" --

"With nimah!"

"You possess this?" asks Arvodo, astonished.

"Yes, Lord, but not in its full strength."

"So, open the cave."

Upal walks toward the rocks, laboriously rolling away some larger blocks so that a gap is created; through this he slips, taking the manga torch with him. For a long time, there is no sound. Suddenly, a mighty boulder moves and rolls a few steps away from the rest of the wall. A large opening has appeared, which, covered by the boulder, forms the entrance to a wide cavity. In it, Upal stands in front of a strange machine, beckoning Arvodo. Arvodo approaches, takes the manga torch in his hand and gazes in amazement at the dormant airship. The parts of the airship are taken apart, Upal carries them to the open space in front of the cave and quickly and safely joins them together.

The machine now presents itself as a fixed frame that encloses a kind of gondola at the bottom that does not touch the ground. Above, a large rotating impeller covers the travelers. On the side, there are two impellers, whose rotations are just measured with those of the ascending wheel; they prevent the gondola from whirling like the latter. These side wheels cause the locomotion in connection with a third wheel in the back of the gondola. Strong elastic springs are attached to the bottom of the gondola, to absorb the shock when it settles. The whole machine is made of a strong, light metal, but one cannot see the actual driving mechanism that must turn the flying wheels. This is concealed in the double bottom and side walls.

Upal has removed a vessel from the cave and is pouring a whitish powder into an opening in the side of the gondola.

"Take care for sufficient propelling power!" reminds Arvodo.

"Be at ease, sir," is the reply, "what we have taken with us is sufficient for a journey there and back twice as far!"

Various objects - which use is unknown to us - Upal places in the gondola, then he gets in and asks Arvodo to do the same. Both sit down. A few grips of Upal and the upper impeller begins to spin around its axis, first slowly, then furiously. A low, deep humming sound is heard, gradually increasing in pitch, produced by the tremendously fast rotation. Upal has his hand on a handle that regulates the speed of the revolutions.

At the moment when the airship rises, the side wheels also start turning. There is a short jerk and now the airship rises easily and safely with its occupants, rising into the clear night air. The buzzing sound is steady, the speed therefore regulated. Upal sets the impeller at the rear in motion and now the airship quickly takes its flight forward. At the front of the gondola is a movable metal projection, looking like a ship's helm; it is the steering of the machine. The airship is lifted by the upper impeller, held steady by the side wheels, and propelled in the desired direction by these and the third wheel. Everything works with uncanny speed, as can be seen from the strong drafts. Also the steering wheel, on which the resistance of the air acts, steers safely.

Three circumstances have made this invention possible on Mallona. First, the atmosphere is denser and calmer, not as whipped by storms as on Earth, and consequently more stable. Secondly, the driving force is the chemical substance nimah, the notorious explosive of Maban. Similar to our dynamite, it can exert colossal force in one direction when unmixed, but mixed with other substances, it is not explosive, but controllable, so that its effect seems similar to the strongest vapor pressure imaginable. This substance is produced and sold in harmless form in state factories. It is used under the name of Maha to propel all the carriages and also to drive the machinery concealed in the walls of the gondola. Thirdly, Mallona has at its disposal an extremely

strong, resistant and light metal mixture, which has all the properties of steel and aluminum in the most ideal degree, and is therefore also capable of providing the necessary enormous power development of the flying wheels.

It is a magnificent sight for Arvodo, who, protected from the strong drafts by a hood-like elevation of the gondola rims, floats for the first time over the mountains, forests and crevices of the sublime mountain world. He is not able to speak a word; Upal is completely occupied with steering the airship, so that Arvodo's intended speech during the ride is omitted.

The bold men float at such a height that the eye of the inhabitants living below cannot discover them in the night sky. Soon they do not see inhabited places below them. On the horizon the sky reddens slightly, the crater area approaches, the goal of the journey. Upal climbs higher. After all, it is necessary to get out of any area of the poisonous fumes that rise from there and will kill every breathing being. With rapt attention, Upal lets the airship glide along in moderate flight. Below, the unfathomable depths of extinct volcanoes, rigid cinder mountains and solidified lava masses, are revealed. The area where the king's slaves work, has been flown around in a wide arc to avoid too observant eyes. Now this arc must be extended to a semicircle to find the crater that leads into the caves of Wirdu.

A short time and Upal completely inhibits the movement of the rear propeller. He retracts the front wheel so that it rests against the side of the gondola. Now he also regulates the side wheels and motionless, the flying ship floats above a terrible cauldron, whose depth yawns blackly. Upal whispers softly: "We are on the spot, there is the entrance."

Arvodo looks down with a shudder. His brave heart beats faster when he sees the maw below him. Firmly he presses his lips together and says briefly: "Down - All-Father, protect us!"

The buzzing sound of the flying wheel deepens as Upal carefully turns the regulating handle, and slowly the flying ship drops vertically toward the crater opening. The eerie maw seems to lunge at it's victims like a hungry beast with it's jaws open, the cracked rocks becoming more and more prominent. Then it flares up as bright as day at the sides of the gondola. Upal has removed the shells of the manga torches attached there and, like a meteor, the flying ship sinks into the unfathomable depths of the crater.

THE CAVES OF WIRDU

What a mighty, never seen sight of the former work of now solidified forces presents itself. Arvodo is overwhelmed by the majesty of the creative nature that reveals itself to him. Wildly torn blocks of lava, burned black and soaked by the falling dew, surround him menacingly. The light of the manga lamps falls glitteringly on the fantastic formations of the lava rocks. Often these appear as terrible, frightening monsters, staring from the depths. Then as phantoms of giants, surrounding the slowly sinking flying ship and, feeling and deceiving the eye, often changing their shapes and floating upwards, where they disappear.

However, this spectacle has no effect on Upal. He already knows the harmless horrors of this environment, since this is not the first time he has sunk into this terrible cauldron. With a sure hand, he steers the ship and regulates the revolutions of the flying wheel, whose humming sound echoes dully and eerily on the vaults. The crater widens downward, taking on a somewhat sideways direction. Upal therefore lets the steering back screw also work slowly in order to avoid the rocks that seem to deny the entrance below him.

The ship sinks lower and lower. Upal adjusts the flight wheel so that the machine floats motionless and quietly free. He points to the left and casts the full light of the manga torch on the rocks. Arvodo sees a wide cavity. "Sir," Upal explains: "here is the place over which I climbed to find the first cave of treasures. There I once stood on the edge of the abyss over which we hover, and saw the entrance to the crater only as a faint crack of light above me. If it were daytime, you would see the sunlight shimmering from here. Only later did it become clear to me that it must be possible to reach these places from above, as I have now shown. But it is impossible without a flying ship. Now pay attention, sir, Usglom's first treasury is opening."

Arvodo looks tensely at the rock face as the flying ship sinks again. A crack opens, it widens into a cave, and now the full light of the manga torch falls on the site that Upal described to his father.

Arvodo lets out a loud cry of amazement. Yes, here lie piled up the treasures so much sought, waiting only for the hand that effortlessly gathers them. "Areval, you are defeated!" whispers Arvodo softly. "I want to enter this cave, Upal, can you guide the ship there?"

"Sir, let it be - deeper still lie other treasures, no less rich than these, yet convenient to reach. These here still elude our possession. It would be dangerous to bring the ship too close to the rocks."

"All right, I'll follow you, show me the sites!"

Again the flying ship sinks, a soft rushing of water sounds from the depth. Attentively, Arvodo raises his head and looks questioningly at Upal. The latter explains: "It is the sea that rushes below and comes roaring in at high tide. Now it flows again only for a short time to the great basin within, from which it once drove Usglom."

The manga torches now illuminate solid ground, to which the flying ship advances. A quiet push, and it stands safely on the bottom of the crater, which arches as a huge hall over the bold. All around, the view is lost in deepest darkness. The light of the torches is unable to reach the bounding rock walls. Upal completely inhibits the movement of the flying wheel. Only the muffled roar of water, which echoes many times on the vaults of this enormous natural dome, disturbs the silence of this tomb of all life. Arvodo shudders involuntarily when Upal encourages him to leave the gondola and follow him. After all, this vehicle is the only means of escaping the death lurking here. Concerned, he listens to the roaring sound of the water. "Is the vehicle safe here?" he asks.

"For sure! Deep down and far from here, the water flows toward an underground lake basin that the tide always fills. We are here almost as deep as the seashore, yet still higher than a great tide could ever reach this place. Trust me, lord, if I had not measured and calculated everything, how would I have dared to show you Usglom's realm!" -

Arvodo nods, grabs one of the manga torches and commands Upal to show him the way. Upal obeys and continues to walk on the flat ground. You can see that the water has once washed and smoothed it. A huge battle between the elements of fire and water must have taken place here long ago to Pluto's disadvantage - the traces are everywhere.

Upal often points to signs carved into the rock to mark the way. They lead to a side wall of the solidified volcano, which now enters the range of light. Swiftly, Upal strides across the granular sand once whipped in by the ocean waves, carefully examines the immense cracks in the rock, and stops before a narrower crevice. He enters it with Arvodo.

After a few steps, the crevice widens into a dazzling cave, as the men have already seen one on high. Infinite treasures are brought forth here. Sparkling crystals everywhere, in which the light of the manga torches refracts, the white rod also emerges out of the rock here together with the precious orestone.

Arvodo is overwhelmed, he cannot believe his eyes. He touches the precious stones, knocks some of them loose with the hilt of his sword, and shows an excitement that this strong-willed man has probably never felt before. At last he finds words of thanks for Upal. Deeply, his eye looks into his own and he says: "You are the most faithful of the faithful, you shall soon know how I know how to thank you by deed!"

Upal bows low before him and in a tone of true devotion whispers: "Lord, avenge my sister on Areval! These treasures are nothing to me, revenge is everything to me!" Arvodo nods silently, he understands Upal. Then he asks:

"Do you know of more such caves?"

"Not as rich as this one, but many smaller ones can be found. It is possible that there are still unknown ones to me. I have not explored all the passages down here." -

"Show me the others that are known to you!"

Upal steps through the gap back onto the earlier path. Along the rock wall, often smaller caves open, into which he shines. Everywhere, the white rod is visible, or precious crystals appear on the rock: a treasure trove that holds immeasurable wealth. Walking along the rocks, they must now turn in an arc almost at right angles; the bold intruders have arrived at the inner curve of the former crater.

"Lord, this is as far as I ever got, let's go back," Upal admonishes.

Arvodo, whose enterprising spirit has greatly increased, says: "We have time, let's go further. Perhaps we will discover more, such a favorable opportunity must be exploited. We cannot miss the way back!"

"As you command, lord!"

Cautiously, both men move forward. The ground is no longer so level; stones and boulders cover it. Dead silence surrounds them, the roar of the water has completely ceased. The sea does not drive its waves into the cauldron at low tide, which occurs at this hour. Now a wide passage opens

in the side of the rocks, the end of which is unforeseeable. Arvodo lifts the lamp, steps into it and sees that it is passable. White sand interspersed with shells covers the floor.

"The sea once flooded through this passage, should it lead out to this?"

Upal looks around in amazement. "Sir, you are right, there are shells here. Here sideways falls the way to the deep. This is where the sea tides once took their course, they came through this passage!"

Arvodo contemplates the cavity thoughtfully: "Upal, we must know where this path leads. If we can use it to reach the sea, it will be easy for us to secretly recover the treasures. But we must also protect ourselves from discovery. Ignorance of an entrance into the interior could ruin us!" Upal affirms this view of the commander, and both of them turn resolutely toward the unknown cavity.

It is a wide tunnel-like space that they enter. On it's walls you can clearly see the effects of the water that once penetrated the walls with great force. Walking is easy on the soft seasand. The two men walk forward for a long time. There is no end to the winding, sometimes strongly widening passage, which is not blocked by boulders and whose origin seems mysterious to them.

At last the passage widens into a wide cavern, then stops abruptly and a chaos of boulders lies before them. Over these they must descend if they want to gain the depth that now stretches out before them. For a moment they waver whether to go further or back. Both know, however, that the desire to gain clarity must necessarily lead them further. The descent is not without danger, but if it is accomplished, the height from which they descend, is significant.

They are now at the bottom of an underground lake basin that has now dried up. Fantastically high rock formations do not indicate which way they must turn to find the former entrance point of the water. Deep sand covers the ground from which high boulders rise. Immense shells, the former habitats of the sea dwellers, are found wedged between cliffs, countless smaller ones lie scattered everywhere. As they walk along, they find skeletons of large aquatic animals that once inhabited the lake. Thousands of years may have passed since they animated the floods.

The men look around in amazement, perplexed as to where they are going, the chaos of rocks inhibiting their overview. Suddenly, a soft, plaintive sound trembles through the deathly silence of this place, then another. The tones string together to form a melody that seems to be heard in the far distance. Arvodo involuntarily reach for his sword, Upal holds the luminous torches lowered to the ground, and both men listen to the quiet sounds with their heads stretched forward.

Upal first finds words of astonishment: "Does Muaga, the daughter of Usglom, sing to warn us?"

Arvodo replies gloomily: "It is not Muaga, nor Usglom, I despise both. But a human is singing the dirge of the royal house. We must know who it is. Lower the torches, that they may only light the path, and now follow the sound of the voice!"

It is not easy to find direction. In this rocky dome, the echoes are deceptive. Arvodo, however, has a fine ear, he finds the right way despite all the obstacles. Behind the rocks they have to go around, the plaintive voice sounds louder and fuller, a sign that they are approaching.

Now they are standing on the steep bank of the former lake basin, the song resounds clearly from the heights. Carefully crawling over boulders, the men climb up. Are they mistaken? There shimmers light! They quickly cover the manga torches with their protective covers; impenetrable darkness surrounds them. Soon their eyes get used to it and they see bright light shining above them.

Carefully, like cats, the men creep on. Arvodo carries the sword ready to hand under his arm. They now clearly hear the singing of two voices. They understand the words, it is the lament over a dead person, sung only to the members of the royal house, and its last verse fades away. It goes as follows:

*"Beloved in life, death cannot separate,
For your soul lives by its deeds,
Which shine splendidly and glorious to all.
Go in to the Father of all existence - Love
He shepherds you, and shall unite us one day!"*

During this chant, the two men have climbed up to the edge and are looking at a poignant group.

In a rocky grotto lies elevated the outstretched corpse of a wonderfully beautiful woman, dressed in a light blue robe. The grotto is filled with dazzling crystals like those already seen by Arvodo. The entrance is hung with burning lamps that cast bright light on the nearest surroundings. At the head of the corpse stands the awe-inspiring figure of the hermit at the sea; at his feet, the young man he called Mureval. Both had sounded the funeral chant, the sounds of which led Arvodo and Upal.

When Upal looks at the group, which is only about twenty steps away, his face freezes in nameless horror. Arvodo notices and whispers to his motionless companion, "Do you know these people?" Then a shrill scream sounds from the latter's mouth. Before Arvodo can prevent it, Upal jumps up and with the cry: "Fedijah, sister!" he rushes toward the beautiful corpse.

