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CARL
SELWYN
BRYCE
WALTON

The **MAN THE SUN GODS MADE**

To the vessel remnants of Lyallar, this man was a god. To the Ardth hordes he was Tyr the Terrible.
A Startling Novel by **GARDNER F. FOX**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SAVAGE GALAHAD ***

SAVAGE GALAHAD

By **BRYCE WALTON**

Tons of sinuous muscle, buried in fetid
Venusian slime, he knew how to survive.
Equipped with an ageless brain and lightning
instincts, he also knew how to die!

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He stirred slightly, the ponderously long, yet smoothly-flowing lines of his body, trembling vaguely with the undulating rhythm of the tall pale watergrass. Dim and monstrous shadows floated past, then suddenly spurted in frenzied speed to devour or be devoured. And the dark blue tint of the swamp water browned in wavering veins of blood.

An alien organism had come to his world. Its strange radiations pierced his brain in waves of bizarre beauty. Its uniqueness was disturbing the long sleep he was enjoying in the warm soft slime. A being from a far world, which he read symbolized in her confused mind as EARTH. And facing certain death, she was utterly disoriented with terror.

She reacted mentally to his world. The name she applied to it was Venus, Planet of the Morning and that was beauty of expression. She was beauty and so were her thoughts; her world must have been of that nature, too. His world had no beauty anywhere in it; beauty would be alien here, yet he was tired of ugliness.

His massive brain circuit contacted hers in its subtle supersonic way, knowing everything she had known or could know, thinking as she thought, reacting as she reacted far above him where she wandered alone along the vaporous fringe of his swamp. And he suddenly realized how alien she really was, for here on his world she was like a bubble floating beneath the surface of his lake, on the edge of countless dangers, confronted by a thousand deaths, but completely unaware of their nearness or exact nature. This was not her world. It would never be a world for her species. And abruptly he wanted to see her, touch her. Touch this

beautiful bubble before it burst. For he had never known beauty before, and he was hungry for it.

One giant flipper moved softly, and the ponderously sleek form, long and pointed and glistening through the water, lanced upward, streaking the depths in a silent blurring arc.

He studied her with curious and new emotions through the thick, heavy-hanging mists, his long serpentine form curled out along the global swamp, undulating between the spongy swaying trunks of two bulbous trees, half-buried in the thick iridescent mud, and effectively hidden from her alien eyes by interlocking crinoids and gigantic towering ferns.

Monstrous insects droned broodingly through the sultry vapors and ventured to light on his gleaming hide. A quick twitch of long steely tendons blotted them out in lightning grips. But his thickly lidded eyes remained fixed on the girl who had come from Earth.

He was not disappointed in her beauty of form. It had a soft, rhythmic smoothly-flowing curvature. It seemed to him a perfect aesthetic creation of its kind. The contrast, too, impressed him—her frail, delicate form treading so fearfully among gigantic flora and fauna of endless varieties, each vying with the others in size and ferocity. Because of this contrast she seemed more beautiful here, perhaps, than she might on her own world. But she should not be here; she would find only death here. She did not understand this world, and she never would.

He felt the pangs of an emotion utterly strange to him. He plunged the supersonic fingers of his brain deeply into hers and found an expression there that would vaguely define that emotion. LOVE. It was an abstract symbol that on her own world meant the crystallization of celestial ideals.

And that is what I must feel for this alien creature, he mused. LOVE.

The many other emotions that accompanied the symbol, LOVE, on her world—hate, jealousy, hope, ambition, despair, courage—these did not enter his massive neural circuits. She felt this great emotion for another being somewhat like her, very close by. This other being, he examined only briefly for he was ugly, a frantic figure pacing nervously in something they both knew as a SHIP that

rested not far away in the swamp. She had wandered away from the SHIP and could not find her way back to it through the mists. And this other organism—MAN—was being driven into complete disintegration with anxiety and fear for her.

But he knew that the man would never find her. There was no jealousy or hate or envy as he curled through the swamp, watching her. That would spoil the beauty of this moment. She would be destroyed soon; other emotions must not distract from the few moments he had in which to absorb this aesthetic thrill of her movements.

