

# THE EMERALD OF MARS



Tangor's Pastiche and Fan Fiction <http://www.erblast.com>

## Ed Augusts

"The Emerald of Mars" First Appeared  
in the fanzine Odwar #1

# THE EMERALD OF MARS

ED AUGUSTS

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Fredrik Ekman, a premier Swedish ERB collector and scholar, recently communicated with Ed Augusts regarding a short story Augusts had written that first appeared in the fanzine Odwar #1, Sept 1964. Ekman's question was simple enough:

*Did you ever finish the story? I seem to recall that the one in Odwar was just the first installment.*

Ed Augusts replied:

*Dear Fredrick, I hereby give you permission to publish my story, "Emerald of Mars", if you do*

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*happen to find it, on your friend's ERB fan web site! Yes, at the time I was supposing that I would continue or conclude it in future issues of Odwar; it was meant to be a "cliff-hanger", if someone enjoyed it, they would want to see the next issue to get the ending! I think I actually WROTE the ending, but Ken's idea was, "Don't use the ending! Make it continue into the next issue!" Unfortunately, I don't believe there ever was a next issue!*

-----Ed

Fredrik typed the text from his issue of Odwar and forwarded it to me as an email attachment. I corrected obvious typos (dropped letters, transpositions) for this release of Augusts' "The Emerald of Mars". Having never seen the Odwar version, I can't say if these corrections are in error! What I can say is *Emerald* is a fun little tale that shows that ERB fandom has been around for a long time... and that Edgar Rice Burroughs certainly excited the imagination of many generations.

Tangor's Pastiche and Fan Fiction is very proud to present the first installment of the unfinished serial "The Emerald of Mars"!

# The Emerald of Mars

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Although Barsoom was a planet already burdened with a proud and ancient history in the years before the advent of John Carter, his presence there nevertheless influenced the planet and contributed toward its development more than any other single factor in the long history of Barsoom. This singularly mysterious man, insignificant in size when compared to any Green Barsoomian, evoked an awe from those who knew him, as well as from those many millions of Barsoomians who only heard of John Carter through legends that swept across the dead sea bottoms of the planet, into nearly every broad plain and inaccessible canyon from the Lost Sea of Korus to the Artolian Hills.

Though his form has vanished from Barsoom, he is still venerated and loved by those who knew him, and remembered by those countless millions

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who only heard of his deeds. A tale of his exploits that is widely known among the people of Barsoom is one that occurred in the summer of John Carter's eighth year on the planet. Few Barsoomians heard of the entire adventure at the time, since it took place in a remote spot of Barsoom removed from civilized life. And John Carter, by nature a modest man, was reluctant to tell anyone of it.

### I

John Carter, Prince of the House of Tardos Mors, Jeddak of Helium, winced at the bright morning sunlight from the sun that was rising above the broad horizon stretching beyond the last ancient houses of Greater Helium toward the yellow-colored spire of Lesser Helium. A tiny dot of a moon sped overhead, a bright pebble in the glowing sunlight. Suddenly, anguish swept over John Carter and he turned his face from the scene before him and wept silently in a dark corner, those tears the first to glisten on his cheeks since his coming to Barsoom.

John Carter held a letter in his hand, a letter written in a strange language not of Barsoom or of Earth. But Carter could imagine what meaning the letter had. It was undoubtedly a ransom note from the villains who had stolen his dear wife, Dejah Thoris from him the evening before.

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That past scene grew vivid in his memory. Returning to his room after an evening of walking through the streets of Greater Helium, he noticed Dejah Thoris not sleeping on her bed where he had last seen her. Spinning around he caught sight of her in the arms of a horrendous creature, much unlike any Barsoomian he had ever seen. A distorted female face surprised him from behind the door, and before John Carter could even comprehend what was happening, a heavy metal bar, swung by a third creature, grazed his skull and crashed across his shoulders, throwing him down to the floor in a state of unconsciousness. When palace guards found Carter he was not seriously injured, his rugged frame withstanding the powerful attack. But Dejah Thoris and the beasts that had been in the chamber were gone, and all that remained was a yellow parchment-like paper on her bed written in strange characters and forms.