He wants to embrace her, his hand grasps cold stone. The woman's corpse, which once had warm life flowing through it, is frozen to marble, petrified by the mummifying fumes of this cave. Confused, he looks up into the face of the venerable old man, whose eyes rest penetratingly on the intruder, and with the loud exclamation: "Muhareb, my king!" he sinks unconscious into the arms of the young man Mureval, who has hurried over.

When Arvodo saw that he could not prevent the companion, he also steps onto the bank. He hears the exclamations of Upal and looks in amazement at the noble figure of an old man.

So this is the long-sought, the disappeared rightful king, the brother of Areval? He cannot believe it. His eyes wander around the strange surroundings, the beautiful petrified corpse, the majestic old man, the unconscious Upal. He is confused and cannot make a firm decision.

The voice of the old man suddenly sounds calmly in his ear. Obliging, he hears the order to follow him. The old man has taken the manga torch that Upal has dropped. One move, and all the lamps in the grotto that holds the corpse, go out. Then he gives a wave to the young man. Both take hold of the unconscious Upal, pick him up and walk quickly toward a dark cavity, the continuation of the passage that Arvodo and Upal had undertaken to find. The silent procession passes through

a tunnel at a fast pace. Suddenly, a faint light shines in the distance. Another short stretch and fresh air blows in, spiced by the sea mist. Now the descending passage widens rapidly. The cave turns into a narrow gorge, into which shining stars look down from the heights. In front of them, the sea spreads out, its horizon lined with bright red, the first morning greeting of the dawning new day.

A KING'S SON

The procession has turned away from the sea, up to the terrace we already know. Arvodo's eye gazes in amazement at the blooming splendor all around. It is the hidden paradise that surrounds the residence of the two hermits by the sea. They have now arrived at their shelter with the still unconscious Upal and lay him down on a moss bed. The old man puts his hands on the head of the unconscious man and quietly his lips move in silent prayer. Then he approaches Arvodo, beckons him, and they both move aside so as not to disturb the sleep of Upal, who has been prostrated by the violence of the events. Arvodo finally finds words and the following conversation develops between them:

"My companion called you by the name of the missing king's son Muhareb. Is it you, the rightful king of Mallona?"

"I am Muhareb, Maban's son. I am the rightful king, but Areval is enthroned in his capital!"

In urgent, agitated tone, with pleading gesture, Arvodo approaches:

"Lord, give me a proof that I cannot doubt, for me everything depends on it!"

"The proof will be of no use to you, Arvodo. I know you - know your plans, because it is granted to me by the All-Father to read the hearts of people, to recognize their will, whether it is good or evil. But I will give you the proof you demand! I am fulfilling the command of Him whom I alone still serve.

The old man departs and soon returns with the vessel that I had seen earlier and that contained jewels.

"Arvodo, once Maban had three rings made as a sign of the unlimited power of his house, carved from one and the same orestone. The stone shows on a white background the image of Furo, the heroic ancestor of our family, covered with the helmet of power and strength, which he is said to have snatched from the demon Usglom himself in a hard fight. You know that since then, Usglom has been resenting our lineage and is bent on destroying it. Maban gave one ring to Areval and one to me; he himself always wore the third. Areval possessed Maban's ring after his death, and it now shines on your hand as a sign of the favor he has shown you. He put a part of his power into your hand. Here, behold the third identical ring." The old man opens the vessel and shows Arvodo the ring that rests inside.

The commander looks at the jewel with amazement. He also sees the royal diadem resting on the bottom of the container, decorated with a sparkling diamond of immense value. He no longer doubts, for only Areval wears the same hoop on special occasions as a sign of his royal dignity. He pulls his ring from his finger, kneels before Muhareb and says: "My lord and king, this token of my power I return to the hand to which it belongs. The command of my dying father is fulfilled. He knew that my lord lives and ordered me to strive to bring back to you the power you renounced. You alone can become the savior of the degenerate people. I have sworn to seek you, and behold, it has become my good fortune to find you. Oh come to your people, abandon this wasteland in which you have lived until now! All hearts will cheer you, you, the rightful king of Mallona!"

Calmly and unmoved, the tall old man looks at the kneeling man. He does not take the ring, lifts him up and says mildly: "Neither I nor Areval am the lord and king of Mallona. None of you knows Him anymore. But I have recognized Him and will fulfill His will. I see that your heart is full of zeal, but it takes wrong paths. It is not I who can save the people anymore. An animal that wants to live in swamps returns to where it is comfortable. Mallona's peoples have become such a beast, their great ones have become ravaging beasts. If they do not turn away from their actions, no help is possible - they must bear the consequences of their guilt."

"They will turn away, Lord, when you give them the example! Your memory is not extinguished in them. They still praise Prince Muhareb as the epitome of virtue."

"If he returns as king - a bloodbath will begin, as was none before. When the first intoxication has passed, the preacher of morals will reap hate where he wants to sow love. The animal wants to have its swamp. Seek to tear it out, after it has forgotten to long for a purer dwelling place, and it will devour you. Not by force will I ever seek to snatch from Areval's hands what he received by All-Father's will. Every ruler is as his people need him to be. The people and the great make him what he is. Areval however became a monster by himself. He oppresses the people and squanders what he presses from them.

What Maban built, he tore down long ago. As this one was a pattern of the good, so he is a pattern of the bad. Why then did not the peoples of Mallona, by practicing the good that Maban taught them, find the strength to resist the temptations of evil through Areval? Because they were not good, because Maban was mistaken and believed that his imposed virtue also had the power of a transformation of the evil qualities, which in our peoples already comes from the fathers. In Maban the last rampart was created against a once surely falling ruin. He was a last signpost to show his peoples which ways they had to walk in order to raise themselves from the swamp of hedonism and desires. It should be reserved for me to continue his work, if the peoples wanted to remember their dignity, which they have to preserve as creatures of the eternal All-Father.

However, they did not do it, they only bowed to violence. The ruler has no power over a people's sense of slavery, which is often hidden behind the desire for law and justice. No force is needed to maintain public order as long as the consciousness of law is alive in every individual. But if this is lacking, then only the power and sharpness of the law begins according to the will of a powerful man, who often needs the law most himself.

Arvodo, I saw this hour coming in my spirit. I knew that it would bring me the decision to return once again to the external splendor. I also know that at the price of a harder tyrant than Areval is, I would bend this world with force. But the way then goes over corpses and blood. The means is

destruction, annihilation of the souls, which pass away in rage, vindictiveness and desires, lost of the further development in the house of All-Father.

I also see the further inevitable consequences. I know that the destruction of the bodies cannot be escaped – how, the hand of the All-Father still veils from me. But I have chosen and I no longer leave this place, where I have gained the light of the soul, felt the blowing of the eternal Spirit and recognized the true goals of the human existence. I cannot be the savior hoped for by you and demand that you keep silent about me when you return to your own!"

"Do you also demand that I renounce the plans that I harbor within me?"

"The fulfillment of all plans, as you made them, is not in my hand, not in yours, it is directed according to the sublime intentions of the Eternal. All plans can never thwart the final goal toward which mankind is striving and hardly delay it's attainment. Act according to your recognition, I will not hinder you."

"And if these plans would now prevent me from concealing that Muhareb, the true king of Mallona, is alive?"

"Thus, once you have found this truth, I cannot prevent you from it. But do not think that Muhareb can be seen if it is not the will of All-Father. It was His will that you found me. Your flying ship, which brought you to the depth of the Wirdu cave, could be shattered; I could have destroyed you, both did not happen. I act according to the will of Him who prescribes in my heart what I should do. You both go in peace, we will guide you back. Surely you will come to yours like him. Our work is not the same!"

Muhareb has spoken with such power of conviction that it is impossible for Arvodo to counter. Darkly he looks down before him, then, pointing to the brightening streak on the sea horizon, he says: "The time is approaching that I must return. Will you prevent us?"

"No, you heard, we will escort you. Wait here, I will see how your companion feels!"

Without waiting for an answer, Muhareb turns away and goes toward Upal's campsite. He finds Upal awake and in eager conversation with the youth. When he sees Muhareb approaching, he jumps up and rushes toward the old man. Muhareb takes the shaken man in his arms and whispers soothing words to him.

"Upal, now is not the time to answer all your questions, but you shall have answers to everything you need to know. Bring back the companion, time is short. When you have fulfilled this task, soon bring your airship back here to me. Do you see there the high rocky promontory jutting far into the sea? You see it from the height of the crater into which you lowered yourself. Keep heading for it, so you won't miss the direction to our hidden bay. I am waiting for you. Let Arvodo return home alone. Be discreet with him, so that one day you will have nothing to regret."

Upal looks at Muhareb in surprise and asks: "Is the commander near us?"

"He is, and he awaits your coming. Are you feeling strong again?"

"I am! Oh how many questions force themselves upon my tongue, but I suppress them and obey your command!"

Muhareb turns away with a wave to Upal and the youth. Both follow. The three go to the waiting Arvodo. He stands where Muhareb left him, staring at the open sea. When he hears the sound of footsteps, he turns, holds Muhareb firmly in his sight and approaches him. Upal and the youth involuntarily stay behind, sensing that the commander wishes to speak with Muhareb alone. In a whisper, Arvodo says: "It is forever your decision to renounce the throne, Muhareb?"

"It is!"

"Maban's bequest to my father, who had been his most faithful vassal, was to seek you out and bring you back. The king knew that his son was alive and could not believe that he had completely turned his back on him. After my father's death, this promise passed to me; shall it be disgraced forever?"

"I have already given you my answer; it remains."

"So you release me from the oath I gave to my dying father?"

"Your promise is without power, which you did not know if you would ever be able to fulfill. You stand before me free, without obligation!"

Arvodo looks at Muhareb with astonishment; disheartened, he exclaims: "Your refusal kills in me the best emotions of my heart. Your father's spirit does not live in you. To be a caveman and want to stay when a throne beckons, I cannot believe it!"

"Because you cannot understand what determines me, it is better that we part quickly. Act according to your knowledge, I will follow mine. Our ways are not the same."

Briefly, Muhareb turns away and beckons the two who have stayed behind. A gesture of the old man indicating the way to the seashore, causes Arvodo to enter the same. Muhareb proceeds. Upal and the youth, both carrying manga torches, follow. They enter a different gorge from the first through which they emerged from the mountain interior and soon find themselves among constricting rocks. A cave path similar to the earlier one takes them up and they walk for a long time in a winding line deep inside. It seems that this path is only passable at low tide, for the sand is wet underfoot, the constricting rocks are wet and dripping. Suddenly Muhareb turns to the right and climbs up between rocks. A wide tunnel now leads uphill. It widens and they enter a wide rock hall.

Upal immediately recognizes the place. They have returned to where they discovered the passage to the dried lake basin. Muhareb had led his companions back to the crater basin by a quicker route, close to where they left the flying ship. Dark night surrounded them, which the light of the manga torches did not scare away. Now it flashes in the distance, the light reflects on metal rods and surfaces, the shape of the flying ship emerges from the darkness.

Arvodo scowls at the vehicle. With different feelings than he left it, he sees it again. The desire to quickly escape from these terrible underground tombs, makes itself imperatively felt by him. Muhareb looks penetratingly at the commander. Arvodo avoids this gaze, but since the last stubborn rejection, thoughts have risen in him that, although still unclear, evoke a conflict between him and the old man.

"Our ways are not the same," resounds in him - good, so may they quickly part and each go his way.

Upal has stepped into the machine and put everything in order. He ignites all the manga torches surrounding the gondola, lets the upwardly drifting flying wheel turn and reports to the commander that he is ready for departure.

Muhareb, realizing Arvodo's thoughts, says: "All-Father, who brought you here, protect your departure!" -

Arvodo gets in. Once again it surges in him, as he looks the old man in the eye. "Will I see you again?" he asks.

"All-Father's will decides, not ours. Do His will. Don't be blinded by Usglom's treasures, so you shall save yourself and we will meet again."

Arvodo's face shows displeasure. Briefly, he gives Upal the order to ascend. The flying wheel turns faster. The machine lifts and floats up to the exit of the crater, safely steered by Upal's expert hand. The journey succeeds without incident. They pass the mouth of the crater. Twilight is spread over the land. Upal lets the flying ship rise high into the air, in order to reach the lonely place from which they ascended, unnoticed. It would be easier to discover it now than in the darkness of the night. Quickly the flying ship glides with them through the air.

Upal now speaks to Arvodo, who is lost in deep thought, as follows: "Lord, if it is convenient for you, I will direct the flying ship to the foot of the mountain, on whose height I always hide it. This will save you the descent and you will quickly reach the place where your servant is waiting with the wagon. We spent much time in the caves of Wirdu, to bring you close, may be of use to you!" -

Arvodo nods, obviously comfortable with losing his companion. He says: "Do so. I expect you in my palace as soon as possible. Be silent towards everyone, remember your oath!"

Upal raises his right arm and puts his hand on his head: a sign that the faithful give to express their unconditional approval. He now directs the flight of the machine with the sharpest attention. Soon they have flown over the crater area and are approaching more inhabited areas. Now wide forests stretch out below, the airship descends quickly and soon hovers at a low altitude above the tops of the trees. Now the abruptly rising peak of the mountain, on which Upal hides his vehicle, appears. At its feet is the plain toward which he is heading. Slowly the flying ship descends. A slight bump, and it stands still on meadow ground, through which a narrow path loses itself in the nearby forest at the foot of the mountain.

"Lord," says Upal, "this path will lead you safely to the place where the wagon driver awaits you!"

Arvodo gets out of the gondola, gives his hand to Upal and says: "Prepare everything so that you will not lack anything for later journeys. I do not yet know what I will decide. But I want you to be ready at any time to undertake further journeys. Provide your camp above with everything you need."

"Lord, I will need some time to do this until I am prepared."

"So do not delay, and do not report to me until you have completed everything well."

Upal repeats the sign of approval. As Arvodo turns and walks quickly toward the forest, in which he soon disappears, the machine rises again into the air and seemingly floats toward the storage site.

THE POISON OF SELFISHNESS

Arvodo has quickly reached the place where his wagon driver was waiting for him and soon drives back towards the royal city. Leaning back in the corner of his vehicle, he is lost in deep thought. His soul struggles for a decision, which he is now compelled to make. The events of the last few days pass before his mind's eye and involuntarily he talks to himself: "The goal I set for myself in Muhareb, is lost. Never again will this caveman dare to do a brave deed. Maban's spirit has sunk in him. His way is not mine. Let him go his way, I will go mine! But which shall it be? The treasures found are immeasurable. I will easily gain with these by force completely what Areval has already half given me - dominion! But why force now? The fruit has long since grown for me through Areval's affection. I can take the scepter from Areval's hand at any hour. If Areval knows that Muhareb lives, then the fear of his brother will give him completely into my hands. Muhareb does not want to become king of Mallona. I, fool, wanted to hand over the power to him. Well, I will now need the forces for myself. Areval falls when I want it. The next king is called Arvodo. But the equality before the people as a recognized king will be given to me only by Artaya's hand. I hate this woman who lives only for herself and her lusts. Artaya's hand gives me the equal right to the throne, but she remains the queen as long as she lives."

