

I. On the Arizona Hills

I do not know how old I am. I may be hundred years old, maybe more. I cannot tell because I never aged as other men and I do not remember any childhood. I look just like I did forty years ago and more. I died twice and I am still alive. However, I feel that I cannot live forever and I have the same horror of death as everybody else. That is why I decided to write down the interesting story of my life and of my death.

Ten years my dead body lay undiscovered in an Arizona cave. Strange events happened to me during that period. I cannot explain them. But I can write the chronicle as an ordinary **soldier of fortune**¹.

My name is John Carter; I am better known as Captain Jack Carter of Virginia. When **the Civil War**² ended, I had only several hundred thousand dollars. I was a captain in the **cavalry arm**³ of an army, which no longer existed. I was the servant of a state, which no longer existed too. I decided to work my way to the southwest and **try my luck**⁴ in a search of gold.

In the winter of 1865, I and another Confederate officer, Captain James K. Powell of Richmond, were extremely fortunate to find a very remarkable gold-bearing mine. But our equipment was very primitive. One of us was to return to civilization and bring the necessary machinery and a sufficient force of men to work the mine properly. Powell was familiar with the country and with the mechan-

¹ **soldier of fortune** – наемный солдат

² **the Civil War** – Гражданская война в США 1861-1865 годов

³ **cavalry arm** – кавалерия, конные войска

⁴ **try my luck** – попытать удачу

ical requirements of mining. We agreed he would make the trip. And I would protect our mine.

On March 3, 1866, Powell and I packed his provisions on two of our burros. He mounted his horse, and started down the mountainside toward the valley.

The morning that day was clear and beautiful. I could see him and his little pack animals making their way down the mountainside toward the valley. Half-hour later I noticed three little dots in about the same place I saw my friend and his two pack animals. I tried to assure myself the dots were antelope or wild horses but started worrying. Powell was well armed and an experienced Indian fighter. But I knew his chances were small against a party of cunning trailing **Apaches**¹. I armed myself with my two Colt revolvers and a carbine and started down the trail taken by Powell in the morning.

It became dark. I had to await the rising of the moon. I had an opportunity to think about the wisdom of my chase. Possibly, I imagined impossible dangers, like some nervous old housewife. I am not prone to sensitiveness but following of a sense of duty was a kind of fetish with me throughout my life.

About nine o'clock the moon was sufficiently bright for me to continue on my way. About midnight, I reached the water hole. I expected Powell to camp here. But there were no signs of a camp.

I noted that tracks of the pursuing horsemen continued after Powell at the same rate of speed as his.

I was sure now that they were Apaches and that they wished to capture Powell alive for the pleasure of the torture. So I urged my horse onward at a most dangerous

¹ **Apaches** — Апачи, собирательное название для племён североамериканских индейцев

pace. I hoped to catch up with the red rascals before they attacked him.

Further speculation was suddenly cut short by the report of two shots far ahead of me. I knew that Powell would need me now more than ever. I instantly urged my horse to his topmost speed up the narrow and difficult mountain trail.

For perhaps a mile or more, there was no further sounds. Suddenly I was on a small, open plateau near the summit of the pass. I passed through a narrow gorge and suddenly I saw something that filled me with consternation and dismay.

The land was white with Indian **tepees**¹. There were probably half a thousand red warriors. I was lucky some object near the center of the camp absorbed them. I easily turned back into the dark recesses of the gorge and made my escape with perfect safety.

I was sure that Powell was the center of attraction. I whipped out my revolvers and ran down upon the entire army of warriors. I was shooting and screaming at the top of my lungs. The red men fled in every direction for their bows, arrows, and rifles. They were convinced that not less than a **regiment of regulars**² was upon them.

Under the clear rays of the Arizona I saw Powell. The hostile arrows of the braves pierced his body. Of course, he was dead. But I wanted to save his dead body from the hands of the Apaches.

I rode close to him, grasped his body and lifted it up on the horseback. I continued my way across the plateau. By that time, the Indians discovered that I was alone and began to pursue me.

