

ERB

The Epic Parallel Universe Life  
of Edgar Rice Burroughs  
the  
King of Pulp Fiction

as imagined by

Woodrow Edgar Nichols, Jr.

PART FOUR:  
THE GIRL FROM HOLLYWOOD

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FADE IN:

EXT. MIL FLORES, THE OTIS HACIENDA, MARCH 1, 1919 -- DAY  
(FLASHBACK)

ERB drives Emma in their Packard touring car up the long driveway to the mansion at the top of the hill, its mission walls and Moorish cupola give it a regal appearance. ERB parks the car, they get out, look at the grounds.

ERB

What do you think of it,  
Emma? It's for sale.  
General Otis, the publisher  
of the Los Angeles Times,  
built it and lived here until  
his recent death. I can get  
it for \$125,000, a steal.  
It's in the country, and yet  
we're still close enough to  
Hollywood.

(pauses)

Just think! 550 acres of  
prime real estate. Do you  
realize what all of this  
is going to be worth someday?

EMMA

But, Eddie, it's so huge.  
Aren't you afraid that you  
are getting a little too big  
for your britches?

ERB

Never! This is just the  
start.

EMMA

As for Hollywood and its lack  
of morality, the farther we  
are from it, the better.

ERB

But, Emma, it's the royalties from the Tarzan movies that are going to make the down payment possible. Don't look a gift horse in the mouth.

EMMA

Said the Greeks to the Trojans. You're changing, Eddie. You're not the same man you used to be.

ERB

Thank God for that! I used to be a loser!

(points)

Just look at that pasture land! Open your eyes! We can make a fortune raising pigs.

(pauses; dreamy look)

I'll put in a pool. We can live here forever!

(waves arms)

I'll call it Rancho Tarzana!

ERB looks up at the sky, beats his chest, gives the HIDEOUS CRY of the Great Apes.

INT. RANCHO TARZANA BALLROOM-OFFICE-GARAGE, MAY 1920 - DAY  
(FLASHBACK)

The ballroom-office-garage unit is a large two-story building on the property just down the lane from the mansion. ERB entertains two people, ASHTON DEARHOLT, 26, an independent actor-director-producer, and FLORENCE GILBERT, 16, a pretty blonde with a strong resemblance to Mary Pickford.

ERB's Rancho Tarzana office is a folksy place with a Western theme.

ERB

What can I do for you folks?

ASHTON

My name is Ashton Dearholt.  
I work for a major studio.  
This is my good friend,  
Flo; she's Mary Pickford's  
double. We'd like to rent  
some of your ranch to shoot  
a Western with Bull Montana.  
Have you heard of him?

ERB

Who hasn't? I'm a big fan of  
anyone who can handle a horse  
like he can.

ERB is almost hypnotized by Florence.

ERB

(continuing)

Have we met somewhere before?

FLORENCE

When I was a little girl, at  
your father's funeral.

ERB and Ashton are shocked.

ERB

Ahhh, I remember now. Of  
course, Florence Gilbert!  
How are you, Dejah Thoris,  
Princess of Helium?

FLORENCE

You remembered! I am truly  
flattered.

ERB

I've still got the letter you  
wrote me when you were almost  
ten years old. You begged me  
to give away the end of  
Warlord of Mars, which I did  
on condition that you keep it  
a secret. Did you?

FLORENCE

Yes, but my mother didn't.  
She made some money betting  
others how it would end  
and she shared the winnings  
with me.

They LAUGH.

A look of jealousy flashes across Ashton's face.

ASHTON

Ahem! I take it then that  
you are not opposed to a  
rental agreement?

Slowly, ERB takes his eyes off Florence, looks at Ashton.

ERB

No, not at all. Jackknife  
Canyon would be a perfect  
location.

They stand, shake hands.

ASHTON

We move quickly in this  
business, Mr. Burroughs.  
We churn out over a  
hundred pictures a year.  
You can make some good  
money renting to us.

ERB

Always a pleasure to make  
money, Mr. Dearholt.  
(to Florence)  
And, Florence, are you going  
to be in the picture?

Florence nods, lowers her eyes in mock humility.

ASHTON

I'll say she is. Bull  
Montana has taught her how  
to ride like the wind.

ERB opens a desk drawer, pulls out a set of silver spurs.

ERB

At Rancho Tarzana, you have  
to earn your silver spurs,  
but if you've been taught  
by Bull Montana, it would  
be my honor if you would  
wear these.

He hands her the spurs, she accepts them, holds them with  
pride in her hands.

ERB

You'll have to allow me to  
give you a tour of the bridle  
trails on your time off.  
Some go all the way to  
Malibu.

ASHTON

She has no time off, Mr.  
Burroughs. When she isn't  
working, she's with me.

ERB

Of course.

EXT. LIVING ROOM OF RANCHO TARZANA, FEBRUARY 1924 - DAY  
(FLASHBACK)

Emma, 49, sits in a Queen Anne chair next to a roaring fire,  
reads a book. A bottle of red wine and full glass sit on  
the table next to her. The camera COMES OVER HER SHOULDER,  
CLOSE ON the open pages, at the top: The Girl from  
Hollywood; it's ERB's recently published novel.

A thin line of perspiration covers her upper lip, sexual  
passion electrifies her body. She breathes harder, rubs her  
legs together from a need, long unfulfilled.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. K.K.S. STUDIOS, HOLLYWOOD - DAY

AERIAL SHOT OF HOLLYWOOD IN THE EARLY TWENTIES, the camera ZOOMS down to the front gates of K.K.S. STUDIOS; the camera PASSES through the gates to the general office complex, a row of wood-frame bungalows.

ZOOM on a door with black lettering on the window: CASTING DIRECTOR.

INT. CASTING DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is a small room with desk, behind it, a window with closed Venetian blinds; in front of it, two guest chairs, and against the wall, a long leather casting couch.

GRACE EVANS, 19, a young pretty sexy blonde, sits in a guest chair across from the CASTING DIRECTOR, 49, a seedy looking fellow with a raspy voice, smoking a cigar. He looks up from the girl's picture portfolio, runs his eyes lasciviously up and down Grace's body.

CASTING DIRECTOR

Grace Evans, eh? I see  
you've done some bit parts  
here and there.

GRACE

Yes, mostly there. Surely  
there is something I can do?

CASTING DIRECTOR

(shakes head)

I'm really sorry, Miss Evans,  
but I haven't a thing for you  
today.

He hesitates, again roams her body as she rises to leave.

CASTING DIRECTOR

(continuing)

Wait!

Grace stops and strikes a sexy pose, hand on hip, raises her eyebrows in anticipation.

CASTING DIRECTOR

(continuing)

Wilson Crumb is casting his new picture himself. He's out on the back lot right now. Go out and see him. He might be able to use you. Tell him I sent you.

GRACE

Oh, thank you. You won't regret it.

The casting director smiles, let's her know he is expecting a favor in return.

EXT. BACK LOT, WESTERN STREET - DAY

WILSON CRUMB, a handsome man in his early 30's, stands next to a CAMERA MAN, 29, discusses a camera angle on an exterior Western saloon set.

THE FILM CREW, LEADING ACTORS AND EXTRAS gather together for direction. There is a certain weakness in Crumb's face, but other than that, he appears to be a perfect gentleman.

Grace approaches with a sexy strut, immediately catches Crumb's eye.

GRACE

Excuse me, are you Mr. Crumb?

CRUMB

What if I am?

GRACE

I've just come from the casting director and he said you might be able to use me.

As she speaks, Crumb runs his eyes up and down her sexy body, but in a way not to suggest offense.

CRUMB

What experience have you had?

GRACE

Just a few times as an extra.

CRUMB

(shakes head)

I'm afraid I can't use you,  
unless you would care to work  
in the semi-nude. I can  
always use another saloon  
girl.

GRACE

Yes, please, give me a chance  
to show you what I can do!

CRUMB

Are you sure? The role  
necessitates making a test  
in the nude.

The glow diminishes from Grace's face.

GRACE

Is that absolutely necessary?

CRUMB

Quite so.

An intense mental battle is reflected in Grace's face,  
finally she SIGHS and accepts her fate.

GRACE

Okay, I'll do it.

CRUMB

See you in my office in  
thirty minutes.

INT. CRUMB'S OFFICE - DAY

Crumb's office is almost identical to the Casting  
Director's. He opens a bottom desk drawer, pulls out a  
bottle of bootleg whiskey, two glasses, pours them each a  
stiff shot, hands a glass to Grace, she sits across the desk  
from him. They TOAST to the future. Grace is nervous.

