

# "PIRATES OF VENUS"

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

## CHAPTER I A Figure in a Shroud

"If a female figure in a white shroud enters your bedroom at midnight on the 13th day of this month, answer this letter otherwise do not."

Having read this in the letter I was about to consult it to the vestibule when my mind's eye caught a glimpse of some reason I read on. It was spelled to you please remember her words and repeat them to me when you write. I might have read on to the end but at this juncture my mind flew to the end and I dropped the letter on the floor. It chanced to be the only letter in my room. I followed then out my door and saw a white figure in a white shroud enter the incident in so far as I was concerned. I did not see the figure but the letter was in my hand.

It was from Carson Napier, a young man who had written and asked me to write a book for him. He had written me a letter and I had written him a letter. He had written me a letter and I had written him a letter. He had written me a letter and I had written him a letter.

On the 13th day of this month I received a letter from Carson Napier. It was a letter from Carson Napier. It was a letter from Carson Napier. It was a letter from Carson Napier.

Now I do not know if you will be able to do it. I do not know if you will be able to do it. I do not know if you will be able to do it. I do not know if you will be able to do it.

It was from Carson Napier. It was from Carson Napier. It was from Carson Napier. It was from Carson Napier.

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Now at this point I should like to say a few words to the present volume. I might mention that I have placed on it for the purpose of explaining to you why I have written it. I have placed on it for the purpose of explaining to you why I have written it.

My principal reason for mentioning this is to tell you that I have placed on it for the purpose of explaining to you why I have written it. I have placed on it for the purpose of explaining to you why I have written it.

The next three days were very busy for me. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school. I had to go to work and I had to go to school.

What awoke me I do not know. I was up with a start in time to see a female figure in a white shroud enter my room through the door. You will note that I saw her enter my room through the door. You will note that I saw her enter my room through the door.

I am no subject to hallucinations. I had never seen a figure in a white shroud enter my room through the door. You will note that I saw her enter my room through the door. You will note that I saw her enter my room through the door.

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The ghostly figure near the foot of my bed



Napier entered



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question but that Ralph is sane. If he had seen Carson Napier and shown him into my study—what a relief that would be!

But before my finger touched the button, Ralph entered the room. There was a puzzled expression on his face. "Mr. Napier is back again," he said and then added, "I didn't know he had left. I just heard him talking to you."

I breathed a sigh of relief as I wiped the perspiration from my face and hands. "I was crazy," so was Ralph. "Bring him in," I said, "and this time you stay here."

When Napier entered there was a questioning look in his eyes. "Do you fully grasp the situation as far as I have explained it?" he asked as though he had not been out of the room at all.

"Yes, but—" I started. "Wait, please," he requested. "I know what you are going to say but let me apologize first and explain. I have not been here before. That was my final test. If you are confident that you saw and talked to me and can recall what I said to you as I sat outside in my car, then you and I can communicate just as freely and easily when I am on Mars."

"But," interjected Rothmund, "you were here. Didn't I shake hands with you when you came in and talk to you?"

"You thought you did," replied Napier. "Who's lonely now?" I inquired ineluctably but to this day Rothmund insists that we played a trick on him.

"How do you know he's here now, then?" he asked. "I don't," I admitted.

I am this time," laughed Napier. "Let's see, how far had I gotten?"

"You were saying that you were all ready to start, had your rocket set up on Guadalupe Island," I reminded him.

"Right! I see you got it all. Now, as briefly as possible I'll outline what I hope you will find it possible to do for me. I have come to you for several reasons, the more important of which are your interest in Mars, your profession (the results of my experiment must be recorded by an experienced writer), and your reputation for integrity—I have taken the liberty of investigating you most thoroughly. I wish you to record and publish the messages you receive from me and to administer my estate during my absence."

"I shall be glad to do the former but I hesitate to accept the responsibility of the latter assignment," I demurred.

"I have already arranged a trust that will give you ample protection," he replied in a manner that precluded further argument. I saw that he was a young man who brooked no obstacles in fact I think he never admitted the existence of an obstacle. As for your remuneration, he continued, "you may name your own figure."

I waved a deprecatory hand. "It will be a pleasure," I assured him.

"It may take a great deal of your time," mentioned Ralph, "and your time is valuable."

Precisely," agreed Napier. "Mr. Rothmund and I will with your permission, arrange the financial details later."

"That suits me perfectly," I said for I detest business and everything connected with it.

"Now, to get back to the more important and far more interesting phases of our discussion, what is your reaction to the plan as a whole?"

"Mars is a long way from earth," I suggested, "Venus is nine or ten million miles closer and a million miles are a million miles."

"Yes and I would prefer going to Venus," he replied. "Enveloped in clouds its surface forever invisible to man it presents a mystery that intrigues the imagination, but recent astronomical research suggests conditions there inimical to the support of any such life as we know on earth. It has been thought by some that, held in the grip of the sun since the era of her pristine fluidity, she always presents the same face to him, as does the moon to earth. If such is the case, the extreme heat of one hemisphere and the extreme cold of the other would preclude life."

"Even if the suggestion of Sir James Jeans is borne out by fact, each of her days and nights is several times as long as ours on earth—these long nights having a temperature of 13 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit, and the long days a correspondingly high temperature."

"Let even so life might have adapted itself to such conditions," I contended, "man exists in equatorial heat and Arctic cold."

"But not without oxygen," said Napier. "St John has estimated that the amount of oxygen above the cloud envelope that surrounds Venus is less than one tenth of one per cent of the terrestrial amount. After all we have to bow to the superior judgment of such men as Sir James Jeans, who is the evidence for what it is worth goes to suggest that Venus the only planet in the solar system outside Mars and the earth on which life could possibly exist possesses no vegetation and no oxygen for higher forms of life to breathe, which definitely limits my planetary exploration to Mars."

We discuss his plans during the remainder of the day and well into the night, and early the following morning he left for Guadalupe Island in his Sikorsky amphibian. I have not seen him since, at least in person, yet, through the marvellous medium of telepathy I have communicated with him continually and seen him amid strange unearthly surroundings that have been graphically photographed upon the retina of my mind's eye. Thus I am the medium through which the remarkable adventures of Carson Napier are being recorded on earth but I am only that like a typewriter or a dictaphone—the stor-

that follows is his

(Continued Tomorrow)

CHAPTER II  
Carson Napier's Proposal

"To get the whole picture clearly before you," Carson Napier began, "I shall have to tell you something about myself. My father was a British army officer, my mother an American girl from Virginia. I was born in India while my father was stationed there, and brought up under the tutelage of an old Hindu who was much attached to my father and mother. This Chand Kabi was something of a mystic, and he taught me many things that are not in the curriculums of schools for boys under 10. Among them was telepathy, which he had cultivated to such a degree that he could converse with one in psychological harmony with himself quite as easily at great distances as when face to face. Not only that, but he could project mental images to great distances, so that the recipient of his thought waves could see what Chand Kabi was seeing, or whatever else Chand Kabi wished him to see. These things he taught me."

"And it was thus you caused me to see my midnight visitor on the 13th," I inquired.

He nodded. "That test was necessary in order to ascertain if we were in psychological harmony. Your letter, quoting the exact words that I had caused the apparition to appear to speak, convinced me that I had at last found the person for whom I have been searching for some time."

"But to get on with my story, I hope I am not boring you but I feel that it is absolutely necessary that you should have full knowledge of my antecedents and background in order that you may decide whether I am worthy of your confidence and assistance or not." I assured him that I was far from being bored and he proceeded.

I was not quite 11 when my father died and my mother brought me to America. We went to Virginia first and lived there for three years with my mother's grandfather, Judge John Carson, with whose name and reputation you are doubtless familiar as who is not?

"After the grand old man died, mother and I came to California, where I attended public schools and later entered a small college at Claremont, which is noted for its high scholastic standing and the superior personnel of both its faculty and student body."

"Shortly after my graduation the third and greatest tragedy of my life occurred—my mother died. I was absolutely stunned by this blow. I felt seemed to hold no further interest for me. I did not care to live yet I would not take my own life. As an alternative I embarked upon a life of reckless-ness. With a certain goal in mind I learned to fly. I changed my name and became a stunt man in pictures."

"I did not have to work. Through my mother I had inherited a considerable fortune from my great grandfather John Carson so great a fortune that only a spendthrift could squander the income. I mention this only because the venture I am undertaking requires considerable capital, and I wish you to know that I am amply able to finance it without help."

Not only did life in Hollywood bore me out here in Southern California were too many reminders of the loved one I had lost. I determined to travel, and I did. I flew all over the world. In Germany I became interested in rocket cars and financed several. Here my idea was born. There was nothing practical about it except that I intended to carry it to a definite conclusion. I would travel by rocket to another planet."

My studies had convinced me that of all the planets Mars alone offered presumptive evidence of habitability for creatures similar to ourselves. I was at the same time convinced that if I succeeded in reaching Mars the probability of my being able to return to earth was remote. Feeling that I must have some reason for embarking upon such a venture, other than selfishness, I determined to seek out some one with whom I could communicate in the event that I succeeded. Subsequently it occurred to me that this might also afford the means for launching a second expedition, equipped to make the return journey, for I had no doubt but that there would be many adventurous spirits ready to undertake such an excursion once I had proved it feasible."

For over a year I had been engaged in the construction of a gigantic rocket on Guadalupe Island off the west coast of Lower California. The Mexican government has given me every assistance and today everything is complete to the last detail. I am ready to start at any moment."

As he ceased speaking he suddenly faded from view. The chair in which he had been sitting was empty. There was no one in the room but my self. I was stunned almost terrified. I recalled what Rothmund had said about the effect of the narcotics upon my mentality. I also recalled that insane people seldom realize that they are insane. Was I insane? Cold sweat broke out upon my forehead and the backs of my hands. I reached toward the buzzer to summon Ralph. There was no

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