Gruoon! The symbol was etched in his mind as a blob of dark dread. His body tensed into rippling steel. The *Gruoon* was dropping down through the mist; his brain could follow every flapping motion of its great leathery shape as it dropped in a straight driving plunge directly for the girl.

His triple-lidded eyes could not see it, but that was not necessary; because of his supersonic brain, he was a ruler of this swamp world, and that was why he would survive the dull grey aeons that stretched ahead. So long as his supersonic brain guided his actions he would rule.

He tensed, arched high in taut waiting, while the *Gruoon* plummeted down in a sighing blur of speed.

Now he could sense the *Gruoon's* naked, yellow-scaled claws outstretched, its toothed beak yawing, and its red-disked eyes shining with that insatiable blood-thirst that was the scourge of this world. The scourge of all but himself.

He tensed the full length of his mighty corded body, his twelve flippers digging into the glowing mud, his gigantic corded tail curled in feral silence around into a taut S that could spring outward in a blinding explosion of power.

She was experiencing great fear, but still not as much as she should. This surprised him. Now that he knew how completely helpless and alien she was on this world of his, how frail and delicate she was, and how she belonged on a much different sphere than this one. She had no conception that the *Gruoon* was even now falling down upon her like a comet. That those poisonous claws would wrap about her creamy body and rip her to shreds and carry her away into the smoking peaks.

She was ignorant of all the countless dangers surrounding her. Fifty *kimm* away, hardly more than the length of his own body, was the SHIP which she was trying to find. But she had not the dimmest concept of where it was. Such appalling lack of basically protective intuition was incomprehensible to him.

She knew nothing of the *Vreed*, and its painless bite which bloated a living organism rapidly until it burst. And the venomous stinging of the *Kristons* that paralyzed to a slow unmoving death. Or the semi-organic *Trumask* tree that waited for her approach even now, immobile, without any visible sign to its victims that its crimson appendages could suddenly whip into action to trap them, dragging them into its trunk that opened to reveal a slightly pulsating cavern full of half-devoured forms. These were only a few of an endless horde of huge and hideous things, yet she suspected none of the things waiting in the mists. She could only believe what she saw through her beautiful eyes. And the mist was thick.

Suddenly the taut S of his body unleashed itself, whipping straight upward in an unbending line. His sharp snout speared up through the swirling vapor until he was balanced momentarily on the tip of his stiffened tail. Then, at the apex of his spring, his three-jawed mouth unhinged, gaped and crunched shut on the *Gruoon*. The vapor was whipped into fretful whirls. The girl sank down, her eyes searching upward, but blindly through the gloom.

He sank down once more on his scaled belly, wriggled deeper in the mud. He dropped the mangled leathery blob that had been a *Gruoon*. Then he turned his eyes once more on the bit of strange beauty which he had preserved a little while longer for his aesthetic pleasure.

Her eyes kept searching above her. Now the dread silence that had followed, for an instant, after the piercing shriek of the dying *Gruoon*, seemed to affect her more than the sound had. She shook her head, her eyes lowering to look apprehensively about her, then back to the thick greyness above. She turned indecisively in several directions, took a few steps in one direction, then hesitated, turned in another; then abruptly and hysterically changed her previous course entirely and was running directly toward him.

Yes, she was completely lost, and that was indeed a strange weakness in an organism. Only fifty *kimm* away was the intricate machinery that had brought

her here, and which sheltered more of her kind, including her lover whom she ached to see again. Incredible.

And this SHIP mechanism full of her kind, aliens, were intending to remain here on his world! It was an amazing paradox. They intended to rely for their survival on a number of synthetic defense methods, constructed from basic elements and powered by various energy principles. This girl had just unsheathed such a device for her own protection—just now, long after the *Gruoon* had attacked and died! If she had any inborn protective instincts at all, they were so weakened from lack of use or by heredity that only now had they gotten around to warning her.

And these beings had mechanical detectors based somewhat on his organic equipment. But they were utterly inadequate to meet the predatory ferocity of his world. Why had these irrational creatures ventured from their own comparatively safe world to this? If they actually intended to remain, their chances of survival depended on almost immediate adaptation. But that would be impossible, of course.

He watched her with a lonely and hungry eagerness. She had slowed her pace to a walk and had already begun edging unwittingly to the right in what would prove to be a long erratic circle leading away from the SHIP. But she would not go far, even on the wrong course. She was walking headlong and blindly into the silently waiting arms of the bloated, motionless *Trumask*.