CRUMB

Would you like to take something to help you relax?

GRACE

Er, sure.

Grace takes another long pull from her drink, Crumb opens a top drawer, removes a paper bindle one and one quarter inch long and an inch wide, with one end folded ingeniously inside the fold to form a fastening. He unfolds it on the desktop, reveals a white powdery substance, the crystals glisten under the harsh light of the electric bulbs.

GRACE

(continuing)

It looks like snow. What is it?

CRUMB

Aspirin. Here, let me show you how to take it.

He divides the powder into halves, puts half in the palm of his hand, SNIFFS it into his nostrils. His face lights up, he grins mischievously at Grace.

CRUMB

(continuing)

Go ahead and take the other half. It will make you feel like a new woman.

Grace puts the other half in her palm, SNORTS it, then stiffens as an exhilarating feeling surges through her nervous system. Her nipples visibly harden, she is sexually aroused.

GRACE

Wow, I see what you mean. I feel, well...really bully!

They LAUGH, exchange a knowing look. Grace stands and slowly strips off her clothes, makes a show of it. Totally naked, she strikes a provocative pose.

She has small fashionable breasts, perky nipples, a pure blonde bush, it arouses Crumb.

GRACE

Like what you see, Mr. Crumb?

Crumb walks around the desk, unfastens his trousers, pushes them over his hips, kicks them off his feet, his is fully erect, has a large penis.

He embraces her, runs his hands over her smooth flesh. They kiss. He grabs her by the buttocks, lifts her, impales her on his penis, walks her to the couch.

CRUMB

I think you've got the part.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM OF RANCHO TARZANA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Emma continues to read, her large breasts heave in sexual desire, her legs twitch furiously back and forth. The bottle of wine next to her is now over half empty.

She hears a NOISE in the kitchen, freezes in guilt, listens intensely. After a minute, she breathes a SIGH of relief, returns to the book, to her dirty Victorian secret.

ZOOM on face of grandfather clock, the hands move quickly to show the passage of time.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRIDLE TRAIL IN THE RANCHO GANADO HILLS - DAY

AERIAL SHOT OF RANCHO GANADO, a thinly disguised Rancho Tarzana, the hills and bridle trails exactly the same as the Santa Monica Mountains leading to Malibu.

The camera PANS down on the side of one of the hills.

CUSTER PENNINGTON, 20, rides his horse, the Apache, on a high trail, stops suddenly, spies another horse and rider on a trail below him descending into Jackknife Canyon.

CUSTER

(to himself)

My God, is that Shannon riding Baldy? Why is she riding into Jackknife Canyon? She told me she was going to be somewhere else. She lied! Goddammit! She must be part of the bootlegging ring! Oh, how could I have ever loved such a lying wench!

ZOOM down to SHANNON BURKE, 20, a voluptuous black-haired beauty, riding her horse, Baldy, toward the bootlegger's camp in the oak grove below. Her white skin glows in robust health, confirming the fact that she has kicked her morphine addiction.

She reaches the camp, a tent and campfire in the oak grove. BARTOLO, late 30's, a seedy Mexican bandito with pockmarked face, waits at attention beneath a great oak. His pony stands next to him with trailing reins. A rifle butt protrudes from a boot in the saddle. He twists his face into a sinister smile.

BARTOLO

Buenas dias, seniorita.

SHANNON

What do you want of me?

BARTOLO

I need money. You get me money from that boy, Evans. You know him. His sister, Grace, took your place with Wilson Crumb. She's his little puta now. Evans got all the money from the hootch we take down two weeks ago to Rancho Ganado. We never get no chance to get it from him.

SHANNON

I'll get you nothing!

BARTOLO

You get money now, and  
whenever I Goddamn want it.  
Or else I tell about how  
you use to be known as  
Gaza de Lure, Wilson  
Crumb's little dope fiend  
puta! I tell how he  
teach you how to peddle  
dope. I know this! You  
do what I tell you, or you  
go to the pen. Sabe?

SHANNON

Now, you listen to me!

BARTOLO

What? You tell me what to  
do? That damn funny.

SHANNON

You will either find some way  
to clear Custer Pennington of  
the bootlegging charges  
against him, or I will go to  
the grand jury on Wednesday  
and tell them all about you.  
I'll tell them all about the  
opium, morphine, and cocaine -  
how you smuggled the stolen  
booze from the ship off the  
coast up here into the  
mountains.

BARTOLO

Yes, but I would tell them  
about you living in sin with  
Crumb and your morphine habit.  
I guess you tell the grand  
jury nothin' at all. Nada.

SHANNON

I kicked that habit, amigo!

SHANNON

(continuing)

And I can tell the grand jury even more. I can tell them that there used to be one more member of your gang. Crumb told me that you killed Graciel. How would you like me to tell that to the grand jury?

BARTOLO

You tell them nothin'! You know too damn much! You better off up here buried next to Graciel!

Bartolo grabs Shannon by the wrist, yanks her violently out of the saddle, she falls heavily onto the ground, THUD. Baldy leaps forward past Bartolo, GALLOPS back up the trail leading home, stirs up a great cloud of dust.

The dust settles, Shannon stands defiantly to her feet, her large breasts heave beneath her riding blouse. Bartolo stares at her lasciviously. He pulls her against him.

BARTOLO

You damn good lookin'.  
Before I kill you, I fuck  
you good.

Shannon struggles against him, he forces his mouth over hers, kisses her long and hard. He pushes her back, SLAPS her face with one hand, rips open her blouse with the other, exposes her large heaving breasts.

Shannon SCREAMS, he SLAPS her again, pulls her down to the dirt. They ROLL AROUND, she KICKS and SCREAMS. He pins her arms to the ground with his knees, punches her in the face, POW! blood runs from her nose and lips.

He fondles her breasts, reaches down, pulls up the hem of her riding skirt, exposes her underclothing, he grabs them, RIPS them off, places a hand between her legs, inserts a finger.

SHANNON

No, please don't!

BARTOLO

Beg me, puta! Like you used  
to with Crumb.

Pressing down even harder on her arms with his knees,  
Bartolo unbuckles his belt, unfastens his jeans, pulls them  
down over his buttocks. He is fully erect.

SHANNON

Please don't, I'll do any-  
thing!

BARTOLO

Yes, you will do everything,  
my little puta!

Bartolo grabs her arms, removes his knees, eases back  
between her legs, wiggles around, presses his penis inside  
her vagina, she WRITHES AND SCREAMS in resistance.

EXT. TOP OF JACKKNIFE CANYON - DAY

Custer stops the Apache, watches Baldy GALLOP helter skelter  
SNORTING up the trail, his head and tail are erect, he is  
riderless. Custer looks deeply concerned, realizes  
something is wrong. He gives the spurs to the Apache,  
GALLOPS at breakneck speed down the canyon trail.

EXT. THE BOOTLEGGER'S CAMP - DAY

Bartolo savagely copulates Shannon, she BUCKS, KICKS, tries  
to free her arms from his grasp.

BARTOLO

Hold still, Goddammit!

She gets an angle, KNEES him high in the inner thigh. He  
SHOUTS in pain, punches her hard in the mouth again and  
again, POW! POW!

Shannon is knocked senseless, her mouth bleeds profusely.  
She is a lifeless doll beneath him, he squeezes a breast,  
with a loud GRUNT, ejaculates inside her.

BARTOLO  
(continuing)  
Like I said, seniorita,  
before I kill you, I fuck  
you good.

The NOISE OF GALLOPING HOOFS, Bartolo looks over his  
shoulder.

BARTOLO  
(continuing)  
Shit!

Custer is almost upon him. Bartolo pulls out of Shannon,  
hobbles over to his horse, holds up his pants with one hand,  
he reaches for the rifle in the boot with his other.

Shannon rolls over, jumps to her feet.

SHANNON  
Custer, look out! He's got  
a gun!

Bartolo removes the rifle, Shannon jumps on him, they  
STRUGGLE, he KNOCKS her back, raises the rifle, takes aim.

Shannon lunges at the rifle barrel, Bartolo squeezes the  
trigger, BANG! the bullet goes wide.

BARTOLO  
Goddamn puta!

Shannon keeps hold of the barrel, they have a tug-of-war,  
back and forth, around and around. Custer spins off the  
saddle, runs furiously towards them.

Bartolo, unable to shake her free, lets go of the rifle, she  
is thrown off guard. Bartolo sucker punches her with a  
right uppercut to the chin, POW! She is knocked  
unconscious, falls down like a sack, THUD, the rifle still  
clutched in her hands.

