

CHAPTER IX -Thuvia, Maid of Mars

CHAPTER IX - Thuvia, Maid of Mars begins with Carthoris, Thuvia, and Jav emerging from a fall into the depths of Lothar, where they miraculously avoid injury. The chamber they find themselves in is cold and oppressive, and Jav's fear intensifies upon seeing Komal—a legendary creature believed by his people to be a divine executioner. Yet, where fear dominates Jav, Thuvia steps forward with calm authority, confronting the beast with neither weapon nor panic. Her mysterious ability to control the banth reveals not only her bravery but also her innate connection to Martian life, dispelling the myth of Komal's godhood and reshaping the group's understanding of the creature as merely an intelligent predator.

Their escape leads them through forgotten corridors into the stark light of a barren plain beyond the city. Here, the truth of Lothar's decline is laid bare. Once a proud civilization thriving with warriors and power, it now clings to survival through illusion and mental projections, with fewer than a thousand citizens left. The people of Lothar, having abandoned physical labor and martial discipline in favor of thought projection, live among echoes of their history. Jav's ability to summon illusions of armies and battlefields becomes a metaphor for their decadence—grand in appearance, but hollow in purpose.

As they continue, Jav conjures a vision of Lothar's ancient might—mighty legions, banners flying, and phantom swords raised in silent fury. But Carthoris sees through the grandeur. These apparitions are pale reflections of a society clinging to its former glory, unable to accept its dwindling reality. While impressive to behold, these mental projections are ineffective in real conflict and serve only as distractions. Jav, blinded by his people's traditions, fails to grasp that no illusion can replace courage and action.

Sensing an opportunity, Jav attempts to use the false army to mislead Tario's forces, giving Carthoris and Thuvia a chance to escape. The plan unfolds with precision until Jav reveals his ulterior motive. Turning to Thuvia, he propositions her shamelessly, offering safety in exchange for her affection. His transformation from reluctant guide to would-be captor is swift, revealing the rot beneath his civility. He believes that the power to create illusions entitles him to reshape others' choices and feelings, but Thuvia's response is immediate and sharp.

She condemns his proposal, standing firm in her values and trust in Carthoris. Her refusal is not fueled by fear, but by an unwavering belief in Carthoris's honor and bravery. Even in danger, she refuses to sacrifice her dignity or loyalty. Jav, exposed by her words, is left seething—a man of illusions undone by a woman of truth. Thuvia's poise in rejecting his offer solidifies her as more than a damsel in distress; she becomes a symbol of strength and fidelity in the face of betrayal.

The chapter closes with growing tension. Thuvia and Carthoris are separated once more, and Jav's illusions begin to unravel under the weight of his desperation. What had seemed a clever escape becomes a web of deception and misplaced ambition. Jav's actions place not only himself but Thuvia at risk, as his selfishness threatens to undo the fleeting advantage they held. Carthoris, unaware of this treachery, is likely preparing to rejoin the fight, and the collision of illusion and reality now feels inevitable.

This chapter highlights the fading glory of a civilization too reliant on illusion and the resilience of those who hold onto principle in times of peril. Thuvia's ability to tame Komal and withstand Jav's coercion reveals her quiet power, while Carthoris remains the embodiment of determination and honor. Their fates are increasingly bound together, and with enemies both physical and psychological gathering, the struggle ahead will test not only their strength but their loyalty to each other and to what is right.