He waited, too, watching her. Somehow she seemed more a thing of beauty as she approached death. Death lent a sadness that added to her beauty a kind of poignancy. His eyes half-lidded dreamily as the full softness of the emotion flowed through him.

The synthetic defensive mechanism was held out in front of her as she edged along. She was beautiful as she moved. And on this world of his, no warmth or softness of her kind could exist. It would die. On his world the only living thing that remotely suggested this girl from another planet to his hungry mind was the delicate soft petal of the *Minon* blossom. But on close inspection of the unwary or forgetful, even this spit out a deadly white venom.

He slid his long writhing length, slithering soundlessly between the *Trumask* and the girl.

Her deeply buried instinct functioned better this time, but not nearly quickly enough. Not for this environment. She paused, her head jerking from side to side, the weapon in her hand clutched tightly and swinging with the direction of her head. But her eyes swept unsuspectingly past the *Trumask*. Seemingly, on her world, only organisms promised real danger.

A strange world, that—a soft, slow-turning world of dream more than reality; of hope rather than realization; of delusion taking the place of struggle.

Slime strung down from the tentacles of the *Trumask* as they writhed toward her in undulating evil shudders. The trunk gaped open.

All of the girl's reactions went through his brain, and he was amazed by their pointless complexity. A thousand fragments jostled each other in her mind. Memories of the past, forgotten mistakes, hopes for the future with no regard for probability, visions of the lover who waited in the SHIP. All these and many more, equally irrelevant to this dire situation. She should be concentrating on one thing—escape. Yet she was not moving. She was in a kind of paralysis he could not understand.

Now, *now*, she was acting, but, as usual, far too late. She was trying to employ the weapon. But one of the bloated red tentacles flipped it from her hand. She sagged down, her mouth mumbling incoherent symbols. She dropped on her knees in the oozing scum, digging down frantically in a sobbing attempt to find the weapon; but three of the viscuous tentacles encircled her. They dragged her toward the maw of the trunk that now gaped to its full, cavernous capacity. Her terrified eyes could see an unrecognizable amorphous shape still struggling weakly down in that pulsating well.

He acted as lightning strikes, instinctively. Later he would know why. In his world thought had to follow action. His huge jaws closed on a number of the thick tentacles, severed them. They whipped free of the girl, jerking and contorting, slashing the murky vapor in aimless death patterns. The girl somehow had staggered out of reach of the remaining ones.

He dropped down again, out of sight, writhing away to bury himself again in mud and fog. He searched her mind. Had she seen him? She must have. Strange that he could find no reaction. There seemed to be a kind of shock. She had seen him. Then some mental defense mechanism had blinded her memory to him. Did

she find him ugly? Why? Should not he be possessed of some kind of beauty, also? He had within him the capacity to appreciate beauty. At least she should be sympathetic and grateful and kind to him if she knew he was saving her from death, and pain. Yet—her mind would not accept him. She had seen him briefly, then forgotten.

Her terror and nervous disintegration was acute now. He could save her from physical dangers, but he could not protect this soft strange mind and nervous system from breaking apart and losing its balance of function.

Yet her beauty still remained, and that was his chief interest. The fluid motion, contour, symmetry and rhythm remained as before; was the justification for her continued existence in his eyes.

Her motions did not follow her mental direction at all now. She reached her hands out as though trying to part thick mist like a solid web. She groped about in small circles. Then she stopped, her eyes parted wide, and she screamed. Through the holocaust of sound—the cries, bellows, and screeches and hisses of the swamp—her scream was almost soundless. Yet its mental significance cut into his great brain like a wound.

Torrg!

The scream's effect had detracted even his wondrous instinctive mechanism for an instant. During that second the *Torrg* heaved itself up almost beneath her. Something slithered through his brain, rippling down his long curved length—the closest emotion to fear his nervous system could approach. He hesitated, flinching away.

He knew what to do. Why then, did he hesitate before the *Torrg*?

The girl stood stiff with terror, mindless, muscles drawn tight, nerves twitching.