Bartolo makes a run for it, Custer hot on his tail. He hops  
into his saddle, digs his spurs into his pony, gallops off  
just in time.

Custer, breathing hard, throws his hat down in anger. He looks down at Shannon. Her jaw is red and swollen. He picks her up, hold her in his arms.

CUSTER

How could I have been so  
wrong about you, my darling,  
my love?

Shannon comes to, opens her eyes, they kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIVING ROOM OF RANCHO TARZANA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Emma flinches again, this time from the MOTOR of ERB's Packard as it climbs up the long driveway of Rancho Tarzana.

She looks at the grandfather clock, then at the pages left to read. She is almost done.

ZOOM out picture window to the Packard as it approaches.

EXT. DRIVEWAY OF RANCHO TARZANA - DAY

ERB, 50, pulls up the long driveway of Rancho Tarzana in his Packard. It is almost noon. He drives up to the garage, looks up at the western hills, sees JOAN, 14, HULLY, 13, and JACK, 9, riding down a bridle trail on their horses.

ERB gets out of the car, a large roll of blueprints in his left hand. He waves to his children, trudges up to the main house. He stops and looks out over the San Fernando Valley, SIGHS deeply.

ERB

(to himself)

Soon, so soon, this will  
all be gone.

INT. LIVING ROOM OF RANCHO TARZANA -- DAY

ERB puts on a happy face, jauntily enters the house. Emma is reading the last page of the book. She doesn't look up as ERB enters. The bottle of wine is empty, the glass less than half full.

ERB clears the coffee table, spreads out the blueprints.

ERB

We're selling the house,  
Emma, getting rid of the  
nightmare. Just look at  
these plans I've had drawn  
up for it. We'll turn it  
into a country club.

Emma looks up from her book, takes a long gulp from her  
glass of wine.

EMMA

You said we were going to  
live here forever, Eddie.

ERB

We'll turn the mansion into  
the club house. The  
investors have agreed to  
call it the El Caballero  
Country Club. Just think, it  
won't take up all of the  
property, just 120 actual  
acres of Tarzana, and the  
other 100 acres will be to  
the west of the ranch.  
We'll build an eighteen-hole  
golf course and just think of  
how popular the bridle paths  
will be, they link Beverly  
Hills all the way to the  
ocean at Santa Monica.

EMMA

You should listen to yourself  
talk sometime, Eddie.

ERB

It will net us \$350,000,  
leaving us still with 335  
acres of hill land between  
the new Mulholland Scenic  
Drive and the club. Hell,  
Emma, it'll be worth a  
million dollars five years  
from now! Just think,  
we're going to be  
millionaires!

EMMA

We have to move again,  
are you afraid to say it?

ERB

We can build a bungalow on  
one of the Tarzana sub-  
divisions. In the meantime,  
we can rent a house in Los  
Angeles. You'll be close to  
stores and shopping. Come on,  
Emma, you know how you're  
always complaining about how  
isolated we are out here.

EMMA

When is it going to end?

ERB

What do you mean?

EMMA

Ever since we were childhood  
sweethearts, I've stuck by  
you through thick and thin,  
but I've reached the end of  
the road, Eddie.

ERB stops, stares at Emma.

ERB

What are you talking about?

EMMA

This dreadful book you wrote  
sums it all up, Eddie.  
These people in this story  
are us. Their Rancho Ganado  
is Rancho Tarzana to the last  
detail, to the last bridle  
trail.

ERB

This is all going to change  
soon, Emma, I wanted to  
preserve it for history.  
It's been like heaven here  
for me.

EMMA

It's just like what your  
mother told me, she said:  
"My little Eddie wouldn't  
be able to last twenty-  
four hours in heaven before  
he was bored to death."

ERB

She said that?

EMMA

And your father! Thank God  
he was not living when this  
book came out. Once again,  
your hero is a gentleman from  
Virginia who fought in the  
Civil War! These Southern  
gentlemen of yours were slave  
owners, Eddie!

(sighs)

These Southern gentlemen of  
yours killed a lot of your  
father's good men! Your  
mother told me that your  
father hated John Carter of  
Mars for that very reason.  
Didn't you know?

ERB

Don't be cruel, Emma. The  
Old Major loved Tarzan.

EMMA

You dealt him a severe blow  
by pretending in the book  
that you were a plantation  
owner born before the Civil  
War. How that must have  
hurt him. As for Tarzan,  
I loved him too until you  
killed off Jane in Tarzan  
the Untamed! I knew then  
that you didn't love me any  
more!

ERB

I wrote that story as war  
propaganda, Emma! Dear God,  
do you know what you are  
saying? Besides, if you  
remember, I hated the way  
Enid Markey portrayed Jane  
in the first Tarzan movie,  
even more than I hated Elmo  
Lincoln. I was only too glad  
to kill her off in the next  
story!

EMMA

Why don't you just say it,  
Eddie, Enid Markey reminded  
you of me.

ERB

Don't be absurd, Emma.  
Besides, you're forgetting  
that Jane didn't really die.

EMMA

Don't you try to pull the  
wool over my eyes, Edgar  
Burroughs.

EMMA

(continuing)

The only reason that she did not die is because Bob Davis of All-Story made you change the ending!

ERB, totally exasperated, throws up his arms, falls back on the couch.

ERB

I lost my entire German audience for being overly patriotic in that book, and now you too are using it against me. It's only fiction, Emma!

EMMA

And now this book! It's obvious that Hollywood has seduced you, Eddie. I'm no Gaza de Lure, like the slut in this story, that's for sure. Who is this woman? I demand to know who has stolen your heart from me?

ERB

She's no one, Emma. I made her up. I can't believe you are jealous of a fictional character.

EMMA

You've changed, Eddie. I don't like you any more. Never touch me again.

ERB sits up in shock.

ERB

Emma - surely you don't mean that?

EMMA

Oh, but I do, Edgar Burroughs.

ERB

Emma -

Emma stands up, STOMPS! her foot on the floor.

EMMA

Everyone in this cheap,  
sleezy story is a criminal,  
even the people that are us.  
Not even the U.S. Marshall is  
spared from your harsh criti-  
cism. And, yet, here you are,  
posing as a good Republican,  
when the whole time you are  
in open rebellion against the  
federal government. You and  
your Mucker have a lot in  
common!

ERB

Prohibition is wrong, Emma!  
I haven't forgotten that we  
are America, not the federal  
government!

EMMA

What kind of society would  
this be if everyone only  
obeyed the laws they felt  
were right?

ERB

It would be like the Wild  
West, Emma, don't you  
remember? You mined with us  
in Idaho, surely you recall  
the freedom of those days?

EMMA

And the continual failure.  
Yes, I remember it well.

Emma pauses, holds up the book.

EMMA

(continuing)

This is gutter filth, Eddie. It demonstrates how truly sick you have become. Just look how you shamelessly capitalize on real events! Anyone who reads the papers cannot help but notice the allusions to the famous scandals in the news. It's obvious that you are alluding to the Olive Thomas drug overdose, the Fatty Arbuckle trial, the murder of Desmond Taylor and complicity of his hop-head mistresses.

ERB

Real events are the fuel for good fiction, Emma.

EMMA

My point exactly! You never listen. See here, Eddie, in this book, you brag about how our family openly flaunts the Volstead Act, everyone commits one kind of immoral act or another, and yet you refuse to pass judgment on anyone. No one is really good. What if the federal government decided to use this book as a pretext to search our premises? We could go to prison!

ERB

Finding our hootch stash would hurt you more than me, Emma. Besides, the New York critics loved The Girl from Hollywood.

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EMMA

And you gave the gossip public exactly what they wanted, didn't you, Eddie? Why don't you be a man and admit you're nothing but a tawdry pulp fiction pimp!

Emma throws the book into the fireplace, walks away.

CLOSE on book's jacket cover as it begins to catch fire, it shows a woman disrobing for drugs in front of a man.

ERB

Damn you, Emma! Ever since we were childhood sweethearts you believed you came from better stock than me. Goddamn you to hell!

ERB leans back in the sofa devastated. He looks up.

ERB

(continuing; to himself)  
Oh, Gaberell, so soon,  
so soon.

INT. ERB, INC., NOVEMBER 1928 - DAY (PRESENT)

Joan, grieved over ERB's portrayal of her mother, listens to THE AMOS 'N' ANDY RADIO SHOW, LAUGHS.

JOAN

You make Mother sound like a such a monster, Popsy. I wish you could be more kind.

