

# CHAPTER VII - Thuvia, Maid of Mars

**CHAPTER VII - Thuvia, Maid of Mars** begins with Carthoris leaving behind a bewildered Jav, who is left to puzzle over the Heliumite's unanticipated behavior. What Jav failed to realize was that his cryptic remarks had unintentionally armed Carthoris with the exact clues needed to act decisively. Through fragments of dialogue and inferred truths, Carthoris had understood the game being played in Lothar—where illusion was as dangerous as steel, and belief could shape reality.

Inside Tario's strange and contradictory court, the lines between fantasy and substance blur as Carthoris and Thuvia face a gauntlet of phantom bowmen. His sword passes through their forms without resistance, confirming they are no more than conjured specters born of thought. Tario, clearly enchanted by Thuvia's presence, attempts to assert dominance through ceremony, demanding they observe Lotharian custom by bowing in submission—an affront to the proud traditions of Helium and Ptarth. Carthoris, standing tall, firmly refuses. His words, though defiant, are dismissed as madness by a culture that has ceased to value the tangible.

Jav, ever the loyal but conflicted servant, follows Tario's orders while slowly revealing the fragile foundation of Lotharian society. Through his words, Carthoris learns of a world clinging to survival not through physical strength, but by sheer mental will. Food, armies, and servants—all are conjured from the minds of the dwindling inhabitants. Their city, though majestic in appearance, is hollow and fading, sustained only by belief. Carthoris sees that their illusions may offer convenience but cannot replace reality.

Concerned for Thuvia's safety, Carthoris questions the fate of those deemed "realists"—individuals like himself who reject the idea that thought can sustain life. Jav explains that such thinkers are considered heretical and are often sacrificed to Komal,

a fearsome creature worshipped as the embodiment of material existence. Komal, it is said, devours those who cannot be mentally reshaped, acting as both punishment and purification. Carthoris hears this with rising urgency, aware that Thuvia's very life could be endangered if she too is seen as an outsider.

As the conversation deepens, Jav shows glimpses of doubt. Though loyal to Tario, he cannot ignore the compelling force of Carthoris's arguments, which question the sustainability of a society that feeds on illusion. The Heliumite's insistence that true nourishment must come from substance—not suggestion—challenges everything Jav has been taught. Their interaction becomes less confrontational and more philosophical, subtly shifting the balance of power as Carthoris continues to assert his beliefs with clarity and confidence.

Throughout, Carthoris remains grounded in his mission—to find and protect Thuvia. His refusal to indulge in the comforts of illusory food or rest underscores his resolve. He represents a culture that values action and honor, not passive dreaming. Even when faced with alien customs and near-magical powers, he remains steadfast in his conviction that reality, not imagination, holds true strength. His character becomes a sharp contrast to the mental fragility of Lothar's leaders, who have sacrificed authenticity for convenience.

This chapter elegantly questions the nature of reality, inviting readers to consider what is truly vital for survival. The Lotharians, though intellectually powerful, appear stagnant and brittle, while Carthoris's physical presence and moral certainty serve as a catalyst for disruption. Thuvia, though absent from much of this chapter, remains at its heart, a symbol of what must be preserved amid illusion and decay.

By the chapter's end, the ideological divide between Carthoris and the Lotharians grows deeper, setting the stage for future conflict. As he makes his next move, guided by instinct and the fragmented clues gleaned from Jav, the reader senses the tension building between two worlds—one rooted in fantasy, the other in truth. In Carthoris's hands lies the potential to unravel or reshape Lothar's fate, not through force of illusion, but through unwavering resolve and a heart anchored in the real.