Arvodo takes a deep breath and repeats: "As long as she lives! And if I once trample this snake, would that be a crime? Is not my brother himself stunned by it? How will he take it, will he see me as his rival? He must forgive for the sake of the high goal that beckons me and him. I see it clearly now, only violence leads much easily and laboriously to the goal - the other way - safely and effortlessly. The wise man always chooses the more passable path and not the rough one. And Muhareb, the cave man, what will he do? Nothing, as he did nothing during the years. What do I still care about this caveman, may he pray at Fedijah's corpse, that he recognizes as his destiny. Mine is to rule, to wrest the scepter from the powerless Areval, to become a prince as none has ever been!"

Arvodo feels hot at these thoughts. His decision is made and he looks impatiently at the horizon, on the edge of which the royal castle of the capital flashes in the glow of the approaching morning.

In order to be able to understand what follows, it is necessary to insert here some elucidations of the cosmic relations of the planet, as they were fathomed after different attempts of this medium [Leopold Engel - tr]. The planet Mallona orbited the sun at a distance of about 70 million miles. It possessed, as already stated, a far denser atmosphere, as a result of which a far stronger air pressure prevailed on it than on us. Since the axis of the planet was not inclined in an angle of 23.5 degrees like that of the earth, but less, it had the consequence that the zones of the planet were subjected to far smaller temperature fluctuations. In connection with the denser atmosphere, which concentrated the effect of the sun's rays, this prevented that light and heat

distribution would have been lower than on our earth, despite the greater distance from the sun. On the contrary, the seasons were more regular than in our temperate zones. Only at the equator there was an almost constant heat, which made the hot belt of Mallona a desert and was avoided by the inhabitants.

Mallona's territories were mainly located in the northern half of the hemisphere; beyond the hot zone, the land was still undiscovered and uninhabited. The inhabitants shied away from penetrating into those regions which offered them no means of subsistence at all. Even less were they inclined to navigation, to break through the hot belt by sea and to settle beyond it. The reasons for this were the storms that every year at the onset of winter and summer, made the seas - as on earth - unsafe and easily wrecked the usually small ships. Their wagons made the use of ships on small sea basins and rivers unnecessary for travel purposes.

A deep aversion to airships and their use prevailed on Mallona. No inhabitant dared so easily to entrust himself to the unsafe elements, since the safe ground was sufficient for rapid locomotion. Airmen and sailors who now and then used the craft, which were well known in construction, were regarded as a kind of madmen, addicted to the demons of water and air, and dependent on the whims of the unseen. Superstitious fear surrounded their activity with the appearance of the supernatural, based on a pact with the invisible powers. Thus, it did not seem advisable to tamper with the vehicles and their owners, so as not to enrage the subservient elements.

These circumstances caused that Muhareb could live undetected on the coast, not too far from the royal seat. Furthermore, Upal, in possession of a flying ship, remained unmolested and no-one would have dared to destroy it on the rocky heights once its presence had been discovered.

Arvodo escapes my eyes and once again my gaze turns to the shores where Muhareb lives.

Quickly they appear before me. I see Upal's flying machine resting in the bay on the white sand, and he himself in eager conversation with Muhareb in front of the entrance to the cave. I see the young man fishing in a small boat. I am drawn to the two to witness their conversation. I now accurately distinguish the voices and understand the meaning of their speech.

Upal asks: "May I know why you refused the commander? He seems to be of good intention and of noble mind!"

Muhareb replies: "He is neither. A beautiful outer covering hides the stirrings of a heart that needs only the occasion to express itself worse than Areval. It is easy to be good, lacking the opportunity to act evil. His will is strong, but only trained to carry out what brings advantage. Such souls fall, when they are faced with the decision to renounce for the sake of an inner price. The poison which all the inhabitants of Mallona have imbibed, destroys him also; he does not find the strength within himself to destroy it!"

Full of astonishment, Upal asks: "A poison that all the inhabitants of Mallona sucked in? What poison?"

"The poison of corruption, to which Maban sought to counteract with the last remedy - obedience! If the inhabitants of this world had obeyed, if they had defended the institutions of the state and

understood the spirit which lay in them, they would have been saved and happy. Wise laws, willingly obeyed in accordance with their educational purpose, lead a people to spiritual and external freedom. But the opposite happens when the laws are ingeniously twisted. If they serve only for the preservation of oppressive power, for fraud and self-interest, they lead to downfall, into ruin.

Early on I recognized where Mallona's peoples must go - they do not go back to the way of the order indicated by Maban. Here lay the salvation, but the way is rough, the rescuer must be able to be hard, he must exercise no consideration also against his own flesh and blood, it applies to eradicate recognized errors. Herein Maban failed. He destroyed again by yielding where he built up. The generation that followed him could have held dear what his contemporaries still reluctantly suffered. But he could not afford the hearth of destruction that he knew - and that lived in Areval - to exist. He did [allow it], and consequently the fall was deeper than our peoples ever sank before.

Disaster is approaching with rapid steps. The hour of doom is not far off. The soul of the people unites in the king, because the ruler is a product of their sense. No free people, pure in its feelings, tolerates a tyrant. Only men with a slavish sense, can become slaves. The environment of the ruler can only rule with him if the people bend. If it does not want this, it soon produces victorious freedom fighters. - But the noble thought leads only to victory if in the breast of the people, not everything is dead yet. It must still be possible to light a sacrificial flame on the altar of the heart, consecrated to the highest, all-powerful force that called us into being. That All-Spirit to Whom we owe thanks and to Whom we have to give an account of our will, thinking and action. The inner flame is the beacon for the direction of our actions. It consumes what is impure, it can turn a tiny spark into a brilliant blaze. If selfishness has destroyed this altar, the sacrificial flame soon smolders. Then it is over with the future of the people: the better ones die out, killed by the power of the victorious evil. For a short time this triumphs, mocks and scorns the warning voice of the last righteous, believes in immoderate imperiousness to be able to strike also the powers of the universe in the face and digs in insane delusion, its own grave".

Muhareb has spoken with the enthusiasm of a seer, Upal listens breathlessly. After a pause, the speaker continues: "Already the scratching of the grave shovel sounds in my ear. It will become quiet, once the dead is buried, completely quiet. Never will the wasteland revive. The king's son has died in me, because it could not be granted to me to save the people. I have searched from this solitude for people in whose hearts the altar has not yet fallen and have found none.

I, the eldest son of the king, have at my disposal all the inventions that the foolish people disregard. In the caves around here are hidden many of them. I have learned to hold in high esteem the genius in man who made the forces of nature his servants. Man is the mighty ruler in the house of nature through the spirit that dwells in him. This raises him above the weakness of his body, and submissively the spirits of the elements lay themselves at man's feet. On Mallona, only a few have realized the immense power of the spirit that we have been given to become self-creators in the given circle. Through the defeated forces of nature, man can penetrate ever deeper into the wisdom of All-Father. We are to master the elements. Not for self-interest, but to learn to know and love the Lawgiver more and more. The people spurn the heavenly gift. Superstition, laziness, sensuality and fear do not allow them to own what the spirit of the wise found.

Countless discoveries have been made and the people still turn away from all innovations. They are afraid of the achievements of the spirit and do not want to be disturbed in their comfort.

There in that bay, the water flows into a hidden cave. Well-buried therein you shall find a swift-sailing ship with which the seas can be safely navigated. Inspired by superstition, no-one wanted to board it for fear that the demons of the water would devour the bold, so this great invention remained worthless. For years, however, it has served me here to visit faraway places unrecognized, to observe with my own eyes the activities of the peoples. Therefore, I am not unaware of what is happening around me. I recognize how the spirit in the people goes out more and more - how in the souls the faith in the purpose of life, died. With this standstill of every development, solidification has occurred; what has been achieved, is lost again - the judgment, the destruction, stands in the background.

You trusted Arvodo and therefore showed him the treasures inside the mountain. Daring still lives in you. You hated Areval as the destroyer of the good and believed that Arvodo would show himself inclined to your wishes as the avenger of your fate. But you are only a means for him, he has no feeling for you, not even for me. I, too, was supposed to be grateful to him as a means for purposes that will soon be revealed. For after he has been rejected by me, he will now find with Areval what he is looking for - satisfaction for his lust for power, which will inexorably burst forth from within him. Do not go back to him, your fate would be sealed. You sought a friend and found an enemy who will destroy you. To tell you this, I demanded your coming, but be free in your resolution!"

"Arvodo should be false?" asked Upal in amazement. "Is he not the secret head of the faithful who consecrated themselves to make justice triumph again and to complete Maban's plans? I belong to the alliance. He knows it and could want to destroy me? I am his slave and I have bowed to him!"

"What was strange to us yesterday can already be a resolution and a deed today. He did not want yesterday what seems necessary to him today. Follow me, get to know Mallona with my eyes. I will give you light and the darkening veils will fall down before your knowledge. I have the last journey to make. The last attempt to stir up the spirits, is commanded to me. Be my companion, follow me. Will you?"

Determined, Upal jumps up and shouts, "I will!"

THE VICEROY OF NUSTR

Clouds now push forward, I no longer see the sea shore. The picture changes. Out of the fog that obscures my view, clear outlines gradually form.

A wide hall arches before me; it is the great reception hall of King Areval. All the nobles of the kingdom are gathered here, awaiting the king's entrance. Tension is on the faces of the men who surround a magnificent throne and furtively cast astonished glances at the high priest Karmuno. He stands motionless at the steps of the throne, his eyes fixed on a great gate from which the king must step. Until now, Karmuno always supported the king when he showed himself to the great ones of the kingdom. Now things have changed. Areval no longer needs him, both as a doctor and as a counselor. The great ones whisper and rejoice at this disgrace, but still fear the once powerful

man. They know his drive, his power as the chief priest of the realm, his wisdom, and not the least, his baseness.

Now a movement sweeps through the assembly. The great gate bursts open, and the king's bodyguards march in, dressed in costly armor, and line up in two rows from the gate to the throne. In front of the steps, stands Karmuno. Areval enters with a firm step, no longer showing any signs of his former illness. On his right walks the commander Arvodo, followed by the viceroys of Monna and Sutona, and Rusal, Arvodo's brother, with the first heads of the country. Slowly the procession reaches the steps of the throne. Karmuno climbs two of them and turns to the king. The procession stops. The priest's voice echoes through the hall - clear, but cold as cutting ore: "Great King, you summoned the nobles of Mallona to hear what you have decided for the good of the land and its inhabitants. The mighty spirit of the universe has enlightened your mind to choose what is right. According to the ancient custom of the fathers, I ask you here as the representative of the eternal deity: "Are you sure that the decision you are about to announce is the result of the eternal will to which we are all subject?"

Areval answers firmly, "I am certain!"

"Are you willing to continue to serve only this will?"

"I am!"

"Then show yourself in the splendor of its will and proclaim its message to the listening people!"

"I will!" -

These words form a customary ceremony, designed to unite secular and spiritual power inseparably. In it lies a significant power to bind the minds: it can be seen in the features of the listeners, who are now eager to listen to the coming message. Areval has not given another glance to Karmuno, who has stepped aside. He mounts the throne and speaks: "Men of Mallona, faithful to my throne! It has pleased the Demon of Death to send a faithful vassal to the Shadow Realm. Nustra, our neighboring state has been without the Nustror for two days. We are therefore willing, in agreement with the will of the eternal deity, to appoint a new viceroy and give him power in the land. Our choice is complete, it remains to proclaim it. Rusal, son of Mutro, the most noble one who still served Maban, brother of our commander Arvodo, step forward!"

Astonishment appears on the faces of those present, only Arvodo and the viceroys are not surprised. Rusal himself, however, is the most; hesitantly he approaches and kneels down at the throne. Areval continues speaking: "Rusal, stand up as Nustror and take the oath of allegiance to me!"

Karmuno now recites a long oath formula, which is repeated by Rusal. Areval pulls him up to himself and crowns him with a golden hoop adorned with an orestone. Now the viceroys of Monna and Sutona congratulate him, also in the hall it has become lively among those present. Loud shouts sound, joyful approval of the appointment. Karmuno seems to want to speak, Areval commands silence from the assembly and begins to speak the final words of the ceremonial himself, before the head priest can get a word in edgewise. Bowing, he says: "The will of the deity, to which I bow, is fulfilled. Come on, Rusal, show yourself to the people in your new dignity!"

With sparkling eyes, yet smiling, the chief priest, like all those present, bows low and steps back. In the general excitement, it has not occurred to all that the chief priest should have said: "The will of the deity, to which the king bows, is fulfilled!" - whereby he, as the representative of the deity, should have remained standing unbowed, while the king and those present must bow deeply.

Those who know the ceremonial, however, now also know that Areval threw down the gauntlet to the chief priest with this deviation from the tradition.

Rusar, led by the viceroys, heads out through the bodyguard alley to the hall. Areval follows with Arvodo. Both of them immediately retreat to the inner chambers of the castle. Slowly the noise fades away, caused by the formation of an imposing triumphal procession led by a herald who announces the appointment of the new viceroy to the people. While Rusar enjoys all the honors, Areval and Arvodo confer in the king's room.

I see them alone. The favorable change in Areval's character is even more evident now than at the great reception. Since he has known through the commander that Muhareb is alive, the delusions of former times have disappeared. The consciousness of an imminent danger has brought him to the development of the utmost energy. He wants to banish the disaster threatening his throne and thinks of means to protect himself from the possibly returning brother.

Arvodo has succeeded admirably in winning over the king completely and replacing Karmuno. He knows that the high priest hates him mortally because of this, but he is wise enough to always show a friendly exterior to him. Today, however, Areval's conduct has shown him that the king intends to carry out a hidden intention, which he wants to explore. He only waits for the favorable moment that will reveal Areval's secret thoughts to him.

Areval now speaks clearly: "Are you satisfied with your king, Arvodo? Your brother is viceroy, as you wished. To you I owe much and the reward shall also be yours. My will is that you receive Artaya's hand soon. Then I acknowledge you. You are the man who will stand by me and help me to eclipse Maban's glory."

Arvodo's expression does not betray the deep satisfaction of his heart. In a calm voice, he answers: "My king knows that my devotion is unlimited. Command, my lord, what I shall do!"

"First a question, Arvodo. What feelings do you think the chief priest Karmuno harbors against you? Is he your enemy?"

"If a smooth smile is a sign of friendship, he is my best friend, but I do not trust the outside. He envies the favor bestowed on me by my king. Who sees into his soul and discerns what rests in its depths?"

"Certainly not good for me and you. Through you, I have broken the chains that bound me to him. He will be anxious to reforge them. I know this lord of all the temples of the kingdom. It depends on him to awaken moods in the people and the crowd of priests in all lands obeys him. If I wanted to be a true king, the only ruler in all lands, I would have to destroy all the brood that obeys him. I must share with him the rule in Mallona, and I see the day coming when a battle to death will break out with him."

Somberly, Arvodo looks at the king. "Has my king considered how this battle would be fought?"

Areval leans toward him: "As long as I was dependent on him in my illness, it was an impossibility. But now that you stand by my side, it is possible. The power of the temples must be overthrown. The people look upon them in superstitious awe, and the power of the demons seems to them

greater than that of the king. I must prove that the gods obey me, that all powers are united in the king. Karmuno has been concerned for long years to undermine the king's power by spreading the doctrine that the king is subject to the power of the deity, which alone manifests itself in Mallona's main temple. You know how everything rushes to the gates of the sanctuary to seek advice, how favorable or unfavorable sayings excite or petrify the minds. Even my warriors are not exempt from it. It is doubtful how many would dare to do what the king commands against the verdict of Karmunos' deity."