ERB

You're just like the rest of us, Joan; you prefer fiction to fact. I can't say that I blame you.

Pierce smiles, he feels the same way about Emma as ERB.

PIERCE

Wow, Mr. Burroughs, what a life you've led.

JOAN

You know, Popsy, Tarzan would be great on the radio. Jim could be Tarzan and I could be Jane. What do you think?

ERB

I think it would work. What do you think, Ralph?

ROTHMUND

The comic strip is coming out next month, and there's no reason why we should let radio pass us by. I'll look into it.

JOAN

We've got to go now, Popsy. You will look into the radio idea, won't you?

ERB

Yes, of course.

Jim and Joan rise, shake hands.

JOAN

Oh, I forgot, Mom wanted you to know that Doc Ed died. Who was he?

ERB

Ernest Hemingway's father. I never knew him, but your mother acted as if she did because we lived in Oak Park.

(pauses)

ERB

(continuing)

You know, when it comes to the prudery of Oak Park, your mother is a living example. No wonder she never felt at home out here.

Joan looks at her feet, nods, leaves with Pierce.

ROTHMUND

To change the subject, Ed, we should be putting out the books under our own imprint from now on. This stock market boom could crash at any time, and the more middle men we eliminate the better.

ERB

I agree, get to it.

ERB watches out the window as Joan and Jim get into their car, drive away. Rothmund goes to his desk in the reception room, closes the door. ERB looks at a wedding picture of Flo and Ashton on the desktop, remembers the first time he made love to Flo...

INT. ERB, INC., FEBRUARY 14, 1927 - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ERB sits across his desk from Ashton Dearholt, 32, and his wife of 3 1/2 months, Florence, six days from being 23.

ERB

Well, Flo, I thought you gave an excellent performance in The Johnstown Flood. You handled a horse as well as George O'Brien, and he's quite a cowboy.

FLORENCE

Janet Gaynor stole that movie from me. Then she got the role of her life with George O'Brien in Sunrise.

ERB

The F.W. Murnau film, yes, I saw that; it was hypnotic; I can't get most of the scenes out of my mind. The carnival sequence was like a tour of Heaven and Hell. The black-haired vamp manicurist was a dead ringer for La, High Priestess of the Flaming God of Opar. It was the most visually gripping movie I've ever seen. They should start giving awards for films like these.

FLORENCE

People were so tired of the Mary Pickford look. That's why Janet got the breaks. I would be very angry with her if I didn't love her so much.

ASHTON

We would only be developing the non-Tarzan books for film, Ed. We could do, for example, The Girl from Hollywood. It wouldn't interfere with your other enterprises.

Florence wears a flapper dress, it shows her curves, she makes eyes at ERB, he can't take his off her.

ERB

Why don't we go to the stables; we'll ride out to the base of Jackknife Canyon; I'll show you where the bootleggers had their camp. It's an excellent spot for a picnic.

FLORENCE

Should we bring a bottle of wine?

ERB

Bring a few.

Ashton grins slyly.

EXT. BASE OF JACKKNIFE CANYON - DAY (FLASHBACK)

They ride their horses to the base of Jackknife Canyon, to the live oak tree grove where ERB imagined the bootleggers' camp to be. They set out a blanket, it is a glorious Southern California day, sunny and warm. They eat sandwiches, drink from a bottle of wine, pass it around.

FLORENCE

What a splendid Valentine's Day.

ERB

I'm really impressed you could ride so well in that flapper dress, Flo.

ASHTON

She can ride with nothing at all on.

ERB

I'd like to see that.

Flo stands up, strips off her dress, she is naked beneath it, gets up in the saddle of her horse, makes the horse do tricks, GALLOPS about, her breasts bounce the whole time.

ERB

(continuing)

That's not a sight you see every day.

ASHTON

We should take the hint, Ed; you know she really likes you.

They both strip out of their clothes, both have erections, Ashton forms his hands into a square, pretends they are a camera lens.

ASHTON

(continuing)

Let's reenact the scene where Bartolo rapes Gaza de Lure.

Flo brings her horse up next to them.

ASHTON

(continuing)

Okay, Ed, you be Bartolo; you've just decided that Gaza must die, but she is so beautiful, you have decided to fuck her first; you wrench her from the saddle.

Ashton holds the reins of Flo's horse, ERB pretends to pull Flo out of the saddle, he is really excited, it is the first time he has been naked with Flo.

ASHTON

(continuing)

Okay, Flo, show some resistance; yes, that's good. Come on, Ed, you are a mean Mexican Bandito motherfucker; punch her a few times in the mouth. Yeah, pow, pow. Good, good. Now, Flo, pretend to go limp.

Flo plays dead, ERB places her down on the blanket, he spreads her legs, looks at her wet vagina, her breasts are hard in arousal, her nipples erect, he presses his penis between her labia.

ASHTON  
(continuing)  
Okay, Ed, fuck her!

Flo humps up her pelvis in lustful invitation.

FLORENCE  
Come on, Ed, fuck me! You know you've wanted to ever since I was sixteen.

Ashton comes in for a close-up.

ASHTON  
Come on, old boy, do I have put it inside her myself? I knew Flo was Gaza de Lure the moment I first read of her. Here's your chance to finally fuck her. Go for it, Ed!

ERB is in the realm of pure fantasy, he penetrates Flo's vagina, takes her like a woman in heat. Ashton rubs Flo's breasts, French-kisses her.

FLORENCE  
Oh, Custer, save me from this horrible creature.

ASHTON  
Not now, my little puta.

ERB does not last long, GRUNTS, ejaculates, he moves aside as Ashton takes his place; ERB drinks the remainder of the wine, watches the two lovers copulate, finally, they orgasm together in GRUNTS and MOANS.

FLORENCE

Oh, Ed, that was a wonderful first time. I hope there will be many more to come. I'm overjoyed that I've finally gotten to know you. I used to dream of you when I was a little girl. I'd watch you secretly when you came home from work.

ERB rubs her breasts, French-kisses her.

ERB

You were a little too young for me in those days, Flo. Frankly, I am overwhelmed that Ashton was willing to share you with me.

ASHTON

This could be the beginning of a great relationship.

FLORENCE

I'm not too young for you now, John Carter! Are you not the greatest swordsman on two planets?

She grabs his penis, it is hard again, she knocks him back on the blanket, crawls on top, inserts him, rides him.

FLORENCE

(continuing)

Come on, Ed; break me like you broke Whiskey Jack!

Ashton crawls behind Flo, presses his penis on top of ERB's, forces it inside, Flo HOWLS, MOANS in pleasure.

ASHTON

Come on, Ed, make some room. Bull Montana taught her how to ride two in the saddle.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ERB, INC., NOVEMBER 1928 -- DAY (PRESENT)

ERB smiles at the memory, opens a desk drawer, pulls out an envelope, opens it, reads the letter inside.

CLOSE on letter: July 14, 1915, My darling Ed: I dream of you every night. Happy Bastille Day, my love. Thank you for that wonderful Fourth of July. Our church, or temple, as Wright would have it, is scheduling a charity for the Bohemian immigrants of Cicero on the S.S. Eastland on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Mark that date on your calendar. I will be free afterwards. I am very excited and hope for an opportunity to see you. You are my Uberman. I love you so, your darling Lizzie.

He looks up from the letter, SIGHS, puts it back inside the envelope, returns it to the drawer.

He picks up the Dictaphone, dictates where he left off.

ERB

(continuing)

The giant pteranodon emitted a shrill scream, comma, stiffened convulsively in mid-air and, comma, as it collapsed, comma, relaxed its hold upon its prey, comma, dropping the ape-man into the nest among the gaping jaws of its frightful brood. Period. Paragraph.

EXT. FRONT DRIVEWAY, ERB, INC., FEBRUARY 14, 1929 -- DAY

ERB drives up next to the family Packard in his Cord L-29. He is wearing a leather bomber jacket, fedora, jodhpurs, knee-length riding boots. He gets out, enters the office.

INT. ERB'S OFFICE -- DAY

Rothmund talks to JACK, almost 16, they look up as ERB comes into the room, grin as he approaches, shake hands. Jack hands him a sketch pad.

JACK

I drew some sketches for  
your next book cover, Dad.  
What do you think?

ROTHMUND

They're very good, Mr.  
Burroughs. Since we're going  
to publish under our own  
imprint, why not keep it in  
the family?

ERB goes through the sketch pad, nods approval, SMACKS one  
of the drawings with the back of his hand.