That night was spent in a search of the city to find the missing princess, but Dejah Thoris was nowhere to be found. Troops and police searched from house to house in Greater and Lesser Helium but to no avail. A clue to her disappearance was found late in the afternoon when an airship was reported missing by a wealthy Barsoomian official in Lesser Helium. It was found that a policeman had seen it rise slowly above the city and fly southward, but he had thought it of no importance at the time.

As the morning came, John Carter realized that his wife was alone with cutthroats somewhere on Barsoom. As he impatiently waited for more reports from officials and the military, Carter

vowed he would not rest a minute in his efforts to find his wife and the ones who had stolen her from him. His position, his palace, his life itself would mean nothing to him now if he were forced to live his days without his beloved Dejah Thoris.

"John Carter, I have come!" An ominously large green shape squeezed itself through a doorway. It was Carter's old friend, Tars Tarkas, Jeddak of Thark.

"I heard this morning what had happened and left my people to help you in any way I could."

John Carter smiled hopefully, and patted the huge Barsoomian warrior-chief on his tough shoulder.

"Thanks, Tars Tarkas. We haven't a minute to lose! I must find Dejah Thoris and I think I can accomplish that faster if I have this letter translated!" Tars Tarkas looked at the letter and blinked.

"John Carter, I will follow you across all of Barsoom in pursuit of danger but you know I would rather destroy enemies than decipher letters."

"In time we shall both be able to destroy enemies! Now let us go to my air flier in the street below, and speed to a distant province."

A circular staircase led to a broad and elegant room of granite and marble. Beyond it, the street and airship waiting for the two warriors.

A whispering, massive crowd had gathered in the streets when they had heard of the unfortunate incident the night before. Lines of tension showed on the faces of the gaily dressed palace guards who had worked feverishly the night through in their vain efforts of finding Dejah Thoris in the city,

or of any clue to solve her disappearance. John Carter held the only, and certainly the most important clue, the unfathomable letter that he clutched as he and Tars Tarkas stepped out with the hard, determined look of those who believe that nothing can seriously affect them for long. The pair soon disappeared into their ship, and the silent craft flew vertically several hundred feet into the crisp Barsoomian sky to be above the tall spires and buildings of Greater Helium, and then streaked toward the distant horizon to grapple with forces of a kind no man of Mars or Earth had ever met or could hope to destroy. The tenacious John Carter thus began a campaign to find his dear wife, and punish those who had so rashly stolen her from him.

An hour of flying across monotonous seas of yellow moss took John Carter and Tars Tarkas over an area seldom visited by many Barsoomians. From the distance of one hundred haads, the brilliantly green edges of the Great Toonolian Marshes could be plainly seen, a striking contrast against the dull ochre moss which covers most of the planet. In the depths of this giant jungled patch lived perhaps the only man of Barsoom who could decipher the strange language of the letter, and the reason for Carter's visit to the Marshes was solely to speak to this old scholar.

The Great Toonolian Marshes were stilled as evening approached. The small animals of the area had finished their food-seeking and they scurried inside their burrows in the trunks and branches of old marsh trees to spend the night. Now was the time for the night creatures, generally



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the larger and more carnivorous animals to appear, either slithering out from their giant ponds of slimy water, or crawling from their homes in the trees on the many hills and ridges that protruded from the stagnant and muddy pools and streams that generally composed the swamps. Then they would find and kill their prey and then return to their natural homes as morning approached.

Under a darkened sky the craft which carried John Carter and Tars Tarkas silently sped to the thickest portion of the Toonolian Swampland and then stopped, hovering quietly. John Carter surveyed the countryside. Green jungle foliage stretched from horizon to horizon. Not far distant was a group of small steep hills that pierced the green blanket of the swamp. They were darkly wooded and very similar in appearance. Nevertheless, John Carter knew what his goal was. He flew his ship directly above and over one of the peaks, and then settled the airship slowly into the jungle.

John Carter and Tars Tarkas stepped from their craft and furtively climbed up a grassy slope that rose from the deep waters below, reflecting upon the cloudy sky of evening and the moons appearing through broken clouds above. The grass was long and scratchy to walk in, but even the small cuts that appeared on John Carter's bare legs were nothing to the punishment of constantly slipping through and among the branches and strange roots of warped trees that stretched up the hillside of this old sinking mountain range.