"Therefore, it seems better to live in peace with Karmuno than to irritate him."

"And to continue to be a slave? No, nevermore! He or I - together, we cannot rule. The kingship or the temple. One must fall. Not without consideration I refused today to close the ceremonial in the old form. I want to show that the king does not need a mediator to act on behalf of the godhead. The deity also dwells in me, or nowhere."

Areval's eyes glow. The resentment so long held against the priest, speaks clearly from his features. But he quickly controls his agitation and whispers softly to Arvodo: "The hermit by the sea has been safe so far, but who is safe from Karmuno's spies? If he discovers the secret, he will know how to use it against me. One's own safety demands quick action. Arvodo, see to it that the hermit is taken into custody unrecognized by the most faithful of the guard! Then bring him to Sutona; in Ksontu's castle he shall be well kept and there he will end his days. He shall not shake my kingdom. Not he, and not Karmuno!" - Now come with me to Artaya. The king leads you to the bride!"

Areval rises and, leaning slightly on Arvodo, leaves the chamber.

A soft noise on the wall draws my attention. My gaze penetrates it and discovers a narrow secret room within the strong wall. Karmuno leaves this scouting post, where he overhears the king's most secret conversations in his chamber.

IN NUSTR

From the capital Mallona, dead straight roads stretch out to the various cities of the empire: the connecting roads on which the fast moving cars effortlessly cover long distances in a short time. East of Mallona, I see the main road leading to the neighboring kingdom of Nustra. Faster than the wagons, I now glide gently through the air and admire the artistry with which the road has been laid out. Nothing is able to hinder the straight direction. Rivers, valleys, gorges have been bridged, mountains have been blown up for the sake of the road. On the smoothed ground, no vibration of the wagons is noticeable. Truly, these roads are a model facility, in comparison to which our traffic routes seem imperfect to me.

The more I move away from the capital, the more romantic the area becomes. I see huge mountain masses looming on the horizon, snowy mountain giants gleaming at me in the sunshine. A mighty mountain-world as a border between two continents, similar to the Ural Mountains between Europe and Asia, towers up in front of me and seems to offer a stop to the intruder. The road, however, continues to build up and climbs to fabulous heights, only rarely avoiding the

enormous obstacles in curves. Gorges and valleys are bridged by astonishing arched structures. At dizzying heights, very close to the snowfields and glaciers, the road now winds its way to the highest heights it must cross. And amidst the silence of an ice-starved glacier world, it leads the traveler safely and without danger to a snow-covered plateau, the boundary divide between Mallona and Nustra.

I admire the art of the engineers to execute such constructions, which would undoubtedly be impossible on our earth. The load of the masses would not allow such arch-constructions as I saw. Everything would collapse in itself, if one would dare to construct bridge arches of such span.

The lower gravity of the planet Mallona makes this execution possible here. In the pure mountain air, I clearly feel the different cosmic conditions. Also the primary rock of the planet seems to me to be a substantially different one than that of the earth. It seems to me lighter in its structure; lighter masses, like the products of the Cretaceous and Triassic periods, which here, covered with snow caps, rise blackly from the blue-white glaciers and snowfields. But I am no longer allowed to stay here. I am driven restlessly on to the end of the plateau and then down to Nustra, the kingdom of Rosar, whose travel wagons and those of his numerous companions follow me.

Now the height is overcome. The country stretches out before me. The mountains drop away steeply toward Nustra, and numerous fertile fields, green forests, flashing lakes, and gentle chains of hills now lie before my enchanted gaze. In a whizzing ride it goes downhill. The cars glide safely down the undulating straight road, like a slide of immense length. In a short time, the descent is completed, and in hours of further travel, the journey now continues through flat, fertile land towards the capital of the country of the same name. The sun is already low on the horizon when the buildings of Nustra appear in the distance, and evening has fallen when Rusar and his entourage enter the wide hall.

Nustra has decorated itself to welcome the new viceroy. Wooden sticks and large bundles of mangan torches blaze everywhere, brightly illuminating the main streets and squares. The road to the ruler's palace on a hill, is especially festively lit. A joyful crowd, richly decorated, moves along the streets and greets the entering viceroy with roaring shouts of blessing. Rusar stands on a ceremonial wagon, dressed in gold-covered robes, and accepts the shouts with thanks. He seems happy about all the honors and rejoices in the sympathy of the people. The procession disappears behind the open gates of the royal castle. Nustra has a ruler again.

I see a wide hall, decorated in a festive manner. Rusar and the viceroys of Monna and Sutona are sitting on an elevation and look onto the excited crowd of courtiers and nobles of the vicerealty, to whom the new ruler is giving a banquet. I seem to be transported here to the times of the opulent Roman Empire. The tables bend under the food served. The guests are no longer completely in control of their senses due to intoxicating drinks.

Dancers show their arts, writhing their slender bodies in sensually exciting dances. Jugglers promote themselves and seek to entertain the spectators with daring leaps. Here an orgy develops, as it is not thought wilder and on festive occasions has long been practiced in all parts of the entire Mallona empire for the pleasure of the great. Also Rusar is no stranger to such activities.

Areval tried to scare away his wild fantasies with great banalities, which he had attended not without awakening lechery, to which youth so easily falls prey. The viceroy of Monna at Rusar's

right side is in the merriest mood. He has just called a beautiful dancer to him, and holding the girl by the arm, he says to Rusal: "Nustror, the flowers of your country are lovely, but I cannot show you less lovely ones as soon as it will please you to visit my country. Promise me to do so, and you shall see the wonders of my garden of love."

Rusal says calmly: "We know, Monnor, what a fine connoisseur you are in matters of love, but little demands me for these yet. The duty of a ruler is to please his people!"

Laughing uproariously, the viceroy pressed the girl to him and exclaimed in a slurred voice: "Do I not please my people? See how I begin with the children of the people."

The viceroy of Sutona, called Sutor, also laughs aloud: "Who would not know that you are endeavoring to become the father of your country's children! Even the Nustror will still practice these beautiful duties."

At this moment, blaring music is heard. The girl escapes from the arms of the viceroy and hurries to the other dancers, who have lined up in a round dance and now begin a dance that is the highest imaginable in wildness and excitement of the nerves. The guests are seized by a general frenzy. They clap their hands to the beat, shout applause and mingle with the dancers. Soon everyone is whirling around under howls and exclamations of pleasure.

Disgusted by this image, I turn away. I have taken a deep look into the depravity of the inhabitants of this planet. It is enough.

The picture changes now. Mists pass by and gradually other figures are formed. Now it becomes clearer. -

I recognize Karmuno and Arvodo's brother Rusal in a small chamber of the castle of Nustra. Karmuno has secretly followed the new viceroy and eagerly speaks to Rusal. Darkly and pale, the youth stares at the ground while the high priest tries to persuade him. I now also hear the words and understand them. Karmuno says: "Away with all misgivings, I stand for success. What brotherly love Arvodo has for you, you recognize from his actions. He steals Artaya's love from you. Or do you think that what moves you has remained foreign to me? Arvodo's power, which he has exercised over the king for some time, leads him to the recognized goal. He wants to become the king of Mallona. He made you now the viceroy of Nustra, because the nearness of his brother is obstructive for him. He marries Artaya, whose hand makes him heir to the throne."

Passionately, Rusal rises: "He shall not!" With a cold face, the priest speaks: "Do you want to prevent it, since Artaya herself wishes this connection and Areval likewise?"

Groaning, Rusal sighs: "She made me think her heart had turned to me, and now -"
"She likes the brother better. Nothing new, sir, with this woman. Artaya knows only herself. If she knew Arvodo's heart was inflamed for her, soon she would tire of him. But so she must conquer him; she does not rest until she conquers the man in him. He would be the first not to bow to her smile, and her vanity will not tolerate that. You, sir, became her slave, and such are cast off as soon as they are no longer needed."

Rusar grinds with excitement: "I will never be a slave to this woman. Let love for her be killed, and only hatred live for her!"

Karmuno smiles secretly and his eye flashes triumphantly. Quietly, he whispers to Rusar: "I know a means by which you may avenge this treachery!"

"And how is that?"

"You will meet it when you meet Arvodo!"

"He is now more powerful than any of us, and - my brother!"

"Your master, who will not spare you if it seems necessary to him!" -

"What remedy do you know?"

Rusar looks questioningly at the priest, who looks him sharply in the eyes and answers quietly, "Muhareb is alive!"

As if stung by an adder, Rusar rises. Full of horror, he stares at the priest and stammers: "Muhareb is alive? Impossible!"

"Why impossible?" -

"Because my brother recently returned from a trip where evidence of Muhareb's death became him. He saw and spoke to the man in whose arms Muhareb died!"

"So Arvodo told you, and you believed him. You did not know that the brother lied for the sake of his secret purposes, which I see through. Muhareb is alive and I know his whereabouts!"

"You know his whereabouts? Where is he?"

"Lord, one does not reveal secrets easily. You see that Arvodo deceived you. Areval does fear the dead Muhareb, but he fears the living Muhareb even more. Through Arvodo, he has learned of his existence and Arvodo knows how to use his fear. Now you know how your brother has power over the king. - Take away the king's fear of Muhareb and means will be found to overthrow Arvodo."

"Karmuno, I know you, you already know the means and hope to use them. You were never a friend of Arvodo. Nor am I now - so speak."

"It is necessary that Muhareb either fall or be recognized as the rightful king. What would you decide to do?"

Cautiously, Rusar asks: "Should this be determined already now? Perhaps neither is advisable. Act in such a way that the paths remain open."

Pleased, Karmuno approaches Rusar: "I see you understand me. Let us be allies, so we will guide the destiny of Mallona! Now seize the reins of government with a firm hand. The priesthood of the land will be instructed by me to support you. What is going on at Areval, is no secret to us. If I want, the walls will have eyes and ears. Neither Areval nor Arvodo will escape this net."

"But in the meanwhile, what happens to Muhareb?"

Karmuno smiles cunningly. "A king's son who buries himself in solitude becomes unfit for the throne. We need his name, less his person. First let there be a rumor in Nustra that Muhareb is alive and has been seen. Of the viceroy of Monna we are sure, he will follow our plans. Muhareb's name will undermine Areval's reputation there as well, and even more so in Mallona itself. If the events will prove to us how great the power that Muhareb's name gives is, we will decide. His faithful will become ours.

"You know this covenant, too?" asks Rusar in undisguised astonishment.

"Nothing must be unknown to the chief priest of all temples. The fruit of what he has sown, does not fall to everyone. Wiser ones, who know how to wait, can reap the harvest. Arvodo has not thought of this, but he will learn."

Rusar listened to Karmuno in amazement. In his mind there is a clear image of this apparently omniscient priest, who ruled the king unrestrictedly until Arvodo apparently disputed this power. But he had also taken care of this case and certainly had a network of scouts, confidants and helpers. He senses the danger of an alliance with this man, but also recognizes the powerlessness to evade him. In a kind of defiance, he says: "And if I now reveal to Arvodo what you entrust to me, tell him what you have knowledge of?"

Smiling coldly and looking at him meaningfully, Karmuno says briefly: "Try it!"

Rusar knows that Karmuno would stop at nothing. Standing up, and forcing himself to laugh, he says: "I don't want to lose Karmuno's friendship by such an attempt. Common knowledge gives common action. I am ready for it."

IN THE TEMPLE OF BEAUTY

I am back in Mallona and standing in front of the main temple of the empire. It is an extremely magnificent building. Towering pillars enclose the main building and a large manga torch shines from each of the pillars. The temple is shaped like a huge cube, shows no windows and only a large entrance gate, decorated with relief figures of symbolic importance. Above the gate, I see the colossal statue of a marvelous woman: the representation of beauty, for whose worship Maban once built this temple.

The whole building is impressive because of its massiveness. It is externally unpretentious, but the proportions, the porticoes and the stream of light that flows down from the columns at night and illuminates the building and the immediate surroundings as bright as day, are impressive. I notice that the temple supports a second, far smaller cube top that serves as an altar. Here, on special feast days, mighty sacrificial fires are lit, and from the kind of fire kindled, the chief priest Karmuno then announces the deity's pleasure or displeasure.

I step through the large gate into the interior of the temple. Solemn silence and darkness surround me. In the background, I see multicolored lights that dimly illuminate the sanctuary of the temple.

There are statues of perfectly beautiful women, all leaning toward a center point indicated by a stone podium with six steps.

What does this circle of statues mean? I am given the answer: "You see represented here the circle of good qualities in man. Every single figure personifies one of them: Goodness, Forgiveness, Forbearance, Love, Mercy, Trust, Bravery, etc.

All of them, however, bend towards the animating principle of action, on which alone their existence depends. On this podium, on days of sacrifice, appears the mobile figure of a giant man, who, enveloped in misty vapor of aromatic incense, shows himself for a short time to the crowd as the supreme deity Shodufaleb. The surrounding statues are then replaced by beautiful living women who remain unmoving in the given positions for a long time. When the giant appears, they also become mobile, rush to him and the whole group then sinks into the ground.

Karmuno knows best how to expand and exploit his monkey tricks. This temple is only too often witness to orgies of the lowest kind, which take place in the dark halls in honor of the deity.

The power of the spirit pulls me up to the podium. I enter it and - sink. I am now standing in a dimly lit corridor and come to a high gate. It opens. I enter a larger room where armed men are standing. They are Karmuno's subordinates, temple guards and servants who are ready at any time to execute even his bloody orders. Then I come to a second large gate, this one also opens. I step into a beautifully decorated room where some priests are waiting and passing the time with games. They seem to be keeping watch in front of a small, iron-barred door, because their eyes are often directed towards it, as if they were expecting people to enter from there.

For me, this door is no obstacle either, it opens and I stand in front of a second one. I have to open six such solid doors before I reach another brightly lit room.

Karmuno is enthroned on an elevated place. In the circle around him sit eleven priests, men of middle age, whose firmness and mischievousness shine from their eyes. Three of them form the highest priesthood of the country they represent. I have penetrated the most secret temple council, which meets in this secured room to receive Karmuno's orders. The latter speaks now and says: "Highest priests of the realm! I greet you in the intimate council room of our sacred temple. We are gathered here as the guardians of the people, as mediators of the Godhead, and - as friends and confidants. As such, let us deliberate on what our interest demands in the coming period. Let each give an uncolored report of how our influence stands in his country. Mansor, high priest of Nustra, you begin your report!"