ERB

Your idea of the Thoat is  
just marvelous, Jack! Yes,  
yes, you can do the book  
covers. I told you all of  
that hard work would pay off  
someday.

A NEWS FLASH on the radio, the three of them stop, listen.

RADIO VOICE

(OFFSCREEN)

Seven members of the boot-  
legging Bugs Moran Gang were  
machine-gunned to death in a  
garage on Chicago's North  
Side early this morning.  
It is being called the St.  
Valentine's Day Massacre.  
The killers were dressed as  
police officers, but inside  
sources say that they were  
members of the notorious Al  
Capone Gang. Mr. Capone,  
vacationing in Miami, was  
unavailable for comment.

JACK

Son of a bitch! Sounds like  
it's time for another Mucker  
sequel, Dad.

They LAUGH.

ROTHMUND

Have you seen the new Hal  
Foster Tarzan strip in the  
Times, Ed?

ERB

Yes, it's magnificent. Now  
if only Hollywood could get  
it right.

ROTHMUND

By the way, Mr. Dearholt  
called again. He wants to  
meet with you to discuss  
some more movie ideas.

ERB

See to it, Ralph.

ROTHMUND

Here's your mail.

ERB thumbs through his mail, Flo has sent him a Valentine's  
Day card, he opens it, the card is covered with big red  
hearts, a note reads: Happy Valentine's Day, my Chieftan:  
Jackknife Canyon Forever!

INT. ERB'S MALIBU HOME, APRIL 1929 - DAY

Ashton and a very pregnant Florence Dearholt, 25, sit at the  
dinner table with ERB, Emma, daughter Joan. They finish  
dinner, drink highballs. Emma is quite intoxicated, excuses  
herself from the table.

The others watch her stagger from the room, wait a few  
discreet seconds before talking.

ASHTON

So, Joan, I hear you've got  
a role in a new play. Tell  
me all about it.

JOAN

I'm afraid I may have to put  
my career on hold for awhile.  
Don't tell Jim yet, but I  
missed my period.

ERB

How wonderful.

ASHTON

Congratulations! By the way,  
where is Jim tonight?

JOAN

Oh, he has other interests  
that take a lot of his  
time. He joined the  
Christian Science Church to  
help him with his drinking.

ASHTON

How horrible for you. How  
do you handle it?

JOAN

By having nights like this.

ASHTON

Why don't you rehearse some  
lines from your play. I'll  
give you my expert opinion.

FLORENCE

I'm going out on the patio  
for some fresh air.

ERB

I'll go with you.

They go out on the patio under a bright moon backlighting  
the waves of the Pacific, the surf BOOMS in the background.

FLORENCE

I know you are impatient,  
Ed, but we need to keep the  
charade up at least until  
I've had my children.

ERB is downcast.

ERB

But, Flo, I can't take any  
more of this play-acting.  
I'm just no damn good at it.  
The idea of you being  
pregnant by another man is  
horrible for me. I hate  
sharing you like this.

FLORENCE

Even though he's my husband?  
Come on, Ed, you have to be  
reasonable. Aren't I worth  
waiting for? Didn't John  
Carter have to wait two years  
for Dejah Thoris?

ERB pulls out his cigarette case, pulls out two, taps them  
against the case, lights them, gives one to Flo. They smoke  
in silence.

ERB

Isn't Ashton getting tired of  
you?

FLORENCE

Yes, he is. I think he got  
me pregnant as some sort of  
competition with you. He was  
fucking me at least three  
times a day, just like when  
we first met.

ERB

You have such a low opinion  
of men.

FLORENCE

It may be low, but it's damn  
well on the money.

EXT. WHITE MOUNTAINS, ARIZONA, JULY 1933 - NIGHT

ERB drives his Cord L-29 through a winding mountain road,  
parks on a viewpoint in the White Mountains of Arizona. He  
takes in the wide desert vista, the SOUND OF THE LITTLE  
COLORADO RIPPLES AND GURGLES down below.

ERB

(to himself)

Why can't Emma let me go?  
Damn that woman! Why  
can't Flo be reasonable?  
How can I search my soul  
if I can't get these Goddamn  
women out of my mind?

He trances out, sees a cloud of dust on the desert floor  
below.

ERB

(to himself)

That reminds me of John  
Carter being chased by  
Apaches.

The dust cloud comes closer and closer at an unbelievable  
speed, becomes an apparition of GERONIMO, dressed in all his  
glory, the apparition comes right up to him, the dust  
clears.

Standing before him is a very naked John Carter.

ERB

What a dramatic entrance.

JOHN CARTER

I thought you would  
appreciate it. You don't  
look well, Edgar; what's  
the matter?

ERB

Woman trouble. It's tearing  
me apart.

ERB looks at Carter, does a double-take.

ERB

(continuing)

Good God, John Carter, you  
don't look like you've aged  
one bit.

JOHN CARTER

God alone knows how old I am.  
I can recall no childhood,  
nor have I ever looked other  
than I do tonight.

John Carter turns, looks out over the Little Colorado, takes  
a deep breath.

JOHN CARTER

(continuing)

How it reminds me of Mars.  
(sighs)  
I too have had woman trouble,  
Edgar.

John Carter walks over to the Cord, inspects it, picks up a  
Detective Magazine off the front seat, shows it to ERB.

JOHN CARTER

(continuing)

You have time for these  
kinds of amusements?

ERB

Pretty little bedtime tales  
of assassination and kid-  
napping, the expression of  
the normal morbid  
fascination with the  
horrifying.

JOHN CARTER

This is too much of a coincidence to be a coincidence. As the result of my plans to eliminate the most powerful assassination guild in Zodanga, my Princess, Dejah Thoris, was kidnapped. Oh, to have one you love taken because of your own stupidity and not to know her fate - there is no horror greater than that.

ERB pulls a bottle of Southern Bourbon out of the glove box, pulls the cork, takes a swig, offers it to John Carter.

ERB

I think this was your favorite? Why don't you take my mind off mine own hell by telling me of yours.

Carter takes a long pull, smiles as he looks at the label.

JOHN CARTER

Yes, this was my favorite. And it is good to drink, for I have a long story to tell.

The camera PANS up into the sky, focuses on Mars.

INT. MGM STUDIOS SCREENING ROOM, AUGUST 1933 -- DAY

ERB watches daily rushes of MGM'S Tarzan and his Mate. The beautiful brunette, MAUREEN O'SULLIVAN, 22, sits between ERB and co-star JOHNNY WEISSMULLER, 29.

Behind them sit director, CEDRIC GIBBONS, cameramen CLYDE DE VINNA and CHARLES CLARKE, all in middle age.

Onscreen is an underwater sequence shot in the studio tub, depicting Weissmuller, as Tarzan, fighting a 20-foot long mechanical crocodile made of rubber and steel.

ERB

It looks really fake, Cedric.

GIBBONS

Hang on, Mr. Burroughs, those are just the outtakes. We wanted to show you how MGM studio magic works. Wait, here comes the edited version.

The edited version is composed of short, quick shots, inter-cut for action, very exciting and suspenseful.

ERB

Wow! What a difference.

GIBBONS

Now, for the special treat.

What follows stuns ERB at first. A STAND-IN, 20's, for O'Sullivan swims nude with Weissmuller in an artistic underwater ballet, also shot in the studio tub.

GIBBONS

(continuing)

We had to use a stand-in for these shots. Maureen can't swim underwater. We used Olympic swimmer, JOSEPHINE MCKIM, what do you think?

O'Sullivan puts her right hand on ERB's thigh.

O'SULLIVAN

She doesn't look at all like me!

WEISSMULLER

Your ass is more bony, but your tits are much nicer.

RIBALD LAUGHTER. O'Sullivan rubs ERB's leg.

O'SULLIVAN

We're shooting the exteriors  
at the Toluca Lake set  
tomorrow, Mr. Burroughs.  
I assure you that my birthday  
suit is much more alluring.  
Will you come?

ERB

Wouldn't miss it for the  
world, and please, call me  
Ed.

He turns and faces Gibbons.

ERB

(continuing)

How in the hell are you going  
to get this past the Hays  
Office?

GIBBONS

When you see how much skin  
Maureen is showing in this  
film, Mr. Burroughs, you'll  
understand what an easy  
compromise it will be to  
cancel only this part.

ERB

Pity this has to go. There  
is nothing objectionable in  
it.

GIBBONS

It will be a big hit, don't  
you worry.

(pauses)

Finally, here are some night  
sequences I thought you  
might like. You can take a  
bow, Clyde and Chuck.

In stunning black and white, in flickering firelight, Weissmuller, as Tarzan, riding the lead elephant, leads an elephant army into the Elephant Graveyard to stop TWO WHITE MEN, 30's, and their NATIVE SAFARI from poaching the ivory.

The elephants are Asian, but large fake African elephant ears have been attached to make them look authentic.

O'Sullivan, as Jane, dressed in an ultra-skimpy leather top and bottom, showing much flesh, sits on an elephant near Tarzan's. Tarzan brings the elephants to a halt, Jane slips down the trunk of her elephant, runs to actor PAUL CAVENAGH, the immoral leader of the group. The outtakes have no sound, O'Sullivan lip-syncs her lines, rubs ERB's thigh.

O'SULLIVAN

"You're my Evil Knight, but  
I don't want to see you  
buried here with my father."

EXT. TOLUCA LAKE SET, AUGUST 1933 -- DAY

The movie people have brought truckloads of tropical plants and lush vegetation to create the look and feel of a jungle river setting. Here and there are giant tropical orchids and fruit trees, huge fleshy-leafed plants of the lily family from South America, and shrubby herb-like plants. The mechanical crocodile is in the near background.

ERB and Gibbons stand next to the camera beside a river pool under a giant tree limb that has grown out over the water. ERB is holding a fluffy bathrobe. Clyde De Vinna is behind the camera as Weissmuller, in his loincloth, and O'Sullivan, dressed in a silk gown, walk out on the limb for a morning swim.

GIBBONS

Sorry to hear that the bank  
foreclosed on the club, Mr.  
Burroughs.

(pauses)

Okay, let's do it in one  
take. Lights...camera...  
action!

O'Sullivan begins to undo the back strap to the gown, Weissmuller shoves her off the limb, grabs the gown, rips it off, O'Sullivan falls feet first, totally naked, SPLASH! into the water. Weissmuller dives in, SPLASH! They surface, swim to shore.

GIBBONS

Cut! That was great!  
Let's take a lunch break.

Without shame, O'Sullivan walks out of the water to ERB, he hands her the robe, she shivers, her ripe wet body covered in goosebumps. Weissmuller walks off as if he could care less.

O'SULLIVAN

Well, was I right?

ERB

I'm breathless.

ERB helps her on with the robe, she leaves it open.

O'SULLIVAN

I suppose you've heard that  
I'm not seeing Johnny any  
more?

ERB

Yes, I've heard. Under any  
other circumstances I'd be  
overwhelmed by your affection.  
But I'm afraid that I'm in  
love.

O'Sullivan raises the collar of the robe, dabs at her wet hair, her breasts are exposed, swollen in arousal.

She stares at the bulge in ERB's pants.

O'SULLIVAN

Are you sure about that, Mr.  
Burroughs?

ERB  
Rub it in, Miss O'Sullivan,  
but yes, I am sure.

O'SULLIVAN  
Your wife must be very lucky.

ERB  
Oh, she's not my wife.

Drops of water sparkle on O'Sullivan's pelt, she notices  
ERB's gaze, strikes a pose.

O'SULLIVAN  
Would you like to see my  
trailer, Mr. Burroughs?

ERB  
I would love to see your  
trailer, Miss O'Sullivan.

O'SULLIVAN  
Right this way.

She puts his arm in hers, leads him off the set.

INT. ERB INC., MARCH, 1934 - DAY

ERB sits at his desk, Rothmund leads three people into the  
office from the reception room: Ashton Dearholt, 40, his  
wife, Florence Dearholt, 30, and ULA HOLT, 19, a young  
Guatemalan, she is an exotic-looking, shapely brunette, with  
long thick Gypsy hair and big eyes.

Rothmund sits them in the guest chairs, stands aside in case  
he is needed.

ERB  
How nice to see you again,  
Ashton, Flo. Who's your  
new friend?

ASHTON

I'd like to introduce you to Ula Rojas, my new sensation. I'm calling her Ula Holt; she's a champion competitive swimmer I met in Guatemala.

FLORENCE

He goes down there with RKO supposedly to scout out locations - forcing Joan and I to rent an apartment in Palm Springs - but the only thing he manages to scout out is pussy! And instead of showing any gratitude for my sacrifices, he has the gall to bring this young floozy into our house.

Ula ignores Florence's tirade, stands, walks around the desk, shakes ERB's hand, smiles demurely.

ULA

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Burroughs, mighty hunter.

FLORENCE

Don't fall for her routine, Ed; she has it down to a fine art. Frankly, I'm tired of being second fiddle, yesterday's news.

Rothmund feels deep discomfort at the immorality of Hollywood. He shuffles his feet.

Ula looks straight into ERB's eyes, still holds his hand.

ULA

Do with me as you please.

FLORENCE

Our arrangement is just not proper, not in good taste.

ULA

You tasted good last night.

Rothmund adjusts his fly.

ERB

I left Emma last month. I'm living out at the Garden of Allah Hotel. I have plenty of space.

FLORENCE

No, I want it to be right, Ed, for the children.

ERB

(raises hands)

Even in Hollywood, the Goddamn prudery still exists! Will Jinx never cease his relentless persecution?

FLORENCE

It is what it is, Ed.

ASHTON

That's right, Ed, don't forget the paying public. We are the models for our audience. We must be above reproach.

ERB is clearly disappointed. Flo looks down, fiddles with her hands.

ASHTON

(continuing)

To change the subject, Ed, I have a proposition for you. You know how disappointed you've been that no one has gotten Tarzan right; well, let's make our own Tarzan.

ASHTON

(continuing)

Guatemala was such a great location. I could make a feature length on the cheap down there.

ROTHMUND

MGM has got a lock on the most of the theater chains, Ed. It would be a very risky venture.

ERB

Who would star in it?

ASHTON

How about the Olympic star, Herman Brix? Ula will be the female lead.

ERB

The real Tarzan means showing a lot of skin. Did you see what MGM got away with in Tarzan and His Mate? Or how about RKO with Fay Wray in King Kong? I've seen the still when she comes up out of the water; her nipple is clearly visible. And did you see Carole Lombard in No More Orchids? She looked almost naked in some of the scenes. Is Ula willing to compete with the likes of that.

ASHTON

Yes, she is, Ed. She's ready to audition right now.

ROTHMUND

Perhaps I should wait outside?

ERB

No way, Ralph. I need your  
red-blooded American opinion.

Ula stands and slowly strips off her clothes, Rothmund tries not to look, looks anyway. A very nude Ula turns to the left, to the right, turns all the way around.

ASHTON

Look at that profile, Ed,  
and what an ass, eh? Ula's  
our girl, all right.

ERB

Yes, she certainly is.  
(to Rothmund)  
What do you think?

Rothmund has a very obvious erection, holds his hands over it in embarrassment. It is difficult for him to speak.

They all stare at his hands.

ERB

Well spoken, Ralph, I whole  
heartedly agree. Get the  
lawyers and have the papers  
drawn up for a production  
company. We'll call it,  
Burroughs-Tarzan Enter-  
prises.

ASHTON

BTE!

ERB

The studios can go to hell!  
I'm going to show the world  
what Tarzan is really like  
on the silver screen!

Ralph can't peel his eyes off Ula.

ERB

(continuing)  
Ralph! Did you hear me?

ROTHMUND

Er, yes, right away, Mr.  
Burroughs.

He shuffles in discomfort out of the room.

ERB

And Ralph!

Rothmund stops, turns his head.

ERB

(continuing)

Send an autographed set of  
all of the Tarzan books to  
Maureen O'Sullivan for me.

ROTHMUND

It would be my pleasure,  
Mr. Burroughs.

EXT. MALIBU BEACH, MAY 1934 - NIGHT

ERB, Ashton, Flo, and Ula ride horses along a secluded strip of the Malibu shoreline under a waning moon, they GALLOP into a race, ERB and Flo are tied for first place, Ashton deliberately slows to keep up with Ula, a relatively inexperienced rider. Flo wears her silver spurs.

ERB makes a trick move, nudges Flo's horse out into the surf, ERB takes the lead, the others concede his victory, they catch up, ride at a slow trot, the breaking surf CRASHES on the shore.

ULA

Wow, I'm really impressed,  
Flo, where did you learn  
how to ride like that?

ASHTON

Bull Montana taught her, and  
a few other things I might  
add that you still need to  
learn in the sack.

ULA

Is that true, mighty hunter?

ERB

I believe I've taught Flo a thing or two.

FLO

He gave me these silver spurs. There is no greater horseman on Earth. He broke Whiskey Jack and rode with the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry.