Tars Tarkas helped matters by pushing apart some of the smaller trees, but even he was occasionally stopped by picket-fence walls of trees

growing within inches of each other. Finally though, the pair reached the top of the hill, several hundred yards from their starting point in the marshes below. The swamps below were quiet except for occasional bird-like whispers, shrieks, and low rumbles from creatures seldom seen by anyone. But they seemed to be farther down in the swamps, and the steaming jungle was rather quiet. In any case, Tars Tarkas wondered if the home of the old scholar they would visit was nearby.

Finally John Carter gained the top of the hill where there was strangely no vegetation and no trees. This was the only spot in the Toonolian Marshes where one could see the home of the scholar Rodemm.

Even in the darkness of night, two small pinpoints of light could be seen reflected below them. They came from a dark opening on the side of the hill opposite the slope they had climbed.

"That, Tars Tarkas, is where Rodemm the scholar lives, and has lived for the past thousand years."

"What an infernal spot in which to spend one's time."

"Rodemm was a great scientist of Barsoom, a descendant of those scientists that engineered the canals of this planet. He has learned the secrets of time and science and now has chosen to spend his remaining days on Barsoom here, in this distant spot."

"Why trouble the old creature?" Tars Tarkas and John Carter were now quickly descending.

"He is possibly the only one alive who could tell me the meaning of this letter. Along with his

prowess as a scientist, he is also an exceptional linguist."

Struggling out of the grip of a sharp branch, John Carter saw that far below them were the dark waters of the ancient marshes. And between the marshes and where they were standing was the opening to the cavern of scholar Rodemm.

Descending still further, John Carter finally jumped to the lip of a ledge that hung a few feet above the murky and frightening waters. He looked up and saw the massive Tars Tarkas step down, nearly placing his green foot on top of him because of the darkness.

"Easy, there."

"Easy?"

"Never mind. Lets look in the cave." Around the edges of the cave's entrance was a semi-luminescent ring, and two burning white lights glared upon them and the dark marshes from the two sides. It was unexpectedly dark inside. The light around the Cave's exterior did nothing to light the inside.

"John Carter... I feel the presence of a strange beast."

Carter stopped in his tracks and listened cautiously, putting his hand on the hilt of his sword.

A breathing sound was issuing from farther inside the cave, and a whiff of something fetid and decaying was in the air. Fearlessly, though, John Carter stepped forward. Suddenly, he felt a sharp pain strike his face and the wetness of his own blood flowed in a sudden gush down his bare neck and chest. Toppling to the cave floor, part of his cheek nearly gouged out, he heard a few distant

sounds and felt a soft numbness that came slowly upward from his lower body and finally wafted him to unconsciousness.

The darkness he endured for long moments on the floor of the cave seemed only a second to him as he came awake under the strenuous tugs and efforts of Tars Tarkas. Carter opened his eyes and saw that the cave was now brilliantly lighted, and that a man of the Red Barsoomian race stood with Tars Tarkas above him. A many-clawed, double-headed, and otherwise fearsome beast was lying sprawled over much of the floor of the cave, dead by the hand of Tars Tarkas. The man, easily recognized as Rodemm, had finished applying medications to John Carter's face. He fingered his cheek gingerly, but it felt numb, cold, and like plastic. He shook his head and then rose from the floor of the cave.

"How feel you, John Carter?" queried Tars Tarkas.

"Never better, but for the coldness in my cheek."

"That will pass quickly and you will be stronger than before, and I have sewn you together again so that not a scar will remain." Rodemm was speaking, his old voice still mellow and youthful. "The beast behind us crawled out from the marsh and has bothered me these past sixty years. I am grateful to both of you for coming and destroying the creature." Rodemm was smiling cheerfully.

"We come, Rodemm on a mission of oppressive importance. You must help me if you can." Tars Tarkas spoke in his low crisp voice to old Rodemm.

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"Why, yes. If it is anything reasonable I certainly will do it. I owe you a debt of gratitude for destroying the beast. Tell me what it is as you come with me to my living quarters."