A tall man of imposing appearance, sharply curved nose, and shrewd yet treacherously flashing eyes, rises gracefully from his seat and speaks: "Beloved brothers! Not much has changed in Nustra since we were last united here, but I have good progress to report on the way instructed. The people of Nustra are easy to control, as long as they are left to their comfort. They cling to what they are accustomed to, and many therefore always consider the old to be better than the present. Therefore, they still rave about Maban as before and consider him a god who descended for the good of the people. You know, brothers, how difficult it has become for us to replace the leading ideas of Maban with our own, in order to direct the minds of the people as our interest demands. Now, thanks to the inertia of minds, this work has succeeded. People in Nustra now think as we want them to think. You, the supreme of our covenant, wise Karmuno, wanted to create the mood for Rusar, the new viceroy. It has happened! From the temples of the whole

Nustra, our faithful servants have proclaimed the will of the Deity that Rusar be well pleased. Thanks to our devices, on the altars the flames of sacrifice for him blazed high and brilliantly. Rusar, if he is generous and follows the advice of this high council, will be able to remain a happy ruler of a happy people. There is no fear that our rule in Nustra will be shaken."

Thoughtfully, Karmuno asks: "The Nustrans still talk a lot about Maban's son, Muhareb?"

"A whole circle of legends has been woven around the person of the prince. His disappearance is explained in all directions. Sometimes he is said to have been murdered, sometimes drowned, sometimes the demon Usglom is said to have stolen him. Soon it is said that because of the goodness of his nature he was not kidnapped by the demon, but by Anarba, the goddess of beauty, and that he lives in her magic garden as a prisoner in youthful freshness. His name is enough to fill the Nustrans with awe!"

"It is good, we will speak of him further later. Are all the posts of the state in Nustra still filled with the men devoted to us?"

"I thank you. Now, High Priest of Monna, how are things in your kingdom?"

A somewhat stout man, from whose round face the pleasure of enjoyment can be read, rises and speaks: "Hail always to our temple and its faithful servants. If anywhere on Mallona, it is well with us in the kingdom of Monna. You know, my brothers, that the Monnor leads a life of the most abundant pleasure, and he shuns any serious work. He gladly leaves the reins of government to such men as do not disturb his pleasures. And since I have succeeded in proving to him that in the circles of our temple there is forbearance for his weaknesses, and that we are able to bear his cares for him, the Monnor was glad to hand over to the temple the greater burden of the work."

"And you bear this burden?" Karmuno interrupts him coldly and inquiringly.

"For the honor of the temple, his servant has willingly taken upon himself the great burden, for it is such. With full hands, the Monnor scatters money among the people. Those who flatter him need not work. The funds flow to him in unimaginable quantities, for the white rod has recently been found in incredible quantities in the fire areas of our country, stretching along the sea. He would be obliged to hand over all the coined rod to the treasury, but he keeps the greater part for himself."

"Who is master of the mint in Monna?" asks Karmuno.

"Volto, one of the most loyal servants of our temple."

"I know. His brother, at your instigation, became superintendent of the rod treasures dug out of the mountains. However, he delivers only half to the state; the other you receive and keep in the temple of Monna."

These words cause great astonishment in the circle. The high priest, who has become almost speechless, stammers at last: "I was about to report on this, Highest, because nothing escapes your eye."

"My name is Karmuno, the far-seeing one," dryly remarks the chief priest, and sharply emphasizing he says: "Now report on!"

Monna's high priest is intimidated. He is unsure how much Karmuno has learned about his activities, which he did not intend to make clear. Now he feels that a lie he is caught in, could be fatal for him and therefore decides not to conceal anything. He continues in an assured voice: "There are great treasures piled up in the temple, of which Areval knows nothing, but which will be at the disposal of the temple council as soon as it is decided. It has also remained a secret that the temple exploits for itself a particularly rich mine, the finds of which, with the help of Volto and his brother, flow only to us."

"Where do you get the workers?" asks Karmuno. Looking at the head priest, he says: "Most high, you know."

Karmuno nods and says: "Speak for the sake of others."

Hesitantly at first, then more confidently, he continues: "It is now about a year ago that in Monna a sect, to whose activities we did not attach too much importance, suddenly began to spread strongly and dangerously for us. I remind the brothers that these were people who claimed that our temple of beauty was a hearth of vice. The inherent high meaning of being a place of elevation under Maban was profaned, because the priestesses of the temple had become filthy harlots. You know that we have decided to punish such rumors and shameful slanders with death.

Then it happened that in a small place, a man stood up and claimed that the deity who appears visibly every year in our temple - and all of you, my companions, do not doubt it, since it has often been seen by your eyes" - (a cynical smile and a mocking motion of approval seized the assembly at these words) - had never actually penetrated the walls of the temple. For it does not dwell in the heaps of stones we have made ourselves, but in the breast of man. - Seek the divinity within you, purify yourselves, the very temple of the divinity, be yourselves the priests of the inner sanctuary - this was the newly awakening teaching. It rapidly found followers among the poorer class and soon caused enmity and disobedience to us, the real, true priests. Secret meetings were held by the new followers. The prophet moved around the country and was protected and hidden by the followers. Discontent with us threatened to break out into open rebellion, had the dangerous sect not been pulled out by the roots and destroyed.

I am satisfied to be able to report here that this was successful. Through scouts, I soon knew where the meetings were held. I let them enjoy deceptive security, and one day the faithful troops of Monnor lifted these traitors, together with their prophet, from their nests. None escaped the temple. They dig for the priceless rod as it's slaves in the fire area of Monnor. These are the workers for whom the enlightened chief priest asked!"

This speech is applauded by all. Nustra's highest priest still asks: "What happened to the shameful slanderer and rebel?"

Indifferently, his colleague answers: "He was burned recently!"

"And is the danger in Monna entirely removed?"

"Completely! Since the dens of the demon Usglom have been harboring the zealots, everyone is convinced of their infamy. In Monna there is again peace and the former faithfulness."

The assembly is extremely satisfied with what they have heard. Karmuno's piercing eyes flies from one to the other. Silence falls in the wide room, the soft murmur of applause dies away as he says: "Brothers, it is fair that the treasures that accumulate in the national temple of Monna, should not rot there. Each high priest will have a share of it, as do the two sub-priests closest to him. We will discuss their best use later. Are you satisfied with that?"

Joyfully, enthusiastic shouts resound, wishing the salvation of the deity Shodufaleb on the enlightened chief priest of all lands. Karmuno has again forged the souls of those present with chains to himself. He knows greed and it's power.

"Highest priest of Sutona, now you report", says Karmuno sitting down, and immediately the joyful mood subsides.

From the row of priests a man rises, spiritual meaning shining from his face. His features appear calm, impenetrable, almost mask-like. This man controls himself completely; his mouth could laugh while his heart bleeds. I see invincible willpower shining from the dark, sea-deep eyes. A long beard curls around the nobly cut profile with the fine, tightly closed mouth. As he rises with calm decorum, I am struck by his regal figure. Truly, this is a man whose appearance makes him seem worthy of a throne. Now he speaks slowly in a melodious voice: "I have nothing new to report to this high circle. What should be new among the Sutons, this mountain people, who are a hundred years behind Mallona, Nustra and Monna? The people are attached to what they received through us; they want nothing else and are content."

Karmuno has observed the speaker somewhat suspiciously and now interrupts him: "We know that the Sutor is giant in body, but equipped with the brain of a child. Experience teaches that even children can become unruly and rebel against their parents. Have you never experienced this in Sutona?"

"Never Supreme One, and it will never be experienced in Sutona!"

The speaker knows how to put into the expression of his voice such a fullness of fullest conviction, that these words immediately stifle any doubt about such possibility. Karmuno only emphasizes sharply: "You are watching over the people and the Sutor, aren't you?"

Turning his eyes fully to the chief priest, the interrogated one says with imposing calm and certainty: "I watch, most High, and will watch!"

Karmuno bows his head. The other priests also indicate from their movements that they apparently consider Sutona inferior and harmless. The highest priest of Sutona sits down.

Karmuno now rises and whispers a few words to the priest sitting on the right, his trusted scribe. He takes a number of parchment-like papers from a folder. He apparently gives an order to the priest sitting on the left, whereupon the latter goes towards the exit. He makes sure that the various doors are locked and that no uninvited eavesdropper can hear what Karmuno intends to tell the circle. He returns with the report of complete safety. The priests look eagerly at Karmuno, whose expressions promise them important news. He says: "Noble brethren and confidants,

enlightened high priests of our lands! You have heard that there seems to be peace and tranquility in all parts of Mallona. You know that unrest and rebellion against our teachings - which the deity himself revealed to us so that the peoples may live peacefully - have been punished and suppressed by us. It is better that individual corrupters perish completely than that they poison the minds of the peoples.

I remember that my family had to suffer persecutions under Maban's reign, because it did not seem good to the otherwise great king that it represented the conviction in the council of the priests: the mediator between the godhead and the people is entitled to unconditional credibility and his words to unlimited force of law. - When a great crowd of priests joined this wise teaching, Maban banished us. Areval called us back, and behold, happy peace has rested on the lands since we have stood beside the king, who found in us his most loyal companions, and in me, his most sincere advisor.

Signs of approval are given. Karmuno continues: "Shall it remain so in the future? I can see from your expressions that you all want it, and I am of the same opinion. But behold, there is a danger lurking behind us. The destruction of our happiness is not far off, if we are not united as before to banish the ruin. Therefore listen: You all know that King Areval, at the inauguration of Rusal, denied the supremacy to me, the highest priest, by the sentence known to you. I searched for the deeper cause of his action and found the true reason. Two words only and you will realize the greatness of the disaster that threatens us: "Muhareb lives!"

An explosion cannot have a more paralyzing effect than this news. Only the highest priest of Sutona shows no trace of excitement. Exclamations of astonishment, of shock and excited questions, evoke a confusion of sounds in which the harsh voice of the chief priest becomes inaudible. When the excitement subsides, Karmuno continues: "The king's son, whose name the Nustranians even today hear only with awe, who would thus belong to him body and soul, should he develop the strength to chain them to himself - he lives! He could snatch the royal power from Areval, for it belongs to him, the once vanished heir to the throne. But thanks to the deity, Shodufaleb has so arranged it: Muhareb does not seem dangerous to us, but Areval does! Listen to what I have explored:

Unknown and meager as a hermit, Muhareb lived on the seashore. He renounced. His hiding place I explored. I had him searched and our faithful servants of the temple were to capture him unnoticed. But his abode is empty, as I myself saw. He disappeared from there, I do not know where he is. He must be found and I will find him, leave that to me. I do not fear that he will strive for the rule again, he should have done so earlier. But it is worse that Areval knows that his brother is alive. The consciousness of being blameless for Muhareb's death, gave Areval back the strength and with it, the resistance against us. That is why that disrespect for me, that is why the last victory, which we were already so close to, is more difficult for us. But we want to set the spiritual full rule of the temple instead of the kingship! If the spirit, which we cultivate and recognize as the best, rules, then the external power is also due to its representatives. Let the world be subject to our spirit, not vice versa. Let Muhareb's name serve us to secure this rule. Wisely guided, the awakened discontent against Areval will grow when the people hear that Muhareb is alive! But mind you, he lives only as long as he serves us, he perishes as soon as he proves his desire to rule.

Here, take these sheets, they contain the instructions that everyone must fulfill in his country. If they are carried out as indicated, victory will not be lacking. Everybody read diligently and calmly

tonight and carry out what the sheet tells him. We will reunite here tomorrow for the meeting and firmly decide what the temple needs. Are you satisfied?"

General agreement resounds from all sides. Lively, eager murmuring buzzes through the room for some time. Karmuno lets the excited minds calm down, then leaves his seat and speaks mischievously: "You are tired, brothers, and need rest. I therefore close this session!"

Again agreement and satisfied smiles of those present. Karmuno presses on a decoration of the wall. A part slides back, revealing a secret way out. He and the priests step into the passageway and pass through another set of doors into a wide, sumptuously decorated room. Richly laid tables loaded with food invite to enjoyment, soft cushions to rest. Now an adjoining room opens, and a crowd of beautiful girls streams toward the priests, laughing and joking. They are the "goddesses" of the sacred temple of beauty. The well-kept, safe room is the love-garden of its priests, who sacrifice there ...

SUTOR'S HOMEWARD JOURNEY

Things are quite lively at the Nustra station, a central point for the roads leading into Nustra for the well-known wagons. The viceroys of Monna and Sutona take leave of Rusar to return to their residences. Royal visits on our earth show no less formality and pomp than here. I see rows of soldiers and a shining retinue of rulers, officials and curious people crowding around the station of Nustra. There are no rails here, but many barriers stretch through the hall, between which the cars can enter and leave unhindered. All traffic is regulated just as it would be at a station on Earth. A long row of covered wagons stands in a particularly sheltered place. These are the court trains of the viceroys.

The Monnor has just entered his spacious carriage, after saying goodbye to Rusar and the Sutor. Music is played and, with shouts of salvation, first a train of three carriages, then the Monnor in his ceremonial carriage and finally a row of six carriages, in which the entourage is located, drive out of the hall. The train takes the eastern direction and will soon reach the sea, which, following a long row of islands connected by bridges, offers no obstacle to reach the continent of Monna.

Rusar is talking animatedly with the Sutor. In the distance I see the majestic figure of the highest priest of Sutona. The latter has arrived late in the evening from the priestly councils of Mallona to accompany his ruler to Sutona. He is surrounded by priests of higher degree of Nustra and speaks calmly with the highest priest of the country. Now again movement arises, the moment of departure approaches. The Sutor says goodbye to Rusar and boards his carriage. This is a kind of saloon carriage, which allows some movement, is equipped with seats and folding tables and allows a free view in all directions. The sides and front wall are protected by a glass-like material that is flexible like mica. The fabric is a strange, transparent, unbreakable product, which is able to replace our glass. The driver of the car is on a high back seat, protected from the wind by a screen of glass-like material. He cannot see into the interior of the car because of the opened hood, but he can comfortably guide the car by means of levers and all kinds of devices.

The Sutor now turns to the highest priest of his kingdom. A hand gesture indicates to him to board the king's chariot. The Sutor turns again to Rusar, embraces him and follows. Now music starts, waving of hands from all sides, shouts and screams. Slowly the line of wagons drives out of the hall, but soon turning southward, also toward the sea.

The train of the Sutor may have been on its way for about an hour according to our time reckoning. I notice that his car is very different from the others. The front- and back entourage keep a significant distance from the royal carriage: on such journeys a special arrangement by the tutor, who wants to remain as undisturbed as possible by his entourage. So far, the two occupants have sat opposite each other in silence, casting indifferent glances at the inhabited landscape. Now the settlements have become fewer and fewer and the travelers can be sure that prying eyes will not bother them further. The Sutor is safe from oncoming carriages, for on such royal journeys, the roads from station to station are closed to general traffic until the sovereign has passed.

The Sutor now turns to his highest priest and says kindly: "Enough of this strictness. We are on our way home to Sutona and may remember our human dignity again. Take off your mask of aloofness, my Curopol. Be a friend again, not a priest!"

As if these warmly spoken words had loosened a spell, the mask-like appearance on the face of the highest priest disappears. The eyes, hitherto cold and unfathomable, take on an expression of mildness, the tightly closed mouth smiles. The whole figure stretches and with his sonorous deep voice, this wonderful man says: "As soon as I have to leave Sutona, I freeze to ice inside. Only your word makes the homeland-sun shine again!"

"Do I feel differently, Curopol? Good for us, that we Sutons were untouched by the servitude of the others whom we left. Shodufaleb save us from them!"

Somberly and seriously, the addressed one looks at the Sutor and in a heavy tone it sounds from his lips: "Shodufaleb has become deaf to our pleas. Even Sutona no longer saves what is abandoned to ruin. We are perishing of ourselves."

"I know it," replied the Sutor, "and we deserve no better! My stay there in the lands has again filled me with disgust. A pestilential breath, a musty and rotten smell rises there, where all sense of higher aspiration has died. They laugh at us and do not understand that reverence for the godhead still gives us an inner value which they have long since lost. And that the powerful Sutons on Mallona alone still feels a pure blood rolling in his veins, uncorrupted by lusts and passions!"

"Yes, unspoiled, but also incapable of shouting a thunderous halt to the enemies of his purity. Once the Suton was feared for his powerful actions, so our songs and old traditions report. He did not tolerate evil, honored the deity and its rule. From this height he has descended. His body is still powerful, but his will is weak. Would you dare, Sutor, to confront Areal with your subjects to protect the spiritual goods of Mallona? You deny. You know as well as I do that the downfall of our people would be certain, for the Suton is no longer to be feared today, once he rises from his mountains. Although the mountain giants of the homeland protect us from the predatory incursions of the neighbors, little would a war campaign of ours be of success. The Suton withers easily in the mild plains, he soon lets himself be captured by the flattering sounds of lust. In the land the Suton is still powerful, the power of the mountains keeps his soul pure. If he descends from his mountains, he soon becomes weary and weak. Therefore, seclusion is still the only means

to preserve our people. Let us remain so, as long as it pleases Shodufaleb and - as long as he does not let ruin fall upon us yet." Seriously the high priest Curopol has emphasized the last words and approvingly, the Sutor asks: "What new thing has the clan then decided to hasten the doom with, which you have long suspected?"

"Lord, Karmuno is the embodied demon Usglom, who lurks in the depths, otherwise his brain would not have devised such monstrous things. Already long ago, the temple rules in all lands and usurps all power in the universe. Karmuno has slowly spread the doctrine that only through the highest priests, the deity on Mallona presents itself; that only to them, it makes itself known and everything mortal must obey only the will that speaks through the priest.

You will quickly understand what a gigantic plan this is. Nothing will be able to happen on Mallona anymore that Karmuno does not experience. To enforce compulsion of conscience, stultification, servitude of the spirit, will soon be the work of the one who should be called to kindle the light of divinity in the hearts. Karmuno has invented excellent rules on how the priest can most easily reach his goal. Joyfully will the precepts be carried out, for they secure the rule of each one in his circle, and at the same time, high reward for strict execution!"

"And how will you, Curopol, carry out these rules?"

"I will know how to take the poison from them, break off the tips and see to it that the Sutons remain what they have been until now, may they perish physically because of it. I am and will remain a Sutor, not a slave of Karmuno!"

"Shodufaleb protect your undertaking! I will gladly support you as always before. What else did you learn in the council of priests?"

"Karmuno announced that Muhareb is alive: news which we have known for a long time, but which he intends to exploit for his own purposes. He thinks to stir up minds against Areal by this fact, and to direct them as he pleases."

"Muhareb does not aspire to the king's throne," he said.

"He knows it, and that is the only reason he dares to play this game."

Thoughtfully, the Sutor asks: "Have you spoken and seen Upal, the Orefinder?"

"No, sir. Upal has disappeared. No-one, not even his parents know where he is. That is why I fear danger for the old people and I am worried about this brave one's fate. He is the only one who possesses the terrible secret of making the explosive nimah, which his ancestor once invented and entrusted to Maban. Since then this state secret has been kept and only in case of need it may be produced by the most trusted people. May Shodufaleb prevent us from having to call Upal to defend our country."

After a long pause of silence, the Sutor straightens up and asks: "What does the priesthood think of the noble Numo who taught in Monna and dared to speak the truth about the temple?"

Hesitantly, Curopol answers: "Lord, it has come as I feared. All that is noble has been destroyed, truth stifled and driven out. Only lies, deceit and slavery still have a chance of success on Mallona.

Wickedness triumphs everywhere and therefore the judgment is certainly not far away. How and by what means it will arrive, only the Godhead knows; but it will also strike us, for we are all partakers of the great guilt."

"You are evading me, Curopol! Answer, what became of the noble Numo?"

Softly and movingly sounds the answer: "They burned him!" -

As if stung by a poisonous serpent, the Sutor starts up: "Burned Numo, this noble whose mouth speaks only truth, whose heart beats for all that is good, the friend of the poor and oppressed - killed? Oh wretched humanity, disgraceful priests, who strangle the best only to serve themselves! Who follow vice, practice wickedness, mock the deity - curse those executioners! Curopol, I do not believe what you say, is it really true?"

"It is true," it sounds softly.

Groaning, Sutor throws himself into the cushions of the car and tears stream down his cheeks. It takes him a long time to compose himself. Then he turns to Curopol and says softly: "I now clearly feel the truth of your constant prophecies that the judgment is approaching. With Numo died the last attempt of the deity to avert the doom from Mallona. The peoples have sunk, the minds have died. The good is suffocated; the evil triumphs. The plague reigns on Mallona, rot and death! Not a breath of fresh air dispels its suffocating breath and we - we likewise fall into ruin. We perish because of ourselves. We are too weak to follow the fading day. Welcome then night, cover us with your veils, destroy, kill us!"

Sutor's last words became a whisper. Curopol looks at his lord and friend with deep sorrow in his heart. -

In the meantime, the wagon has reached the seashore. Bold bridges stretch from one island to the next and now lead the travelers to the homeland of Sutona. Rigid rocks form a ring around the coast of Nustrá; convenient hiding places for boats that fear the waves of the sea during storms. But no sail is to be seen, no ship, because the high, arched bridge constructions connect the continents more easily and more safely.

Just as Sutor's chariot is driving on an arch that spans the sea toward Sutona in a mighty sweep from the last rock of Nustrá, a ship in which three people are sitting, shoots out from behind a cracked block. Curopol sees it. An involuntary movement towards the Sutor makes him look up. He also sees the ship and is startled. Curopol points to the vehicle disappearing behind the rocks, and breathing heavily, he shouts: "Muhareb, Upal! With them, vengeance approaches!"

REBELLION

In the descriptions of the somnambulist clairvoyant, who, as it were, re-experienced the past by bringing back the events he had seen into the present, a stagnation occurred after the last image.

It was clear from his facial expressions that he saw events, but he was persistently silent about what he saw. Finally, he communicated some events in torn sentences, but forbade to write them down until he himself would ask for it. After a few days, when in the meantime the experiments had been continued several times, he told the following:

“Now write again what I have seen. They are terrible, unbelievable events that I have witnessed. If I were to describe all the details, I will not be believed and I will be ridiculed. Therefore, I will say only general things about what happened at that time...:”

Karmuno and his clan of priests had succeeded in spreading the rumor of Muhareb's return. He was praised as the son of Maban, who had inherited the qualities of his father and could bring the empire back to it's highest flowering. The hope for better times found all the darker illumination when it became known that Areval wanted to free himself from any influence of the temple, to which especially Maban had given such a high significance.

The emerging rumors that the rightful ruler Muhareb had reappeared, were initially not believed. Especially Rusar did not want to think about this possibility, although Karmuno had informed him personally about this fact. However, he knew the chief priest too well. His openly expressed intention to use the name of Muhareb for his own purposes, led him to believe that he had won a person who would play the role of the returned prince for Karmuno. But when one day Upal appeared before Rusar and informed him not only about the real Muhareb, but also about the intentions of his brother Arvodo, anger overcame the deceived and he swore terrible revenge to the king as his commander.

He urged Upal to tell him the hiding place where Muhareb was now hiding. Upal did so, and suddenly Muhareb was surprised by Rusar with a large retinue and paid homage to him as the rightful king. When Rusar found him in the little hut by the sea and looked at the venerable man in amazement, he asked him hesitantly: "Are you Muhareb, Maban's son? With the dignity of the self-confident man who expects the honors due him, the latter answered simply: "I am." At this, his eye rested penetratingly on Rusar. And when the latter bowed before him to pay homage to his rightful king and lord, Muhareb did not resist, but accepted the homage. Silently, he followed the viceroy. Muhareb rested his arm on the shoulder of his young companion and willingly climbed with him and Rusar into the wagon that led them to Nustra's capital.

I saw Muhareb in royal adornment, the precious browband adorning his forehead, the ring shining on one finger of his right hand. An overwhelming majesty emanated from his person and enraptured the people of Nustra, who enthusiastically paid homage to him. All honors were bestowed upon him; he lived in the palace of Rusar, but he remained taciturn and in his eyes could be seen how little his heart was touched by all the splendor.

Then I saw Muhareb surrounded by a great crowd. The great ones of Nustra and emissaries of Monna and Mallona were gathered; Muhareb spoke before them long and forcefully, like a prophet who is filled with his divine mission. He warned the people against their hedonism and effemacy. He proved to them the futility of earthly splendor and the necessity of striving for imperishable spiritual goods. He explained that he had not come to preach disobedience to his brother, but obedience to the Godhead and His order. However, this order had already left the

people long ago. And he as a king's son, who laid down earthly power in order to gain the spiritual, wanted to show the ways in which everyone could reach this final goal of life.

The speech was of powerful effect. The people were moved, and if little else had been lacking, they would have worshipped Muhareb as the visible representative of the deity Shodufaleb. Muhareb, however, exhorted the people to introspect and reflect on what he had said. He firmly rejected any further tribute.

I now saw Karmuno, who had listened to this speech in disguise and unrecognized, in the priestly council of Nustras. He explained that the temple must now use the current awakened by Muhareb to chain the people even more firmly to the temple than before. For this purpose, he said, it was first necessary to support Muhareb's speeches. He must be heard so that action can then be taken as the interest of the temple requires. Another day, the priests in the kingdom of Nustra preached repentance and sought to direct the faithful trust of the inhabitants to the main temple of Mallona, where the deity was visibly enthroned.

In Mallona, I saw King Areval and Arvodo. Both of them were extremely bitter about Rusar's homage. Areval ordered to treat the Nustrans as rebels if they did not hand over Muhareb to him. However, the Nustrans had no intention to obey the request. Rusar invoked the oath he had taken to his dying father.

Arvodo did not understand why Muhareb refused then at the sea shore to do what he apparently did willingly now in Nustra: to strive for the rule of Mallona. If Muhareb became ruler, Areval will fall and with him, the commander. He therefore incited Areval against his brother, and soon Areval's army prepared for war against Nustra.

Muhareb shuddered when he heard of the revenge. He knew, after all, with what horrible means Areval could spread death and destruction through the dreadful explosive nimah. Upal was ready to entrust the carefully guarded secret of his great-grandfather, the production of nimah, to Muhareb in order to fight violence with violence. Muhareb, however, did not want bloodshed. He had other goals than that of power. He gave Upal the necessary orders and one day Muhareb had disappeared. Upal's airship had abducted him unseen with his young companion. The cunning Karmuno was completely indifferent. He only approved of Areval's orders and told himself that by the campaign he would most likely destroy the brothers who were so inconvenient to him and get Areval under his control. He knew perfectly well the overwrought nerves of the king, who was still inwardly ill, and knew that only a favorable impulse would be needed, if possible in the absence of Arvodo, in order to dominate him completely again. This moment arrived.

The caves of Wirdu had not recently given the yield as usual. Areval had communicated the concerns of the officials, who considered the sharp decline dangerous to the state coffers, to the commander and confidant Arvodo. The latter reassured the king and told him about Upal's discoveries, which he had seen himself. Since that time, Areval felt himself as the conqueror of the treasure-guarding demon Usglom, whose hatred against his race he need not fear any more. In spite of his inner horror, he had the desire to see the immense treasures and Arvodo promised him that.

Arvodo believed to find the lonely bay, from which a passage led into the interior of the earth, also without further assistance from the sea. Nevertheless, he lacked Upal with his airship as the safe guide. He therefore sent for him, but did not find him. He sent for the parents, and when they

truthfully declared that they knew nothing of his whereabouts, he had the old people thrown into prison. Angrily, he announced that Upal, the Orefinder, was to be imprisoned as a disobedient one wherever he would be found. Moreover, Upal was considered a beneficiary of the deity, since otherwise he would never have found the Orestone. As a result, a threatening mood arose against Arvodo, from which, in turn, Karmuno soon knew how to take advantage. He stirred up the rising hatred when the commander left the capital to march against Nustra.

Not far from the royal seat on the shores of the lake, was the magnificent country seat of Areval, where he fled to enjoy complete peace and quiet. Here he felt safe, because under the penalty of work in the caves of Wirdu, no unauthorized person was allowed to approach this secluded place of rest. Areval was walking with his daughter Artaya in the lonely parks of the country estate. No servant accompanied them. Areval felt completely safe here, because the wide park was surrounded by a high wall. They had reached a clear pond, which was surrounded by high and dense bushes. Here Areval or Artaya used to bathe sometimes. Next to the pond was a larger lawn, surrounded by impenetrable bushes.

When both wanted to visit the meadow, they were surprised. In the middle of the square stood the strange flying machine of Upal, and when they came closer, there was a rustling in the bushes. Out stepped the tall figure of Muhareb, next to him, his young companion. Eye to eye, the brothers faced each other: Areval pale and with panting breath. Muhareb in dignified spiritual height, the dark eyes wistfully directed at the king.

"I have come to warn you, brother," it sounded urgently from Muhareb's lips. "You persecute me, who am not your enemy. You sent out your commander against your rebellious subjects, as you think. But it is not these who are to be punished. They are in error, they wrongly believe that I am aspiring to the throne in Nustra. My attempt was to save their souls, as I would save yours. Therefore desist from bloodshed, recall Arvodo!"

"Recall Arvodo!" sneered the king, "fine and clever thinking! Meanwhile Rusar gains time to occupy all mountain passes. The Nustrans mock my might. I do not trust you, who dwell in the caves of Wirdu and made an alliance with Usglom, the mortal enemy of the tribe of Furo, to corrupt me."

"Nothing is further from my mind than your ruin, brother! I have forgiven and forgotten the past. I do not desire the throne you now occupy. Fedijah rests in the realm of Usglom, his treasures surround her, she is reconciled with Furo's tribe! Fedijah's spirit demands reconciliation between us."

Areval flinches at the mention of this name. His eyes widen, his breath catches. He madly looks around and whispers hastily: "Fedijah rests in the realm of Usglom, I know it from Arvodo. She demands reconciliation you say - from me?"

Muraval, the young companion of Muhareb, looked pityingly at the frightened king. And as if this look had magnetic power, Areval turned to the youth. When the eyes of both met, Areval cried out, staggered back and leaned on Artaya who was close to him.

"Muhareb, who is that youth there? Fedijah's eyes shine at me from his face. That is how she looked at me when she rejected me, that is how her gaze still haunts me in my dreams and in my waking hours. Who is that one with Fedijah's eyes?"

Steely, heavy and calm, Muhareb answers: "Your and Fedijah's son! I raised him, I bring him to his father! He is the heir of this kingdom - your son!" These words were of such powerful effect as if the king had been struck by a club. Areval collapsed under their impact, his sick brain could not immediately grasp what was said. He saw the once frightening delusions reappear, they stood before him in tangible violence. A mad fear seized him. Violently, he picked himself up and hurled the words at his brother: "You lie, you monster, who has come only to destroy me! You are playing a jugglery with me, a deception that I am destroying. Arvodo, give me your sword! The creatures you killed, live again. I myself will kill them!"

Hastily, Areval tore open his outer garment, under which he always carried a short sword, pulled it out and hurled the weapon at the young man standing calmly. He hit only too well. The tip of the sword dug deep into Muraval's chest. Artaya also cried out loudly as a stream of blood sprang high from the young man's chest and he was caught collapsing by Muhareb and Upal ...

Areval stared absent-mindedly and frozen at the dying man, while Artaya's cries for help resounded through the park. Loud shouts answered from afar. The watchful servants hurried over. In a few moments they would be at the place. Then Muhareb and Upal grabbed the lifeless body of the youth, carried it quickly to the airship and laid it gently down in the gondola.

The servants were already heard breaking through the bushes to quickly follow Artaya's cries for help, when the airship rose. And Muhareb, standing tall, with a terrible face, his eyes full of pain and fury directed at the king, thundered at him: "Curse you, King Areval, and yours! May All-Father's wrath strangle you, the murderer of sons!" -

The airship quickly rose and disappeared. Areval collapsed unconscious. When Rusar heard that his brother was approaching with an army to chastise him and the Nustrans for the apostasy, he did not remain idle. Quickly the mountain passes leading from Mallona to Nustra were occupied. It was impossible to descend to the plains of Nustra until the few passable roads and only the one drivable road were in the hands of the enemy.

Rusar knew with what terrible explosives Arvodo's army had been equipped, and that he could offer successful resistance only if the passage to the mountains was blocked. From the heights he, too, could send down tremendous explosive devices on the enemy by means of centrifugal machines, even if these did not possess the all-conquering power of the nimah. The manufacture of the latter remained a state secret of Areval. Only the mildest form was known and was generally used as a driving force for machines. The stronger effect was known only to high state officials, but the most terrible explosive effect, once used by Maban, remained secret. Soon the armies of Rusar and Arvodo faced each other, but neither of them succeeded.

The heights that were occupied in time, were defended effectively, and Arvodo's crews did not dare to approach them. Other means had to be used to chastise Nustra, but the necessary machines were not immediately available. They had to be manufactured in the state workshops first, and so much idle time passed while decisive things were happening in the capital Mallona.

KARMUNO'S VICTORY

Areval had completely collapsed from the violent shaking of his nerves: from the curse of the brother and the murder of his own son, which was a fruit of his criminal attack on Fedijah, who had been violently kidnapped at that time. Now came the time when Karmuno again completely dominated him as before. Karmuno had forbidden the servants to speak a word about the incident in the park under the strictest punishment. Only Artaya knew about the incident and had reported it to Karmuno. The latter knew immediately how to make her understand how much her interest demanded to keep silent about the fact that there might be an heir to the throne whose death was uncertain.

But whereto had Muhareb and Upal turned? It was important for the high priest to know this, as well as whether Muraval had only received a severe wound or was dead. He suspected Muhareb's place of refuge at the seashore and was confirmed in this opinion when Areval told him about Arvodo's discovery of the wonderful treasures in the caves of Wirdu.

Immediately he gave orders that a larger number of the most faithful temple servants - who had long since forgotten to fear gods, demons and the All-Father - should get ready to enter the caves of Wirdu in order to pay a visit to the refuge of Muhareb. Under his guidance, they reached the small paradise from the sea. They found the former dwelling place of the king's son, but it was empty! Nothing revealed that it had been inhabited recently. The passage into the interior of the mountain was also found, the place where Fedijah's petrified body had once lain; but this grotto was also empty, no trace of the former natural treasures was left.

Somber-eyed and foreboding, Karmuno now ordered them to penetrate deeper into Wirdu's caves. Countless manga torches were set up, illuminating the enormous caves as bright as day. The still visible traces in the fine sand showed clearly which way was to be taken; it led to all the places that Upal had once shown to Arvodo. But it was empty here, too. Broken out was the precious orestone, the white rod; bare rock, broken rocks stared everywhere, no treasures of the Demon Usglom beckoned.

Karmuno also found the place where Upal's airship had stood. He looked up into the gigantic chimney, which could only be reached by means of such a machine, and had to tell himself that the treasures above remained unreachable for the time being. Angry in his heart, he had to turn back with his own without having achieved anything. He cursed the clever Upal, who, as he surely assumed, had beaten him to it. Karmuno had to fight down his anger, against these facts, nothing but patience helped.

Areval raged when Karmuno informed him that neither Muhareb nor the treasures were to be found. In his sick brain, he hatched a thought that dominated him more and more, until at last he got up to a terrible order.

He was possessed by the belief that his brother had conspired with the demon Usglom for his downfall. That therefore Usglom had sunk the treasures only into greater depths and that in the interior of the mountains, Muhareb dwelt with Usglom to destroy him and his house. In a terrible rage, he cried one day: "I will drown both of them, for I am the ruler of Mallona, this whole world belongs to me! I am lord of the upper world as well as of the underworld. Usglom, you old enemy of my tribe, I will destroy you!"

He gave orders that the rocks should be blown up with nimah and that the sea should be led into the caves of Wirdu. Thus he would defeat Usglom and Muhareb, the hereditary enemy and the enemy of the throne. -

Karmuno tried to dissuade him in vain. His madness was stronger. Finally Karmuno gave in, for he believed that this enterprize would be of no greater consequence than that the caves would fill with water. Secretly, however, he hoped that the king would find his downfall in the supposed victory over Usglom.

Artaya suffered greatly under the tyranny of her father. He tolerated only her and Karmuno around him. Involuntarily, she became closer to the highest priest, who knew how to pity her and gave her advice on how best to counter the king's attacks. Furthermore, he knew how to portray Arvodo as a man who only wanted to rule through her, who would take the scepter from her and who did not think of letting her participate in the rule.

All these secret whispers made her think much about whether it would not be better to become the wife of the highest priest, whose power and influence she knew very well. Karmuno, skilled in all arts, paid homage to Artaya's beauty. And as the festival of beauty was approaching, at which the most beautiful girl was always celebrated for a longer time as the visible goddess of beauty, he let it be known that Artaya might gain victory in his priestly kingdom. The vain creature was intoxicated by the thought of being able to win this prize, which was considered the highest on Mallona to which a woman could be elevated.

Karmuno was now sure of his prey. Winning the sick king was easy for him. Arvodo was held by his army at the foot of the mountain, no news of what had happened reached him. On the day of the great festival of sacrifice to the goddess of beauty, Artaya was awarded the beauty prize. Karmuno received the hand of the princess. The temple triumphed.

Far away from the seashore, however, powerful hammer-blows sounded for the production of the mines, the blasting of which was to provide the sea with an entrance into the caves of Wirdu ...

SUTONA

The medium had finished the narration of the seen and explained not to be able to report any further visions. When he now put the ring in the usual way to the forehead, however, the representations began again in such a way, as if he was personally present with the events...

I am drawn by the power to which I owe the sight of Mallona to the south of the planet, where the great empire of the Sutons lies. I fly over the sea from Nustra and arrive at the bold artificial road: a monstrous bridge whose arches stretch from island to island until reaching the mainland of Sutona. I got to know this road partly when I accompanied the Sutor on his journey.

Now the mainland of Sutona appears. A wide barren beach area, then follows an uninhabited stretch of land, half desert, half steppe. The ground becomes hilly. I recognize several villages. Now I notice a wide, calmly flowing stream that carries its waters to the sea. A large city lies at this stream. An unusual sight surprises me here. I see ships. The Sutons use the river as a road for larger loads, also rafts float on the wide and deep stream. In the south, I recognize mighty mountain tops, a road stretches to there. I follow it and soon a mountain landscape surrounds me, which becomes more and more impressive. The mountains rise to a gigantic height, the summits are spun around by veils of clouds. The heat, almost unbearable in the steppe, is more and more softened by a cool south wind that descends from the unpredictable southern mountains.

The huge mountain masses are coming closer and closer together. The path stretches through a wide valley. To my right, the river flows fast, on which the ships glide, guided by skillful Sutons. Now the capital is approaching, built in a valley basin. The background is formed by the snow- and ice-covered gigantic mountains of an alpine world, such as cannot be seen on earth and against which the snow-covered mountains of the border mountains of Mallona and Nustra, are nothing.

Contrary to the refined way of life of the other continents, I see the buildings of the capital of Sutona in simple construction. It is undoubtedly recognizable that its inhabitants pay more attention to the practical needs of life than to pleasure and a good life.

I am drawn deeper and deeper into the country. The capital is behind me. The river now roars over boulders and loses itself sideways into a valley, while I follow the road, which becomes narrower and narrower. Wild clusters of rocks often cover the road; waterfalls plunge down from significant heights, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left. The whole area is deserted, no living being disturbs the majesty of this sublime nature.

Now the valley opens up. A higher mountain cone suddenly rises, surrounded by insurmountable mountain giants, and on this mountain shines in the bright sunshine, an enormous castle, built up as if by cyclopean hands, which looks threateningly down into the wide country. This is Ksontu's castle. Here I will find the Sutor again and will learn what has become of Muhareb.

In a high, wide hall with large window openings, I see the Sutor sitting at a table covered with papers. Curopol, the highest priest and confidant, stands beside him and hands him writings, which he signs and returns. Now this work is finished, and the Sutor asks: "What news did the messenger bring from Mallona?"

"Lord, Karmuno has won. He is heir to the throne. Artaya became his wife. He ordered in the name of the temple that Muhareb be searched for diligently and offered a reward to whoever brings sure tidings!"

"How is Muhareb?"

"As usual, sir, see for yourself!"

Curopol points to a closed door, goes to it, and pushes the carpet aside a little. The Sutor follows and looks through it.

He sees Muhareb standing at a high arched window, from which the view is free into the valley and onto the magnificent mountain landscape. The room is not very large, but high and airy. The

venerable old man stands motionless. His eyes are turned to the clouds and shimmer in the glow of rapture, his hands are pressed tightly to his chest. No doubt, Muhareb is not in his spirit in Ksontu's castle, he lives in the distant regions of unearthly freedom, where the body cannot follow yet.

After the two have looked at the motionless old man seriously and compassionately, the Sutor turns away. Curopol lets the heavy carpet fall down and speaks in a subdued tone: "Thus he has been standing at the window day and night for a long time, ever since Upal brought him and the dead youth here. Only sometimes he descends to the tomb where the bodies of Fedijah and Muraval rest. He does not speak, eats and drinks only the bare necessities, and yet his spirit is not dead. He lives in better regions and will live there forever when vengeance rages here."

"Where is Upal?"

"He took the last flight to Mallona. He will bring us news from there. It is possible that we may see him today. I fear he will bring us bad news."

"Why do you fear that?"

"Because I certainly believe that Karmuno long ago had the caves of the Wirdu investigated to look for Muhareb; that the secrets of Upal are known to him and he will have discovered that Upal took the treasures of Wirdu in time. Where should Muhareb have fled, where should Upal have taken him? If Karmuno does not receive news through the priests of Nustra and Monna, he knows that only in Sutona the fugitives are to be sought. It is impossible that the flying ship can hide unseen for long in the upper kingdoms.

Karmuno knows that Upal will dare anything. Not long, more airships will sail through the skies. To break the resistance of the Nustrans, Arvodo had demanded the rapid construction of airships, so that they would kill the defenders of the passes by falling nimah. In a moment, Upal will find other daring ones. Excited by high reward, these will accomplish what Karmuno commands. Are we also safe here from treachery?"

"Here in the old castle of Ksontu, lives no traitor. I appreciate Upal's prudence, who knows how to take paths where no-one sees the bold one."

"All-Father grant that it may always remain so!" replies Curopol, taking the signed papers, salute and depart.

Night has fallen. Anyone who has ever been to the high mountains of our earth, knows what a magical spell spreads over a mountain range glistening in the moonlight on warm summer nights. Delicate white mists rise from the gorges in fantastic shapes, resembling ghostly processions, struggle up to the heights and disappear into the dark ether. The silence of the universe spreads over the slumbering nature; a deep silence reigns in the mountains. The uncertain moonlight does not allow details to be recognized and often deceives the wanderer striding along on lonely paths with all kinds of phenomena, which, on closer inspection, decay to nothing. So it is also here.

Behind the castle, the fully illuminated disk of one moon rises. A second full moon stands a little higher. The crescent of the third moon stands in the west. Now I see a figure passing the higher moon disk, similar to a Latin T. Upal's flying ship must look like this in the far distance. On the

tower of the castle, the guard stirs. He, too, has noticed the apparition and reports it to the Sutor's trusted servant.

I see that preparations are being made on the wide platform of the castle. Manga torches light up. Now a beam of light flashes from the height, then another. It is a signal that Upal gives. A longer time of expectation passes, then a first soft, then stronger noise is heard in the air. The airship slowly descends and soon stands quietly and firmly on the platform.

Upal and two men wrapped in cloaks, emerge from the gondola. Curopol has arrived and greets Upal, who points to his companions, and the four of them quickly enter the castle.

In a brightly lit chamber, the Sutor rests on a divan. Curopol quickly enters with Upal. The Sutor jumps up excitedly and greets him. "Sir," Upal addresses him, "I bring with me two more men whose faces you surely did not think to see. Here they are!"

Curopol leads the men in. When they raise their bowed heads and bright light shines in their faces, the Sutor is astonished, for before him stand Arvodo and Rusar!

"Lord, we are fugitives, lost ones, if you do not protect us," says the commander in an agitated voice.

"How is this possible?" asks the Sutor in amazement. "Both of you are here, the hostile brothers? What happened, what did Areval do?" -

"Nothing!" replies Rusar gloomily, "but all the more Karmuno. We are the victims of his cunning!"

"Tell how it all came about!" exclaims the Sutor.

"Shall we be the reporters of our own shame? Let Upal speak, he knows how things lined up," Arvodo rebuffed.

At a sign from the viceroy, Upal now reports: "Lord, the commander had searched for me and imprisoned my old parents when they could not testify where I was. But when Arvodo went out against Rusar, he released them. I had learned about this, and so I set out for Mallona to bring the old ones to safety. Disguised, I came to the capital, which was reveling in the splendor of the great sacrificial feast. To me it was a feast for the dead: I found my old father dead and my mother dying.

I cannot grieve, but must rejoice that All-Father took her under his protection, since my strength was not sufficient. She died the day before the feast of sacrifice and was buried the same day. I could not hesitate, because Karmuno's scouts were waiting to catch me if they saw me. Therefore, I had to leave the last services of love to the hands of good friends. On the day of the feast of sacrifice, Artaya was chosen as the beauty queen. Karmuno crowned her and on the same day she became his wife. Areval confirmed Karmuno as the heir of his kingdom and demanded from the commander his ring, which granted him this royal power. Karmuno had cunningly spread the word throughout Nustra that the Nustrans would be pardoned if they voluntarily submitted on the day of the sacrificial feast. The people, delighted to escape the horrors of war, were thus won over, and in the army of Rusar, the courage to fight, dwindled. With Karmuno now hereditary king, the

army of Arvodo was recalled. The Nustrans were offered pardon and Rusar was deposed as viceroy because he first drew his sword against Areval and bowed to Muhareb.