ULA

Well, mighty hunter, I believe tonight will be your Custer's Last Stand.

ERB

Is that a promise?

ASHTON

A conditional promise.

They find a good spot to set up camp, let the horses roam, find driftwood, make a fire, lay out blankets, open several bottles of wine, hold them in their hands, raise them in a toast:

ASHTON

To Edgar Rice Burroughs, the Mayor of Malibu.

FLORENCE

To the greatest swordsman on two planets!

ULA

To the mighty hunter!

They CLINK the bottles and drink, make small talk. After the first bottle, Ula strips off her clothes, her young naked body supple under the moonlight.

ULA

Last one in's a rotten egg!

The rest strip, frolic in the surf.

Ula swims far out, ERB tries to catch up with her, fails. They both stop, tread water fifty feet apart, stare at each other, waves heave around them.

ULA

(continuing)

What's the matter, mighty hunter? Can't catch your prey?

ERB

You'll be the death of me, Ula.

ULA

That'll be the day.

They all swim back to shore, return to the warmth of the fire, remain in the nude, huddle together.

ASHTON

What are you working on, Ed? Anything new?

ERB

I'm working on my first John Carter in a long while. Flo has inspired me to a whole new level.

Flo snuggles up to ERB, he holds her, rubs a breast.

ERB

I've even managed to put you in the book, Ula; as a slave girl.

ULA

I'm sure I'm flattered, but I'm afraid I'm already Ashton's slave girl.

Ashton and Ula make out, he rubs her between the legs, she MOANS, stares at Flo in desire. Flo tries to keep her composure.

FLORENCE

Tell us the story, Ed,  
before my dear husband loses  
interest and fucks his  
little slave girl.

Ashton looks at Flo, inserts a finger inside Ula.

ASHTON

You used to love being my  
slave girl, Flo; until I gave  
you to Ed.

Ula MOANS LOUDER as she's fingered. ERB clears his throat, tries to focus on his story.

ERB

John Carter is bored living  
with the Princess in Helium,  
he seeks a new adventure...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PRINCESS DEJAH THORIS'S BEDCHAMBER, HELIUM - NIGHT

Carter plays Jetan - Martian chess - with Phaidor; the lesser moon, Thuria, the lesser moon, passes outside a large picture window like a huge slow-motion meteor.

Martian chess is played upon a board of a hundred alternate black and orange squares. One player has twenty black pieces, the other, twenty orange pieces. The first row of pieces on a player's side, from left to right, are the Warrior, Padwar, Dwar, Flier, Chief, Princess, Flier, Dwar, Padwar, Warrior. In the second row, one Thoat on each end, eight Panthans in between.

Panthans, soldiers of fortune, are represented as Warriors with one feather, may move one space in any direction except backwards.

Thoats, mounted warriors with two feathers, may move one straight and one diagonal, and may jump intervening pieces.

Warriors, foot soldiers with two feathers, may move straight in any direction, or diagonally, two spaces.

Padwars, lieutenants wearing two feathers, may move two spaces diagonally in any direction, or combination.

Dwars, captains wearing three feathers, may move three spaces straight in any direction, or combination.

Fliers, represented by a propeller with three blades, may move three spaces in any direction, or combination, diagonally, and may jump intervening pieces.

The Chief, indicated by a diadem with ten jewels, mounted on a thoat, may move three spaces in any direction, straight, or diagonally.

The Princess, indicated by a diadem with a single jewel, may move three spaces in any direction, straight, or diagonally, and may jump intervening pieces.

Jetan is conceived as an ancient battle between the Black Martians of the south and the Yellow Martians of the north. The board is usually arranged so that the Black pieces are played from the south and the Orange from the north.

The game is won when a player places any of his pieces on the same square as his opponent's Princess, or when a Chief takes a Chief.

The game is drawn when a Chief is taken by any piece other than the opposing Chief; or when both sides have been reduced to three pieces, or less, of equal value, and the game is not terminated in the next ten moves.

The Princess may not move onto a threatened square, nor may she take an opposing piece. She is entitled to one ten-space move at any time during the game. This move is called the escape.

Two pieces may not occupy that same square except in the final move of a game where the Princess is taken.

When a player, moving properly and in order, places one of his pieces upon a square occupied by an opponent piece, the opponent piece is considered to have been killed and is removed from the game.

Princess Dejah Thoris watches the game from a divan, puffs on a long Hookah stem, smokes Pimalia, a hallucinogenic flower, the dried buds burn in an enormous hookah pipe next to the divan, smoke slowly curls up into the air.

Zenax, every foot and inch a First Born, swims in the bath, a gleaming pool of scented water in a marble basin; golden stanchions support a chain of gold encircling the basin, lead down into the water on either side of marble steps, a glass dome above lets in starlight at night, sunlight in the day, circling the bath, murals on the reflective marble walls depict bathers and fish in a broad band inlaid with gold.

As Thuria passes through the sky, it's reflective glow shines down from the dome, bathes Zenax's smooth ebony skin in a soft warm light.

Dejah Thoris gives unobvious hints to Phaidor, they all drink Zodangan liquor, are on their fourth bottle, all are very intoxicated.

Phaidor looks exotic with white skin, bald head, gleaming green eyes, her proud breasts aroused from the sweet liquor of the citrus-like red-rind fruit of the sompus tree, distilled into an ancient-formula held by the Ptor brothers, bottled under the Zodangan Gold label - "Jeddak's Choice" - in the Ur family tradition. Several empty bottles litter the table.

Zenax moves easily through the water, the muscles of her sleek black body ripple with each stroke, she swims up to the marble stairs, grips the gold chain handles, walks up, A FEMALE SLAVE meets her, towels her dry.

Zenax strolls over to Dejah Thoris, takes the hookah stem from her hand, PUFFS, inhales, holds it in, exhales, her eyes glaze, she smiles in sweet intoxication, she rubs her breasts, fingers herself.

ZENAX

All hail, Pimalia. How  
do I taste, Princess?

Zenax removes her fingers from her vagina, sticks them in  
Dejah Thoris's mouth, the Princess sucks them.

DEJAH THORIS

You taste like fresh First  
Born vagina, Zenax.

(shakes head)

Look at Phaidor; she's  
more interested in the  
vagaries of the Warlord's  
penis than playing the  
game.

(to Phaidor)

Pin his Princess with your  
flier, Phaidor! Your panthan  
blocks her if she jumps. You  
can take her with your thoat  
in your next move.

CARTER

Why is it, my Princess, that  
the more intoxicated you get,  
the more insightful you  
become?

DEJAH THORIS

It's part of the magic of  
Zodangan liquor, or perhaps  
it's the Pimalia.

She refills her glass from a bottle, knocks it back in a  
single gulp, takes the hookah stem from Zenax, takes a PUFF,  
hands the stem back to Zenax, exhales a huge cloud. Phaidor  
studies the board to see if the Princess is right.

DEJAH THORIS

Go ahead and study the board  
all you want, Phaidor; one  
would have thought a Holy  
Thern would know better!

Phaidor is feeling tipsy from the liquor.

PHAIDOR

The Holy Therns did not drink.  
It is hard for me to keep a  
single train of thought under  
the influence of this hellish  
elixir.

CARTER

Zodangan liquor was the  
source of much corruption  
on Barsoom. I thought  
that a prohibition upon it  
was a good idea at the time.  
How did I know that a such  
a good idea would end up  
creating so much evil?  
How could I have foreseen  
that Ur Jan would make a  
fortune bootlegging the  
liquor on the black market?  
How could I have known that  
the riches he made would  
finance his dreaded Guild  
of Assassins?

DEJAH THORIS

His family makes the best  
Zodangan liquor. You are  
slow to learn the ways of  
Barsoom, my Chieftan.  
Ur Jan, regardless of your  
Jasoomian values, is loved  
far and wide on Barsoom for  
his family tradition in  
sompus cultivation, under  
the exclusive supervision  
of the Ptor brothers. You  
should have taken my advice.

CARTER

Yes, I know; you told me so.

Phaidor moves her flier, looks up at Carter to see if she  
has made the right move.

DEJAH THORIS

At least someone takes my  
advice!

CARTER

The Warlord concedes!

He tips over his princess piece, she seizes it in her hand.

PHAIDOR

I have the princess!

Carter is angry, tries not to show it, he stands, stretches.

CARTER

My vigilante force against  
the Guild has borne little  
fruit. I need to come up  
with a better idea to root  
out this great evil.

Phaidor is very pleased, she rises, takes Dejah Thoris's  
hand, lifts her from the divan, embraces her, kisses her  
fully on the mouth.