He hesitated. He had about gained the maximum from her beauty. It was a passing thing. He could not possibly go on appreciating it much longer; she was a limited art form. And the *Torrg*—even *he* was apprehensive of that one. Even *he* had never challenged the ferocious deadliness of the giant *Torrg*. It was a mighty, mindless machine of destruction, and so difficult to kill. Its thick leathery body, slick with green scum, was almost impossible to pierce, and any one of its twenty writhing arms was a pounding, sucking, smashing bludgeon of

power. He had five *amphos* to live ... but if he tried to keep the *Torrg* from this alien creature....

He searched her mind, as the *Torrg* raised up higher and higher from the thick nest of its pool. Vaguely, beneath her terror-stricken mind, he saw the symbol SQUID, enlarged many times. Its great green-colored caudal fins swayed impatiently, fanning huge swirling spirals of vapor, like smoke, throwing drops of swamp weed and mud until the groveling girl's beauty was almost buried in the steaming stench.

Why had she reacted so adversely to that brief sight of him? Why was he so uncertain about his course of action? If he had a form suitable for her eyes, if he could look forward to having her always to watch its perfect rhythm of movement; if he were only assured of her beauty going on forever, flowering for his pleasure in this world of teeming ugliness, if—

The *Torrg* acted almost too quickly for his reaction. But that unexpectedness of the *Torrg's* move decided him. His instinct guided him again, guided him in a blinding streaking flash of sheer power.

He took the muddy squirming figure of the girl between his unhinged jaws, delicately, but firmly. He accomplished this in an incomparable burst of energy, continuing on through the finish of the move without a stop. His body shot beneath the whipping tentacles of the *Torrg*, toward the SHIP that waited helplessly for her return.

He felt the *Torrg's* suckers close on his back as he passed. There was no pausing to understand why he was exposing himself to certain defeat. One must get in the initial blow in his world, or lose. His instinct was guiding him. It had never yet failed him. Later, if he survived, he could reason out the problem.

He sat the girl down gently, an inert lump just beneath the bow of the SHIP. Then he twisted around to try and rake the *Torrg* from his back. He had put himself wholly into the mad mindless power of the *Torrg's* blood-thirst. He kept trying to turn, but it seemed too late for that. He felt its twenty arms wrap about his throat and belly and flippers. Its monstrous weight crawled up his back. Two more of its appendages clinched about his jaws—his only means of destruction.

He coiled and uncoiled, unleashing the full force of his great power. His body

twisted, jerked over and over in lightning-fast, explosive arcs. Simultaneously he rolled in the direction of his swamp lake, at the bottom which he had lived for all his lonely life.

Disengaged appendages of the *Torrg* swung and slapped thunderously against the swamp surface. Then the two were sliding down through the thick black depths of his swamp lake.

In the tepid bubbling water their individual differences were largely canceled. Here they could battle to the ultimate decision.

They sank down through the murky, swirling deeps, and he was curling and snapping his fifty *kimm* until the entire expanse of his swamp lake churned and frothed, surging and boiling as though a steam fissure had blown open beneath it. Dead things floated up past them toward the surface and were promptly devoured by serpentine things.



This was his last battle. His instinct told him that.

This was his last battle. His instinct told him that. Somehow, though, his instinct had failed him this time. Taking the girl back to her SHIP had been an error of instinct. He would never know why he had done it, because he would not have time to study the psychology of it.

He felt the great holes being ripped in his belly where his flippers had been torn out. He felt his thick cold blood streaming out in rivers, thickening the swamp lake. He noted the darting lusting hunger of the intent school of killer snakes that were already swimming into the current of that blood, following up the direction of the final feeding.

This knowledge drove him to the great effort that partially dislodged the appendages from about his jaws. His long sharp head speared around, closed about that part of the *Torrg* from which its many eyes stared cold and lidless.

They settled together that way into the crawling mud of the lake bottom. The *Torrg's* death threshings, the final contracting of its arms, crushed him, squashing his insides out into the thirsting water. His jaws were locked about the

*Torr*g in a grip even death could not undo....

Until weakness drove the last spark of reason from his great supersonic circuit he was reflecting on the psychology of it, of why his instinct had proven false. Glimmerings of the cause appeared, but then the ancient brain that had survived so many countless *amphos* abruptly ceased to exist.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK SAVAGE GALAHAD

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