Arvodo angrily defied the order to return home, for he wanted to dispute the crown with the cunning high priest. But his obedience was refused, and Arvodo became a commander without troops. Both brothers had to flee, both ostracized by Karmuno's cunning. On the heights of the mountains, the brothers met. They could see how the troops they once commanded fraternized and went to Mallona to pay homage to the new hereditary king. The war was over before it even began.

Strange things have happened in Mallona. Areval - under the delusion that Muhareb still lives in the caves of Wirdu - had a tributary blown up to put the caves under water. A great feast was to be celebrated, signifying the victory of the tribe of Furo over its mortal enemy Usglom."

Startled, Curopol asks: "Did he do it?"

"He did. The rock is hard, but it must give way to the nimah. Where once Muhareb lived, and the passages stretch into the interior, they have blasted a narrow channel and given admission to the water."

"The madman!" murmurs Curopol, "and the consequences of such doings?"

"They were only small at first. Areval was satisfied that a small river from the sea poured into Usglom's kingdom and celebrated the victory with a feast such as never happened before. It is said that since that day, Areval's spirit is benighted, he is seen no more. Karmuno rules alone in the kingdom. A priest-king is now ruler. May Mallona only prosper!"

"When was the feast?" asks the Sutor.

"Three days ago!"

"Such a short time ago! Was the blasting also on the same day?"

"No, sir, it was the day before, but I fear it will yet have evil consequences."

"How so?"

"Once again I wanted to visit the caves to get the last precious items from the vent. But I could not enter. When I wanted to approach the mountain, steam and poisonous gases poured out of the chimney. It was impossible to enter. I also noticed that the whole crater area was more briskly active than before. The inflow created by the blasting had widened and hot steam was pouring out of the mountain itself, where the sea water was entering. I heard it hissing deep inside the mountain. Usglom does not surrender so fast! I fled therefore this region, which I sought out to collect a material, which I still need for the production of the nimah. And since I knew that I would also find it at the seashore of the border-mountains, I hurried there in the flying ship. A stroke of luck let me find the brothers there. I took them in and thus came to Sutona with both of them."

"You are looking for a sanctuary?" the Sutor turned to the brothers inquiringly.

"So it is, will you grant it to us?"

"Certainly, but you know that my protection is limited. You cannot stay here openly. But I can hide you, and in Ksontu's castle you are safe!"

"You are not if All-Father's hand does not shield you!" sounds an insistent voice from the entrance of the chamber. All look there in amazement and see Muhareb standing in the doorway. His tall figure is bent, his gait as if he were carrying a heavy load. Upal rushes to support him, and he gratefully accepts his help, smiling. He stops in front of Arvodo, looks the commander seriously in the face and says in a reproachful tone: "Where has ambition led you? You built on your own strength, trusted in promises. Did you not know that passion is not the foundation on which the wise man builds? Where has honesty, the power of the word, the fulfillment of duty, compassion, trust and faith in the Father of all existence gone? The feeling in the chest for goodness, truth and honesty is extinguished, silenced. He who deceives, wins only until the deception also destroys the winner. You have experienced it and perished from it, as our whole nation perishes from it. The hour of retribution is approaching, it is already here!"

At that moment, an eerie distant thunder sounds - persistent and deep rumbling. A soft tremor, clearly felt by everyone, passes through the ground. The rumbling fades and startled, those present look at each other. Only Muhareb remains unaffected, suddenly stretching up high and exclaiming with shining eyes: "All-Father, You are calling me. I shall not see the last misery. The generations here are corrupt, they are perishing, they were no longer worthy of Your love. You tried to awaken them, but they were asleep. You punished them with a ruler as they deserved, but they did not feel the scourge and remained indolent. You subjugate them through those who call themselves Your priests, and behold, the darkness these spread around, does them good. They do not want the light and strive to stifle it. Now the long-suffering is exhausted, the punishment is approaching and others will be given what You wanted to scatter here in rich abundance. Your servant has also become dull, for the last pure man, Muraval, whom I raised in Your service, is dead. Nothing holds back Your wrath now. Oh take me up, let me not see the last abomination!"

Muhareb's voice freezes to a low whisper. His face shines as if in an unearthly light. His eyes turned upward it seems as if these see another, more beautiful world. Thus he remains rigid, erect, wordless for a short time. Suddenly he breathes deeply, his features slacken, his body collapses. Upal catches him and lets him slide gently to the ground. Those present step closer. Muhareb is dead!

THE END OF MALLONA

I see the capital Mallona. I can observe tremendous excitement of the people. The entire southwestern horizon is taken up by thick clouds of smoke, from which it flashes a deep, hot red. There is a perpetual faint trembling of the earth, a dull, subterranean rumbling, often followed by stronger shocks. Various tall buildings have collapsed.

A large crowd surrounds the royal palace of Areval and casts imprecations against the king, who challenged the demon Usglom and did not drown him, as he believed. The sacrificial altars of the deities blaze with offerings to implore help from the good, protective gods. In vain, the raging in the crater area becomes more and more angry, the earthquakes follow faster and faster. I see Artaya and Karmuno. She wants to flee from the catastrophe, but Karmuno does not allow it. As the representative of the deity, she must remain in the temple, or the people will rebel completely. She is now the deity personified. If she flees, it means the deity is turning away from the main

temple. Artaya resists, she demands, she wants her freedom. Karmuno, that demon in human form, scornfully ridicules her and forcibly imprisons her in the temple of beauty. He orders two servants to stab her at the slightest attempt to escape; Artaya must show herself as a goddess to the people every day, but she trembles for her life.

Karmuno holds council with his priests. It is decided that Arvodo, Rusar and Muhareb with Upal must be captured at all costs. Karmuno wants to raise Nustra to the royal seat, the proximity of the craters now makes the seat in Mallona impossible for him. He does not doubt that the natural phenomenon will calm down there, but he is no longer comfortable near it. He then wants to enjoy the new royal throne, which will soon fall to him, with his own in peace. His intention finds undivided applause.

Then something terrible happens. Suddenly, the whole country shakes. With a terrible roar, a flood of fire leaps up in the crater area; a terrible earthquake shakes the capital. Most of the houses, including the Temple of Beauty, collapse. It buries under its debris Artaya, the crowd of priests and a lot of the inhabitants who had fled to it. Horror and mad terror seize the survivors. Everybody flees haphazardly, only worried about saving their lives. Karmuno and Areval leave the royal castle with a few faithful. They manage to get hold of one of the fast-moving wagons and in frantic haste they flee to Nustra. No sooner have they left the city, than a new shock causes the royal castle to collapse.

I see the earth-part Nustra, there one feels nothing of the unfortunate catastrophe. Karmuno arrives in Nustra with Areval. New terrible news has arrived there. Messengers and fugitives from Monna arrive. The almost extinct craters of Monna on the sea coast began to rage again, and suddenly the whole coast sank.

A tremendous flood swept over the land in roaring fury, reaching the capital and submerging it. The Monnor perished in the floods, which rushed with furious speed; so did almost the entire population of the more southern part. Only the southernmost high point of Monna remained untouched. Areval listened to these reports with the stolid expression of stupidity. Then he understood, and once again the last energy in this shattered spirit rose up.

"I want to see whether I am victor or not!" he cries out. "From the mountains of Sutona I want to see the victory of my race. You, Karmuno, accompany me." This command is very convenient for the high priest, for he too says to himself that the mountains of Sutona should be the safest place of refuge.

I see Upal sailing through the air in his airship. He goes out on patronage to survey what is happening in the countries. From the heights, he finds it easy to do so. He is also determined to defend or destroy the bridge leading to Nustra if danger threatens.

The northern coast of Sutona was also hit by the tidal wave that inundated Monna, but was not damaged. The low, uninhabited coastal areas were flooded, but soon the rising land inhibited the floods.

Revenge glows in Upal's heart. He sees the downfall of the people clearly before him. Muhareb's last words ignited in him a kind of eagerness to die; he knows that his life will end. But he does not want to end it without having taken revenge on those whom he blames for all misery.

He therefore guards the access road of Nustra and sees his precaution rewarded. He knows the royal carriage that rolls up there and suspects that Areval flees in it. Fast like a bird of prey, the airship shoots down from the height. In the carriage, this is immediately noticed. The carriage stops, in the far distance, other carriages approach with the king's entourage. Upal guesses Areval's intention to use them to spoil him as much as possible. He nevertheless steers his ship towards the distant approaching chariots and throws a shiny object from a safe height in the middle of the bridge.

A terrible crash is heard. The bridge sways, an arch is blown up and sinks into the agitated waters of the sea. Areval's car is now blocked off from his helpers. Now Upal drives his flying ship to the highest speed. As swift as an arrow, the royal chariot flies toward the mainland, but Upal overtakes it. Again he throws out an explosive device which hits the bridge. Another tremendous crash and the further journey is blocked.

The car is forced to stop. It is now approached by the flying ship. It hovers outside the bridge, and Upal sees the distorted faces of Areval and Karmuno peering out of the wagon. "Leave the chariot," he commands both of them, "or I will smash you!"

The king and the high priest obey. "Drive back as far as you can!" he commands the wagon driver. Trembling, it is done. Upal now steers his airship to the bridge and at a short distance, it stands before the once mightiest of Mallona.

Upal keeps a firm eye on his enemies. He picks up a kind of lasso from the floor of the gondola and throws it at Karmuno. Before he can escape the snares with a quick movement, they are already sliding around his body. A sharp jerk and Karmuno collapses, tied up. Now Upal jumps out of his airship, lunges at Areval, who is standing there frozen, and grabs him with tremendous force. He lifts him high up and shouting at him: "You drown the Usglom, I drown you!" he hurls the king over the edge of the bridge into the floods of the sea.

With fierce hatred, he now turns to Karmuno, ties ropes around him even more tightly, and cries with a sneer: "It shall not go so quickly with you. Your desire was always too hot. I will therefore see to your cooling!" He carries the bound man into the flying ship and ascends with him into the air, toward Sutona.

I, too, am now floating high in the ether, overlooking the vast lands. Mallona is a desert. It hisses, roars, thunders and crashes in those regions where once the Rod and the Orestone were sought. Mountains have fallen and the sea pours freely into the terrible fiery gulfs that I described when I first entered Mallona. A terrible battle of the elements has erupted. Suffocating vapors swell up and drive with stormy howl and the furious speed of released vapors, over the ground. With a poisonous breath, they kill all living things. In Monna, too, the unleashed elements are raging. It seems that there is a connection between the crater areas. It jerks and presses in the interior of the globe. The solid shell of the planet still holds, still defies the tremendous tension of the vapors that have arisen.

The atmosphere becomes darker and darker, more and more poisonous. Now, from both fires, an immense mass of vapor builds up; it spreads out and covers the part of the earth called Nustra. The vapor masses meet, flow together and now rush over Nustra towards the south. Sutona's hour strikes.

Once again my gaze penetrates to Ksontu's castle. I see the Sutor in mute terror - Curopol, the two brothers and servants standing on the battlements of the castle and looking toward the north. There, far away on the horizon, a dark wall of clouds towers up, slowly approaching. There is a whirring in the air: Upal's airship passes over the castle, flying toward the next glacier. It climbs higher and higher toward the snowfields.

Having reached the top, Upal takes the bound high priest in his arms like a child, embeds him in the snow and says full of fury: "Now cool yourself, mighty one! Call your gods, you priests! Nothing can save you now!"

He returns to the flying ship and lets it float down. Karmuno has made no sound. In vain he tries to free himself from the shackles. Then he becomes silent and prepares to die.

The dark cloud came closer and closer. A terrible sultriness, hot fumes precede it. Suddenly, there is a hissing and roaring. A hurricane breaks loose with a poisonous breath and kills all living things in an instant. High in the air, Upal's airship is tossed back and forth like a feather, it's parts shredded, broken. There is nothing left alive on Mallona.

THE LAST VISION

I am floating far from Mallona in the space of this world. The planet is surrounded by vapors, so that nothing can be seen of it's surface. Suddenly, it flashes brightly. Flames sprout from the vapors, and I see the globe burst into a thousand pieces. The moons that surrounded it lose their orbit and wander around in space with the debris. The remains of the enormous world-body shoot like shooting stars to all sides. Parts meet also the other planets of our solar system and can tell about that terrible fate-tragedy in the world-space.

Now I see how a shining figure descends, as if it had emerged from the core of Mallona. It floats towards the sun. A seven-star radiating diadem adorns the head, the hand holds a peace palm, infinite goodness and mildness shows on the countenance. The figure beckons to me and speaks: "Give me news of what you have seen! Once Mallona should have become the carrier of highest love. It was to produce a human race, which would have free self-determination, so that it would attain the highest goods of the spirit and become godlike. Only there where man can become an angel or a devil, the freedom of the spirit blossoms. If he recognizes the love of All-Father and the wisdom of His laws, he conquers death and attains eternal life. If he spurns both, he meets certain destruction. Only one power rules in the universe, only one wise Love. It knows the ways and the best means for the eternal plan of creation.

Another planet is now chosen to become the bearer of the highest love. Look down there, you know it well - it is your earthly home-valley. In this hour, there arises the first man, to whom deep

in the heart, I will plant the spirit-seed of the highest people. Nothing will hinder him to progress to the highest level of culture, if he does not forget love. The new generation will achieve spiritual freedom and triumph over all evil!"

The figure descends and I see the earth coming closer and closer. I recognize it's surface and see the formation period, which one calls today the tertiary time. I recognize in wild areas, long extinct animal species, see the cave bear and also the prehistoric man.

Suddenly, a rosy light glows in the east. A gentle rustling moves through the air and it is as if a voice whispers to me: "There in the far east, a human couple was born now as the first, whose souls received the seed of the eternal Spirit. From these now, more peoples will go out, which shall once walk in the light of the truth!"

EPILOGUE

The clairvoyant transmits another image to us. He saw a foreign country, which he recognized as Egypt, through the pyramid buildings.

Just now the ground was dug for a temple building. Then they came across hard ground and found a huge block that looked like baked clay. Laboriously, the hard material was knocked open and removed piece by piece. Suddenly the inside showed half-burned bones. The remains of a man of immense stature emerged, firmly embedded in hard-baked clay. Priests came to inspect the strange find. Under their direction, the block was carefully examined.

The skeleton was freed from it's hard environment. It wore on the right hand the remains of a metal from which still hung a gem. This unknown sign remained for many years as a sanctuary in the temple. The Romans then brought the stone to Italy, and during the migration of the peoples, it was taken and buried. After many years, it was found by a man who had it recovered as a ring and bequeathed it to his family as a rarity.

This ring told us about the past times of the lost planet Mallona, whose existence nobody suspected until now.

Whether his story is true? - some will be tempted to ask. The important thing is that the tale of Mallona holds a warning that can be found by anyone who has heard of the sinking and follows the development of today's humanity with the alert eye of the spirit....

- FIN -

NOVATA
PLACE OF NEW BIRTH