Chapter IX - Thuvia - Maid of Mars

Chapter IX places Carthoris, Thuvia, and Jav in the heart of Lothar’s enigma—a city ruled not by armies but by the imagination of its few remaining minds. They are led into a chamber where fear briefly grips them at the sight of Komal, a ferocious banth worshipped as a deity. But what seems to be divine wrath is calmed not by steel, but by Thuvia’s voice. Her steady tone and unshaken gaze soothe the beast, proving that connection, not force, holds true power. This moment blurs the line between myth and reality. The god is only a beast, and the beast, surprisingly, responds to kindness. Carthoris watches, both relieved and amazed, as Thuvia demonstrates not just control but grace under pressure.

Wandering through Lothar's strange architecture, the group arrives at an arena once used for sacrificial rites. Jav, ever the keeper of tragic tales, reveals how enemies of Tario were fed to Komal. The city itself seems suspended in a dream, where enemies are imagined and punishments played out through projections. Carthoris struggles with the surreal nature of it all—buildings that appear empty but are filled with invisible citizens crafted from thought alone. Jav explains how the people of Lothar, once real and powerful, now live almost entirely in the realm of belief. Their minds shape soldiers, rulers, and entire dramas out of willpower. Yet beneath that lies decay—no real growth, only repetition. It is civilization turned into shadow, with memory as its only anchor.

Soon, the illusion of peace collapses. Tario’s bowmen, summoned from thought, descend upon them. Carthoris prepares to fight, but swords are useless against projections. Jav, matching thought with thought, conjures his own imagined army. A battle erupts between forces that don’t breathe yet fight with full fury. Carthoris and Thuvia stand amid this chaos, surrounded by a clash no outsider could understand. It’s not violence of muscle, but of will. Jav, though unreliable, shows the strength of his

imagination, giving the trio a chance to flee. What they run from is not just danger, but the emptiness of Lothar’s strange legacy.

Amid the escape, intentions unravel. Jav begins to reveal his desire for Thuvia—not as an ally, but as someone he hopes to claim. In a critical moment, he manipulates perception, crafting an illusion that makes Carthoris appear to leave Thuvia behind. Thuvia, briefly fooled, begins to question Carthoris's loyalty. Jav’s plan is cruel, built on deception and unspoken fears. He offers himself as a protector, presenting safety at the cost of freedom. But Thuvia’s strength does not falter. She sees through him and rejects his advances with scorn. Her loyalty to Carthoris, though tested by doubt, remains firm. Jav’s world of illusion offers comfort, but it cannot hide his self-serving motives.

As Thuvia turns away from him, the distance between truth and fiction becomes clearer. The power of Lothar’s people lies in crafting reality from thought, but that same power corrupts when used without conscience. Jav’s obsession is not love, but possession disguised as admiration. Meanwhile, Carthoris, unaware of the illusion that has separated them, rushes through the ruins, convinced Thuvia chose to remain behind. The weight of that assumption lingers in his chest. He doesn’t blame her but mourns what he believes to be her choice. And yet, even in separation, both hearts remain tied to the same purpose—survival, and the hope of reunion.

The deeper theme of this chapter lies in the fragility of perception. On Barsoom, what one believes can shape the world, but that same belief can also deceive. Lothar is a city that survives on imagination, yet it is slowly vanishing because nothing real is left to sustain it. Jav’s illusions are powerful but hollow. Carthoris and Thuvia, in contrast, are grounded in purpose and connection. Their bond, though strained, has been built through shared danger and mutual respect—not magic. In a world where fantasy can be mistaken for truth, their choices reaffirm the strength of clarity.

As the chapter concludes, the companions are no longer united. Thuvia remains trapped in a web of deception, while Carthoris fights forward, unaware of the truth. Jav, despite his powers, finds himself rejected, his illusions failing to give him the

control he craves. Lothar, for all its grandeur, becomes a symbol of what happens when a society replaces progress with memory. It is not evil, but lost—trapped in a dream that no longer serves those who created it. Thuvia and Carthoris must now navigate not just terrain, but misunderstanding and danger shaped by the minds around them. And in doing so, they learn that love and courage can only grow where illusion is cast aside.