¹ **tepees** – типы, переносное жилище кочевых индейцев

² **regiment of regulars** – полк регулярной армии

My horse was traveling practically unguided. I believed that he would find the right path and carry me to safety. But he didn't. He entered a pass, which led to the summit of the range. I heard the yells of the pursuing savages suddenly grow fainter and fainter. I looked the trail below and to my left. I saw the party of pursuing savages disappearing around the point of a neighboring peak.

I knew the Indians would soon discover that they were on the wrong trail. They would renew the search for me in the right direction as soon as they located my tracks.

I went short distance further and saw an excellent trail. It was level and quite broad and led upward and in the general direction I wished to go. I followed this trail for perhaps a hundred yards. A sharp turn to the right brought me to the mouth of a large cave. The opening was about four feet in height and three to four feet wide, and at this opening, the trail ended. It was now morning.

I laid Powell upon the ground. The most **painstaking examination**¹ failed to reveal the faintest spark of life. I forced water from my canteen between his dead lips, bathed his face and rubbed his hands. I worked over him continuously for the better part of an hour. But I knew he was dead.

I was very fond of Powell²; he was a hard-working man in every respect; a polished southern gentleman; a staunch and true friend. With a feeling of the deepest grief, I finally gave up trying to reanimate him.

I crept into the cave to explore. I found a large chamber, possibly a hundred feet in diameter and thirty or forty feet in height. There were many evidences that the cave was inhabited some time ago. The back of the cave was lost in

¹ **painstaking examination** – тщательное обследование

² **I was very fond of** – я был очень привязан к Пауэлли

shadow and I could not see whether there were openings into other apartments or not.

I continued my examination but felt a pleasant drowsiness creeping over me. I was tired from my long and strenuous ride. I felt comparatively safe in my present location. I knew one man could defend the trail to the cave against an army.

I soon became so drowsy that I hardly resisted the desire to rest on the floor of the cave. I knew that it would mean certain death at the hands of my red friends. But as soon as I started toward the opening of the cave I reeled drunkenly against a side wall and slipped upon the floor.

II. The Escape of the Dead

Delicious dreaminess overcame me and my muscles relaxed. I was half-asleep when the sound of approaching horses reached my ears. I tried to spring to my feet but was horrified to discover that my muscles refused to respond. I was awake but unable to move. I noticed a slight vapor filling the cave. A faintly pungent odor came to my nostrils. I assumed that it was some poisoning gas. But I could not explain why I should retain my mental faculties and yet be unable to move.

I didn't have to wait long in my living tomb before a stealthy sound told me of the Indians' nearness. Then, I saw a war-bonneted, paint-streaked face staring at me. I was sure he could see me as the early morning sun was falling full upon me through the opening.

Instead of approaching, the fellow merely stood and stared. His eyes were bulging and his jaw was dropped. And then another savage face appeared, and a third and fourth and fifth. They craned their necks over the shoulders of their fellows whom they could not pass upon the narrow ledge. Each face was the picture of awe and fear but I could not see why.

Suddenly a low but distinct moaning sound issued from the recesses of the cave behind me. As it reached the ears of the Indians, they turned and fled in terror, panic-stricken. Their wild cries echoed in the canyon for a short time, and then all was still once more.

The sound did not repeat but it was sufficient for me to speculate on the possible horror, which lurked in the shadows at my back. Several times I thought I heard faint sounds behind me as of somebody moving cautiously, but eventually even these ceased. I could only vaguely conjec-

ture the cause of my paralysis. My only hope was that it might pass off as suddenly as it fell upon me.

Late in the afternoon, my horse started slowly down the trail in search of food and water. I was alone with my mysterious unknown companion and the dead body of my friend.

From then until possibly midnight all was silence, **the silence of the dead**¹. Suddenly, I heard the awful moan of the morning. The sound of a moving thing came again from the black shadow. The shock to my already **overstrained nervous system**² was terrible. With a superhuman effort I strove to break my awful bonds. It was an effort of the mind, of the will, of the nerves. And then, something gave and I stood with my back against the wall of the cave.

The moonlight flooded the cave and I saw my own body lying on the floor. My eyes were staring toward the open ledge and the hands were resting limply upon the ground. I lay clothed, and yet here I stood naked as at the minute of my birth.

The transition was so sudden and so unexpected that I forgot anything else than my strange metamorphosis. My first thought was, is this death? But I could not believe this because I could feel my heart pounding against my ribs. My breath was coming in quick, short gasps, cold sweat stood out from every pore of my body. Definitely, I was anything other than a ghost.

Suddenly, the weird moan from the depths of the cave repeated. I was naked and unarmed and I had no desire to face the unseen thing which menaced me. I could no longer resist the temptation to escape this horrible place. I leaped quickly through the opening into the starlight of a clear Arizona night.

¹ **the silence of the dead** – гробовая тишина

² **overstrained nervous system** – перенапряженные нервы

The crisp, fresh mountain air outside the cave made me feel new life and new courage coursing through me. The fact, that I lay helpless for many hours within the cave and nothing molested me, convinced me those noises might result from purely natural and harmless causes.

I filled my lungs with the pure, invigorating night air of the mountains. As I did so, I saw the beautiful vista of rocky gorge, and level, cacti-studded flat, transformed by the moonlight into a miracle of soft splendor and wondrous enchantment stretching far below me.

I turned my gaze from the landscape to the heavens where **the myriad stars formed a gorgeous and fitting canopy for the wonders of the earthly scene**¹. A large red star close to the distant horizon quickly riveted my attention. It was Mars, the god of war. As a fighting man, I was fascinated by it. I closed my eyes, stretched out my arms toward the god of my vocation and felt myself drawn with the suddenness of thought through the trackless immensity of space. There was an instant of extreme cold and utter darkness.

¹ the myriad stars formed a gorgeous and fitting canopy for the wonders of the earthly scene — мириады светил образовали гигантский плотный шатер над земными красотами

III. My Advent on Mars

I opened my eyes upon a strange and weird landscape. I knew that I was on Mars. I was not asleep, no need for pinching here. My inner consciousness told me as plainly that I was upon Mars as your conscious mind tells you that you are upon Earth. You do not question the fact; neither did I.

I found myself lying prone upon a bed of yellowish, mosslike vegetation, which stretched around me in all directions for miles. I seemed to be lying in a deep, circular basin, along the outer verge of which I could distinguish the irregularities of low hills.

It was midday, the sun was shining full upon me and the heat of it was intense. Here and there were slight outcroppings of quartz-bearing rock, which glistened in the sunlight. No water and no other vegetation than the moss was in evidence. I decided to do a little exploring as I was thirsty.

I sprang to my feet and, surprisingly, jumped up in the Martian air to the height of about three yards. I alighted softly upon the ground, however, without appreciable shock or jar. I found that I must learn to walk all over again, as the muscular exertion which carried me easily and safely upon Earth played strange tricks with me upon Mars.

I decided to explore the low structure, which was the only evidence of habitation in sight. I reached the low, encircling wall of the enclosure. There appeared to be no doors or windows upon the side nearest me. But the wall was only about four feet high so I cautiously gained my feet and peered over the top. The things that I saw surprised me.

The roof of the enclosure was of solid glass about four or five inches in thickness. Beneath this, there were several

hundred large eggs. They were perfectly round and snowy white, and nearly **uniform in size**¹ being about two and one-half feet in diameter.

Five or six of them already opened. The grotesque caricatures, which sat blinking in the sunlight, made me doubt my sanity. They seemed mostly head, with little scrawny bodies, long necks and six legs. Later I learned those were two legs and two arms, with an intermediary pair of limbs, which they could use at will as either arms or legs. Their eyes were set at the extreme sides of their heads a trifle above the center and protruded in such a manner that they could be directed either forward or back. They could look in any direction, or in two directions at once, without the necessity of turning the head.

The ears, which were slightly above the eyes and closer together, were small, cup-shaped antennae, protruding not more than an inch on these young specimens. Their noses were longitudinal slits in the center of their faces, midway between their mouths and ears.

There was no hair on their bodies, which were of a very light yellowish-green color. In the adults, as I learned later, this color deepens to an olive green and is darker in the male than in the female. Further, the heads of the adults are not so out of proportion to their bodies as in the case of the young.

The iris of the eyes is blood red while the pupil is dark. The eyeball itself is very white and so are teeth. The lower tusks curve upward to sharp points which end about where the eyes of earthly human beings are located. Against the dark background of their olive skins their tusks stand out in a most striking manner, making these weapons present an especially formidable appearance.

¹ **uniform in size** — одинаковые в размере

Most of these details I noted later because I had little time to speculate on the wonders of my new discovery. As I stood watching the hideous little monsters break from their shells, I failed to note full-grown Martians from behind me.

The rattling of the ammunition of the foremost warrior warned me and I turned. And there upon me, **not ten feet from my breast**¹, was the point of that huge spear.

The man himself, for such I may call him, was fully fifteen feet in height. He sat his mount as we sit a horse, grasping the animal's barrel with his lower limbs, while the hands of his two right arms held his immense spear low at the side of his mount. His mount was ten feet at the shoulder; had four legs on either side; a broad flat tail, larger at the tip than at the root, and which it held straight out behind while running; a gaping mouth which split its head from its snout to its long, massive neck.

Like its master, it was bold, but of a dark slate color and exceeding smooth and glossy. Its belly was white, and its legs shaded from the slate of its shoulders and hips to a vivid yellow at the feet. The feet themselves were heavily padded and nailless.

I needed to get out of the point of the charging spear. I gave a very earthly and at the same time superhuman leap to reach the top of the Martian incubator. Successfully I landed a hundred feet from my pursuers and on the opposite side of the enclosure. My enemies were clearly surprised by my leap. Some of them seemed to be satisfied that I did not molest their young.

They were conversing together in low tones, gesticulating and pointing toward me. Now they looked upon me with less ferocity.

¹ **not ten feet from my breast** — меньше чем в десяти футах от моей груди

While the Martians are immense, their bones are very large and they are muscled only in proportion to the gravitation which they must overcome. The result is that they are much less agile and less powerful, in proportion to their weight, than an Earthman. In fact, if one of them were transported to Earth, he could not lift his own weight from the ground. My feat then was as marvelous upon Mars as it was upon Earth. I was a wonderful discovery to them.

Each of them was armed with several other weapons in addition to the huge spear which I described. They had rifles of a white metal stocked with wood. The wood was much prized on Mars as it was hard to grow. The metal of the barrel is an alloy composed principally of aluminum and steel which they learned to temper to a great hardness.

After conversing for a short time, the Martians turned and rode away. One of them stayed alone by the enclosure. He definitely was the leader of the band. He threw down his spear and small arms and came around the end of the incubator toward me. He was entirely unarmed and naked except for the ornaments strapped upon his head, limbs and breast.

When he was within about fifty feet of me, he unclasped an enormous metal armband and put it in the open palm of his hand. He tried to tell me something but I did not understand the language. I guessed that he **was making overtures of peace**¹.

Placing my hand over my heart I bowed low to the Martian. He understood the action right. I took the armband from his open palm, clasped it about my arm above the elbow; smiled at him and stood waiting. His wide mouth spread into an answering smile. Then we turned and walked back toward his mount. At the same time he motioned his fol-

¹ was making overtures of peace — предложил мир

lowers to advance. They started toward us on a wild run, but were checked by a signal from him.

He exchanged a few words with his men, **motioned to me**¹ that I would ride behind one of them, and then mounted his own animal. The fellow designated reached down two or three hands and lifted me up behind him on the glossy back of his mount.

The entire cavalcade then turned and galloped away toward the range of hills in the distance.

¹ **motioned to me** — показал жестом