PHAIDOR

I have the Princess! Let's  
celebrate this great victory!

Carter approaches Zenax, takes the stem from her hand, takes  
a hit, she takes his penis, masturbates him.

ZENAX

My Chieftan, why so  
forlorn? How about some  
fresh First Born vagina?

Carter exhales a huge cloud of smoke.

CARTER

Oh, yeah; that puts a new  
light on things.

He kisses Zenax's exquisite lips, French-kisses her mouth and tongue, fondles her breasts, pinches her large jet-black nipples, she lowers the tip of his penis, inserts it inside her vagina, he copulates her, she steers him to the bed platform, shoves him down, rides him on top, her large breasts swing like pendulums above him, he moves with her supple hips.

ZENAX

Oh, John Carter, oh, unhh,  
I love you so.

She MOANS, has a very wet orgasm, Carter GRUNTS, ejaculates. He rolls her off, stands up, paces the room.

Dejah Thoris and Phaidor join Zenax in the furs and silks, Carter grabs a bottle of Zodangan Gold, studies the label: Genuine Zodangan Gold, Barsoom's favorite, manufactured and bottled for centuries in Zodanga by the Ur Family under the exclusive supervision of the Ptor Brothers' Secret Formula.

He chugs down the rest of the bottle, throws it against the wall, SMASHES it into tiny pieces, TINKLE.

CARTER

I will break the Guild! I  
will bring Ur Jan and his  
assassins to justice!

DEJAH THORIS

Come to bed, my Chieftan.  
You will be able to think of  
a good plan in the morning  
when your head is clear.

Carter reluctantly concedes, takes off his harness, heads for the furs, the three women await him, he looks down on them, gets an erection, joins them, they pin him down, the Princess climbs on his face, Phaidor mounts him, inserts his penis, rides him, Zenax watches, masturbates, Carter looks up at the open invitation of Dejah Thoris's wet vagina.

CARTER

One thing is better than  
Zodangan liquor, my Princess,  
and that is the Red Flower of  
Helium.

He licks her clitoris, her vagina, drinks from her fountain.

EXT. PALACE TOWER WINDOW - MORNING

CLOSE-UP: John Carter sits in the window sill of the large picture window of Dejah Thoris's bedchamber, the city slowly comes to life below him.

The camera PANS across the spires, domes, and towers of Greater Helium, its mile-high Red Tower not far from his tower, the mile-high twin Yellow Tower of Lesser Helium can be seen dimly 75 miles in the distance.

The cities are laced with broad streets, resembling park-like canyons between the many tall buildings. SLAVES can be seen above every housetop airing out the gorgeous silks and costly furs of the house; jeweled-encrusted women loll upon carven balconies before their sleeping compartments.

STRAINS OF INSPIRING MARTIAN MUSIC break pleasantly from open windows.

The tall buildings have multiple level landing stages for the four levels of air traffic; in the first level, private fliers; in the second, long light passenger fliers; in the third, freighters; and at the highest level, the great international passenger fliers.

The streets are sod with red ochre vegetation of the old sea beds, and the new innovation, Marentina ground fliers, roll swiftly up and down the streets, pass over slower traffic; at the intersections, north-south traffic has the right of way, east-west traffic rises above it.

From hangars upon many rooftops, private fliers join the swift-moving traffic on the first level.

ZOOM to the twin Yellow Tower, PAN down to the streets of Lesser Helium, CLOSE on a MAN IN A NAVAL OFFICER'S MILITARY HARNESS walking down a street, he descends a ramp to a Pneumatic Tube Station.

Pneumatic Tubes interlace and link the two cities, carry passengers in a projectile resembling an artillery shell, one projectile for each passenger, upon the conical nose of each projectile, a destination dial and pointer.

INT. LESSER HELIUM PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION - DAY

A HALF DOZEN ATTENDANTS ASSIST A LONG LINE OF PASSENGERS as they enter the station. The naval officer waits in line, it comes his turn, he approaches his projectile, sets the pointer for the Warlord's palace, an attendant opens the arched lid, the officer steps inside, lies down on an upholstered bottom, the attendant closes the lid, it locks with a CLICK, zooms through a series of dark mouthed tubes, makes a WHIZZING NOISE, switches tubes as necessary, the projectile covers the seventy-haads between the two cities in seconds.

INT. WARLORD'S PALACE PNEUMATIC TUBE STATION - MORNING

The officer's projectile arrives at the Warlord's palace station, A PALACE GUARD opens the lid, the officer steps out, shows the guard his pass, he is permitted to enter.

INT. PRINCESS' BEDCHAMBER - MORNING

A FEMALE SLAVE approaches Carter as he sits in the window sill.

SLAVE

JAT OR is here to see you,  
master.

Carter hops out of the window, walks with the slave into the main chamber.

CARTER

Show him in.

Jat Or is the naval officer from the pneumatic tube, the slave admits him into the chamber, he approaches, salutes the Warlord.

CARTER  
What is the status of the  
egg, Jat Or?

JAT OR  
It just hatched; I came  
immediately, my Prince.

CARTER  
The sex?

JAT OR  
Matai Shang and Phaidor had  
a son as prophesied, my  
Prince.

CARTER  
Not a word of this to anyone,  
Jat Or. You are dismissed;  
get some well-deserved sleep.

JAT OR  
But sir?

CARTER  
What is it, Jat Or? Are you  
worried about a Holy Thern  
revival?

JAT OR  
Who isn't, my Prince?

CARTER  
Let me worry about that, Jat  
Or. Remember, not a word to  
anyone.

JAT OR  
Yes, my Prince.

INT. PRINCESS' BEDCHAMBER - MORNING

Carter empties out a drawer from a huge dresser, rifles through the contents, finds what he is searching for, holds up an ornamental bottle of red pigment. Dejah Thoris stirs, props herself up on an elbow.

DEJAH THORIS

What is that, my Prince?

CARTER

Red pignment for my skin.  
Ptor Fak of Zodanga gave  
it to me to disguise my skin.  
With this ruse, I was able to  
infiltrate the old Zodangan  
Navy when you were held  
captive by Sab Than. I'm  
going to use it again to  
infiltrate the Guild.

(pauses)

I am surprised to find the  
pigment in your drawer.

DEJAH THORIS

But you knew exactly where  
to look.

(suddenly understanding)

So that is why the Ptor  
brothers were granted  
immunity and trade rights  
in the Treaty of Zodanga.

He looks at the Princess, is pained to ask the question.

CARTER

It is true that Ur Jan was  
the bodyguard of Sab Than?

DEJAH THORIS

(shrugs)

Who knows? I never paid  
attention to such details.

CARTER

How could you not help but notice him? He's a giant of a man, with a most prodigious penis.

DEJAH THORIS

I was too busy getting drunk with Sab Than to notice the help, my Prince.

Phaidor stirs, reaches a hand for Zenax, Carter shakes his head, looks away, turns to another drawer, opens it, pulls out a Zodangan military harness, metal, and weapons, puts them on.

CARTER

The assassins must be taught a lesson, or no one's life will be safe on Barsoom.

DEJAH THORIS

Your campaign is most unpopular, my Prince. Do you not wonder why so few are willing to join your band of vigilantes? Perhaps your good idea will turn out bad in the end.

CARTER

By their acts, they have issued a direct challenge to my authority as Warlord. I cannot permit it to go unnoticed.

Phaidor snuggles up next to Zenax, holds her tight in her arms.

DEJAH THORIS

I wish you were not going, my Prince. I have a premonition that - well - that we are both going to regret it.

CARTER

Don't worry; I won't be gone  
for long.

DEJAH THORIS

You won your high position  
here with your sword; and by  
your sword I suppose you  
must maintain it, but I wish  
it were otherwise.

PHAIDOR

Are you not going to say  
good-bye in a proper manner?  
You must maintain us by  
your sword as well.

Phaidor's witch green eyes glow, Carter does not respond, he watches as Phaidor moves down, gets beneath Zenax in a sixty-nine position, her head hangs down over the platform, she spread Zenax's labia apart with her fingers, exposes her vagina to Carter, flashes her green eyes, lifts her head, feeds on Zenax, they LICK, SUCK and MOAN, have many orgasms.

DEJAH THORIS

Don't you just love the  
balance of light and darkness  
the Therns and First Born  
create?

CARTER

We call it the Yin and the  
Yang on Jasoom.

Carter cannot withstand the temptation, he strips off his  
Zodangan harness, resigns himself to his fate.

DISSOLVE TO: