

A decorative frame with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork on the left and right sides. Inside the frame, the word "CHAPTER" is written in a bold, sans-serif font above the number "1", which is also in a bold, sans-serif font.

On the Arizona Hills

I am a very old man. I am a hundred years old, maybe more, but I have never aged like other men. As far as I can recall, I have always been a man of about thirty. I look the same as I did forty years ago, and yet I feel that I cannot go on living forever—that some day I will die the real death from which there is no return.

Because of this, I have decided to write down the interesting periods of my life. I cannot explain these happenings. I can only describe in the words of an ordinary soldier of fortune the strange events that happened to me during the ten years that my dead body lay in an Arizona cave.

I have never told this story before, and no one will see this manuscript until after I have passed on. I have no desire to be ridiculed by the

public, the pulpit, and the press—held up as a liar—when I am only telling the simple truths which some day science will confirm.

My name is John Carter but I am better known as Captain John Carter of Virginia. At the close of the Civil War I found myself with several thousand dollars in worthless Confederate money and the rank of captain in an army that no longer existed. I was a servant of the Confederate States of America, which had vanished along with the hopes of the South. Masterless, penniless, and with my only means of livelihood gone, I decided to work my way to the southwest and search for gold.

I spent a year prospecting in the company of Captain James K. Powell of Richmond. We were extremely fortunate and located a remarkable gold-bearing quartz vein, more valuable than anything in our wildest dreams. We decided that one of us must return to civilization and return with a crew of men and equipment to properly work the mine.

Powell was familiar with the country, so we decided that he should make the trip. I would stay behind and protect our site from any claim-jumpers. On March 3, 1866, Powell mounted his horse and led two loaded burros down the mountainside on the first stage of his journey.

The morning was clear and beautiful and I could see him and his pack animals plodding their

way toward the valley. For most of the day I would catch glimpses of them as they topped a ridge or came out on a level plateau. My last sight of Powell was about three in the afternoon as he entered the shadows on the far side of the valley.

Some half hour later I happened to glance across the valley and was surprised to see three little dots in about the same place I had last seen my friend and his pack animals. I am not given to needless worrying, but the more I tried to convince myself that all was well with Powell and that the dots I had seen were antelope, the less I was able to assure myself.

Since we had entered the territory we had not seen a single hostile Indian. We had been told of the great numbers of these vicious raiders who were supposed to haunt the trails, murdering any white man who fell in to their merciless clutches.

I knew Powell was a well-armed, experienced Indian fighter, but I also knew that his chances were small against a party of Apaches. Finally, I could no longer endure the suspense, and arming myself with my two Colt revolvers and a carbine, I strapped on two belts of cartridges, mounted my saddle horse, and started off down Powell's trail.

As soon as I reached level ground I urged my mount into a slow run and continued until I discovered the point where other tracks joined Powell's. They were the tracks of three unshod

ponies—INDIANS!

I followed at a faster pace until darkness set in and I was forced to wait for the rising moon. As I waited, I had time to think about the wisdom of my chase. I pondered the possibility that I had imagined the dangers. When I caught up with Powell we would both get a good laugh for my pains.

By nine o'clock the moon was bright enough for me to proceed, and about midnight I reached the water hole where Powell had expected to camp. I found the spot deserted, but I saw that the tracks of the pursuing horsemen continued after Powell with only a brief stop for water.

I was now positive that the three riders trailing him were Apaches and they wished to capture Powell alive for what evil purposes I could only imagine. I urged my horse onward, hoping that I would catch up with the Indians before they attacked him.

Further speculation was cut short by the faint sound of two shots far ahead. I knew that Powell would need me now, and I urged my horse up the narrow mountain trail. I had forged ahead a mile or so when the trail suddenly opened onto a small level field. The sight that met my eyes filled me with dread and dismay.

The stretch of level land was white with Indian tepees, and there were probably half a thousand warriors clustered around some object

near the center of the camp. Their attention was riveted to this point of interest. I could have turned back into the dark and made my escape with perfect safety.

I do not believe that I am made of heroic stuff, because in all of the hundreds of acts that have placed me face to face with death, I cannot recall a single one where any alternative occurred to me until hours later. My mind is such that I am subconsciously forced into the path of duty without even thinking about it.

I was positive that Powell was the center of attraction, and the instant I viewed the scene I whipped out my revolvers and was charging down on the entire army of warriors, shooting rapidly, and whooping at the top of my lungs. I could not have chosen better tactics, for the red men, surprised and convinced that a troop of cavalry was attacking, turned and fled in every direction for their rifles and bows and arrows.

The view after the crowd's panic-stricken flight filled me with rage. Under the clear rays of the Arizona moon lay Powell, his body bristling with arrows. Riding up close to him. I reached down, grabbed his cartridge belt and drew him up across my saddle. A backward glance convinced me that to return by the way I had come would be more hazardous than to continue forward, so putting spurs to my poor beast, I made a dash for the far side.

The Indians discovered that I was alone, and I was pursued with curses, threats, arrows, and bullets! The facts that it is difficult to aim anything but curses and threats accurately by moonlight; that they were upset by the unexpected manner of my arrival; and that I was a rapidly moving target; saved me from their various deadly projectiles and permitted me to reach the shadows of the surrounding peaks.

My horse was traveling practically unguided, and so it happened that he entered a shallow gully that led to the summit of the range and not to the pass that I had hoped would carry me to safety. However, I owe my life and my remarkable adventures to this turn in the road.

My first hint that I was on the wrong trail came when I heard the yells of the pursuing savages suddenly grow fainter. I stopped on a ledge overlooking the trail and saw them disappearing around the bend. I knew they would quickly discover they were on the wrong trail and the search for me would be renewed as soon as they located my tracks.

I went just a short distance farther when an excellent trail opened up. The trail was level and broad and led upward and in the general direction I wished to go. The cliff rose for several hundred feet on my right, and on my left was an equal drop to the bottom of a rocky ravine. I followed this trail for a hundred yards when a sharp

turn to the right brought me to the mouth of a cave. It was now morning, and daylight came almost without warning.

Dismounting, I laid Powell on the ground and my most painstaking examination failed to reveal any spark of life. I forced water from my canteen between his dead lips, bathed his face and rubbed his hands, working over him continuously for the better part of an hour until I had to face the fact that he was dead.

I was very fond of Powell, a polished southern gentleman and a loyal and true friend. It was with deepest grief that I finally gave up my crude attempt to revive him. I left him on the ledge and then crept into the cave to check it out. I found a large chamber, with a smooth and well-worn floor. The back of the cave was so lost in dense shadow that I could not see if there were openings into other chambers.

As I was examining the cave, I started to feel a pleasant drowsiness creeping over me that I blamed on the fatigue of my long and strenuous ride and the excitement of the fight and pursuit. I felt comparatively safe in my present location, since I knew that one man could defend the trail to the cave against an army.

I soon became so drowsy that I could barely resist the strong desire to throw myself on the ground for a few moments' rest. I knew that this would never do, as it would mean certain death

at the hands of my red friends, who might be upon me at any moment. With an effort I started back toward the opening of the cave only to stumble drunkenly and slide down to the floor.