HERE ARE SOME EXCERPTS OF

STRANGERS FROM THE GATE

by

James Stuart Anderson

A new, original short story of perilous adventure and supernatural horrors, in a land ruled by swords and strength.

It begins with an arrival by night . . .

The chill wind cut like a thousand cold steel blades, piercing both cloak and maille, and the desert insects were busy making their nightly noises. The bonfires were already starting to burn low, and red and brown tents were being pitched in front of the looming presence of a great range of rocky cliffs, whose jagged contours were dimly outlined against the star-strewn sky by the moon descending to the horizon far beyond them. But added to this now was the jinglings of riding gear and approaching hoof-falls, slowly coming up from the distance. Tensing of a sudden, as the telling noise reached him at last, a watchman at the outer fringe of the camp shifted his grip on the pike he held ready.

"Hear that, Skelnik?" he asked of his companion, another guard standing alert at his side, while turning an ear in hopes of judging the sound better. They were both of the Iyahmish race, these two, the brown tan of their skins testament to a people bred in the harsh rays of the scorching desert sun, and their high cheeks and hawkish noses proclaimed their lineage.

"Riders off to the left," said the first guardsman, having identified the noise.

Taking a firm hold of his pike, the soldier stepped forward as if it would help his vision pierce the dark night air.

"You there," Skelnik called aloud, stepping up himself, "stop and identify

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