A small cave that joined the larger one perpendicularly, was filled with odd bones, decaying food matter and excreta. It had obviously been the den of the beast Tars Tarkas had killed. Beyond it, the cavern was dark and then around a sudden narrowing turn, brilliantly lighted with glowing panels atop the now-tubular long cave. A large steel gate, placed there to guard against large and small Toonolian Marsh creatures opened easily to the hand of Scholar Rodemm, and the three entered a huge room flanked with walls of grey and silver computers, strange scientific devices, and machinery that both Carter and Tars Tarkas had never seen before.

"Speak what you will, John Carter."

John Carter, now completely recovered from any wounds he received, stood and told Rodemm that he was a friend, sympathetic to science, and that he had come to show him a strange letter and to see if he could translate it for him.

The scholar then spoke, his voice friendly and reasonable, but his words fierce and distracting.

"Your strange letter may be of importance to you, and it may not. In any case, it is of no importance to me! I must busy myself with other matters... replenishing the Barsoomian Seas with water, and many kindred and diverse matters. Now you may return to your ship and go back to whence you came!"

"Wait, Rodemm!"

But Rodemm had spoken quietly and distinctly, and turned to leave the chamber. Thirty feet separated him from John Carter, and he would be gone in another moment. Quickly, looking and seeing that the roof of the caver they were in was nearly a hundred feet above them, Carter took a step and jumped with all his strength, landing a few feet in front of the old scientist.

"You are not of Barsoom, By the throne of Issus!" The old scientist was surprised by this miraculous showing of athletic ability no one of the planet could have possibly equaled, allowed to Carter by the weakened Martian gravity and his own powerful muscles.

"John Carter," Said Tars Tarkas, approaching from the other end of the giant room, "Let me hang this scholar by his toes for his ungrateful attitude as a warning of what happens to those who tamper with the temper of Tars Tarkas!"

"No, Tars Tarkas." A faint smile etched John Carter's features. "Remember, I might have bled to death had he not helped me." Then he thought.

"But perhaps we could do it later though, if the old scholar does fail to help us after we have reasonably discussed the matter with him and he persists in his attitude!"

The old man's ancient shoulders shrugged, and his face grew glum, but he winked and seemed content with the situation and the persistence of these strangers.

"Alright, you have won the battle. Now let me see your fabled letter!"

John Carter withdrew from his side a yellow piece of paper and slipped it into the scholar's hand.

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"Tell me what it says, old Scholar, and we will leave you here to your work."

The eyes of the scientist narrowed as he scanned the paper, and then suddenly glowed with excitement. He took an enlarging glass and looked intently at the letters and words written the night Dejah Thoris was stolen from John Carter by the strange creatures at the palace in Greater Helium.

"Can you decipher it's meaning, Rodemm?" The bony figure twitched and then ran about the room, searching to find an old book of language comparisons, but Rodemm failed to answer John Carter. The man skimmed across page after page in the book, and then looked up at Carter as he asked the very same question again, this time in an impatient tone.

"It's meaning? I must notify the Universities of Barsoom. Never was I as pleased with anything since I discovered a dozen books of the ancient white race. It's meaning? Untranslatable to me, but perhaps a machine could unravel it for you!"

Tars Tarkas smashed his huge fist upon the table, scattering papers upon the floor.

"Scholar, you say much yet tell us little. Can you decipher it or not?"

Rodemm curled his lip and thought a minute.

"Possibly after weeks of calculation and speculation, after thousands of failures, an ordinary Barsoomian scientist could unravel the meaning of the first several words. But I, to satiate your lust in this matter, will decipher the letter in several seconds!"

Carter and Tars Tarkas were duly impressed. The scholar seemed certain of what he was doing,

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and confident that he would succeed.

"Follow me, gentlemen, and you will find I accomplish what to anyone else would be a miracle!"

Rodemmm then pressed a switch and part of the wall facing them slid back, revealing a dark chamber beyond. Rodemmm disappeared into it, and John Carter and Tars Tarkas followed. All was darkness as the wall closed again. Tars Tarkas nervously spoke to Carter of their situation.

"John Carter! It is a trap. Prepare to fight and die, for I sense danger ahead!"

John Carter scoffed at the idea of any danger confronting them here, in the dark tunnels of an old and eccentric scientist, but he remembered that Tars Tarkas had been quite correct in warning him against the ferocious cave-beast minutes earlier and then wondered what lay ahead.

-TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE