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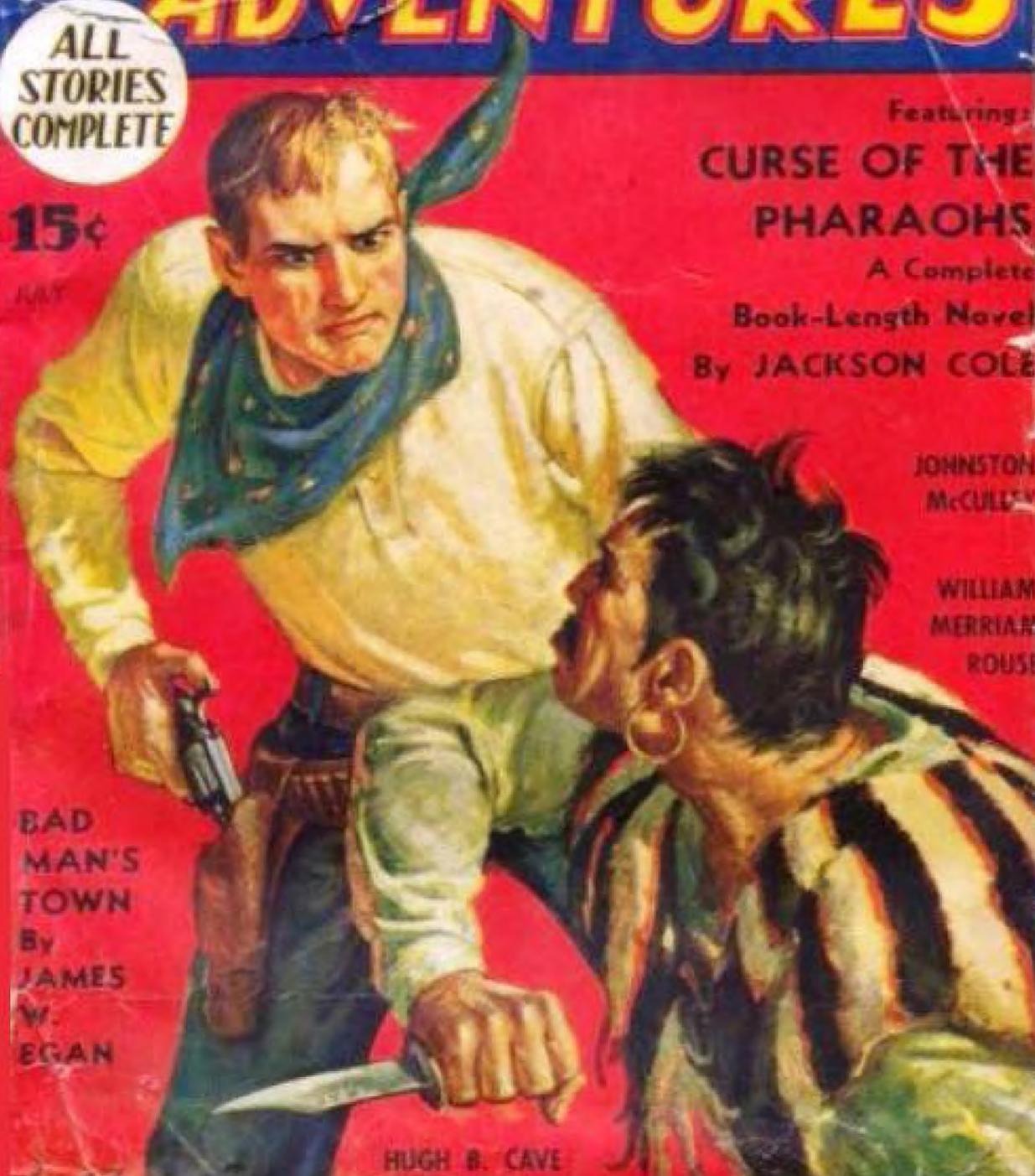
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**"Only by Actual WEIGHT RESISTANCE can you obtain muscles like these!**

My system does not depend on the mere "flexing" of muscles that I use disc dumbbells in that no other method can give you strong, supple weight lifting muscles!

**"The SUMMERTIME is the ideal time for PHYSICAL TRAINING**

Get the benefit of fresh air, sunshine and longer hours. Now is the time to build your body to muscular perfection. Be proud of your physique when you put on a bathing suit!

# IF YOU DO NOT ADD AT LEAST **3** INCHES TO YOUR CHEST

*... it won't cost you one cent!"* — Signed: **GEORGE F. JOWETT**

**T**HREE SOLID INCHES of muscles added to your chest and at least two inches added to each of your biceps, or it won't cost you a penny. I know what I am talking about...I wouldn't dare make this startling agreement if I wasn't sure I could do it.

All I want is a chance to prove it! Those skinny fellows who are discouraged are the men I want to work with. I'll show them how to build a strong man's body...and do it quickly. And I don't mean cream-puff muscles either...I will show you how to get real, genuine invincible muscles that will make your men friends respect you and women admire you!

So many of my pupils have gained tremendous development that I am

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## Nothing Can Take The Place of My Weight—Resistance Method With Progressive Dumbbells!

The Jowett System features the weight resistance method that has been tested and endorsed by many of the world's most famous strong men. By using this proven, scientific system of graduated weights, you can quickly develop your muscles and broaden your chest!

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INCLUDING A MIGHTY CHEST

It will be a revelation to you. I give you my secret methods of strength development illustrated and explained as you like them! Don't wait...mail your order NOW!

## FREE BOOK WITH PHOTOS OF FAMOUS STRONG MEN!



**RUSH THE COUPON TODAY AND I WILL INCLUDE A FREE COPY OF**

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It is a priceless book to the strength fan and muscle builder. Full of pictures of marvelous bodied men who tell you decisively how you can build symmetry and strength the Jowett way! Reach out—Grasp this Special Offer.

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Send by return mail, prepaid, the course checked below, for which I am enclosing \$

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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. X, No. 2 ✓

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

July, 1934 ✓

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FROM A FAT MAN... to a HE-MAN... in 10 MINUTES!

# "I REDUCED MY WAIST 8 INCHES"

WRITES  
GEORGE BAILEY

"I lost 50 pounds" says W. T. Anderson. "My waist is 8 inches smaller" writes W. L. McGinnis. "Felt like a new man" claims Fred Wolf. "Wouldn't sell my belt for \$100" writes C. W. Higbee.

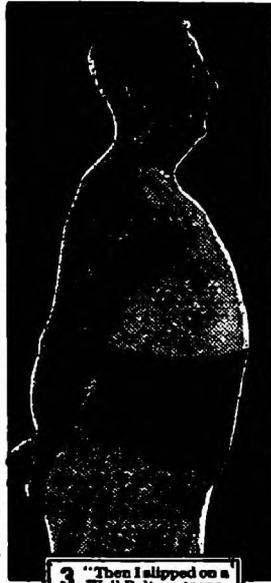
ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHS SHOWING THE IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENT IN APPEARANCE



1 "I was just a fat man with a protruding stomach... ill at ease and clumsy—no pep to do anything!"



2 "I was ashamed to undress in the locker room—my friends poked fun at me and I had no answer!"



3 "Then I slipped on a Well Belt... a transformation took place... what a difference—pounds seemed to have fallen away!"



4 "My friends were astounded!... I looked better—my clothes fitted me—and I felt like a million dollars!"

We are so sure that you will reduce your waistline at least three inches that we want you to . . .

TRY THE WEIL BELT FOR 10 DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE!

**We GUARANTEE to REDUCE your WAIST THREE INCHES IN TEN DAYS . . .**

. . . or it won't cost you one cent . . . even the postage will be refunded!

**YES SIR:** I too, promised myself that I would exercise but it was too much like work—and it's darn hard to diet when you like to eat. The Weil Belt was just the answer—no diets, no drugs—I feel like a new man and I lost 8 inches of fat in less than 6 months!

### GREATLY IMPROVES YOUR APPEARANCE!

The Weil Reducing Belt will make you appear many inches slimmer at once, and in 10 short days your waistline will actually be 3 inches smaller—three inches of fat gone—or it won't cost you one cent!

It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives an erect, athletic carriage.

Don't be embarrassed any longer with that "corporation" for in a short time, only the admiring comments of your friends will remind you that you once had a bulging waistline.

### THE MESSAGE-LIKE ACTION DOES IT!

You will be completely comfortable and entirely unaware that its constant gentle pressure is working constantly while you walk, work or sit . . . its message-like action gently but persistently eliminating fat with every move you make.

Many enthusiastic wearers write that it not only reduces fat but it also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the

digestive organs in place—that they are no longer fatigued—and that it gently increases their endurance and vigor!

### DON'T WAIT—FAT IS DANGEROUS!

Fat is not only unbecoming, but it also endangers your health. Insurance companies know the danger of fat accumulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity, so don't wait any longer.

Send for our 10 day free trial offer. We repeat—either you take off 3 inches of fat in ten days, or it won't cost you one penny! Even the postage you pay to return the package will be refunded!

**SEND FOR 10 DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER**

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Gentlemen: Send me FREE, your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10 day FREE trial!

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16x4.00	\$2.75	16x4.00	\$2.75
16x4.50	\$3.00	16x4.50	\$3.00
16x5.00	\$3.25	16x5.00	\$3.25
16x5.50	\$3.50	16x5.50	\$3.50
16x6.00	\$3.75	16x6.00	\$3.75
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16x99.00	\$50.25	16x99.00	\$50.25
16x99.50	\$50.50	16x99.50	\$50.50
16x100.00	\$50.75	16x99.50	\$50.75

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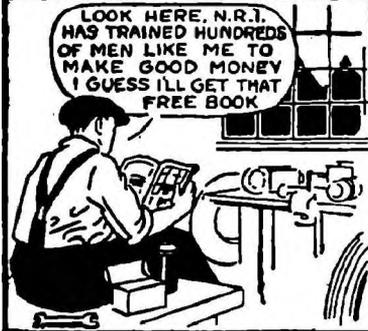
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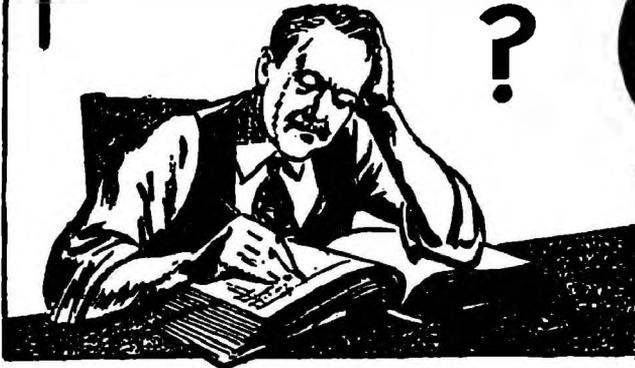


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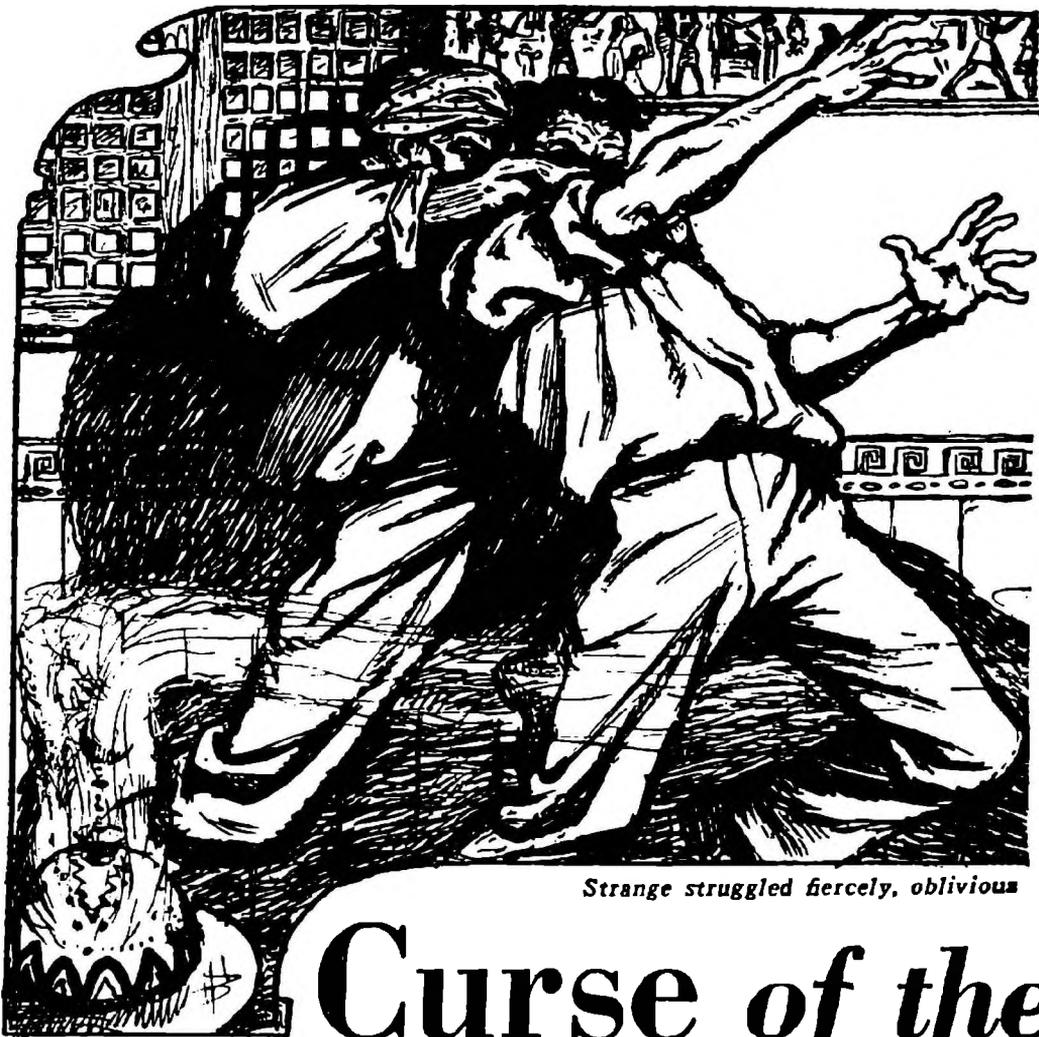
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*Strange struggled fiercely, oblivious*

# Curse of the

CHAPTER I

*The Smiling Death*

**T**HE desk was piled high with rolled parchment manuscripts. On a space which had been cleared in one corner an electric coffee percolator was bubbling with steady intensity. The great, lonely house reverberated and echoed the steady booming of the big grandfather clock in the hall as

*A Complete Book-*

By JACKSON

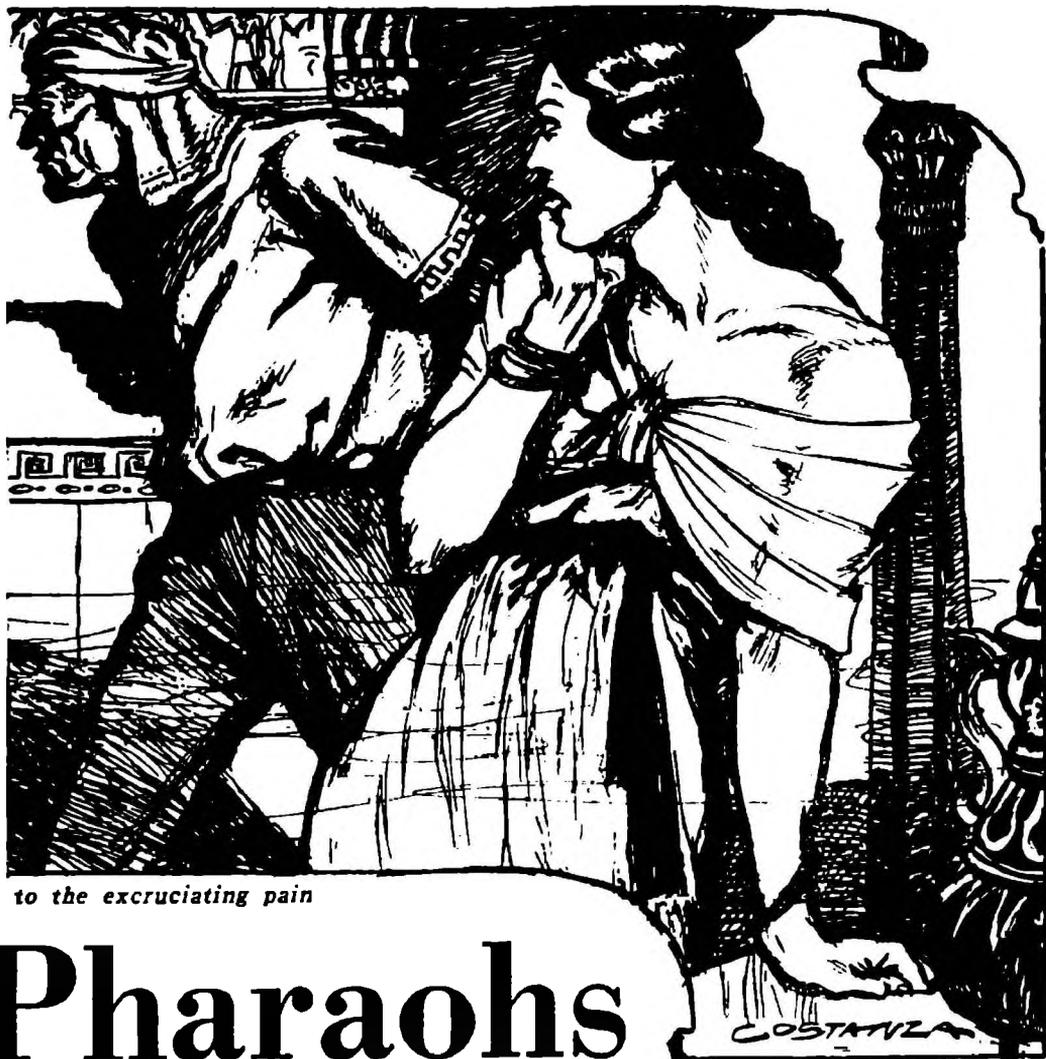
*Author of "Claws of the Red"*

it struck a quarter of three in the morning.

Outside, Leicester Square, as the rest of London, was fast in the grip of a miasmatic fog.

Harry Strange sipped strong black coffee from a cup which he held in his left hand, while his eyes moved

*Flailing Fists and Flashing Knives in an Action-Packed*



to the excruciating pain

# Pharaohs

## *Length Novel*

COLE

*Dragon," "Valley of Giants," etc.*

steadily down the printed characters of the parchment papyrus. From time to time he made notes with a pencil.

The big pile of manuscripts had been snatched from the tomb of the famous Pharaoh, Sut-ran-Ahmen, in the course of the diggings by the

Cavanaugh-Bell-Strange expedition into the crumbling ruins of ancient Egypt.

Dr. Cavanaugh, Dr. Bell and Harry Strange, internationally known sportsman and amateur Egyptologist, had set themselves the colossal task of finding the existence of the famed Sut-ran-Ahmen treasure. To it reference was made in innumerable instances in ancient writings, but thus far, it had escaped discovery by these invaders of Egypt;

*Novel of Vast Egyptian Treasures Stained with Blood!*



Harry Strange

they had succeeded, insofar that they had located the tomb of the Pharaoh. But though they had expected to find the treasure he had hoarded beside him, they had found nothing but ancient papyri and these had been divided among the three men.

Dr. Bell remained in Cairo, while Dr. Cavanaugh and Strange repaired immediately to London so that the facilities of the Egyptian room of the British Library would be at their disposal in the deciphering. There Strange had leased the house he now occupied.

**S**UDDENLY the silence of the big house was shattered by the clamoring of the front door bell. It rang three times before Strange lifted his head, scowling impatiently. He stood up, strode into the hall, slipped back the bolt on the door.

"Dr. Cavanaugh!" he exclaimed. "At this hour of the night? I thought at first it was morning, and that my housekeeper was coming to work."

Dr. Cavanaugh, a white-haired, blue-eyed man, pushed past Strange into the hall. He took off his coat, glanced anxiously at the clock.

"No," he said. "It's ten minutes of three." He suddenly gripped Strange's arm. "Harry, I have ten minutes to live!"

Strange raised his eyebrows.

Dr. Cavanaugh led the way into the library, stood near the desk. He was palpa-

bly keeping a firm grip on himself to prevent panic. But his face was white, taut and drawn.

"You're joking, Cavanaugh!"

"Not in the least."

"But, *ten minutes?*" Strange looked at him, puzzled.

"At the stroke of three!"

Harry Strange rarely lost his composure, but he was startled now—and instantaneously incredulous.

"How—how will you die? And why at three?"

For answer Dr. Cavanaugh reached into his inner pocket and drew forth a rolled papyrus, similar to the ones piled on the desk. "Here," he said, "see for yourself."

Still staring at the older man, Strange unrolled the parchment. His eye began traveling down the characters when he leaped to the desk, laid down the manuscript, read more carefully.

"Good God, man!" his voice boomed. "We've found it! It's here, the key to the treasure. Have you read what it says here?"

Dr. Cavanaugh nodded somberly.

**S**TRANGE looked up, annoyed. "You don't seem excited. Why, look! I'll translate roughly—the key to the location of the treasure will be found in the linen wrappings of the mummy of the high priest Ra-Menni. Ra-Menni! He was Sut-ran-Ahmen's high priest and his mummy is preserved in the Cairo Museum. We've got it! We've got it!"

Dr. Cavanaugh's voice sounded coldly. "Is that all you can read?"

Puzzled, Strange lifted his head. "That's all."

Dr. Cavanaugh leaned over his shoulder, inspected the hieroglyphics. He pointed a shaking finger. "It's—it's not there. I read it at my house. It was so distinct. In good, modern English, too. Now it's disappeared!"

"What is it that you read in good,



Cavanaugh

modern English on the papyrus?"

"The warning that I would die," said Dr. Cavanaugh breathlessly. "Listen. The clock was just striking midnight when I read it. I had gone through a good many of the manuscripts. When I came to this one, I unrolled it and a fine dust seemed to arise which brought on a fit of sneezing. I thought nothing of it at the time.

"THE light seemed poor and I held the papyrus closer to the lamp. I read what you've just read and of course, I was very excited. Then suddenly in the margin I read the words in English that I was doomed for death!"

"In English?" Strange repeated incredulously. "Why, the manuscript was taken from a sealed tomb! No one—"

Dr. Cavanaugh shook his head. "Someone has gotten access to my private papers. How, I do not know."

"You mean on the trip from Cairo to London?"

"Or perhaps in my house. You Americans are loath to believe in Egyptian magic. You're too courageous and hard-headed for that. But I tell you, Strange, I believe in it. These papyri have been under lock and key all the way from Cairo. For no more than half an hour at a time have they been so much as out of my sight. Yet—"

Strange clipped, "Wait a moment."

He held the papyrus to the strong light of the shaded desk lamp, peered closely at it.

"By God!" came from his lips in a half-whisper. "Here it is, again. It was written in disappearing ink that needs heat or strong light to bring it out. My God, Cavanaugh, *what are we up against?*"

"Be careful, man!" cried Cavanaugh. "If I am to die from handling the manuscript—"

Strange shook his head, sniffed. "It was the powder, no doubt. None of the other manuscripts had any powder rolled up in them. Here it is, as you said, in good, modern English lettering."

He read aloud:

"Dr. Cavanaugh: You have dared desecrate the tomb of the Pharaohs. For that, you must die the Smiling Death. Three hours after you read this, the Grim Reaper will overtake you."

Strange finished reading the cryptic message in awesome tones. "We must get you to a doctor at once!"

Even as he spoke, they heard the whirring of the big clock in the hall.

"Too late!"

THE words came from Dr. Cavanaugh's lips in a tremor.

*Boom!* It was the first stroke.

"Dr. Cavanaugh!"

The man could not answer. His fingers waved vaguely through the air. He clutched the side of the desk with his other hand, steadied himself. A change had come over his countenance. His face, taut and grim a moment before, was creased in a smile.

*Boom!* The second stroke.

The smile had become a maniacal grin. The eyes had become blank and staring. A vacuous expression stared out of the doctor's face, all the more horrible for its accentuation by that ghastly and insane enjoyment



*Dasmine*



*Ra-Menni*

he seemed now to be undergoing.  
"Dr. Cavanaugh!"

Harry Strange placed a hand on the man's shoulder. He felt his body stiffen, even as a trembling set in that started from the doctor's knees. Cavanaugh's right hand clutched at his throat as though he were being choked by some invisible force. Strange, weird gurglings issued from his lips, then ceased altogether.

The grin was frozen on his face. He stood up suddenly, straight, but stiff and stark. It was as though his body had been elongated a few inches. He seemed to be waiting, listening—

*Boom!* The stroke of three!

He had been awaiting that signal. His body pitched forward to the heavy rug, fell with a dull thud.

Dr. Cavanaugh had died with a smile.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Living Mummy*

**I**T was two days before Harry Strange could leave London behind him. The police asked many questions, looked very dissatisfied with the answers Strange could give them, but they finally permitted him to depart. By boat and by plane, he arrived in Cairo in two and a half days.

Harry Strange had entered the Cavanaugh-Bell expedition as something of a lark. He had, for a long time previously, dabbled in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics and when he had the opportunity of putting up the money for the expedition, he jumped at the chance. Now, however, all thoughts of a lark had left his mind. The matter had become serious—and dangerous.

Strange, of course, had not shown to the men from Scotland Yard the fatal manuscript which had brought

Dr. Cavanaugh's death. He

kept it under lock and key throughout the journey to Cairo, positive in the belief that none but his own hands had touched it since leaving London.

It was nightfall when he stepped from the plane at Cairo. The museum would be closed. But, undaunted, Strange at once sought out an official he had come to know. Quickly he secured from this man permission to enter the museum that very night.

He thought of getting in touch at once with Dr. Bell, who had remained in Cairo while Strange and Dr. Cavanaugh had gone on ahead to London. But he decided to put that off until he made an examination of the Ra-Menni mummy which held the secret of the great treasure.

He had no difficulty in entering the museum, once he had presented the letter from the official to the chief guard. The long, wide halls were dimly illuminated and echoed his every step. The rooms had been designed in accordance with ancient Egyptian styles of architecture. From the walls and ceiling stared expressionless faces of ancient gods and men.

Down a long passageway to the right, he came to the room where the most important of the mummies were kept. Above the sarcophagus of each was placarded the name, when known, and its history.

**A**BOVE the one most prominently displayed, he saw the name—Ra-Menni. Strange closed the door behind him, set rapidly to work. It was a delicate task to unwrap the linen taping. The outer covers of the mummy revealed nothing—no marks, no hieroglyphics.

What was more, the linen seemed fresh to his hand.

It was not the usual time-stained linen of the other mummies, but



*"A curse on the men who disturb the rest of Ra-Menni! They shall die a horrible death!"*

gave every evidence of having been tampered with. The last of the wrapping was finally removed, and Strange gasped aloud. This was not a mummy, *but the body of a man recently dead!*

It needed but a single glance for him to ascertain the identity of the dead man.

*It was Dr. Bell!*

For a moment Strange stared, speechless, unable to move or make a sound. Then he cursed dully as he realized the extent of the horrible joke played upon him. The real mummy had been stolen and the

body of the murdered Dr. Bell had replaced it.

First Dr. Cavanaugh, and now Dr. Bell. Was it his turn next?

How long Dr. Bell had been dead, Strange had no way of knowing. But the remarkable way in which every feature had been preserved told the tale. Dr. Bell had been murdered and then mummified exactly as had been the ancient Egyptians!

Suddenly he lifted his head, listened intently. Through the closed door he had heard a noise. It sounded like a muffled cry. A moment later it was repeated low

penetrating. Then followed the scuffling of boots over the marble floor outside. Someone had broken into the museum.

At least, that was the interpretation Strange placed upon those sounds. He quickly closed the carved wood box, pushed at the door of the crypt on his left. It moved to his touch. He quickly gathered up the linen wrappings, shoved them into the crypt. Then he put both hands under the shoulders of the mummified Dr. Bell, dragged the body after him into the darkness of the crypt.

HE was not a moment too soon. He had scarcely concealed himself behind the door when the outer door opened, and through a slight crack he saw four men enter.

They were short, slight, dark-haired men. That much he could see. As for the rest, he could determine nothing, for their faces were covered by masks. He heard them talk in guttural, low-pitched tones, but he could not distinguish the words. Then he saw the man force open the sarcophagus.

"Empty!"

Strange heard that one word distinctly.

The man dribbled rich curses from his lips, then talked very rapidly in lowered tones. The others seemed frightened of something, as though they stood in awe of the empty box.

Strange instantly understood why. These men were superstitious. They probably imagined the dried, mummified figure of the high priest had walked off by itself.

He suppressed a chuckle, set instantly to work. He stripped himself of his coat and vest, laid his hat beside them, then worked feverishly in the darkness. It took a full ten minutes. In that time, the men were spurred and lashed to action by curses of their leader.

The man had ordered a search. Every other sarcophagus in the room was forced open and its contents inspected. In none of them, apparently resided the mummy of Ra-Menni. Then the leader pointed to the low-built crypt where Strange lay concealed.

Instantly, Strange rose as he heard their fumbling hands at the heavy door. He stood stooped over, waiting until the door was fully opened. Then he strode forth with heavy, majestic, slow-moving step, for all the world like a real mummy come to life. It was a blood-chilling spectacle.

The four men stood stark still, petrified with terror at sight of him. The linen wrappings about his body looked real. Everything but his eyes had been crudely bound up by the linen tape.

He lifted his right hand, held it straight out before him, pointed.

In muffled, sepulchral tones, he spoke. "A curse on the men who dare disturb the rest of Ra-Menni! They shall die a horrible death. They shall know no peace in the grave!"

One of the men screamed outright in sheer terror. Another clutched at his face, fell back, nearly fainting with fright. It was too much for men in their right senses to view.

THE leader became white as death beneath his mask, turned with faltering step for the entrance. That proved the signal for the others. With wild, unearthly yells they broke for the door.

"You are doomed!" cried out the "mummy" after them.

He heard their footsteps clip-clopping over the marble floor. Then a door opened and banged shut. After that, the museum settled back to complete silence.

Strange chuckled at the result of

his work. Had they waited another moment, they might have seen that the linen was not completely wrapped about his figure. But their first fright had been too much for them.

Still chuckling, he returned to the crypt. It had been modernized with electric lights, for visitors to be enabled to see its interior. Strange clicked up the light, stared. There on the floor, next to the body of Dr. Bell, lay another mummy. With a low cry of triumph, he bent over it.

**S**URE enough, it was the mummy of Ra-Menni! Then it had not been removed from the museum after all. He recognized it as that of the priest by virtue of its wrappings, which were not white as the others, but blue, a sign that indicated that the mummy had been either a member of the royal family or else of extraordinary importance in his own right.

Quickly, he started unraveling the wrappings. When he reached the second layer, an exclamation escaped him. Painted in fading figures of white on the blue linen were a series of hieroglyphics which he quickly set himself to deciphering. His lips moved as he spelled out the message contained in the figures, according to the key given in the famous Napoleonic Rosetta Stone.

"The temple of Taur," he spelled out aloud. "Below the surface." The next step gave him a little trouble.

"Below the surface, below the surface," he repeated. "That can mean only below the surface of the earth. I'll bet they mean a cellar of some kind, or a catacomb. And the temple of Taur, of course, that's near the site of ancient Thebes. I got it!"

He continued his reading. "The treasure of the Pharaohs can bring only death to its seeker."

That was all the hieroglyphics could tell him.

Suddenly his leg jerked back. He had felt a pin prick in it. Or was he mistaken? Had it been merely his imagination? No, the leg was hurting him.

For the first time since he had engaged in this treasure-hunting, Harry Strange felt something akin to vague terror grip his being. But only for a moment. The next, he stared wildly about him. Then he tried to stand up and found he could not. Could not!

It seemed impossible. Yet his legs had gone cold and numb. He no longer felt them. Then the power in his arms seemed to have deserted him. He shook himself, tried to rid himself of this strange numbness. He could not do it. His body refused to obey the dictates of his mind. His every sense was alert, but his body was strangely paralyzed.

But how—?

He looked up and felt something of the same nameless terror he had himself instilled into the hearts of the four masked marauders but a few moments before. *For sitting up and viewing him with amused curiosity was the real mummy of Ra-Menni which he had left lying on the ground!*

### CHAPTER III

#### *Ra-Menni*

**I**T seemed an incredible sight. But nevertheless, Strange could not doubt his eyes. The figure had moved, actually moved. And it was talking!

In English of unusually good diction and purity, the mummy said: "I did not mind, my friend, to see you reading the directions. I say that because it is my earnest wish and belief that you will never live to follow them." He rose to his feet—a gaunt, awesome spectre. "And now may I compliment you on your

disguise? It is nearly as good as mine.

"Of course, I watched you in the dark, changing your clothes to the linen wrappings of poor Dr. Bell. I can assure you, sir, I was hard put to it to keep from laughing out loud. You most certainly, in the slang of your native America, put one over!"

A thousand and one thoughts crowded in quick parade through Strange's mind. He had a hundred questions to ask. But his tongue refused to obey his impulse. Try as he would, concentrate as he would, he could not move his jaws, nor make his lips respond.

**T**HE almost complete numbness and paralysis held him firmly in its grip. It required superhuman effort of a kind to bring beads of cold sweat on his brow, to turn his head even slightly. The weight of tons seemed to lie upon his arms, his legs, his body.

But what did give him some measure of cold comfort was the knowledge that the "mummy" was a real human being of flesh and blood, and not some creature roused like a ghost out of the dim past.

He saw the "mummy" move to the door of the crypt. Then, for the first time, Strange was able to see the real mummified figure of the ancient high priest, Ra-Menni. It was lying, a shriveled up bag of bones and parchment-like skin, in a corner.

The "mummy" gave a low, distinct whistle, came back into the center of the crypt. In a few moments, two men entered from the outside, appearing as though through the ground itself, so noiseless was their advent. Speaking in a strange, outlandish tongue that sounded vaguely familiar to Strange, but the meaning of which totally escaped him, the

"mummy" presumably gave them their orders.

Immediately the two men dragged forth the inert body of Strange and in a few moments had divested him of the loathsome wrappings. One of them ducked back into the crypt, returned with his street clothes, proceeded to dress him.

In the meantime, the "mummy" had also removed the blue linen wrappings and came forth from the crypt in clothes of distinctly English cut. Strange saw him to be a dark man, so dark as to suggest the word black.

He was tall, bony, thin to the point of cadaverousness, with a cold, inscrutable face that might well have been a death mask. His eyes glowed like live coals, set deeply in his head. His eyelids hooded over balefully, without blinking, like some erect species of snake. His cheekbones were high and protruded like knobs from beneath his tightly-drawn skin.

**B**UT what was most striking about him was the fact that even without the aid of the blue linen disguise, his features closely resembled the cold, awesome features of the real mummified high priest. In fact, he was the exact living counterpart!

A harsh guttural word fell from the man's thin lips and immediately, without a word in reply, the two men lifted up the cold, numb body of Harry Strange. Acting with the dispatch and complete obedience of slaves, they carried him out in the dimly lit corridor. The "mummy" led the way to the wide, high-ceilinged main hall.

Two lights burned here at either end. All about, Strange could see uniformed attendants lying motionless on the floor, either dead or unconscious. He could not be sure which.

The "mummy" pointed to the attendants, chuckled. That chuckle had the same effect as the rasp of a finger-nail over slate. It chilled and sent shivers racing up and down the spine.

"My rivals did that for me," he said in his odd pure English. "I might say *your* rivals, for they are people who hope to find the treasure of Sut-ran-Ahmen for themselves. They very kindly knocked out the guards. I was expecting them, but I must admit I was not expecting you. At least, not so soon.

"YOU see, I left London in rather a hurry following Dr. Cavanaugh's tragic death. I thought you would remain at least a week. Luckily, I had Dr. Bell's body already prepared for you, for I knew you would inevitably come here."

Strange summoned all his strength in a murderous desire to fling himself at the man, but not a single muscle could he move, not a finger. The two men carried him between them as they might so much baggage, so much dead weight.

Through Strange's mind was running one thought: this man had practically confessed to the murdering of Bell and Cavanaugh. If he could only be free of this binding numbness. But his heart sank; he knew he hoped in vain.

A side door to the museum was reached and this was at once opened. Strange was carried through it, out into the night. The soft wind whispered among the stately palm trees clumped together near the museum, and in the midst of them, Strange saw a high-powered limousine drawn up.

Still without a word, the two men bundled him inside. One took a place at the wheel, the other beside him. In the seat next to Strange sat the "mummy."

But even in the darkness, Strange was vaguely aware of the presence of a third unknown person in the tonneau. A moment later, as the car started off, he was sure of it. He heard the "mummy" speak in that outlandish, unknown tongue of his and a soft, deep-throated but distinctly feminine voice answered.

That language, Strange mentally decided, was probably the ancient Egyptian tongue which, of course, had no relationship whatever with the Egyptian hieroglyphics found on papyri.

The car left the museum grounds, traveling at a leisurely pace which amazed Strange. There was no attempt at haste or concealment. On the contrary, the car appeared nothing more than bound on a pleasure trip.

Through the streets of the city it bowled along, never making undue haste, even stopping in parts of the native quarters where crowds prevented its progress. People on every side of it, policemen with gun and club at alternate corners. A single cry from Strange's lips would have brought assistance. Yet his throat remained lax, his tongue idle. He was past all help. Not a finger could he lift, not a sound could he make to save himself.

THE fine, big residences of the English officials were left behind. The broad, fine façade of Sheapher's Hotel passed, and then came the last native market. After that, the city faded into the distance. Open desert, through which the road had been cut, loomed ahead.

How long they traveled, Strange did not know. Perhaps half an hour, perhaps more. He saw, but did not feel, the hand of the "mummy" tap his knee.

"We are almost there," the man said. "In my humble dwelling, we

will wait until the numbness I have induced will pass. Then we can discuss your fate at leisure. I promise you, dear sir, at least an interesting death. I may be pardoned of conceit when I say that I rate myself a connoisseur in such matters."

The woman who sat on the other side of the "mummy" said something sharply and the "mummy" turned. His dark eyes blazed, his thin lips curled.

"**WE** are being followed," he grated. He picked up the speaking tube, shouted something. Instantly, the car turned off the road, plowed into the ankle deep sand.

The wheels churned madly, but made no progress. The "mummy" muttered something under his breath. One of the men sprang out.

Strange could not turn his head to see what was happening. He heard the sounds of another car rapidly approaching. He heard the woman scream. The "mummy" suddenly turned on the ceiling light and for the first time Strange had a glimpse of the woman.

That glimpse nearly took his breath away. She was incredibly beautiful. She wore no hat. Her dark hair was combed straight back from a perfectly shaped forehead. Her hair was so black that in certain lights it appeared to be almost blue.

Her eyes were a deep sky-blue in startling contrast to her hair. Her skin was satin-smooth and the color of old ivory. Her features were perfectly formed and regular. She looked at him with eyes that for some reason seemed to him to be filled with pity.

The next moment he had forgotten the girl and his eyes sought the road. Tearing down at a terrific speed was another car. It slowed perceptibly as it came abreast the

limousine and three jets of orange-red flame burst forth from its rear as it passed. One of the men cried out, clutched at his chest, flopped grotesquely to the sand.

The "mummy" was yelling directions into the speaking tube. The driver instantly stepped on the gas; the wheels churned again and the limousine struggled back to the road. It turned instantly around, back in the direction from which it had come.

Strange was unable to see what was transpiring in the rear. But from the "mummy's" actions, he knew that the other car had also stopped, further down the road, had turned and was coming back.

The car that bore him along moved at better than seventy, but it did not seem to be enough. The lights of the city appeared just ahead when the pursuing machine caught up. For a moment it seemed the wheels must interlock and the cars sideswipe each other.

**B**UT then the limousine picked up added speed, forged ahead. Into the first street of the city it roared, narrowly missing half a dozen pedestrians. It was zigzagging through the crooked, narrow lanes at the same wild pace when suddenly out of one of the side streets appeared the pursuing car.

The driver yelled, jerked the wheel sharply to the left to avoid the inevitable collision. Strange saw the iron stanchion on the sidewalk, tried to yell. No sound passed his lips. The next second, there was a terrific smash.

Strange's head seemed to hit the ceiling of the car. The motor raced, plunged on without a guiding hand. There was another crash as it bucked into the wall of a building. Glass tinkled, smashed to smithereens; steel crumpled like paper.

Strange's head hit something hard and unyielding. Vaguely he was aware of shouts and the stamping of feet on all sides of him. Then the shouts ceased altogether. He slumped to the floor of the car, unconscious.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *The House of Ra-Menni*

**W**HEN he came to, Strange was lying on a bed. He lay quietly in the darkness for a few minutes, and then his fingers reached for his head. It ached dismally and he felt it was bandaged tightly. He sat up.

As he did so, his mind went back to the events preceding his state of unconsciousness. He was aware suddenly that he could move, that the horrible paralysis had left his body. It was a blissful sensation, indeed, to move his limbs at will.

Then his mind oriented his sense of place, and he realized he was in a hospital. He could see two windows, the night sky beyond them, and some low-hanging star fragments.

The door opened without warning and a man in white coat and white trousers tiptoed in. When he saw Strange sitting up, he clicked up the lights. Strange blinked at him. The man grinned.

"I suppose you want to know where you are, eh? The American Hospital in Cairo. They brought you here as an emergency case, but you aren't hurt badly. Just a knock on the head. You'll be all right in a day or two. But say, you were certainly out!"

Strange grinned back. "I'll say," he agreed ruefully. "Who brought me here?"

"Why, an ambulance, of course. You must remember the automobile accident? They say the other car

got away and no one got its license number."

"I see."

"Yes, and the driver was killed. The wheel caved in his chest and punctured his lungs. The girl wasn't hurt much, though. Luckily she was thrown out of the car and escaped with only a few bruises. We fixed her up in the out-patient ward and she went home immediately. What is still better, you'll be glad to hear your friend wasn't badly hurt, either, although we—"

Strange stared. "What friend?" he snapped. "You don't mean the mummy?"

"'Mummy'?" repeated the interne. He looked oddly at Strange as though he thought the knock on the head might have had dire results on his sanity. "I mean," he hastened to say, "the man in the back seat with you. I've just been in to see him. He's already up and dressed. We can't get him to lie in bed." He felt in his pocket. "By the way, he asked me to give you this note when you awoke."

**S**TRANGE disregarded the outstretched hand.

"Where is he?" fell from his lips.

"Why—why, in the room adjoining yours. Is anything the matter? You look— Don't get excited and worried. He is not badly hurt."

"No," snapped Strange, tumbling out of the bed. "But he will be," he flung over his shoulder.

He flung open the door, raced into the corridor. The door to the adjoining room was closed. Strange turned the knob, flung it wide. He stood motionless on the threshold. The bed was unoccupied; the room was empty.

Strange came into the room, saw the window wide open. It fronted on a fire-escape which in turn led to the ground. A fierce exclamation es-

aped his lips. The "mummy" had escaped.

There was no help for it; nothing that now could be done. Shrugging, Strange turned and retraced his steps. The doctor met him in the corridor, wide-eyed, open-mouthed.

**S**TRANGE took the envelope he held in his hand, tore it open. "The most dangerous man in Cairo has escaped you," he said simply, and spreading the sheet of paper out smooth, he read:

"Dear Monsieur Strange:

"You are fortunate. Or else your gods are powerful. But you shall not escape me a second time. My rivals hoped to kill me by wrecking the car; they succeeded only in saving you from death. I will admit I was negligent in estimating their murderous propensities. I should have reasoned that they would lie waiting to see if anyone left the museum after you frightened them away so cleverly. I was in error. But I shall not reason foolishly again.

"If you refrain from further investigation or further attempts to recover the sacred treasure of Sut-ran-Ahmen, your life will be spared for I have conceived a real admiration for your courage and your abilities. It is always pleasant to contend with an enemy who approaches one as almost an equal.

"If you persist in your attempts, however, I will be forced to overcome my scruples and deal with you as I hope to deal with the rest of my rivals. You will die in a special manner that I have prepared particularly for you."

The note was signed: "Ra-Menni."

The following morning Strange left the hospital, over the protests of the physicians. He was still a little weak and wobbly in the knees, but the need for quick action asserted itself, and he threw all caution to the winds.

No definite plan of action had come to his mind, but one thing stayed with him night and day. That was the need to locate the whereabouts of the "mummy" who used the name Ra-Menni.

The streets of Cairo, their peculiarities and Oriental allure, were as familiar to Harry Strange as were the streets of London or New York. It was on the morning of the second day after he had left the hospital that he made his contacts with an Assyrian merchant who dealt in opium, slaves and all manner of illicit merchandise.

This Assyrian merchant kept a side line of tattooing as well, in addition to a host of other money-making projects, and from him Strange bought what he needed. The Assyrian charged high prices, but it was worth all the cost. He sold good stuff and he knew the value of a very close mouth.

Accordingly, Harry Strange entered the man's booth in the native quarter as a tall, lean, hard-jawed American. He came out with the ragged clothes, shuffling walk and general appearance of a Lascar seaman.

His height seemed foreshortened by a trick of stooping his shoulders. His eyes slanted almond-wise just a trifle. His skin, bronzed before, had a slightly yellowish cast. What looked like a knife scar ran diagonally across his temple to the lobe of his ear.

The disguise was complete. The personality of Harry Strange, cosmopolite, was completely hidden in the new character—the Lascar sailor.

**A**S such, he could mingle freely with the ragged men and women in the squalid native bazaars, pick up such gossip as suited his purpose. A well-dressed white man would be inevitably barred from such contact but a lonely seaman with gold in his pockets had the ear of all.

Two days went by during which Harry Strange completely lived the life of the character he had adopted.

In all that time, not a murmur, not a word of Ra-Menni did he come across. Then, late on the afternoon of the third day, with the sun sinking low beyond the pyramids and most of the merchants hastening to close up their booths for the night, Strange saw the girl.

It needed but a single glance for him to make certain of her identity. No second was needed. Unmistakable were those dark blue eyes, that blue-black, lustrous hair, the chiseled purity of her features. She was the girl who had been in the car at the time of the accident.

She passed idly from booth to booth, fingered bolts of silk, beads and trinkets. She bought nothing, but merely gazed about her, for all the world like any of the native women.

STRANGE kept a close watch on her without coming too near. He did not risk a face to face contact, for fear she might recognize him beneath his disguise. His two fruitless days of aimless wanderings through the city had at last brought results. He was certain now that the girl would lead him straight to the hiding place of Ra-Menni.

When the girl finally quit the bazaar, night had already fallen. Strange saw her move down the crooked, narrow streets, away from the native quarter.

He followed less than fifty feet behind her, keeping her well in sight all the time. She led the way through the better section of the city, onto the outskirts where were situated the fenced-in estates of the wealthy.

It was at this point that Strange was suddenly aware that he, too, was being followed! It was a peculiar sensation. Pursuer had become pursued! He had been aware a long time of the shadow of a man flitting

from dark doorway to doorway behind him, but had thought nothing of it. Now he heard the sound of pattering footsteps distinctly, unmistakably behind him. Figures flitting from doorway to doorway in the native streets of Cairo are not an uncommon sight, but—

STRANGE whirled about, saw a dark blot disappear suddenly behind a palm. He was certain it was a man. So certain was he that he momentarily dropped his shadowing of the girl to turn back and investigate.

Suddenly he saw the dark figure of a man rush past him and race after the girl. He saw the girl turn, heard a short piercing scream from her lips. Bewildered, Strange raced ahead. By the light of the young moon he caught the glint of a naked, wicked-looking knife. The man had it raised above the girl.

It had happened so quickly that Strange was all but too late. With a cry, he caught up with the pair under the shadow of a high wall of rubble and plaster. The man with the knife snarled something unintelligible at the sound of Strange's approach, turned to meet him.

Strange acted instinctively. As he ran, he flung himself forward in a flying tackle that caught the man about the waist. A cloud of dust rose up as they hit the ground together. The knife clattered out of the man's hand with the force of the fall, rolled into the dust a few feet away. Fiercely the man clawed and scratched at Strange's countenance.

Strange got in two well-aimed blows with his doubled-up fist before he permitted the man to stand up. Whatever the vices of this shadowy creature of the night, cowardice was not one of them. He scrambled to his feet, flung himself at his adversary.

Strange met the attack by plant-

ing his left fist in the man's stomach, following that advantage up quickly with a right to the face that clipped the man's head back sharply.

Except for the girl's first involuntary scream, the fight was conducted silently. It was weird, seeing the two men struggle under the light of the moon, with not a sound coming from their lips. There was to be heard only the thud of fist against flesh, dull and rapid.

**S**TRANGE'S boxing skill was fast taking toll of his opponent. For every blow he received, Strange gave three in return. They were punishing, devastating blows. The unknown man's face was cut to ribbons. His lips puffed up and blood ran from his nose and from a cut above his cheek-bone.

And then, without warning, the man suddenly broke away from Strange. He turned, began to run back in the direction from which he had come. Strange started to follow after him, stopped, looked back. The girl had disappeared!

It was as if the man had realized that, and known that further battle was useless. Strange retraced his steps and, instead of racing after the man, sought the mysterious girl.

The solution was plain enough. There was a low gate further down the high wall. Undoubtedly, it was into this she had gone. Strange tried the latch, found it moved to his touch. Cautiously, he jerked it open, flung the door wide. An inner court, like a Spanish *patio*, was revealed to him. A house lay behind the *patio*—dark, silent and gloomy.

Strange waited until he was certain nothing moved in the outer court before he put foot within. Hugging the shadows, he moved quickly toward the house, approaching it from the side. Tall, narrow windows looked down at him. The

place was perfectly silent, appeared deserted.

He had almost decided he had made a mistake when his sharp ears caught the faint sound of a voice speaking hardly above a whisper. It seemed to come from the front of the house. Strange catfooted up three broad steps onto something like a porch. The door loomed ahead.

Abreast of the door, he waited, listening. The sound of a voice had ceased altogether. There was only the sighing of the wind in the high tufts of the palm trees. Strange's hand reached out in the darkness, touched the door knob.

It turned!

That should have been warning enough to him to retreat, or at least reconnoiter. The way was too suspiciously open. But on the brink of discovery, he was reckless, headstrong. He turned the knob as far as it would go, then gently pushed the door. When it was about a foot ajar, he slipped in, quietly closed it behind him. Complete, utter darkness enveloped him.

He had not taken more than a single step forward when his arms were suddenly seized from behind and he felt the cold steel muzzle of a gun pressing against his temple. Light suddenly appeared in the hall and Strange saw Ra-Menni before him, holding the gun. Another man was holding his arms from behind. In the background was the girl.

**R**A-MENNI'S gun did not waver for a split second. He coughed discreetly. "Welcome," he said, "to the house of Ra-Menni. I must beg your pardon for having resorted to such crude methods—using my beautiful slave girl to entice you here. But—" He shrugged, turned to the girl. "Very good work, Dasmine!"

Dasmine! So that was her name.

Strange looked up full into her eyes with withering contempt. The girl met his gaze for a second with her own luminous orbs. Then her face colored and her gaze dropped, abashed.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Laboratory of Ra-Menni*

STRANGE stood quietly in the grip of the man who held his arms; then suddenly he twisted about, sought to free them. His head jerked aside out of range of the gun and his foot kicked back. He reckoned, however, without his adversary's ingenuity. In a second his arms were free, but the other man had his knee in the small of Strange's back, his arms about his throat.

Strange struggled fiercely, but steadily, inexorably he was borne back. His breath was coming in short gasps. The pain in his back was excruciating. Then suddenly, the man behind used his other foot and Strange lost his balance. He fell heavily to the floor. Before he could roll over, the other was atop him, his knees pressed in on Strange's chest, his lithe, brown hands holding Strange's widespread.

Strange heard Ra-Menni cough, then give vent to a cackle that was intended for a laugh.

"I might have used the gun," he said flatly, "but I preferred to preserve you for another death. A gun, *Monsieur*, is so quick, so vulgar. *Dasmine*, ropes!"

The girl hesitated for an instant, then fled to obey. She was back in a few moments with a length of rope. Ra-Menni put aside his gun, knelt down and began methodically to truss up his captive.

Strange submitted meekly enough, there being no other course open to him. But he managed nevertheless

to flex his muscles as far as he was able, as the bonds closed about him, so that they were comparatively loose and had nearly an eighth of an inch of play when his muscles relaxed.

Immediately thereafter, the man who had held him while Ra-Menni tied the ropes, and who had not uttered a word during the entire interim of the struggle, picked him up like a sack of meal. He tossed him over his shoulder, and followed Ra-Menni down the length of the outer hall into another room.

A single glance told Strange the place was a laboratory of some sort. Extraordinarily large glasses, retorts and test tubes were strewn about the place. Huge Bunsen burners lined one table. On another stood other retorts of monstrous size. But what attracted his attention most was a coffin-shaped glass case that stood in the center of the room.

RA-MENNI donned a white laboratory coat, the stark whiteness of which served only to accentuate the dark furrows of his queer face. He rubbed his hands together briskly, as though well satisfied with the business at hand.

"You must be wondering, perhaps," he said, "why *Dasmine* walked alone in the bazaars. I have my spies, *Monsieur* Strange, and I had already had you spotted in your clever disguise. I took the intention for the deed and knew you would not rest until you had caught up with me.

"I know what rankles in your heart. You want revenge for the deaths of the Doctors Cavanaugh and Bell. You know I am responsible for their unfortunate demise." He bowed.

"I am! I gave you your opportunity of following *Dasmine*, know-

ing you would not stop to reckon the consequences."

The girl stood in the doorway. She spoke rapidly in that strange sing-song tongue that Strange could not fathom. Ra-Menni listened with a smile flickering about the corners of his mouth.

When she had finished, he turned to Strange.

"**D**ASMINE tells me you saved her life." He bowed again. "For that I thank you. Dasmine is invaluable to me. Again my rivals stole a march on me, as you Americans say; they followed you as you followed Dasmine. It was indeed noble of you to save her life when it is my rivals' chief aim to destroy me and all my attendants."

The girl broke in and Strange was amazed to hear her speak in English. "Ra-Menni, he saved my life! Spare his!"

Ra-Menni's head shot up and his eyes smoldered deep in his head. "Dasmine," his voice had bite and venom mixed inextricably in it, "you forget your oath at the altar!"

Instantly the girl dropped to her knees as before a lash. "Master," came from her in broken tones, "forgive me. I have sinned!"

"Rise, Dasmine! Your sin will be washed away with the death of this inquisitive infidel." Ra-Menni turned to Strange. "I freely forgive the girl," he said. "She was merely grateful."

Strange had a question of his own to ask. "Who is your rival, of whom you have spoken so much?"

"Ah! I may tell you, now that you stand on the brink of death. My rival!" he cackled shrilly.

"His name is Kedhil Pasha. He is a man powerful in the councils of Egypt. He seeks what you, Dr. Bell and Dr. Cavanaugh sought"—his voice lowered, became dull and

threatening—"the holy, sacred treasure of Sut-ran-Ahmen!"

Strange had never before heard the name Kedhil Pasha. It meant nothing to him. He looked intently from the wide-eyed girl to the demoniacal looking Ra-Menni, shrugged.

Ra-Menni, in turn, seemed to dismiss the subject and turned to the work at hand. He busied himself with vials into which he poured strangely colored liquids with careful precision. Then he twisted to and fro a series of complicated looking dials.

When, at last, his preparations seemed complete, he turned to Strange. "I presume, *Monsieur*, you are familiar with the process of mummifying which my forefathers invented and which since has been lost to the world. The men of science have wondered at the inimitable results attained by ancient Egyptians in preserving corpses. No other race ever succeeded in imitating them.

"**I** ALONE, among modern men I have simulated the ancient Egyptian lore, with modern chemicals and with secrets and discoveries of my own. Watch closely! You will see with your own eyes first what will happen to a living creature. Then will come your turn!"

He spoke rapidly in his curious language to the silent man who retired to another room, returning in a few moments with a full grown dog of the cur variety under his arm.

The dog was placed at once in the coffin-like glass case and the lid was securely fastened. Lights appeared, shining brilliantly, within the case.

"Watch!" cackled Ra-Menni. "I promised you an interesting death, remember. Here it is! This dog

will die instantly of a noxious gas. Then it will undergo the treatment which will preserve its body against decay. Unlike other dead flesh, it will not rot for centuries. Watch!"

Ra-Menni turned a few dials and under Strange's horrified gaze, jets of flaming gas streaked up and down like bolts of lightning within the glass case. Another dial was turned and a light that had in it every color of the spectrum flared an instant in the transparent coffin.

**S**TRANGE stared incredulously. It was true. Every word of Ra-Menni's was true. The dog, alive but a second ago, now lay dead on its side, its life snuffed out.

"And now!" came from Ra-Menni, his eyes alight and glowing.

A new series of flame and smoke jets appeared and disappeared with startling intensity, half-blinding the eyes with their brilliance. A subtle change seemed to come over the animal. Its limbs seemed to shrink and shrivel up perceptibly. The skin of its short-haired body became a mass of wrinkles, exactly like that of a mummy in a museum case!

Strange waited for no more. His hands were tied behind his back. It was a matter of seconds between life and death for him. To be placed in that horrible glass case, to suffer the same fate as that unfortunate cur dog, to become a shriveled, parchment-skinned mummy—it was unthinkable!

The attendant was watching the dog with glowing, feverish eyes. He did not notice Strange's bound hands work swiftly, working his wrists past the bonds.

Sweat stood out in beads on Strange's forehead. He worked rapidly but quietly. The rope chafed his wrists raw as he struggled to free himself. At last, one hand was free, then the other.

It was a split second before Strange could unknot the ropes about his legs. He was free now. He had the use of his arms and legs. If he had to die, at least it would not be without a struggle.

Ra-Menni gave the dials a last twist, and the light slowly faded from the glass case. "Your turn, *Monsieur!*" he barked.

Strange moved swiftly. The table with the giant retorts was at hand. He leaped up, grabbed one by its long, protruding neck before the attendant could stop him.

Ra-Menni shouted something unintelligible. The attendant lunged for Strange's legs. Strange sidestepped neatly, brought the retort with all his strength down on the head of the man.

The man's leap had carried him past Strange. The glass splintered into a thousand pieces. The man sighed, lay in a crumpled heap on the floor, inert and unconscious.

"**YOU!**" came in a hysterical scream from Ra-Menni. "You will not escape me!"

He seized something from out of his pocket. It was the gun. With a yell, Strange flung the neck of the retort which was still in his hands at Ra-Menni. The jagged end of the missile struck him on the gun hand. He cried out, clapped his other hand on a gash that instantly appeared. The gun clattered to the floor, rolled under one of the tables.

Strange flung himself forward onto Ra-Menni, but the other dodged with incredible agility under his rush, slithered across the floor to the opposite side of the room. Strange fell to his hands and knees in an attempt to recover the fallen gun. He jerked his hand around just in time, leaped to his feet, forgetting the gun for the time being.

Ra-Menni had secured what looked

like a huge blow torch. He pressed a button and a scalding stream of liquid fire poured out of the wide jet in a flat trajectory. Strange retreated backward from this new weapon, keeping just out of reach of the shooting flame. Ra-Menni, mumbling curses under his breath, forced him even further back.

Strange in a matter of seconds found himself penned into a corner, with no way of escape. Ra-Menni's blow torch came nearer and nearer while he himself was able to stay far from Strange's reach.

**S**TRANGE suddenly heard the screams of the girl, Dasmine. Through the jets of flame he could see her, waving to him frantically. At least, to him, it so appeared. She was pointing to something upward, above his head.

The flames from the blow torch began to scorch his clothing. In several places his skin was laid bare and the flesh exposed. Again as through a haze he saw Dasmine pointing overhead. Blindly, Strange's hand reached up. Against a little wall bracket, his hand grasped a tiny glass object.

It was indeed a ridiculously small weapon. But in his desperation he was not thinking about that. He flung the little vial with full force at Ra-Menni.

Instantly, there came a muffled report as of a Maxim-silenced gun. The glass object had burst. At once the room was filled with a heavy vaporous smoke, acrid and biting to the eyes and lungs. Strange coughed, choked, clutched at his throat to get a clear breath of air.

But what was more important, Ra-Menni also fell back. He dropped the blow torch, rushed for the door. It was a matter of mere seconds, but they were enough to spare Strange his life. He heard a door

bang shut and he rushed for it, barely able to see, feeling his way to it instinctively.

He got it open when it seemed his lungs must burst with the heavy, vaporous smoke. Out in the hall, he breathed easier. The front door stood open.

He raced outside just in time to see a big, dark car race through the dark night for the road. A huge section of the high wall had opened up to admit its passage.

Strange started after it with a hoarse cry, ran a few steps and then stopped. The car was already well on its way. It was useless to try to pursue it. He turned back to the house. At least that might yield some clue to Ra-Menni's identity.

But at the threshold, flames stopped him. The house was a roaring inferno. The torch Ra-Menni had dropped was taking its toll.

Cries from all sides sounded in the night. People had seen the fire, were coming on the run. Strange hesitated a second and then slipped into the deep shadows, out in the open road. He started back for the city. He had no wish to answer a lot of questions.

In a few moments, every bit of the house would be destroyed. Ra-Menni's secrets remained intact.

## CHAPTER VI

### *The Preparations*

**I**T was not as a Lascar seaman, but as Harry Strange, American, that a tall, lean young man engaged a suite of rooms in Shepherd's Hotel that night. Strange realized that his disguise had been proven valueless to him and so he dropped it at once.

He had not taken up his abode for more than an hour when a knock sounded on the door and a bell-boy appeared, bearing a note.

"Delivered a few moments ago, sir," the boy said. Grinning, he pocketed the bright, new coin. Strange flipped him and left. Strange tore open the envelope, read:

"Dear Monsieur Strange:

"Again you have escaped me. Truly you are an elusive quarry. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to pursue you and match wits with you, but the activities of my rival now force me to flee Cairo. Fortunately, I know that it is written in the stars that you will follow me, where your fate awaits you."

IT was signed again: "Ra-Menni." And in a postscript was added: "You saved the life of Dasmine. She saved yours. The gods are satisfied and you are now quits."

For a long time, Strange stared at the letter. Then Ra-Menni knew it was Dasmine who had shown him where that vial of acrid vapor was hidden. The mysterious girl had indeed repaid her debt to Strange. And as to where Ra-Menni was fleeing, Strange could well guess.

He spent an hour in a cold tub before he went off to bed. The touch of crisp, clean sheets made him feel civilized once more and helped dispel the remembrance of the horrors he had seen at the house of Ra-Menni.

The next morning, he set about making the necessary preparations. He got in touch with camel drivers, hired a covey of servants. The journey, he was informed, was a long, arduous one through the trackless desert, but with sufficient stores it could readily be made.

Completing his preparations, Strange had started away when a dirty, evil-smelling dragoman appeared out of nowhere.

"My friend," he said in faltering English, "you will wish to see the sights, eh? I will guide you, yes? For a shillin', I am your servant."

He bowed low to the ground.

Strange shook his head, refused the generous offer. He started through the street, unattended. The dragoman looked chagrined, and followed after. He kept up a running fire of chatter, emphasizing always the fact that he would charge only a shilling for his indispensable services.

Finally, in the midst of a busy bazaar, with Strange still refusing to listen to the unkempt man's chatter, his arm was rudely clutched and he was jerked around. The dragoman's face was suffused with rage.

"You have cheated me," he shouted hoarsely. "Friends, neighbors," he implored of the bystanders, "hear my tale of woe! This wretched foreigner has promised me a shilling. I have worn out the soles of my weary feet in his service and he refuses me my pay."

An angry growl went up from the assembled merchants and shoppers.

"You're a liar!" snapped Strange. "I promised you nothing."

"You hear? He denies his promise. I am a poor man, but I will demand justice! I will go to court! I—"

SUDDENLY, he drew out a wicked looking knife, lunged at Strange. Strange, almost caught unawares, barely escaped the thrust. The knife passed through the cloth of his coat, just pricking the skin of his arm. His right fist doubled, swept upwards in a wide arc, and caught the dragoman on the jaw.

Instantly the market place was a bedlam of shouts and screams. Men crowded around Strange, hemmed him in.

The dragoman barely managed to get to his feet. The knife had fallen from his hand and he was lugubriously nursing his chin.

"Justice!" he screamed. "I demand justice! You all saw him

strike me, a poor, defenseless man!"

Native police broke their way through the crowd. Voices babbled at them, explaining what had happened. Strange tried to tell his story, was shouted down. On every side he was accused of being the provocator of the trouble. One of the policemen laid a heavy hand on his shoulder.

"Come," he said tersely.

"Where," asked Strange coolly, "are you taking me?"

"To the magistrate."

"What magistrate?"

"Kedhil Pasha."

THE native court was not far away. A long stream of idle onlookers followed after like a procession in the wake of Strange and the policeman. Strange's smile was in complete variance with his racing thoughts.

He knew well enough that this silly affair could become dangerously serious. There would be a hundred natives to swear on oath that he, and not the dragoman, had bared a knife. And the magistrate was Kedhil Pasha! The man Ra-Menni had mentioned as his rival!

It was plain as a pikestaff. Kedhil Pasha had arranged this whole affair with the view of putting Strange safely out of the way until the treasure was found.

A beetle-browed, dark man with pendulous, thick lips, almost negroid in character, sat on the bench of the raised dais in the crowded, hot court-room. He looked curiously at Strange and Strange returned his stare defiantly.

The magistrate listened coldly to the policeman's view of the case, silenced the ebullient dragoman.

"Prisoner," he said, speaking thickly, "have you any defense?"

Strange smiled. He looked first about the court room, then said in a

clear, compelling tone: "Ra-Menni is my defense."

Kedhil Pasha half rose from his seat at Strange's words. A hush had fallen upon the assemblage. Apparently, the name had power to awe and frighten.

"Court is dismissed!" thundered the magistrate. "I will examine the prisoner in my private chambers."

Instantly a hubbub of sound pervaded the place. It took some ten minutes to clear the room of the excited people. At last, Strange was conducted through a door into a corridor beyond and past this to a larger room, modernly equipped with desk and telephone.

Kedhil Pasha was awaiting him, seated behind the desk. The policeman went out, closed the door. They were alone.

"Sit down," said Kedhil Pasha. "We must have a talk. Of course, you realize that I can still have you thrown into prison for your very serious offense of attacking a native. But for the time being, I will waive that."

STRANGE ducked his head, smiled. "We understand each other," he said.

"But Ra-Menni," insisted the Pasha, "what of him? What happened to him? Last night his house was burned to the ground. They found a charred corpse within, that was beyond recognition. That it was not Ra-Menni, I can only guess."

Strange nodded. "You are right. It was not Ra-Menni, but probably only one of his attendants."

"And Ra-Menni?"

"Escaped."

"Ah!"

Utter silence settled in the room for about five minutes, during which neither Strange nor Kedhil Pasha spoke. The Pasha seemed to be weighing something momentous in

his mind. At last he stood up, facing Strange.

"You are very clever and resourceful. I have power and money. Yes?"

HE paused for an instant and Strange said nothing. He went on at once.

"We are both in great danger of a common enemy. We are both in reach of a great treasure—the greatest known to man. Alone, neither of us will ever secure the treasure, but together—" He stopped, eyed Strange shrewdly from beneath lowered lids.

"Together," he continued, "we can beat Ra-Menni. I have no illusions about you. I know you can only hate him as much as do I. Ra-Menni murdered Dr. Bell. He made the trip to London to murder Dr. Cavanaugh.

"He has murdered some of my best men. I, too, bear him a grudge. Separately, we are powerless, but together, my dear sir— What do you say?"

Strange thought quickly. He knew well enough that to refuse the Pasha's offer would be only to invite death, or, at best, imprisonment. Then, perhaps the man really was sincere. He sounded as though he were. Strange came to his decision, stuck out his hand Western fashion.

"It's a bargain," he said. "Shake!"

The Pasha's face lighted up. "Good!" He took Strange's hand, pumped it heartily.

"I can offer to lead you to the site of the treasure," Strange said.

Kedhil Pasha waved a hand through the air, impatiently. "I know where the treasure is. Ra-Menni himself told me—not in person but by letter. He gave me the exact directions. And I believe him.

"The point is, my dear sir, not merely to reach the treasure, but to

reach it *and return alive!* I want you at my side because you are a resourceful person, as I have reason to know.

"When Ra-Menni told me you were also seeking the treasure, I tried to have you removed, but now I see that was an error. Ra-Menni was playing a game. He was playing us against each other for his own amusement. We must join forces!"

"But how," asked Strange, "did you learn of the existence of the treasure?"

The Pasha drew himself up proudly. "My family is one of the oldest in Egypt. It is a tradition we have nurtured that one of my ancestors helped conceal Sut-ran-Ahmen's treasure during the Pharaoh's reign. It has remained for me to learn of its whereabouts and to attempt its recovery."

There was a moment's silence, broken at last by Kedhil Pasha. "Tomorrow," he announced, "we will equip an expedition. A hundred men armed with carbines will go along to protect the caravan. You will be ready!"

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Door of the Temple*

THE hot sun beat mercilessly down upon the ocean of sand. In a straggling line moved a procession of weary camels, bearing burdens tied to their humps. Alongside of them walked, with lagging step, dark-visaged men with carbines strung across their shoulders.

In the midst of the supply-carrying camels strode two camels with passengers aboard. On one rode Kedhil Pasha; on the other was Harry Strange.

The faces of all the men were lined and furrowed. Their shoes,

their turbans, their loose white clothes were saturated with fine sand. The hot sun sought out their weak spots, chafed their wrists raw, blistered the festering spots where the sand had prepared the way.

For three weeks the caravan had been traveling at an ever slowing pace. Obstacle after obstacle had been met with for which reckoning had not been made in the plans of the journey. Water-holes were found to be dried up; mysterious, rapacious diseases broke out among the camels and donkeys, reducing their number, over-burdening the living.

**T**HE men grew mutinous, surly, dissatisfied despite the high wages promised them. Not one of them knew the destination of the journey save Strange and the Pasha.

For three days, no water-hole had been sighted. The goatskin bags were long ago squeezed dry of their last drop. It was in this instance that Strange proved himself a leader.

Long after even Kedhil Pasha's authority among the men waned, he still continued to hold sway over them by virtue of his own courage. He inspired them to greater effort, urged them on when they would have deserted and chanced the return to Cairo alone.

Late in the afternoon a cry went up from one of the men. The donkeys were seen to throw up their heads and sniff eagerly. The camels grr-rr-umped weightily. Soon the donkeys were outdistancing the slower, stately ships of the desert. The men's faces brightened. They moved with more spring and snap.

Water!

A water-hole had been spotted a thousand yards ahead by one of the scouts. The animals had discovered it for themselves. It was all Kedhil Pasha could do to prevent a stampede for the drinking place. He was

forced to take out his revolver and enjoin the men to form a line before any semblance of order was induced.

Man and beast drank long and thirstily. The oasis boasted but a few mangy, wind-bitten palms, but even these were welcome as the men flung themselves down for a much-needed rest.

Strange walked on alone to reconnoiter, topped the first rise in the sand. As he did, he saw below him what looked like a valley although it, too, was but a floor of sand. Rising, however, a few feet above the white, glittering sand was something that looked like a spire. A few feet away was another.

The ruins of the ancient temple!

Strange rushed back, broke the news. At once a hubbub arose among the men. They drew back from Strange and the Pasha, whispered excitedly among themselves. At last, one of their number strode forward, bowed so low that his forehead touched the ground.

**"M**EN akin to the gods!" he began to orate. "We fear for ourselves mightily. We have taken advices and we refuse to stay within the confines of this place longer than need be. None of us knew the object of this caravan when it left Cairo; now we—"

"You can't turn back now!" interrupted Strange.

"Oh, sire," said the man mournfully, "this is an accursed spot. It is written in Egyptian lore that he who desecrates its sacredness will die a horrible death. It was sealed with the curse of the great Sut-ran-Ahmen centuries ago, so that no man might—"

The Pasha whipped out his revolver. "The first man to set foot back to Cairo, without explicit orders, gets a bullet in his back! I

am Kedhil Pasha. I am powerful enough to offset the curse of the centuries!"

Notwithstanding the fact that the men had carbines at their disposal and that they outnumbered Kedhil Pasha and Strange by more than ten to one, the effect of the revolver was to cow them to obedience. So great was the Pasha's name, so much did he inspire fear.

"Tomorrow," boomed the Pasha, "we unpack the shovels and dig! Tonight we pitch camp and rest!"

**T**HAT night Strange and the Pasha took turns at guarding the camp lest any of the men desert. Since nothing amiss did happen in the course of the night, the men took greater heart and set to work with a will in the morning.

But the digging proved back-breaking, torturing toil. Under the blazing sun, the men worked grumpily, grumbling ever to themselves. Obviously they were torn between their fear of Kedhil Pasha and their terror of the traditional curse.

Four days passed before any real progress was made. A long trench had been excavated that led ever closer to the site of the temple. The men became more and more reluctant to continue, until on the afternoon of the fifth day, the digging came to an abrupt, dramatic end.

One of the shovels struck, not sand, but something hard and unyielding. Strange and the Pasha jumped into the trench at once. They grabbed shovels, and spaded away the last barrier of sand that revealed the broad, stout, bejeweled door that opened into the temple.

First attempts to open the door failed. It was locked securely. Finally the Pasha's patience wore out and a pick-axe was employed to smash it down. Four mighty strokes and the door shivered, then gave way.

The men, consumed with curiosity, forgot their superstitious fears and crowded close.

"Behold!" cried Kedhil Pasha. "Once more is the door to the temple of Sut-ran-Ahmen opened by man!"

With that, he pushed at it with his shoulder, then fell instantly back. A hiss was heard as of air escaping out of a balloon. A harsh odor wafted from the dark corridor ahead.

"Back!" cried Strange. "Get back, everyone! That smells like poisonous gas!"

He and the Pasha were the first to scramble to safety. The other men went into a panic, got into each other's way. Before Strange's eyes, four of them fell suddenly to their feet, as though beaten over the head with numbing blows.

Strange's intuition had been correct. The four men were instantly killed, their lives snuffed out like so many candles. The others managed to scramble to safety.

Hours passed before Strange ventured back to the door, sniffed speculatively. The air had cleared and the noxious gas had disappeared. But it was quite another matter to convince the men of that fact. Neither Strange's urging nor the Pasha's gun could force them to go near the open door to the temple once more.

**T**HE Pasha was in a towering rage. He brandished the gun, threatened to fire bullets at random into the huddled workers' midst if they refused to obey him.

"Let them alone," Strange put in. "You can't blame 'em after what happened. They're frightened out of their wits. They've been nursing a superstition for centuries and here it is, proven true. Men do die when the temple is forced open. They don't realize that it is only coin-

vidence, that the poisonous gas is merely a chemical accumulation of the centuries."

"They must obey my voice!" thundered Kedhil Pasha.

"Forget it," said Strange, grinning. "They're past caring what you'll do to 'em. They won't go near that door now for the devil himself. Tell you what, give me a lantern and I'll go in there alone. If I come out alive and safe, they might take heart and follow us. Agreed?"

"Agreed!"

**H**ALF an hour later, lantern in hand, Strange once more approached the fatal door to the temple. He waved one hand cheerily at the huddled group of men, then stepped into the interior gloom.

The door led into a wide corridor that seemed to swallow up the lantern's feeble rays. High walls on either side threw back fantastic shadows. Each cautious step that Strange took made weird, awesome echoes. He thought of a pebble dropping into the bottomless depths of a well; he felt like that pebble.

The corridor came to an abrupt end, branched off into two circular courts. Strange chose the one off to the right, followed it cautiously. In the center he came upon a pit, deep and fathomless. He heard vague sounds issuing from it, faintly but regularly.

It took a few minutes before he decided that the sound was made by the drip, drip of water deep down in the bowels of the earth. Perhaps this very pit, now dry, had once been a drinking place.

He circled it warily, saw another dark corridor ahead. And as he stepped into it, the walls seemed to throw back the glow of the lantern with dazzling brightness. It was as though a hundred mirrors had caught the lantern's glow and

were tossing it back and forth like a ball.

His hand felt of the walls, felt the surface to be rough. He peered closer and an exclamation escaped him. Diamonds and rubies and moonstones! The walls were studded thickly with them!

Untold treasures were imbedded in those walls. And this was only a beginning. Near the end of the corridor, he came across steps carved out of stone that led ever deeper down.

He moved slowly downward, counting the steps. There were twenty of them. The bottom was a wide room, fan-shaped. On every side were doors. He approached them gingerly, tried their latches.

One opened to his touch, revealed nothing. The others held fast against his strength. In each door were two holes a few inches apart. By standing on tip-toe, Strange was able to peer through them. He held the lantern high over his head, and finally in one of them he saw the object of the search. Treasure!

It lay heaped in woven baskets placed about the walls. Some of the baskets had long ago crumpled to dust and had strewn their contents to the floor. He caught but a glimpse of the countless rubies, of the gold and silver contained inside.

Strange tried the door once more. It refused to yield. With a sigh of regret, he started back to summon aid.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Trap*

**H**E emerged from the corridor into the open-air trench, blinking his eyes against the rays of the waning sun. It was like coming from night into day. A muffled cheer arose from the men at sight of him.

Kedhil Pasha was at once at his

side, thundering questions. Strange answered quietly.

"We have attained the object of our search," he announced. "I have seen the treasure with my own eyes."

The Pasha's eyes gleamed dully. He licked at dry lips with his tongue. "The treasure of the Pharaohs!" he said in awed tones. "Ah!"

"The door needs forcing," Strange told him. "We will have to take a few men with us who will not be too much afraid."

"AND Ra-Menni?" queried the Pasha, almost in a whisper.

Strange grinned cheerfully. "Not a sign of him. What did you expect? That I would meet up with him in there?"

Kedhil Pasha shook his head gloomily. "You do not understand. There has been no sign or word from him for weeks, but nevertheless, his presence, his spirit, seems to hang over the air like a pall." He pointed a forefinger to emphasize his point. "I tell you, from now on every moment is fraught with danger!"

Strange shrugged. "That's as it may be. In the meantime, there is the treasure.

"Men," he shouted, "there is nothing to fear within. I have gone in and come out with the utmost safety. Who will follow the Pasha and myself? For the volunteers, there will be a reward for their courage!"

The men hung back reluctantly until first one, then three more volunteered to aid the searchers. Instructing the others to remain where they were, Strange led the way back into the temple. This time, at the head of the small party, he moved with greater speed and more confidence.

When the corridor with the walls of precious stones was reached, the

men gasped. They crowded forward, forgetting their superstitious fears in the light of acquisitive greed.

The fan shaped room was reached at last, and Strange pointed out the door that held the treasure. The men fell to with a will, hacked away with pick-axes, until the door swung wide. Then, even by the light of the lanterns, the men's faces blanched and they backed hurriedly away. The experience of the first door from which had issued the poisonous gas, was still fresh in their minds.

Even Kedhil Pasha, consumed with money lust as he was, hesitated to go nearer. Strange pushed forward.

"Let me try it first," he said simply. He shoved at the door with the flat of his palm. Then hastily he jumped back.

And just in time! A serpent's head jerked out, struck sharply at his ankle, just missed. Immediately two more snakes slithered out of the open door, wriggling their huge bodies over the threshold, their expressionless heads held high, their fangs flickering, tongues darting.

"We are doomed!" yelled the men. "The curse is upon us!"

Turning, they fled up the stairs, screaming their sheer terror. Kedhil Pasha turned deathly pale, backed for the stairs. But he did not run.

STRANGE, however, whipped out the automatic he carried in his hip holster, took careful aim and fired at the foremost of the serpents. The bullet struck the crawling object square in the head. It continued to move and lash its tail even after it was dead.

The other two snakes continued their slow movements undeterred. Again Strange fired. This time he missed. He jumped aside agilely, fired again. The snake reared up, flopped back grotesquely.

The third snake appeared to have

marked Kedhil Pasha for his prey. It crawled sinuously toward him, seemed to hold him fascinated and chained to the spot where he stood.

Again Strange raised his gun and fired. The shot echoed and re-echoed through the silent underground tunnels and corridors. The snake lay dead a foot away from the Pasha. Strange pulled the trigger again and again, until he heard the click of the hammer on an empty cylinder.

His gun was empty, but the snakes were dead. Kedhil Pasha seemed to recover as from a trance. His hand brushed at his eyes as though removing a film. His breath came in short gasps.

"FOR a moment I thought—" he began and stopped, shuddering.

"I know," said Strange, shrugging. He kicked at the thick body of one of the serpents. "Hooded cobras. Their bite brings death in a few minutes. Pleasant things, aren't they?"

"You go in alone," urged the Pasha. "There may be more—"

Strange nodded, took the lantern from the Pasha's hand. He pushed the door open wider and stepped over to his right, fast. He waited. Nothing happened.

Holding the lantern well in front of him, he stepped into the room. Huge blocks of stone, dripping with moisture, composed the walls. His eyes sought the corners carefully, lest any more of the dreaded cobras lurk there, but there was none.

Then he turned his attention to the treasure. In no whit had the ancient writings been misleading or exaggerated. The treasure was far greater than the mind could encompass at a single glance. Each raffia basket contained gold, silver, precious stones—a king's ransom.

Enough lay strewn on the floor to fill a dozen of the baskets. There were plates of beaten gold, even a

few combs made of the yellowish metal, in addition to square bars of it.

Two baskets contained nothing but sapphires and rubies which, catching the lantern's rays, flickered iridescently. Another held diamonds in endless profusion. These were square cut, of enormous size, some set in pendants and earrings.

Strange lost all track of time as his eyes and mind filled themselves with the dazzling, overwhelming sight. He stood transfixed by the chilling wonder of it. Such accumulation of treasure the world had never known before. All the ancient power, glory and majesty of the Egyptian Pharaohs, in their time the most absolute rulers on earth, were revealed in this array of gold and silver and precious stones.

Suddenly, Strange's eyes darted from the treasure to the stone wall beyond.

The wall had betrayed itself by a slight creaking!

STRANGE'S eyes widened as he saw the stone move outwardly! A section of it opened. A woman stood there, outlined against the darkness by virtue of the whiteness of her garments.

"Dasmine!" came from Strange's lips.

The exotically beautiful girl's eyes were blazing. With her hand outstretched, she pointed. Instantly, Strange whirled about.

In the doorway stood Kedhil Pasha. In his hand was a revolver. The Pasha had been about to pull the trigger when the wall had moved, revealing the girl.

Now he stood frozen with terror and amazement.

A dull curse escaped Strange's lips.

"You would have shot me in the back!" he rasped. "You thought

you wouldn't have to share the treasure with me."

Kedhil Pasha recovered himself. His eyes glared wildly from the girl silhouetted in the secret passageway to Strange. He raised the gun, fired wildly. Strange ducked to one side. The bullet smashed into the stone wall, sent bits of it spattering to all sides of the room.

Before the Pasha could fire a second time, Strange leaped across the intervening space. He knocked the gun out of the traitor's hand with a blow to the shoulder.

**K**EDHIL PASHA fell back before Strange's attack. Then he closed in suddenly, sent his knee upward into Strange's groin. The American fell back with a groan, doubled up with the pain.

The Pasha made a flying leap to recover the gun, where it lay near one of the baskets.

As he bent over it, Strange flung himself upon the man's back, bore him to the ground. Over and over they rolled, upsetting basket after basket of the sacred treasure. Kedhil Pasha was agile and strong. He slipped out of Strange's grasp, caught up a heavy object of gold, sent it hurtling at Strange's head.

Strange ducked, received the blow with his shoulder instead of his head for which it had been aimed. He stepped in at once, sent a series of crashing rights and lefts to the Pasha's unprotected face.

Kedhil Pasha could fight, but he couldn't hold out against punishment of this kind. Backing away before the rain of blows, he stumbled over one of the baskets, went down to a knee.

Before he fully recovered, Strange had crashed in a quick criss-cross left and right that sent the Egyptian prone to the floor.

Fists clenched, breathing heavily,

Strange stood over him, waiting for him to get up.

Suddenly he was aware of a rustle of garments from behind him. He whirled about. Dasmine had disappeared.

"Dasmine!" he called sharply. "Dasmine!" His voice echoed and re-echoed through the semi-darkness.

The section of the stone wall remained open, revealing a passageway beyond. From it came the sound of a dry chuckle. It was like the rustling of autumn leaves—faint and weird.

From out of the darkness came a voice speaking precisely, sharply: "Welcome! Welcome to the temple of Taur, where dwells the spirit of the ancient gods—powerful and omnipotent!"

Kedhil Pasha scrambled to his feet, squealing with sheer terror. Strange's eyes were glued to the dark passageway, but he could see nothing. "The door!" Kedhil Pasha then screamed. "The door!"

Strange wheeled about. The door to the fan-shaped corridor remained open. But from above, the stone wall seemed to be moving swiftly—downward!

It slid into place with hardly a sound, shutting out the door, making of the wall a solid, unbroken mass. Kedhil Pasha screamed again shrilly, clawed at the stone wall with his fingers until the nails bled.

"We are trapped!" His voice had become hysterical, piercing. "We are trapped!"

## CHAPTER IX

### *Human Sacrifice*

**F**OR a moment, Strange stared at the blank wall, at the shuddering Pasha. Then his gaze reverted to the opposite side of the room where the dark and mysterious passageway lay.

He had not long to wait. Slow

footsteps sounded and in a moment Ra-Menni appeared. Now he was not dressed in the trim garb of the Western world, but carried the flowing garments of purple and white once worn by the priesthood of ancient Egypt. Behind him appeared six men, similarly dressed, but without the gold decorations that distinguished their master's appearance.

Ra-Menni stood to one side and the six men silently filed into the room. Kedhil Pasha shouted something unintelligible, made a futile dive for the fallen revolver. Swiftly one of the flowing robed priests shot out his foot, sent the gun flying beyond the Pasha's reach.

"Seize them!" intoned Ra-Menni. About his thin lips lurked a smile. The men methodically grouped themselves about Strange and the Pasha. Two men took hold of the Pasha's arms, but four surrounded Strange.

"It is well, my brothers," muttered Ra-Menni, addressing the priests. "It is the white man, the American, who is the cunning one. The other is but a dog and fit only for a dog's death. To my chambers!"

**H**E turned about abruptly, stepped into the dark passageway. One of the priests prodded Strange and the American merely shrugged his shoulders and followed.

Resistance was useless, worse than useless. There was nothing left but to obey.

The passageway proved wet and damp and evil-smelling. Strange had to stoop his head going through it, but what he found on the other side had a surprise in store for him.

Unlike the part of the temple he had seen and explored, this section was clean-swept. It looked as though it were in daily use. In fact, Ra-Menni led the way into a sumptuously furnished chamber, a reconstructed room.

And there, seated on a soft divan covered with dazzling silk, was the girl, Dasmine.

Ra-Menni made a mock bow to his captives. "As you may well see, you are a guest in my private home. Here I have lived, undisturbed, fulfilling my destiny upon earth, until your expedition forced me into the world and its wicked, senseless ways in order to guard my home."

That, indeed, the place was a home in every sense of the word, Strange could readily see. Food and wine were heaped on plates of gold and stored in fine-blown bottles on little pearl-inlaid tables. Servants appeared as out of nowhere, carrying empty plates and bottles away.

**S**TRANGE'S eyes must have beggared the question, for Ra-Menni interrupted his musings with a discreet cough.

"Perhaps you wonder, my friend," he said, "how I manage here. It is indeed simple enough. The air is good. It is fresh from vent holes concealed and camouflaged above the sand's surface. The way you yourself chose to enter the temple is not our way. We have a broad, even path that leads to the open. It is concealed as the vent holes are hidden and few, very few, venture this way."

Strange's brow was corrugated in a puzzled frown. "But why do you choose to live this way? Why have you never disturbed the treasure we discovered?"

"The treasure?" queried Ra-Menni sharply. "The treasure is sacred. We never touch or disturb it. It is written that it must lie as it is until Taur once more descends from the heavens to the earth of man. Besides, there is much more gold and precious stones than ever myself or my priests can hope to use, strewn about our holy temple.

"And as for why I live in this manner which must appear so strange to your infidel Westernized eyes"—Ra-Menni drew up proudly to his fullest height—"I live here as lived before me my fathers and forefathers, as have always lived from time immemorial the men who bore the name Ra-Menni!

"**F**OR I," his hands raised aloft with the fingers wide; his face became bright as with an inner light; his voice thrilled and vibrated throatily: "I am the last living descendant of the high priests of Egypt! In my veins runs the pure blood of the ancient, glorious priesthood; in my heart sings the sacred song, to the powerful gods of my forefathers; in my brain resides the lore, the knowledge that once made the civilization of Egypt the greatest on the face of the earth!"

In the face of this man's overwhelming belief in his mission on earth, even Strange's skepticism received a rude shock. He found himself believing in the man's words, his intentions.

The light of faith still glowed in Ra-Menni's countenance as he turned to Kedhil Pasha. His voice was calmer now, more restrained, and for that reason alone, more menacing.

"Kedhil Pasha!" he intoned. "You have known the ancient writings, you have heard the ancient legends.

"It was one of your ancestors who helped conceal the treasure of Sutr-an-Ahmen against the Babylonian invasion. Your ancestor betrayed the Pharaoh and died upon the altar, a sacrifice to the gods, for his base perfidy.

"You have emulated your ancestor in every other respect; and in this last you, too, will follow in his footsteps. You shall die upon the altar, and time will stand still to receive

you into its folds. You can meet your ancestor face to face, as, it is written, all human sacrifices shall!"

"No, no!" screamed the Pasha. "Not that! Ra-Menni, mercy! Mercy, I beg of you!"

The impassive face of Ra-Menni did not change by so much as a flicker of an eyelash. "You must die in the cleansing fire!" was all he said.

Two of the priests caught up Kedhil Pasha from the floor, overpowered him and dragged him screaming from the room.

"Ra-Menni!" snapped Strange. "You can't do that! My God, man, this is—is unheard of! Are we savages, blood-thirsty savages?"

Ra-Menni smiled gently, sadly. "It is written he is to die," he muttered. "It was written in the stars that he would suffer the same fate as his ancestor."

Strange turned to Dasmine. "You!" he pleaded. "You can't stand by and see a man—"

He was interrupted by a horrible, blood-curdling scream from the other room.

"Can you stand it?" Strange cried. "Are you monsters or men!"

**H**E raced for the door, but two of the priests seized him at once by the arms. Struggle as he would, he could not dislodge their firm grip.

Dasmine eyed him with wide orbs, a little amazed, yet a little puzzled.

"It is written that he would die so!" she said in a low but firm tone, as though wishing to convince Strange of the inevitability of Kedhil Pasha's fate. "The gods so willed it and so it must occur!"

"Dasmine!" came the flat voice of Ra-Menni. "Argue not with the infidel, for what will it avail? He believes not our teachings, nor in the

glorious strength of our gods!" "Blood-thirsty demons!" Strange clipped.

Another scream, louder and more horrible than the first, came from the other room. Then there was a momentary silence. Strange could hear the crisp crackle of flames.

**T**HE silence was followed by a low chanting. It began on a passive, minor note, swelled higher and higher in surges of sound that filled the chamber.

Again it sank to almost a whisper and again it rose, wave on wave. Weird, incomprehensible music that filled the ear, and somehow made Strange shudder for he knew not what. He felt transported from the modern world into another lower sphere from which came cries of suffering and pain.

The chant ceased abruptly on the same minor note in which it had begun. A single voice was heard now, intoning something that sounded like a prayer.

When the voice had ceased, one of the priests re-entered the room. He bowed to the ground, touched his forehead to it. Then he rose, and handed Ra-Menni a keen, wicked-looking knife. Ra-Menni at once began to speak in sing-song tones, in that tongue that Strange did not understand but which he again realized must be the language of ancient Egypt.

Ra-Menni seemed to be addressing the knife. He brandished it above his head, whipped the keen blade through the air with a whish! Then he started for the door into the outer room. At the threshold, he paused, turned about to meet Strange's horrified gaze.

"The ceremony has begun," he said. "Fresh blood will be offered the gods. Once more they will know the ancient, glorious, priestly cere-

monies customary when Egypt, under the Pharaohs and high priests, ruled the world as its greatest power!"

Again the low chant was begun.

Strange could stand it no longer. He struggled fiercely, freed himself momentarily. He rushed to the door through which Ra-Menni had disappeared, and fell back in horror.

He saw the butchered form of Kedhil Pasha lying on an altar which was studded and gleaming with precious stones. About him roared and flickered a hungry fire.

Strange hardly felt the arms of the priests as they snatched at him and dragged him away. He felt weak and sick at the stomach. The stench of burning flesh filled the room.

Minutes dragged by. At last the chant came to a finish and Ra-Menni once more appeared in the doorway. His somber, dark face lifted up; his gleaming eyes fastened their gaze on Strange's.

"As for you," he said quietly, "you will not die in the same way."

## CHAPTER X

### *The Law of the Priesthood*

**H**E came further into the room, stood a few feet away from Strange.

"No," he continued, "blood such as yours would be an insult to the gods. You have proven a worthy adversary, but not worthy of a glorious death upon the altar of the gods of ancient Egypt." He paused, looked deeply into Strange's eyes with startling, hypnotic power.

"You shall die a horrible, agonizing death—not instantly. No, not that! You will die slowly, with horrible pain racking your soul and body. You will cry out for the surcease that death will bring you.

"You will cry for death, pray for

it, implore it to smite you swiftly. But it will linger just over your head, slowly working, never in haste."

**H**E moved quickly to a cabinet against the wall, drew out a vial of muddy looking liquid, held it up for Strange to see.

"Here," he said, "is the poison. It is unknown to medical science of today because it was lost, like so many other Egyptian secrets, with the downfall of the Pharaohs. I discovered it here among the ruins of the temple.

"You will swallow it while I stand aside and enjoy the spectacle of your death agonies. Pain like a raging fire will course through your limbs. For days you will suffer. You will beg of me to put a bullet through you—or a knife, but I shall not lift a finger to help you.

"Later you will be embalmed and mummified—a symbol for all time of the fate that awaits infidels who dare seek the holy treasure of Sutr-an-Ahmen!"

Holding the vial extended before him, Ra-Menni approached. Having been witness to this man's weird experiments before, Strange was under no illusions as to the truth of the words he uttered.

The muddy liquid would probably do everything he claimed for it!

Strange's blood pounded in his veins as Ra-Menni came ever closer, and his brain raced madly to find a way out of his difficulties. He had to find that way quickly. There was not a second to lose.

Thus far he was not bound. Should Ra-Menni succeed in trussing him up, he knew there would be no hope, that nothing short of a miracle or a change of heart on the high priest's part would save him. And as well whistle for the miracle as

await a change in Ra-Menni's intentions!

There was but one course open to Harry Strange, and that lay in his own actions. If he could but outwit the priests who held him captive, for an instant get his arms free, at least he could put up a battle, go out in a blaze of glory, not in the ignominious fashion prepared for him.

His arms and body relaxed as though he had given up all hope. He hung his head and sighed deeply.

The arms that held him fast felt the change in the position of Strange's body. They expected no further trouble from their captive. Strange waited until Ra-Menni was but a step from him. Without telegraphing his intentions by any preliminary tensing of his muscles, he lashed out suddenly with his foot. The blow caught the high priest on the shin.

**R**A-MENNI gave vent to an involuntary cry and leaped back safely out of reach, the vial still in his hand. But Strange was not quiescent any longer. With that kick, he had simultaneously wriggled and twisted, wrenched one of his arms free.

The priest tried to snatch at it, hold it fast, but Strange doubled his hand into a fist and brought it up with a swing that had behind it all the strength of his lean, hard body. It caught the second priest on the side of the head. He cried out, let go of Strange's arm. Instantly, Strange whirled, planted his fist flush between the eyes of the other man.

The man's mouth flew open, a stupid, incredulous expression covering his face. He swayed like a sawed tree for a second, then toppled to the floor with a dull thud.

Strange heard Dasmine scream. He took the scream for a warning and ducked. Something bright and flash-

ing winged past his side, missing him by the width of his skin. It plunged into the wall behind his head with a quiver. It was a long-bladed knife flung at him from the doorway.

**R**A-MENNI, after his first cry, had fallen safely back, guarding the precious liquid. He guessed Strange's intentions aright. He knew the American would dare anything to smash that vial. He would take any risk, expose himself to any danger. And it was the vial that Ra-Menni wanted to save at any cost!

The priests from the other room rushed in through the doorway, each armed with a knife. Strange snatched up the unconscious form of the priest he had downed, held him up in front of him as a shield.

Another knife whizzed at him with incredible speed. Like the first, it missed by the width of a hair, buried its nose in the wall. This time, Strange grabbed the haft, yanked and tore it free. He dropped the human shield he had adopted, and raced across the intervening space toward Ra-Menni.

Ra-Menni dodged the attack, slithered over to the other side of the room. One of the priests flung himself bodily at Strange; he was off balance, and missed. He tried to change direction, but Strange grabbed his ankle, twisted it sharply.

The man screamed, dropped to the floor, hugging the ankle. For the time being, he was out of the fight.

Then the man who had been knocked unconscious, stirred, moaned and opened his eyes.

Strange was but a few feet away, and the priest lunged across the floor at him.

Strange side-stepped, lashed out his foot, kicked the man in the shoulder. The priest doubled over, but instantly another braved the

knife in Strange's hand and grappled with him at close quarters.

Another flung himself at Strange's back, nearly bearing him to the floor with his weight. Strange dropped his knife, swung his arms back over his head and caught the priest in a grip about the head. He pulled forward and up with all his strength and heaved him over his head against the oncoming attack. Three men went down as the priest's body struck them.

Suddenly Ra-Menni slipped in, faced Strange squarely. The high priest held the huge sacrificial knife in his hand. Strange saw it raised, poised to plunge into his heart. His hands leaped out, caught Ra-Menni's wrist, pointed the knife down.

**T**HREE of the priests flung themselves at Strange at that precise moment. Strange lost his balance, fell heavily against Ra-Menni. A sudden scream rent the air. It filled the room with sound. The priests as at a signal fell away from Strange, stared incredulously at their leader.

Ra-Menni had fallen to one knee. He rose upright instantly, the vial in his left hand, his right clutching the haft of the huge knife. Its point had been plunged into his body!

A sudden, complete silence had fallen over the room. The priests' faces were torn with anguish, despair and pity. They had no eyes for Strange then, only for their leader.

Ra-Menni stood poised like a bird about to take flight. A widening blot of blood stained his white garments. He stared fixedly at Strange, started to say something. A stream of blood bubbled to his lips, dripped from the corners of his mouth, choking off the words he had meant to utter.

The eyes blazed with meaning, however, and Strange saw hate and

scorn enscribed there. Ra-Menni suddenly tottered, took a half step forward. He swayed like a drunken man and then crumpled to the floor in a heap. The vial smashed as his hand hit the floor and the liquid made a little puddle near his head.

A low cry came from the lips of the priests. One of them instantly knelt down beside the leader, made a hasty examination. His head drooped to his chest and his arms hung listlessly at his sides as he rose.

Ra-Menni was dead!

**S**TRANGE quietly knelt down and recovered the knife he had dropped. At the same instant, he felt a light tap on his arm. It was Dasmine. Silently she pointed to the open door that led into the corridor.

The priests were grouped in a semi-circle about the body of Ra-Menni. In a second they would turn to wreak vengeance on the man who had brought about his death.

There was not an instant to lose. Strange cat-footed for the door, was through it and in the corridor before the others were aware that he was gone. He stood for a split second in the corridor, undecided which way to turn.

He heard a cry behind him. The priests had discovered his flight. He whirled about, saw another door, flung himself at it. He was behind it, had it closed before any of the priests had gained the corridor.

Cries sounded through the temple. But the search for the American was a half-hearted attempt. The priests seemed to have lost all interest in him. That much soon became evident to Strange.

He hid behind the door as it was flung open by one of the pursuing men, remaining well concealed in the dim shadows. The man made no at-

tempt to search the room thoroughly, and thereafter the cries and the sound of footsteps ceased as the door was again closed.

Strange waited a few moments without even moving, lest he give himself away by a tell-tale sound. Then suddenly there came to his ears a low-pitched, mournful, ululating chant. He took a long chance and opened the door. He slipped into the corridor, knife extended, but there was no one in sight. Tip-toeing to the open door of the big room from which he had fled, he peered in cautiously.

He saw two men kneel down and lift up the inert form of Ra-Menni above their heads. Another ran to the cabinet, fumbled within for a moment. Instantly, a section of the stone wall slid back, revealing a dark aperture.

**S**TILL chanting, the priests began a slow procession into the opening, the two carrying Ra-Menni's corpse in the van. As the last man stepped into the dark interior, the stone wall slowly slid back.

Strange leaped at it, tried to move it. It was solid and unyielding. He turned to the cabinet, searched inside, saw nothing that would reveal how the wall had been made to open.

He whirled about. Wide-eyed, tears dimming her luminous eyes, Dasmine was huddled in a corner of the room.

"What happened?" Strange flung at her, puzzled. "Why did they disappear like that, and what are you staying here for?"

She bowed her head, answered in a low, vibrating voice:

"It is written that a woman is not permitted into the vales of the dead."

"The dead?"

She nodded her head slowly, her lithe form shaken with sobs. "The priests have gone to meet death;

the ancient priesthood of Egypt has come to an end."

"But—" began Strange.

"It is written," she said in the same choked voice, "that when the last high priest dies, his followers must inter him immediately and voluntarily bury themselves alive with him."

STRANGE suppressed a shudder. He understood now why the priests hadn't tracked him down. "But surely you don't believe that Ra-Menni was actually a high priest, descended of the ancient high priests?" he asked incredulously.

She raised her head, looked at him with amazement. "But of course, he was. Many, many years ago, he wandered the length and breadth of Egypt collecting his followers, all who would listen to his words. I," she tossed her head proudly, "I, myself, was one of them.

"To each of us who heard his call, Ra-Menni explained that it was the blood that ran in our veins that forced us to hear his voice and obey him. Ours was the pure, undefiled blood of the ancient Egyptians who long, long ago served in the temples.

"He led us to this place, taught us our duties, established the rule and hierarchy of the old-time priesthood as it existed in the age of the Pharaohs. One day, Ra-Menni told us, a princeling of the royal blood would appear to assume the throne of the Pharaohs.

"On that day Egypt would once more become the greatest power on earth. For that ruler, Ra-Menni was guarding the sacred treasure of Sutr-an-Ahmen." Her head bowed down again. "But it was not to be. All, all has come to an end."

"But why, then, did he permit Ked-hil Pasha and myself to come this far seeking the treasure?" Strange put in.

"Because the secret of the treasure passed from hand to hand faster than his avenging arm could move. Finally, he resolved to wander no more in search of those who possessed the secret, and kill them as he did Dr. Cavanaugh and Dr. Bell—"

"How *did* he kill Dr. Cavanaugh?" interrupted Strange.

"In the half hour that Dr. Cavanaugh left the papyrus unguarded, Ra-Menni found his chance to place his strange powdered poison in the parchment. One deep breath of that poison, and the victim dies within three hours!"

"Then, no matter when Dr. Cavanaugh had opened that papyrus, he would have died in three hours," mused Strange. "I understand now—and, of course, the poison's action twisted his facial muscles into what seemed a ghastly smile." He frowned. "But why didn't that same poison affect me?"

"DID not Dr. Cavanaugh bring the papyrus to you?" she demanded, and as Strange silently nodded, she continued: "Then perhaps the poisonous powder was shaken off, so that there was none left when he showed you the parchment."

"That must have been it," said Strange.

"And as I started to tell you, Ra-Menni returned here. He had decided to let those who possessed the secret come to the temple itself, where he could better deal with them."

"But you? When did you come here?"

She looked at him steadily. "As a child. I served as the slave of the master. He taught me everything—even to speak languages; English and French and others."

Strange glanced from the girl to

the blank stone wall from behind which came no sound to indicate that there men were going to their death.

"But what will you do now? It is written—"

She spoke very slowly and steadily, with clear-eyed intention. "It is written that I am to die, not in the holy manner of the others, but in my own humble way. I have long prepared for it."

As she spoke, she fumbled with a heavy ring on her finger. The ring went to her lips.

"Dasmine!" Strange cried out. "What have you done?"

"Poison!" came from her lips. The pupils of her eyes seemed to recede to pin-points.

"It—it—was concealed—in the ring—I—"

Her words ceased for a moment. Then she said distinctly: "The

treasure—the sacred treasure—is yours!"

Her beautiful form shuddered and slowly she sank to the ground. Strange rushed instantly to her side, knelt over her. Her lips were moving. He bent his ear close, listened intently.

She was speaking in that incomprehensible tongue—the language of ancient Egypt. Her words had the recurring beat of an incantation or prayer. No more than a few words escaped her lips, and then sound ceased altogether and she was dead.

For a long time, Strange knelt over her, staring down into the face that was now calm and composed as marble. When he rose, his hands were clenched into fists, the nails digging into his palms and his knuckles showing a line of white.

Then he strode woodenly for the door, to find the way he had entered.

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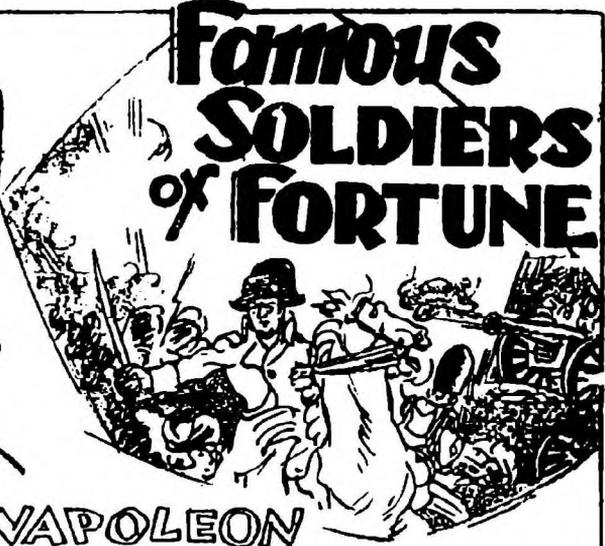
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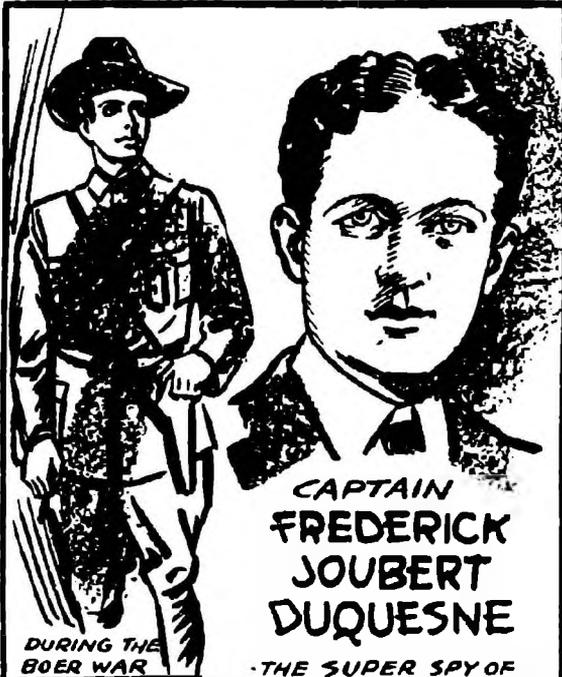


## NAPOLEON

WHOSE AMBITIOUS CAREER WITH ITS CONTINUAL RUN OF ROMANTIC ADVENTURES GAINED FOR HIM THE TITLE OF THE FIRST EMPEROR OF FRANCE, BEGAN HIS MILITARY CAREER WHEN 10 YEARS OF AGE AT AJACCIO, CORSICA.



AS A YOUTH HE PROVED HIMSELF A LEADER OF DETERMINATION, FORCE AND QUICK ACTION AND BY WONDERFUL STRATEGIES DEFEATED THE ALLIED FORCES OF ITALY, AUSTRIA AND GERMANY. LATER, ALL THE POWERS OF EUROPE JOINED TO DEFEAT HIS DESIRE TO BE RULER OF THE WORLD.



## CAPTAIN FREDERICK JOUBERT DUQUESNE

DURING THE BOER WAR

THE SUPER SPY OF

THE BOER WAR WHO WITH MANY CLEVER EXPLOITS WON FOR HIMSELF THE DAB-DEVIL REPUTATION OF BEING ENGLAND'S "CLEVEREST AND MOST DARING ENEMY AGENT."

DURING THE BOER WAR HE HAD AN UNPARALLELED RECORD FOR AUDACITY AND WAS WOUNDED IN COMBAT MORE THAN 35 TIMES. HE WAS CAPTURED NINE TIMES BUT ALWAYS ESCAPED.



## PIZARRO,

AND HIS SMALL BAND OF SOLDIERS WHO CONQUERED PERU, WERE SAVED FROM DEATH AND DEFEAT THE FIRST WEEK OF HIS CAMPAIGN BY PIZARRO'S BEING THROWN FROM HIS HORSE.

NATIVES, NEVER HAVING SEEN A HORSE, WERE SO SURPRISED THEY ALLOWED PIZARRO TO ESCAPE.



**GEORGE ROGERS CLARK —**

THE YOUNG VIRGINIAN WHO WAS ONE OF THE MOST DARING OF THE PIONEERS WHO HELD KENTUCKY AND OHIO AGAINST BRITAIN AND HER INDIAN ALLIES.

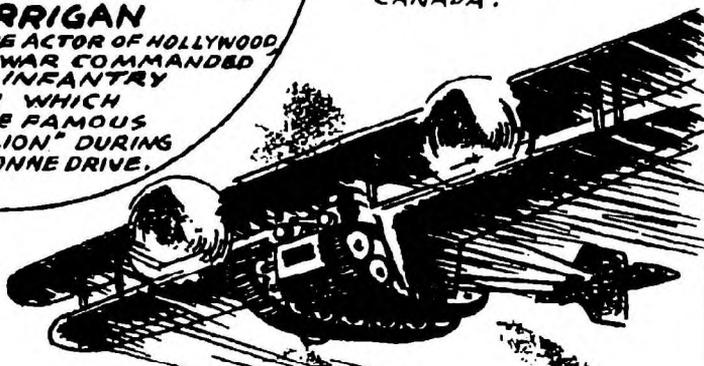


WHEN 25 YEARS OF AGE THIS YOUNG KENTUCKY GIANT WITH A FEW PICKED MEN OPENED UP THE "THEM FAR WEST" ACROSS THE OHIO. WITH RAPID MARCHES THROUGH DENSE FORESTS AND ACROSS OPEN PRAIRIES, CLARK FORGED AHEAD OF THE BRITISH, WHO CLAIMED ALL OF THE WESTERN TERRITORY AFTER DEFEATING THE FRENCH IN CANADA.



**WILLIAM HARRIGAN**

THE FAMOUS MOVIE ACTOR OF HOLLYWOOD IN THE WORLD WAR COMMANDED THE 307<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY BATTALION WHICH RESCUED THE FAMOUS "LOST BATTALION" DURING THE ARGONNE DRIVE.



**FLYING TANKS -**

-WEIGHING AS MUCH AS 1100 TONS AND SO DESIGNED AS TO BE THE FUSELAGES OF PLANES WHOSE WINGS ARE RELEASED WHEN THE TANKS TOUCH THE GROUND, INVENTED BY AN AMERICAN, HAVE LATELY BEEN SUBJECTED TO TESTS AND ARE EXPECTED TO PROVE ONE OF THE GREATEST WAR-AIR MENACES OF THE FUTURE.

A-1

# Bad Man's Town

*Brad Harper Mixes It With Hard-Fighting, Ruthless  
Desperadoes in an Exciting Drama of the West*

By JAMES W. EGAN

*Author of "Crook's Bodyguard," etc.*

**H**HEAD bare, the bronzed six-footer with the rough-hewn features stood beside an open coffin in Sam Linwood's undertaking establishment. He was a powerfully built man in his thirties. Bleak eyes of blue now gazed upon the waxen lineaments of a youngster who, even in the mask of death, bore an unmistakable resemblance.

"Brad" Harper was finding it hard to realize Gene actually was dead. Impulsive, reckless, headstrong Gene! The kid brother to whom he had essayed to be both guardian and pal. Not with much success, Brad reflected in bitter self-reproach.

Six months ago Gene and he had quarreled fiercely. The hot-blooded youngster—only nineteen—left the elder brother's ranch in Coconino County, Arizona, vowing never to return. Since that hour had come no message or word of him—until three short days back. Shockingly laconic was the telegram delivered to Brad Harper at his Bar H Breaching spread:

**"GENE HARPER MURDERED  
HERE LAST NIGHT STOP BODY  
AT LINWOOD UNDERTAKER  
STOP AWAIT YOUR ACTION."**

The wire was signed by Chief of Police Whitney of Twenty Wells, a boom town in the Texas oil fields. Brad called in Doug Hendry, the foreman. The latter read the message with troubled eyes. He knew,

despite the angry parting, how deep-rooted was the elder brother's affection for the wayward boy.

"I'm leavin' for Twenty Wells, Doug, to bury Gene—and find a murderer!" Brad said harshly. "You can handle the outfit. Mebbe it'll be some time before I'm back. I don't aim to return until I've settled my score with whoever killed the kid."

**A**ROUND the Arizonan's waist, as now he stood in the drab room of the dead, was a gun belt from which hung a black-stocked .38 calibre Colt. In a holster beneath his left armpit there was a small Luger pistol—a souvenir of one sulphurous hour of red carnage in Belleau Wood, far across the sea.

Brad faced Sam Linwood. The undertaker was a stout, rather jovial-appearing man, for all his dreary vocation.

"My brother's funeral will take place this afternoon," he said. "You can arrange it?"

"Yes, Mr. Harper. Shall we say three o'clock?"

Brad nodded. "I'm the only relative. In case Gene had any friends who might wish to attend the services—"

"I'll see they are notified, Mr. Harper. One young man has called a coupla times. I believe he was a friend o' your brother's. Dave Sand is his name. They worked in the fields together and chummed



*Straight toward Purnell moved the overalled figure*

around. He lives at the Empire Hotel."

"SAND, huh? I'll talk with him, after I see Chief Whitney. I don't suppose, Linwood, you've any idea who killed Gene?"

"Not the slightest." The undertaker shrugged. "Twenty Wells is prob'ly the toughest town in the Southwest. Killin' is frequent here. We've had thirty murders in two years, and only one punished. The police seem powerless. The governor's sent rangers here and even threatened martial law. Yet crime and corruption flourish.

"It's a bad community, Mr. Harper. The gunmen run it. I doubt you get much help outa Whitney. He ain't attempted to arrest nobody. Johnny Holm, the district attorney, is square and honest, but he's lyin'

very sick in a hospital at Amarillo."

"J sec." Brad spoke dryly. "Where is the police station?"

A moment later the Arizonan was out under the wooden awning common to most of the structures along the street as a protection against the greasy sunlight.

Smoke clouds from the carbon black plants almost obscured Old Sol.

The corrosion of oil was everywhere. Yet, as he turned his steps toward police headquarters, Brad Harper paid scant attention to the ugliness and dirt.

Incongruously adjoining the mortuary—although the incongruities of Twenty Wells were many—was a ramshackle pool hall. Two men lurched out suddenly. One was a Mexican; the other, a burly, whiskered American who wore no coat

and packed a revolver at his hip. Unsteady of limb, exhaling the stench of cheap booze, the Mexican staggered into the oncoming Harper. The force of the collision sent him reeling backward. He blinked at the sunburned six-footer with ophidian eyes—their snaky quality struck Brad at once. He cursed him with a foul Spanish oath.

Brad Harper had a working knowledge of Spanish. Ordinarily he might have disregarded the vilification of a drunken man. But, moved unaccountably by some feeling he could not analyze, he acted swiftly.

His hands shot forth, clutched the snake-eyed Mexican in an iron grip. A tremendous heave and the offender sprawled his length in the dusty street.

**A** GROWL escaped the whiskered ruffian. A hand dove to his holster. He never drew. Brad's own right hand fingered the black stock of the Colt. His blue eyes froze the other. Under their chill the hulking brute caved in.

"I'll be seein' you later, hombre!" he threatened. "Git up, Manuel!"

The Mexican wobbled to his feet, his pocked visage malignant. Before allowing his companion to drag him away he threw the Arizonan a deadly glance from the reptilian eyes.

For several seconds Brad watched the pair pursue their erratic course. Then he pushed through the gathering knot of curious bystanders, letting excited questions fall upon deaf ears.

A short tramp along the high board sidewalk brought him to police headquarters. Chief Whitney proved a swart, middle-aged Texan with none too candid eyes. He did not impress Brad favorably.

"You must realize we have a small force and are handicaped in various

ways, Harper," Whitney told his visitor. "Whoever killed your brother left little to go on. The body was discovered down a side alley, behind a heap o' rubbish.

"He'd been stabbed in the back, his pockets cleaned. I don't know how much he had on him. Mebbe it was only a few dollars. There's hijackers in this town who'd murder you for a ten-spot. It ain't safe to wander off the main stem at night. Other men have been found dead in back alleys, leavin' no clues for us to work on.

"If your brother had enemies, they ain't known to us. I've questioned fellow workers, includin' Dave Sand, a young hombre who prob'ly was your brother's closest friend. He couldn't tell me nothin'."

"Where was Sand the night o' the killin'?" grimly.

"Him and your brother separated durin' the evenin'. Sand was with a dance hall girl. He didn't learn o' the murder 'till next day. We checked up on him, and his story is true. No, we ain't got much to go on in this case."

"Well, Chief," said Brad, arising, "I'm goin' to stick around a spell after the funeral today. Mebbe I'll uncover somethin'."

"Don't get into trouble, Harper. That's plum' easy to find in Twenty Wells. I'll warn you it's a tough town, full o' bad hombres."

"Much obliged for the warnin', Chief; I reckon, though, I'm able to take care o' myself."

**B**RAD emerged from the station wearing a slight frown. He had a conviction the swart Whitney had not been altogether aboveboard with him. He decided to call at the Empire Hotel. Dave Sand, however, was not in. Not until the hour of the funeral did the cowman glimpse his brother's chum. Sam Linwood pointed him out

in the small crowd of mourners, a young man with a rather weak face.

Most of those assembled for the simple service were workers in the fields or the carbon black plants, the latter readily identified by their sooty faces and grimy eyelids. A few women sprinkled the throng, mainly dance hall girls. Of one of the latter Brad Harper took especial note.

She was a pretty, rouged blonde, about Gene's age, who wept openly during the rites. Moreover, she accompanied the cortege to the cemetery. Brad resolved to interview this young woman in the near future.

An hour after Gene Harper had been laid to rest, the elder brother confronted Dave Sand in the latter's room at the Empire.

"I understand you were Gene's friend," the Arizonan began. "Just what do you know about this business, Sand?"

"I don't know nothin' beyond what I told Whitney," a bit sullenly.

"Never mind what you told Whitney!" sternly. "You better come clean with me, Sand!"

**B**RAD'S compelling eyes bored the other. Sand shifted uneasily. He swallowed hard, did not respond.

"You're holdin' back somethin'. What is it?" snapped Brad.

"I ain't holdin' back nothin', Harper. I mean—well, it ain't safe for me to talk." Abruptly he surrendered to that icy gaze. "I don't want to lay alongside Gene!"

"That's what you're liable to be doin', unless you open up pronto!" Brad ripped out fiercely. His Colt sprang from the holster, prodded Dave Sand's belly. "Speak, Sand!"

"All right, Harper," weakly. "It wouldn't done no good to spill this to Whitney—he can't be trusted. And my life won't be worth a dime after tonight!"

"It ain't worth a lot right now, Sand! Go on!"

"I don't know who killed Gene. Honest, I don't, Harper! All I got is a suspicion. Him and me went to Purnell's Friday night, the night he was killed. It's the biggest, toughest joint in Twenty Wells, a wide-open booze and gamblin' hell combined with a dance hall.

"The police don't bother Porky Purnell often.

"**G**ENE had about a hundred dollars and got into a game. He'd bucked Purnell's game before without much luck, but Friday he won steady. A little before midnight, the last time I seen him alive, he was four thousand or so iron men to the good."

"Last time you seen him, was it?"

"I was with one o' the dance hall girls. We went to a booth in back and drank some liquor. Gene said he wouldn't leave the game. Next time I looked for him he was gone. Purnell told me he'd walked out with five thousand bucks when he quit."

"This jasper Purnell told you himself?"

"Yeah. I kidded Porky about Gene takin' him to the cleaners. Porky just grunted. Next mornin' I heard o' the murder. I knew right off somebody followed Gene from the joint."

"And you spilled nothin' to the police because you figured mebbe Purnell sent that somebody, huh?" Brad demanded. "You think Purnell would have a man killed to get back his five thousand?"

"Nobody knows what Porky Purnell would order done in this town." Dave Sand licked dry lips. "Mebbe it wasn't only the money."

"What you mean?" sharply.

"Gene kinda liked a dance hall girl named Nancy Larkin, who works at Purnell's. Porky fancies her some

himself, and I'd told Gene he oughta lay off her."

"Is she the girl who cried at the funeral?"

"That's Nancy. I guess mebbe she was fond o' Gene. Friday night she was sick and not workin'. She's prob'ly got a good idea who was back o' the murder, though she don't dare open her mouth."

Brad Harper thrust his revolver back in its holster. His eyes were more glacial than ever.

"Reckon you've told me ample, Sand. Where's Purnell's joint?"

"Listen, Harper!" Sand grew panicky. "You can't go up against Porky Purnell! Even the police is afraid o' him! Why, I'll bet Whitney suspects what happened to your brother, but he'll never make a move against Porky!"

"I'll do my own movin', Sand."

"It's suicide, Harper! Purnell controls a dozen gunmen, and they include three o' the worst hombres in Twenty Wells. One is Chicago Nick, a hophead, who sticks pretty close to Porky. Then there's Drag Venter, a big gunfighter, and Manuel, a Mexican, who's sometimes called 'Cascabel,' account o' his snaky eyes."

"**C**ASCABEL—rattlesnake, huh?" Bard's mind flashed back to the encounter with the drunken pair, to the ophidian-orbed Mexican he had manhandled. "Reckon I've met that Spig. He was along with a big, whiskered hombre."

"Drag Venter." Sand nodded. "He throws lead, while the cholo prefers a knife."

"And Gene was stabbed in the back!" savagely.

"It might've been Cascabel or the hophead. Nick's handy with a gun or knife. Anyone o' a dozen could have done it. Still, Porky relies on Venter and the other two for most

o' his dirty work. He seldom packs a gun himself."

"Where's his joint?" rasped Brad.

"Straight down the street, about four blocks from the hotel here. An electric sign in front says 'Purnell's.' Porky usually is there after eight o'clock in the evenin'. But I tell you that you're signin' your death warrant to tangle with him. I'm clearin' outa Twenty Wells tonight!"

"Suit yourself, Sand," contemptuously. This young fellow's name was a decided misnomer, Brad reflected. He was a cowardly weakling. Gene had been unfortunate in his choice of a chum. Not that it mattered now; the Arizonan knew his objective, could settle his own score.

**A**T eight o'clock that night Brad Harper's tall form swung along Twenty Wells' brilliantly lighted and seemingly interminable main street—a dazzling white way of wickedness. Cheap pianos made hideous clamor. On the boardwalks men in filthy overalls jostled women in silks. Hot dog vendors barked monotonously. Flivvers slewed past expensive sedans in the dust. Noise, bustle, the reek of oil everywhere.

Brad's austere eyes caught the red-lettered incandescent sign ahead: "Purnell's." Unhesitatingly, he turned in. A large, barn-like, gaudily decorated interior. To one side stretched a dance floor, already crowded with short-skirted feminines and a polyglot assortment of males. A four-piece orchestra blared from a flamboyant stand in the center of the waxed expanse.

Rows of curtained booths to the rear and on a balcony above. A dozen card tables. The constant clinking of chips. Close to the street entrance a long bar with massive mirror and brass rail. Soft drink bottles stacked high, but nobody imbibing such mild waters.

Brad's gaze swept the motley assemblage. He could distinguish neither the burly Venter nor the snake-eyed Mexican. Among the dancers, however, he saw the blonde girl Sand said was Nancy Larkin. Her eyes met his with what he thought was half-fearful recognition. Then she was lost in the swirling couples.

Brad pushed toward the crowded bar. He found room beside a greasy-faced, sturdy man in overalls. He addressed the bartender.

"Where'll I find Purnell?"

"He's around here some place," carelessly. "What's yours, hombre?" The latter to the overalled man next to Harper. This individual, apparently a worker in the oil fields, didn't answer him. He stared intently at Brad. Suddenly he grinned, spoke.

"Hello, Harper! How's the old top kick? Been a long time since we fought the Fritzes and the cooties, ain't it?"

**T**HE surprised Arizonan, who had given his neighbor a mere cursory glance, studied the oily visage a long moment. His hand shot forth. "Corporal Bill Guthrie! Could I ever forget that phiz? Glad to see you, Bill!" For the nonce Brad Harper was drawn back to the shell-torn fields of France.

"Yep, it's me, you old Coconino wildcat! Let's have a pair o' beers, garsong!" Presently they lifted glasses to each other.

"What you doin' in this hell-hole, Harper?" Guthrie demanded. "Not even the beer's good in Twenty Wells!" His black-circled eyes fell upon Brad's gun. "I see you go heeled. Well, this sure is a gunman's town!"

"I've reasons for bein' here, Bill." The former soldier's bronzed face grew hard. Before he could continue, the voice of the bartender cut in.

"You want to see the boss, stranger? Here's Porky now."

Brad wheeled. Approaching the bar was a heavy-set man of possibly forty. Small, pig-like orbs set in a gross countenance, gave him an aspect undeniably porcine, making his sobriquet easy to understand.

"Excuse me, Bill," Brad spoke grimly. "Reckon I'm goin' to be busy for a few minutes. Mebbe I can gab with you later."

Harper confronted the man with the porcine features.

"You're Purnell? I'd like to have a private word with you." His eyes met the pig-like ones frigidly. The latter's narrowed.

"Yeah?" drawled Porky. "And who the hell are you, hombre?"

"The name's Harper, Purnell. Gene Harper's brother."

"Ah?" The tone was calm, the little eyes unwinking. "Come with me."

Purnell led the way to a small table near the wall, at which sat two rough-looking men. Peremptorily he commanded the pair to vacate. They obeyed without protest. Porky pointed to a chair.

"Sit down, Harper." He dropped into the other seat.

**I** WON'T beat around the bush, Purnell." Brad lowered himself warily. "Last Friday my brother was stabbed to death. The motive for his murder is presumed to have been robbery. I ain't certain it was. However, he'd just left your place with five thousand dollars won at poker. Quite a sizable sum for a boy to take away from any gamblin' joint."

"Where did you obtain that information, Harper?" Purnell leaned back.

"No matter where I got it, Purnell, I reckon the information is correct," Brad said harshly. "Gene went outa here with a lot o' your money;

shortly afterward, he was murdered and robbed."

"In other words, you hint I had a hand in his death?" Thick lips parted in an unpleasant smile. "Prove it, Harper! Lodge a complaint with the police, if you think it'll do you any good. I've a notion they'd laugh at you."

"And I reckon you'd join in their laughter, wouldn't you, Purnell?" Brad spoke savagely. "I ain't concernin' myself with the police. I prefer to square a debt personally. The murder o' my brother was the work o' yellow rats. None o' them will be laughin' when I finish with 'em! So the law's a joke in Twenty Wells, huh? All the better! I won't be hampered in dealin' with you and your assassins, swine!"

Red rage flamed in the porcine eyes, then they swiftly grew bleak as Harper's own.

"Be sure you can finish what you start, hombre!" In Porky's voice now was a trace of mockery.

**B**RAD came to his feet. He realized Purnell was a dangerous antagonist, probably far more dangerous than any of his hirelings. Already the Arizonan's eyes had spotted one of these at a near-by table—a young fellow with a pale, leaden face and nervous hands. Undoubtedly the drug-using gunman, Chicago Nick, whom Sand had said stuck closely to Porky.

"Don't hurry away, Harper!" Purnell's tone remained mocking. "I've found you very entertainin'!"

Brad resisted an overwhelming impulse to smash a fist into that gross visage. Without another word he spun on his heel, shoved across the dance floor and headed for the open. None tried to impede him, although Chicago Nick directed a venomous glance after the stalwart figure. Porky Purnell sat where he was,

drumming the table top with fat fingers.

Once in the brightly lighted street, Brad paused uncertainly. He had thrown down the gauntlet to the man he believed responsible for his brother's murder. What his next move should be he had not determined, but his whole being craved action.

**S**OMEONE else emerged from the portals of the dive. Brad saw it was Bill Guthrie.

"You got outside before I could halt you, Harper," said his ex-army comrade. "I been requested to deliver you a message. From a blonde gal callin' herself Nancy Larkin. Know her, Sarge?"

"I reckon I know the one you mean, Bill."

"Well, she seen us talkin' in there and she told me she had somethin' important for your private ear. Within the next ten minutes she'll pretend she ain't feelin' good and slip away. She wants to meet you at her room in the Plaza Hotel. Her room number is 33. I don't know what the idea is, Sarge—"

"I have a suspicion, Bill; much obliged!" Brad's brows knitted. Was this a trap, he wondered. "Is the Plaza near-by?"

"It's a cheap dump, down about the middle o' the next block. There's two entrances—the lobby in front, and a door leadin' to the alley in back."

"Two entrances, huh? All right, Bill. Reckon I'll be meanderin' for the Plaza."

"Listen, Harper! If you—" began Guthrie, only to check himself. "Where you stoppin'? I'd like to have a chinfeest with you later on."

"I'm beddin' at the Commercial, Bill. Don't know what time I'll get in tonight, though."

"I'll look you up," Guthrie promised. He swung back into Purnell's

Slowly Brad Harper set off toward the Plaza Hotel.

THE hostelry proved a three-story edifice of rather shabby appearance. Brad, dawdling along to give the girl her ten minutes, did not enter the small, deserted lobby. He idled his way to the next corner, went down a short side street and invaded the gloomy alley to the rear.

The Arizonan's hand was on his Colt as he progressed up the alley. He reached the back entrance of the Plaza without incident. A single electric globe shone faintly over the door, which was an inch or two ajar.

Brad's booted foot thrust the door open. He discovered himself to be at the bottom of a narrow stairway.

"Chances is Room 33 is on the second or third floor," he reflected. "I'll go up this way."

He tread the steps to the second floor as soundlessly as possible and came to a dimly illuminated corridor. No one was visible, for which he was inclined to be thankful.

Brad had guessed rightly in regard to Room 33. It was on the second floor, not ten feet from the stairs. The door was shut and there was no transom. He couldn't tell whether or not the room was occupied. With his left hand he rapped on the panels. A moment of silence. Then he heard a feminine voice.

"Who is it?" tremulously.

"Brad Harper. Am I speakin' to Miss Larkin?"

"Oh!" Another slight pause. "Yes, I'm Nancy Larkin. You can come in, Mr. Harper. The door's unlocked."

Brad frowned. He had a queer feeling danger lurked behind the door. His right hand drew the Luger from its shoulder holster. His left commenced turning the knob gently. He held the pistol ready for instant action.

All at once the brass spun out

of his left hand. The door was yanked open violently. And Brad Harper quickly found his forebodings well grounded. He was trapped—trapped in a fashion that rendered his Luger impotent.

Perhaps two yards beyond the threshold of the opened door stood burly Drag Venter, cocked gun in his right hand, covering Brad. The brawny left arm of Purnell's henchman strained the form of Nancy Larkin close to his, an effective shield. Drag could shoot; the Arizonan dared not.

"Walk right in, Mister Harper!" Venter wore an ugly grin.

Reluctantly Brad obeyed. A lithe figure whisked from the shelter of the door, closed it. Brad gazed into the snaky, evil eyes of the Mexican nick-named Cascabel.

"Grab his hardware, Manuel!"

HARPER, his hands raised overhead, was stripped of the Luger and Colt. Drag Venter released Nancy Larkin. The girl's cheeks were white under her rouge.

"Your message secured results, Miss Larkin," Brad said, drily.

"That Porky!" she cried, hysterically. "He guessed my intention o' meetin' you here. When I slipped out the back way, Drag and Manuel were at my heels. They forced me into takin' them to the room in haste. They told me they'd kill me unless I obeyed. Now they've got you and they'll murder you, same's Gene. It's all my fault!"

"Shut up!" Drag Venter ordered roughly.

"I won't! I know that snaky greaser stabbed Gene because Porky wanted it done!" persisted the girl.

"Stuff somethin' in her mouth and tie her up, Manuel!" grated Venter: "We'll leave her here thataway and let Porky deal with her."

Powerless to interfere, Brad Har-

per was compelled to watch Cascabel bind Nancy Larkin with twisted sheets, gag her with a pillow slip. Thus trussed, she was dumped on the bed.

"SO you knifed my brother in the back, you Spig rat?" said the Arizonan between his teeth. "If I'd only guessed the truth when I had you in my clutch earlier today—"

"Si, I kill him—like I kill you!" snarled Cascabel, adding a foul curse. "Behind a rubbish heap they shall find your carcass, too, when tomorrow's sun dawns."

"Let's be moseyin', Manuel!" broke in the burly gunman. "I'll open the door and you can march him to the alley, with your knife ticklin' his spine. I'll walk a few feet back o' you both, in case he tries any funny business."

Hands still elevated, Brad Harper walked from Nancy Larkin's room and down the narrow stairway to the alley. Cascabel followed closely, his steel prodding the victim. Brad knew his chances were less than one in a million. Desperately he racked his brain, could think of no maneuver which might avail him.

The Mexican at his back, he emerged into the alley's gloom. It wouldn't be long now. Cascabel's knife urged him ahead.

Drak Venter was some ten feet behind.

Suddenly, from out of the blackness, came a shout.

"Harper!" The voice belonged to Bill Guthrie.

Drak Venter swore. His gun blasted in the direction of the sound. Brad's heart jumped, and jumped again as an answering spurt of flame split the murk. Venter's hulking body crashed to earth.

The unexpected turn of events must have stupefied Cascabel for an instant. This instant sufficed Brad

Harper. He dropped forward to elude the blade at his back.

Going down, he kicked viciously behind him with the left foot. His boot heel caught the Mexican's shin. A squeal of pain burst from the snaky one. Before the foe recovered from the crippling blow, Brad was rolling over and tackling around the ankles.

Cascabel spilled. Brad pounced upon the thrashing figure. He groped for the Mexican's knife hand, found it. Both hands clamped around the fellow's wrist. A terrific twist, followed by a second agonized yelp. The steel spun from Cascabel's grasp. Then the Arizonan's powerful fingers encircled the other's throat.

"YOU all right, Sarge?" Guthrie approached. "The big gunman's done for. The light from the hotel entrance kinda outlined him when I shot."

"I'm all right, Bill." Brad's iron grip on the Mexican's windpipe did not relax. He throttled without mercy, until the body of Cascabel abruptly went limp and lifeless. The assassin of Gene Harper never again would sheath his cowardly steel in an unwary back. Guthrie pulled Harper to his feet.

"I guess you've finished the cholo, too," he said soberly.

"He killed my brother, Bill," Brad stated implacably.

"That youngster murdered last Friday night was your brother? I begin to understand this affair, Sarge! The Spig and Drag Venter deserved what they got. But tonight's work ain't through yet."

"I reckon not, Bill. That swine, Purnell, remains to be dealt with! I'm much obliged to you, old partner; you arrived in the nick o' time."

"Well, I smelled trouble brewin'. After I went back inside Porky's

joint I saw the girl sneak out the rear way. Porky was wise to her. Venter and the cholo had been in a booth and he set 'em on her trail. I decided I oughta trek along to the Plaza, too.

"I LEFT by the front entrance.

I Right away I found I was bein' shadowed. Chicago Nick, the hop-head, was followin' me. So I ducked around the next corner and hid in a doorway.

"I jumped Nick and we had a little tussle. I wound it up by clippin' him over the head with my automatic and leavin' him lay. I got here in time to take a hand. But where's the girl? Was she just a decoy?"

"No. She's up in Room 33, bound and gagged. I reckon we'll have to turn her loose." Brad began explaining how he was trapped. Bill Guthrie interrupted.

"She's safe where she is for the present, Harper. We ain't. Get back your hardware and let's be lopin' along. Nobody except Porky'll be interested in the shootin', but he'll be interested plenty. And I ain't sure I rapped Nick hard enough. If he has recovered he's prob'ly high-tailed back to his chief and warned him all is not well."

Once more armed with his two guns, Brad Harper followed Guthrie's lead. They left the alley in the rear of the Plaza, and, moving guardedly, finally reached the scene of the encounter with Chicago Nick, unmolested. The hophead no longer was there.

"Uh huh!" Guthrie voiced grimly. "He's tellin' Porky!"

"Look here, Bill," said the Arizonan, "I'm mighty grateful for your help so far, but I got no right to drag you in further hot water."

"Oh, you would count me out, would you—and me your old war-time buddy?" reproached Guthrie.

"No, you don't, Sarge. I'm in this to the bitter end. Not altogether on your account, either. I have a score o' my own with Porky Purnell. Fact is, I think my claim comes ahead o' yours."

"Your claim?" in astonishment.

"Perhaps I better say the claim o' my employer—Uncle Sam! I'm goin' to reveal you somethin', Harper. The government's after Purnell hard. A month ago one o' our agents was murdered in Twenty Wells, and you can guess who was responsible!

"I was assigned to the case. I've been fairly lucky. In my rôle o' a worker in the fields I've uncovered unmistakable proofs o' Purnell's guilt. Within twenty-four hours I'd took action. Even though tonight's play forces my hand a bit, it don't matter."

"YOU'RE really a federal officer, Bill?" Brad demanded.

"Been on the D. J. payroll ever since the war, Sarge. While Porky Purnell may hold the local police in the hollow o' his fat hand, Uncle Sam is a different proposition. We might's well have a showdown tonight. I'm going to arrest Porky, if I can. Will you stick with me, Harper?"

"Will I? It won't be the first time we've gone over the top together, Bill!"

"All right, Sarge; it's the zero hour!" said Uncle Sam's newly disclosed agent. "We'll march boldly into the joint. O' course, Porky don't suspect my real mission here. He prob'ly figures me just a friend o' yours.

"I aim to post you at the front entrance to cover me inside. And you better take this!" Guthrie dug into his overalls, produced a long, tubular electric torch. "It's a plum' powerful flashlight. Stow it in a back pocket. Porky is a very re-

sourceful jasper and the glim may come in handy."

**T**WO men of grimly determined mien presently pushed within Purnell's. The orchestra still blared away, a few dancers shuffled over the floor. Several patrons leaned against the bar. At the same small table near the wall where Brad had defied the porcine proprietor, Purnell sat in frowning conversation with Chicago Nick.

The invasion of the stern-visaged pair with guns unlimbered brought a sudden hush upon the dive. Even the music faded away.

Chicago Nick leaped to his feet. The pallid face of the drug addict was twitching. But Porky Purnell neither arose nor evinced emotion on his gross features.

"What is this?" he sneered. "A holdup?"

"Everybody get back and stay back!" Crisply the words fell from Bill Guthrie's lips. Straight toward Purnell, automatic leveled, moved his overalled figure. "No, Porky, this ain't a holdup. The United States government has come a-callin'. The Department o' Justice wants you for the murder o' Agent Paul Watts on September 17 last!"

Brad Harper, keenly vigilant, caught the narrowing of Purnell's pig-like orbs, the quick alarm flashing across the pouchy face. Slowly Porky heaved to an upright position. His sneer returned.

"Yeah? Well, I don't give that for your charge!" He snapped his fingers at the advancing Guthrie, barely a yard away.

No sooner was the scornful gesture made when someone pulled the light switch. Every globe in the place winked out, plunging the barn-like interior into deep gloom. An instant later half a dozen guns crashed.

Bullets whistled past Brad Har-

per, but they whistled overhead. As darkness enveloped the big room he dived to his knees.

His left hand jerked forth the flashlight given him by Guthrie. He pressed the button.

The broad white beam of the torch swept onto a striking tableau. Like a fat worm, Porky Purnell was crawling along the dance floor, a hand tugging under his shoulder.

Bill Guthrie also was down, as yet unharmed. Crouched above him, blindly slashing the air with a wicked knife, was Chicago Nick. Granted a couple of seconds more the hophead might have flashed his blade in the officer.

Chicago Nick was not vouchsafed those seconds. Brad's ready Colt barked. A shriek pealed from the drug user as the well aimed slug tore through his body, hurtled him beneath the legs of the small table.

None too quickly Brad snapped off his torch. Two or three bullets from gunmen invisible in the gloom hummed so close he could almost feel them scrape his skin. He flung himself prone. His voice rang out.

**T**ELL Purnell to order lights up or I'll shoot him next and pour it into him, Bill!" he shouted. "He's endangerin' the lives o' innocent men and women." Brad shifted just in time to escape a whizzing chunk of death.

"You heard, Porky?" rasped Guthrie's voice. "That goes!"

No response from Purnell. Recklessly Brad turned on the flashlight. Its rays picked up the gross evildoer at the edge of the bandstand. He was kneeling, in his hand a flat automatic of small calibre.

The flat automatic snarled. Something bit Brad's cheek, like a venomous insect. A near call. The Arizonan's gun roared as his torch went dark.

Suddenly the house lights flicked on. The re-illumination of the dive revealed Purnell writhing on the floor, a wound in his right shoulder.

The routing of their leader and the death of Chicago Nick appeared to take all heart out of the other ruffians who had tried vainly to assassinate Brad and Guthrie. Not a shot was fired after the restoration of light. Apparently Porky's remaining gunmen refused to fight lost causes.

"I'll round up these *malos* hombres and gather their guns, Sarge," said Bill Guthrie. "You got a scratch on your cheek, but it ain't serious. Next step is to remove the tricky Mr. Purnell. Porky knew he was sunk soon's I mentioned Uncle Samuel. So he signals for lights off in the desperate hope o' gettin' away. I had a hunch that flashlight would prove handy."

Just as he concluded, a quartet of uniformed officers, guns drawn, burst into the dive. Leading the police, a scowl on his swart face, was Chief Whitney. "What the hell's this?" he grated. "You fellows—"

"Chief, you're right in time to assist Uncle Sam in cleanin' out a rattler's nest. I'm William Guthrie, o' the Department o' Justice—here's my shield!"

At sight of the emblem of authority Whitney's visage lost color.

"PURNELL'S under arrest for the murder o' Paul Watts, government agent, last month.

"We've been forced to wound him and wipe out three others—Venter, Cascabel and the hophead. Cascabel, by the way, killed Gene Harper last Friday at Purnell's order. We'll prove that through the testimony o' Nancy Larkin, now a prisoner at the Plaza Hotel. The government can count on your cooperation, o' course, Chief?" in grim accents.

"I—yes, o' course, Mr. Guthrie!" weakly.

Brad Harper's sombre blue eyes looked straight through the unhappy Whitney.

He was seeing a fresh grave under the oil-clouded heavens; he wondered if Gene's spirit could now understand and be at peace.

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*Author of "Bare Fists," "The Ace from Hell," etc.*

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# The Whirlwind's

*A Colorful, Swift-Moving  
Yarn of Trickery and  
Vengeance on the  
Highways of  
Peril*

By JOHNSTON McCULLY

Author of "Alias the Whirlwind," "The  
Mark of Zorro," etc.

## CHAPTER I

### *The Masked Man*

FROM the near distance came the soft *plop-plop* of trotting horses' hoofs in the deep dust, the faint creaking of carriage wheels, and frequently the crack of a lash, drifting down the wind as it swept in from the moon-drenched sea. These mingled sounds reached the ears of the masked rider who sat his horse silently in the shadows cast by a mass of rocks.

The horse was a powerful, rangy black, and the rider was shrouded in a black cloak. The mask across his face was black, as was his drooping hat. He was nothing more than a shadow himself, a menacing shadow with pistol held ready in a steady hand which rested on the pommel of his saddle, and blade loose in its scabbard.

The soft *plop-plop* of hoofs came nearer, the carriage wheels creaked louder, the snap of the lash now punctuated a burst of song which rang out across the land in a fair baritone. This traveler through the moonlight seemed to be enjoying life and the scene. Nor was he merely



*The Whirlwind urged his big black*

reacting from drinking too much wine—his song was too clear for that.

The masked rider gathered up his reins and pressed his mount with his knees.

At the proper moment, the big black he bestrode sprang out from the shadows and to the middle of the dust-deep highway.

There came a squawk of terror from the native coachman who drove the prancing team drawing the carriage, as he caught sight of the masked man, and he pulled the horses back upon their haunches. The carriage lurched sideways and came to a stop, and the song came to an

# Rage

A Complete Novelette



*at top speed, as the troopers thundered along behind*

abrupt stop also, in the middle of what was to have been a wonderful crescendo.

"Your purse, señor!" the masked rider demanded of the occupant of the carriage.

He spoke in the stern voice of a determined man used to being obeyed.

As he spoke, he pressed his horse closer to the carriage, and bent forward in his saddle, his eyes gleaming through slits in his mask, the pistol held ready to bark and split the night with flame if there was a show of resistance.

The occupant of the carriage gave a gasp of surprise, but seemingly not

one of fear. He regained his composure quickly.

"By the saints, a highwayman!" he exclaimed.

"You have guessed it, señor!"

"That this should happen to me!" the man in the carriage cried. "The jest in that!" He tossed back his head, and his wild laughter rang out to echo among the rocks.

"Is it so amusing, señor, to have a pistol held at your head, and have your purse demanded of you?" the masked rider asked, angrily.

"I ask your pardon for my laughter. It was not at you, but at the situation. One moment, I beg, before you shoot! See—my hands are ele-

vated." The man in the carriage was indeed holding his hands above his head.

"What is this?" the highwayman demanded.

"I have rare words for your ear alone. Pray allow my coachman to go forward a short distance, that he may not hear what I say. He is a harmless fellow, and unarmed."

"**P**ERMISSION for him to do so is granted," the highwayman replied. "If you are attempting some subterfuge, señor, he may return soon to drive on with your dead body."

Receiving his orders, the native coachman fled gladly, to stop about a hundred feet away and look back, his fingers in his ears and his eyes bulging.

He expected a blast from the pistol the highwayman held, a shriek of pain, perhaps that this robber would even kill him after slaying and robbing his master.

"Your purse!" the highwayman demanded again of the man in the carriage. "We can talk after I have obtained that."

Now, the man in the carriage bent forward, so that his face was clearly revealed in the bright moonlight. It was a handsome face, that of a man about thirty, a man garbed fashionably, and upon whose white fingers jewel-studded rings gleamed.

"My purse?" he said. "You do not want it, señor. I can convince you of that. But whom have I the honor of addressing?"

"I am El Torbellino, The Whirlwind, to those who know me by no other name."

"Splendid! This is far better than I had dared hope. I have heard of you and your exploits, señor. You are a man after my own heart."

"Praise will not make me forget your purse—or the rings you are

wearing." The Whirlwind replied.

"My rings? They are, indeed, valuable. I also have with me a well-filled purse, Señor El Torbellino—stuffed with coins of gold and silver and tucked into my girdle. A rare prize for a highwayman! But you will not take it from me."

"Can you mean, señor, that you would be so foolhardy as to try to fight, with the muzzle of my pistol at your head?" The Whirlwind asked.

"You mistake me. I have no thought of fighting. A man does not fight with his comrade."

"His comrade?" The Whirlwind questioned.

"This is why I sent the coachman away—I did not wish him to hear. Attend me, señor! I travel with money and jewels about me, having no fear of the gentry of the road. Can you not understand, señor? Because I am a highwayman, myself."

"You?" The Whirlwind gasped.

"**E**VEN I, señor. To you, and the people of this Southland, I must be simply Don Audre Ruiz, a caballero driving about the country for pleasure. Yet, I am a highwayman."

"Traveling in this guise—"

"Ah, Señor El Torbellino, it is easily explained. A little slip, in the vicinity of San Francisco de Asis, and I judged it wisdom to disappear for a time. Certain of the soldiery were too close on my heels. To hang by the neck—the mere thought of it is repugnant to me. So, I took to traveling."

"And you will ride the highway in this vicinity?"

"Have no fear, señor, that I shall intrude upon your district. Here, I play the caballero, and mayhap pick up a few coins at dice and cards, being adept at both. El Torbellino rules the highway here, as far as I

am concerned. And may good fortune attend you!"

"Don Audre Ruiz, you say?"

"So I am to be known. Do you understand, now, why I do not fear to travel with valuables about me? We of the highway do not steal from one another. You know it is against the code."

"So it is," The Whirlwind agreed.

"Now, Señor El Torbellino, for the benefit of my coachman, I'll raise an outcry, and do you discharge your pistol and ride away furiously. I shall have to tell a tale of being robbed."

"**B**UT you retain your purse and rings."

"I shall say that they were hidden, and that you got another purse with only a small amount in it."

"Start your outcry," The Whirlwind directed. "Take up your reins and lash your horses. Stop to pick up your driver, then hasten away as fast as you can!"

"I hope we meet again, El Torbellino."

"The hope is mutual, Don Audre."

Don Audre Ruiz gathered the reins and prepared to make an outcry. But he did not give it voice. There was a sudden din on the highway ahead. A pistol cracked, and a ball sang past The Whirlwind. And around the rocks and toward the carriage charged three troopers from the presidio of San Diego de Alcala.

"Help! Help!" Don Audre Ruiz screeched.

As The Whirlwind spurred away, Don Audre brought forth a pistol, and fired. He was doing so to make the situation appear genuine. The Whirlwind thought. Yet the ball came perilously close—much too close for a shot supposed to be purposely wild.

The Whirlwind did not speculate regarding it at the moment, being

more concerned with making immediate escape.

But he remembered it later.

## CHAPTER II

### *Tricked!*

**I**T was an accident that the troopers happened to be in the neighborhood. The native coachman, finding himself unwatched, had slipped into the shadows, darted around the rocks, and then sped down the highway. He had encountered the troopers as they rode into the highway from a *hacienda* where they had been interrogating natives suspected of stealing hides.

They listened to the story of the frightened coachman, then rode furiously to the rescue, not forgetting the fact that there was a rich reward offered by the Governor for the person of this El Torbellino, either alive or dead. One stopped beside the carriage to hear the yarn of Don Audre Ruiz, while the other two pursued.

Down the dusty highway, The Whirlwind urged his big black at top speed. The two troopers thundered along behind. The Whirlwind's pistol barked to deter them, and a bullet sang past the troopers' heads. They fired in reply, but the bullets went wild.

Like an elusive shadow, The Whirlwind rode from the highway and began circling back toward the distant town. The troopers continued their pursuit, one gradually drawing away from the other, having a better mount. He realized this, and slackened speed, not desiring to encounter The Whirlwind alone.

Back toward San Diego de Alcala, The Whirlwind raced. When he came to smooth ground, where the going was not so dangerous, he used his spurs. The troopers were shaken off and left behind.

The Whirlwind rode down into a

coulée and brought his laboring horse to a walk. Almost silently, he traveled slowly along the coulée's sandy floor, through the deeper shadows. Presently, he stopped his horse and dismounted.

He tethered the animal to a clump of brush, and swiftly removed cloak and hat and mask, as well as the blade he wore. He recharged his pistol, and stowed it away with the other things behind some rocks. Creeping cautiously out of the coulée, he hurried through the shadows toward the long, low, rambling building of adobe, which was the inn conducted by Carlos Lazaga.

**T**HE Whirlwind had disappeared. In his stead was Pedro Garzo, a wanderer lately come off El Camino Real, the King's Highway, who had been given the job of menial at the inn.

Carlos Lazaga, the fat landlord, was not in the kitchen when Pedro Garzo entered it. But Juanita, the landlord's fair daughter, was there. She glanced at him archly, her eyes flashing and dimples playing.

"So, here you are!" she said. "It takes you a long time, Pedro Garzo, to go to the pasture and give salt to the big black horse my father bought, and which no man can ride."

"I have been walking back slowly through the moonlight, busy with my thoughts."

"You had best be busy about your duties. You were thinking of some señorita, perhaps?"

"Perhaps," Pedro Garzo agreed.

In front of the hostelry, at the corner of the plaza, was a sudden commotion. Galloping hoofs pounded the earth, carriage wheels squeaked, men shouted to one another.

"Some guest is coming," Juanita observed.

"The sounds indicate trouble," Pedro Garzo said.

"Perhaps El Torbellino, the naughty highwayman, has been abroad again."

"Perhaps," he agreed, glancing at her swiftly.

"Do you know what they are saying about El Torbellino?" she asked. "That he is a man of noble blood, who came from Spain after a quarrel with his father, and that he plays at being highwayman for the excitement of it, and that whenever El Torbellino robs a man, the next morning old Fray Marcos finds gold in the poor box at the chapel."

"One hears a lot of gossip—if one listens," Pedro Garzo observed.

Their eyes met again, and the señorita smiled and dimpled as before, her manner that of a woman who shares a secret. Pedro Garzo slipped out of the kitchen and entered the public room of the inn, where he pretended to be at work sweeping dead ashes back into the fireplace. He listened to the din outside.

**T**HE carriage of Don Audre Ruiz had arrived. Don Audre came stalking into the hostelry with one of the troopers beside him and the fat landlord at his heels. A splendid man, this Don Audre appeared to be, every inch the caballero, as he strode to the nearest table and dropped on the bench beside it.

"Wine!" he shouted, as he pulled off his gauntlets. "Give wine to this good soldier, also."

"My comrade has ridden to the presidio to fetch our sergeant, Juan Cassara," the trooper reported. "I am sure the sergeant will be here immediately."

"Fine protection for travelers on the highway!" Don Audre complained. "I shall make a report of this occurrence to the Governor. Is it possible that all of you cannot catch this one road robber?"

"We do our best," the trooper re-

plied. "He is like a shadow, this El Torbellino."

**T**HEN Sergeant Juan Cassara came hurrying into the inn from the plaza. His huge body was shaking with wrath, and his face was almost purple with suppressed rage. He bowed low before Don Audre.

"My capitán is away, and I am in charge here, señor," Sergeant Cassara explained. "I have ordered out every man to run down this rogue. They will patrol the highway and hills until daylight. This scoundrel of an El Torbellino shall be caught, and his neck snapped by a rope. Of what did he rob you, señor?"

"Of nothing!"

"How is this? My troopers frightened him away in time?"

"Your men aided me not at all," Don Audre said. "I was left to my own wit and resources."

Working beside the fireplace, Pedro Garzo smiled. It was a good jest, he thought, that Don Audre, himself a highwayman, should play the indignant victim.

"Your own resources, señor?" Sergeant Cassara asked.

"I already had outwitted the rogue when your troopers came on the scene. By a clever trick, señor. I wore jewels openly, and had my purse in my girdle. And I told the scoundrel that I, myself, was a highwayman. He would not rob a comrade."

Sergeant Cassara's laughter filled the room.

"A very clever trick!" he agreed. "You claimed road brotherhood with him?"

"And he believed me. He did not question the truth of what I said. I told him I came here because it had got too hot for me in the North."

"And how am I to be sure, señor, that such is not the case?" Sergeant Cassara asked. "Perhaps you are

truly a highwayman, pretending for the moment to be otherwise."

Pedro Garzo felt sudden fear for Don Audre. The big sergeant was no fool, and perhaps would demand proof.

But Don Audre laughed. "I shall identify myself properly for you, honest sergeant," he said. "Prominent men in this vicinity know me, and will vouch for me. I have come to visit Don Juan Sandoval, and perhaps—though this is supposed to be a secret—I shall wed Don Juan's charming daughter."

His voice rang with truth. Pedro Garzo, still working near the fireplace, felt hot rage surge through him. The Whirlwind had been tricked! This was really Don Audre Ruiz, and no highwayman. He had claimed road brotherhood falsely.

The Whirlwind had believed him because of his jewels and purse carried so openly. No honest man in his right senses would do so, whereas a thief would know that his property would be respected by other thieves.

**H**ERE was a thing that called for vengeance. The mind of Pedro Garzo began working swiftly, trying to evolve a method whereby The Whirlwind could balance the scales.

"Pedro!" Lazaga called. "Attend the guest!"

Don Audre looked at him scornfully as Pedro Garzo approached. There was no fear of him being recognized. This cringing menial did not seem to have spirit enough for a road agent.

"Clean my boots, pot-washing scum!" Don Audre barked. "Heat water, that I may bathe face and hands. My coachman will give you perfume to put into the water. Help him with my horses, also."

Pedro Garzo's eyes flashed angrily, and he dared not lift his head and

betray his resentment. He knelt and removed Don Audre's boots, and carried them into the kitchen.

"That one has a mean tongue," Juanita whispered to him. "I was listening. What a trick he played on El Torbellino!"

"So it seems!"

"The whole country will be laughing heartily at it. El Torbellino will be the subject of jest, unless—"

"Unless—?" Pedro Garzo prompted.

"Unless El Torbellino hears of this, and takes a revenge. That is what I'd do, if I were El Torbellino."

Pedro Garzo looked straight at her, his face a mask.

"I have the thought, *señorita*," he said, "that El Torbellino will hear of it—and take his revenge."

### CHAPTER III

#### *Two Highwaymen*

IT was late before Don Audre Ruiz decided to retire, and before he reached the decision the rage of Pedro Garzo was such that he managed to contain it only with the greatest difficulty.

There was forthcoming immediate proof that Don Audre was no highwayman, for men who knew him called at the inn to pay their respects. The Whirlwind was made a thing of jest.

Don Audre, moreover, treated Pedro Garzo worse than one of the flea-bitten dogs of the pueblo, which caused Pedro Garzo to battle with himself to keep from making an attack and so betraying everything.

Above all, at the gambling table, Don Audre, supposed to be a caballero, cheated cleverly. Pedro Garzo saw this. Since in reality he was a man of good blood himself, it irked him to see good blood stained. But a menial could not denounce a caballero.

So, when Don Audre finally decid-

ed to retire, Pedro Garzo was a seething volcano of rage. Sergeant Juan Cassara had decided to spend the night in the big room, awaiting the reports of the troopers who were searching for The Whirlwind's trail. Everybody else would be gone save the one trooper remaining with the sergeant.

Don Audre demanded that Juanita light him to his room, and she did so with poor grace—and with Pedro Garzo hovering near and eager to avenge an insult to her. But Don Audre attempted no fond caress. He took the candle from the girl at the door, gave her a coin, bade her good-night.

Then he entered the room off the patio and closed the door—but left the wide window open.

In the big room of the inn, all the torches in the walls were extinguished save one, which sputtered and smoked near the front door. Sergeant Juan Cassara sprawled on a bench, half asleep, a wine mug at his elbow, and a wineskin handy in case the mug was in need of replenishing. The trooper, braced against the wall on the floor, snored.

Pedro Garzo slipped quietly to the open front door and looked out at the plaza. It was empty of humans. No lights were gleaming in the houses around the square. Here and there a drifting shadow revealed where some furtive native lurked. It was quiet around the distant presidio. San Diego de Alcalá slept.

PEDRO GARZO waited a time, then went quietly along the dark side of the building, and hurried through the shadows to the coulée. He busied himself there for a time. Returning, he went to the small corral behind the inn, into which the horses of guests were turned. He caught up a horse, and put on saddle and bridle, and led him back to the

coulée and tied him there beside his own big black.

Back at the inn again, Pedro Garzo got into the dark patio. Working swiftly, he put on the garb of El Torbellino, strapped on his blade, looked to his pistol, last of all adjusted the mask. Like a shadow, he slipped to the open window of the room which had been assigned to Don Audre Ruiz.

Moonlight streamed through the window and revealed Don Audre in sleep, his mouth sagging open as he snored. The moonlight was blotted out for an instant as The Whirlwind got into the room.

**D**ON AUDRE found a dream broken. A feeling of discomfort assailed him. He came awake to a realization that he was being roughly prodded with something in the side of his neck.

"What—" Don Audre began.

"Speak in whispers, or you die!"

Those words came in whispers to Don Audre's ears. He knew, then, that it was the muzzle of a pistol prodding him in the neck. Sudden fear clutched him, and the perspiration popped out on his face.

"Sit up," came the command.

Don Audre sat up on the side of the couch. Before him, a shadow against the wall, was a menacing figure. The moonlight glinted from pistol and blade.

"What is this?" Don Audre asked.

"Need you question? The man who claims road brotherhood falsely can expect no mercy."

"Ha! It is El Torbellino! Can it be possible that you do not understand?"

"Understand what?"

"I am a highwayman, as I said. I have forged letters of recommendation. I was compelled to play the part, to throw aside the suspicions of that sergeant."

"I happen to know, señor, that reputable men greeted you as an acquaintance. You are no highwayman. But you are worse—a card cheat! You hide behind a cloak of respectability when you steal."

"For such words—" Don Audre began.

"Silence, or you die! A man who befouls the good blood in his veins deserves double punishment. Señor, I have come for your purse and rings. This time, no lie will prevent me getting them."

"Take them," Don Audre said. "I am at your mercy."

"You are indeed, señor."

"There, beneath my cloak—"

The Whirlwind got the purse, and stripped rings off Don Audre's fingers, while the latter shivered with fear and made no resistance.

"This is all?" The Whirlwind asked.

"It is all. You have beggared me. I shall be obliged to get a loan, for I am far from home."

"Perhaps." The Whirlwind suggested, "I can show you how to get funds. But that will come later."

"I ask your pardon, Señor El Torbellino, for having deceived you on the highway."

**Y**OU made me a thing of mockery. People must be shown that El Torbellino can take revenge."

"You would kill me?"

"A shot would bring people, and my blade is too honorable to stain with your foul blood."

"Now, by the saints—!"

"The saints are better off your lips, señor!" The Whirlwind snapped. "Just now, I take this loot and leave. But we shall meet again. I take your pistol, also. You might try to shoot me—and come yet closer than you did out on the highway."

The Whirlwind darted to the window, got through it, and disappeared;

silently, he raced to the end of the patio. He stripped off cloak and mask, put them with the pistols and sword and loot behind a clump of brush and vaulted the patio wall. It was Pedro Garzo who hurried along the dark side of the inn and got quickly to the front door. He stood just outside it, leaning against the wall.

**H**OWLS for help rang through the night. Pedro Garzo stepped back through the doorway and into the big room. Sergeant Juan Cassara was springing to his feet, fighting the sleep out of his eyes, trying to draw blade. The trooper was awake, and trying to get up.

The howls continued. Cassara sprang through an open door and into the patio, for the howls seemed to come from there. Pedro Garzo and the trooper were at his heels. Lazaga came tumbling out of his room, a billowy nightshirt about him and a queer nightcap with an enormous tassel pulled down to his ears.

Don Audre Ruiz, half clad, rushed out into the patio and grasped the sergeant by the arm.

"He has been here—El Torbellino! He stole my purse and rings and took my pistol! He threatened to slay me!"

"You have been dreaming, señor," the sergeant said.

"Dolt! Look through my room. My purse is gone. See, where he scratched my finger when he tore the rings off it. I demand protection! I shall report this to the Governor."

"Softly, señor—softly," Cassara begged. "How long ago was this?"

"Only a moment ago. You were slow coming when I called for help."

"Search!" Cassara cried at his trooper. "Listen for retreating hoofbeats! This El Torbellino must be captured! He must hang for this! Right under my very nose—"

But there were no retreating hoofbeats. There was nothing to indicate which direction The Whirlwind had gone.

Except for the one man, Cassara's troopers were scattered out under the stars, watching the trails. Cassara could do nothing except try to give Don Audre consolation.

And that was a sorry business of which Sergeant Cassara soon tired. He bade Don Audre go to bed again, said that the pursuit of The Whirlwind would be continued, and returned to the big room calling to Lazaga to fetch more wine.

Soon, it grew quiet once more. Cassara sent his man to the presidio, to inform any trooper who returned where he could be found. Lazaga returned to his quarters. Pedro Garzo, as unnoticed as a bit of furniture, crouched in the corner by the fireplace.

But he did not crouch there long—only until Sergeant Juan Cassara had taken considerably more wine and had become drowsy again. Slipping through the front door, Pedro Garzo listened a moment, then he darted along the dark wall and out into the patio.

**H**E got The Whirlwind's raiment and donned it again, buckled on the blade, adjusted the mask, and once more went to the room where Don Audre Ruiz was housed. The window remained open; the door was closed, but not locked. There was no sound of snoring, and The Whirlwind believed that Don Audre remained awake.

He kicked open the door and entered, pistol held ready. Don Audre, stretched on the couch, struggled to sit up.

"Silence!" The Whirlwind warned in a whisper.

"You again?"

"Get on your clothing—at once!"

If you are not dressed in record time—"

"What would you do with me?"

"Ha! Are you giving me an excuse for shooting you?" The Whirlwind asked. "'Tis all I need, señor—a faint excuse. You have done much to irk me. I dislike to murder a man in cold blood, however—"

"Hold your hand!" Don Audre begged.

He dressed swiftly, though he was so nervous that he scarcely could fasten the garments he donned. The Whirlwind made sure he had no pistol, but instructed him to buckle on his blade.

"We slip quietly from the patio," The Whirlwind said. "We go through the shadows without being seen, to a place I have in mind. If you wish to die somewhere on the journey, you have but to make an attempt to escape, or give an outcry."

"But, where are we going?"

"Two highwaymen," The Whirlwind replied, "are going about their business of stealing purses."

## CHAPTER IV

### *Honest Thief*

**I**N THE coulée, The Whirlwind compelled Don Audre Ruiz to stretch out on the rough ground, a thing not difficult to do when Don Audre was prodded with the muzzle of a pistol again. He bound Don Audre's wrists behind his back, and fastened his legs together, then gagged him.

"If you are not here when I return, señor, I shall come looking for you," The Whirlwind warned.

Then he hastened back to the inn, from which there came no sound now save Sergeant Cassara's snores.

Cassara sprawled on a bench against the wall, and not far from the front door, no doubt subconsciously seeking the cool breeze

which swept in from the plaza. The Whirlwind entered the room cautiously, pistol in hand.

**F**OR a moment he stood with legs asprawl, looking at the sleeper. A chuckle rumbled from his throat. Then he bent forward.

"Cassara! Sergeant!" he barked.

"Eh?" Sergeant Juan Cassara straightened on the bench, and rubbed at his eyes with his fists.

"Attention, señor! You should be about your business."

Now, Cassara's eyes were open. Before him, standing only a few feet away, was a cloaked and masked figure. Cassara started to get to his feet.

"Do not move!" The Whirlwind warned. "I have information for you."

"'Tis that pest of El Torbellino!" Cassara growled, low down in his throat.

"Quite true, señor."

"You dare to face me so? For this you shall—"

"Careful, señor! Do not compel me to slay you," The Whirlwind said. "You are half asleep, else you'd notice that I hold a firearm."

"Give me an even chance!" Cassara begged. "You put shame upon me thus."

"I come to give you a chance to cover yourself with glory."

"How is this?"

"Attend me, Señor Sergeant! This man who calls himself Don Audre Ruiz, and says he claimed road brotherhood with me, and hence escaped being robbed—"

"Ha! What of that pretty gentleman?"

"Is it true that he is Don Audre Ruiz?"

"No doubt. Men of quality here know him."

"And did you ever hear, Señor Sergeant, of a man forgetting his

good blood and turning rogue? This Don Audre cheated at cards last night."

"I thought him devilishly fortunate."

"How does it occur that he is so ready to claim to be a highwayman? Is it not possible that such is his profession, and that he hides behind his proud name?"

"What is this?" Cassara cried.

"SOFTLY, señor! Keep your voice down. I am El Torbellino, The Whirlwind. If you catch me, I hang. Until you do, señor, I protect my own interests. Does El Torbellino care to have another highwayman working along the highway here? Are there rich travelers enough for two? I am an honest thief, Señor Sergeant. I do not pretend to be a caballero."

"What is this to me? I have no proof."

"You shall have it, señor. I happen to know that a certain rich merchant, by name Don José Mendez, is even now approaching San Diego de Alcalá, coming from distant San Juan Capistrano."

"I know it," Cassara said. "He always travels by night when it is cool."

"This Don Audre Ruiz came ahead. He will be out in the hills when Don José comes along. He will take Don José's purse, then slip back here to the inn, and say that he was nervous and having a walk in the moonlight. When you try to question him, he will rebuke you, saying that he is a caballero."

"We shall see as to that!"

"Slip to his room now, and you'll find him gone. You'll find that he has taken one of the horses from the corral, also. Catch him in the act, Señor Sergeant. Undoubtedly, he will attempt the robbery near the jumble of rocks at the top of the hill. From

there, the trail can be watched in both directions."

"I thank you, El Torbellino," Cassara said. "But this act of yours will not prevent me running you through or taking you a prisoner when I have the opportunity."

"Remain quiet a moment, until I am safely away," The Whirlwind ordered.

He darted through the door and into the plaza. But Sergeant Cassara did not remain quiet. He belated for Lazaga, rushed to the door and howled toward the presidio for the trooper to come to him, made such a din that people were awakened in their houses.

The Whirlwind darted along the building and fled safely to the coulée again.

Sergeant Cassara ceased his howling, made some excuse when Lazaga appeared, and furtively inspected the room of Don Audre Ruiz, to find him absent.

CASSARA found, also that the bridle had been taken off his horse and the mount turned loose. So it took him considerable time to catch up the animal again. But presently, with the one trooper at his side, and refusing to tell why he had made such a racket, Cassara rode away through the moonlight, along the trail to the north.

The Whirlwind, back in the coulée, removed the bonds from Don Audre Ruiz, but allowed the gag to remain.

"If you try to remove it, señor, I fire!" he warned. "Here is a horse for you—climb into the saddle."

The horse was black, smaller than that of The Whirlwind, but might easily be mistaken for his in the moonlit night. Don Audre mounted. The Whirlwind directed him along the floor of the coulée, then out across open country, but always

keeping to the deeper shadows as much as possible.

In time, they circled back toward El Camino Real. The Whirlwind stopped, and listened. By this time, he knew, Cassara would have caught up his horse and left the town. He would approach cautiously, his intention being to catch a highwayman at his nefarious work.

**P**AST the rocks at the top of the hill, The Whirlwind went, Don Audre riding beside him. It was evident that Don Audre was badly frightened.

Presently, they stopped. Here was another jumble of rocks, and deep shadows cast by them, and a depression not far from the dusty road. The Whirlwind caused Don Audre to dismount in this depression.

"I am going to bind your legs and arms again," The Whirlwind said. "You may lay on the ground and rest. Nothing will harm you."

Don Audre gurgled behind the gag, but The Whirlwind did not speak again. Roughly, he bound his victim, after toppling him to the ground. He left the horse a short distance away, tied to a stunted tree. Then he got into his own saddle and rode away, back to the highway.

For a second time that night, he heard the soft *plop-plop* of horses' hoofs, and the creaking of carriage wheels. The Whirlwind got out his pistol. Don Audre's weapon, which El Torbellino had taken from him, was in his sash.

Don José Mendez, the rich merchant, was half asleep in his carriage as the horses carried it slowly along the highway. A native coachman drove, and crouching beside him was another native, armed and on guard.

From behind the rocks, a masked rider appeared.

"Stop!" he thundered.

The coachman gave a cry of fright.

Don José Mendez came awake, shouting. The armed guard sprang out of the carriage and started to get behind it.

But The Whirlwind had been watching for that. He jumped his big black aside as the guard fired, and an instant later was upon the man. He transferred his pistol to his left hand, whipped out his blade, and ran the guard through the shoulder. Then he was back at the carriage.

"Your purse, Don José!" he barked. "At once, or I fire!"

Don José handed up the purse. His hands were shaking, and his face showed ghastly white in the moonlight. He was a rich merchant and a shrewd trader, but fighting highwaymen was not his forte.

**"D**RIVE on!" The Whirlwind cried. "Pick up this wounded fool."

He discharged his pistol into the air as he spoke. That shot, and the one the guard had fired, should bring Cassara, he judged. He jumped his horse aside and watched the carriage go down the road in a cloud of dust. Soon he heard pounding hoofs.

Cassara and the trooper were coming. The Whirlwind revealed himself clearly in the moonlight. Then he turned his mount and raced, knowing that he would be pursued.

Off the road he dashed, and to where he had left Don Audre Ruiz stretched on the ground. He sprang from the saddle and rushed to the side of the prone man.

"We reach a climax, señor," he whispered, as he took the bonds off Don Audre again, and then removed the gag.

"What is the meaning of—" Don Audre began.

But, with the butt of his heavy pistol, The Whirlwind smote him once, just behind the ear. Don Audre

groaned, and journeyed forthwith to the land of unconsciousness. Working swiftly, The Whirlwind whipped off his own mask and put it on the unconscious Don Audre. He tossed the recently discharged pistol beside him, so it appeared to have fallen from his hand. He untied Don Audre's horse and left him standing there.

**H**OOFBEATS came nearer. The Whirlwind surveyed the scene. "So!" he muttered. "It is evident what happened. Escaping over this rough ground, the man's horse stumbled and threw him. He struck his head against a rock, and there he is, ready for Cassara to pick up."

Springing into his saddle, The Whirlwind rode swiftly for a short distance, until he was in the end of a tiny canyon. Then he slackened speed to a walk, and went silently on. Behind him, he heard Sergeant Juan Cassara shouting to the trooper.

The Whirlwind circled toward the town. In the coulée, he divested himself of highwayman's garments again. He stripped saddle and bridle off the horse, slapped the animal on the rump, and watched him tear away to the pasture.

A few minutes later, Pedro Garzo crept into the big room of the inn and crouched against the wall near the fireplace. He was smiling slightly. Two fat purses—and revenge taken! Old Fray Marcos would find something in the poor box the following day.

Bedlam in the distance denoted the arrival of the carriage of Don José Mendez. Pedro Garzo hastened to awaken Lazaga and tell him a guest was coming.

Into the inn Don José stormed, the story of his adventure tumbling from his lips. Pedro Garzo seemed frightened, Lazaga offered condolences, little Juanita gasped her dismay as

the story was unfolded. Then there came a sensation. Into the plaza rode Sergeant Juan Cassara and his trooper, with Don Audre Ruiz a prisoner between them. By this time, certain men of the pueblo had gathered at the inn.

"An outrage!" Don Audre was crying. "The Governor shall hear of this! I tell you El Torbellino abducted me, took me to that spot, smashed me on the head—"

"Silence!" Cassara thundered. "If anybody asks me, it was all a pretty lie about The Whirlwind stealing your purse and rings. No doubt, you have hidden them somewhere. He knew you for a road thief, and one honest road thief does not steal from a brother in crime."

"That is the man—I swear it!" Don José cried. "His costume, his general build—yes, he is the man!"

**I** PROTEST!" Don Audre cried. "Sergeant, you'll be punished for this!"

"Silence!" Cassara shouted again. "It is not a thing for me to decide. The evidence is such that I hold you prisoner in the prison room at the presidio, until my capitán returns." "When does he return?"

"Not for ten days or so," Cassara said. "He has gone to San Juan Capistrano to get him a wife. Lazaga, give me more wine. Then we'll take this rogue to the presidio!"

Pedro Garzo slipped quietly into the kitchen, to get food for Don José Mendez. Juanita Lazaga smiled.

"El Torbellino perhaps will be glad that this has happened," she said. "His revenge will be complete. Ten days or so in the prison room, even if he is cleared afterward!"

"El Torbellino will perhaps be glad," Pedro Garzo agreed.

Their eyes met again, and again the little señorita smiled like a woman who shares a secret.

*A Smashing Story of Snarling Hate and Menacing  
Danger in the Far Reaches of the Bitter North*



*Adams leaped and laced at him viciously, right and left and left again*

# PARTNERS

By WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

*Author of "Cold Feet," "The Underling," etc.*

**T**HE slim, muscular, nervous hands of Richard Glendale Adams found the last tin plate in the greasy dish water and began mechanically to dry it on a section of flour sack. His lips moved as he stared absently at a log wall, softened a little by the yellow light of an oil lamp.

*"He never gazed on Carcassonne—  
he never gazed—"*

"Say!" There was a sudden stir among the blankets of a bunk at one end of the room. A tousled, bearded head rose from the shadows. A pair of enormous shoulders heaved up and a man heavier by fifty pounds than Adams, a giant of bone and muscle,

rose and stamped his shoepacs against the floor. "How many times you going to say that cussed thing over? What the hell!"

Adams finished drying the plate, and then washed and dried his hands. His wide mouth, which had been humorous six months before, curled in a sneer. He stared, insolently, up into the sombre eyes of the big man, a little above the level of his own.

"I'm trying to remember," he said, "the verse and the author. With my present lack of intellectual companionship poetry is a little comfort. You no doubt have forgotten that I washed dishes all last week to the accompaniment of '*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree—*'"

"NO. I ain't forgot it!" bellowed the giant. He thrust a splinter viciously into the stove and lighted his pipe. "I don't get no chance to think of nothing else but book learning with you around! That's all you're good for! That and washing dishes!"

"You object, I suppose, because you're incapable of appreciating poetry," remarked Adams, softly. He knew that his slight and superior smile, his controlled voice, infuriated the uncouth fellow who faced him at a distance of ten feet. He was glad of it. How he hated the oaf! Sam Horn! Even the man's name was crude. Like his manners!

"Listen!" Horn spat at him. "What I object to is having you around where I be! You make me sick! That's what!"

"And I," replied Adams, "have often wondered during the past winter whether my restored health was worth the hardship of six months of association with you! It has been a price to pay, I assure you!"

"Damned sissy!" Horn trembled to the force of his suppressed wrath.

"If you was man size and hadn't been sick I'd knock hell out of you! Reading them dam' books all winter! A lot of company for me!"

He swung an arm dramatically toward a shelf where a dozen volumes were ranged.

"I suppose it would have been preferable to play euchre with you!" exclaimed Adams, sarcastically. "Or, what is that other stupid game? Rummy? It is curious how invariably the vacuous mind falls back on playing cards for a filling, a stuffing, a resource against its emptiness!"

Sam Horn knew that he was being insulted, even if he did not understand all the words. To his simple soul this was more galling than frank abuse would have been.

He might have overlooked a vile name from a man who was weaker than himself but this kind of talk was too much. Deeper color surged into his bronzed face. His neck began to swell.

"There's nothing in you," continued Adams, with a shrug. He rolled a cigarette, leaning nonchalantly against the sink. "I've done my share of the work and furnished my share of the grub, according to agreement. You're to have all the pelts for the trouble of bringing a greenhorn, a tenderfoot, with you. I've had a winter in the bush and I'm a well man again. The bargain is ended. It's the beginning of April and getting soft. I'm going out with the first trapper who comes down from the deep woods. I can't stand your vulgarities any longer."

THAT last sentence was what did it. Horn understood its meaning, and Adams had known that he would. With a hoarse and whistling noise of rage the big man leaped. His arm went out and his open hand, like the paw of a bear, struck for Adams' head. If the cuff had landed it

would have knocked Richard Glendale Adams insensible.

But Adams boxed well. He slipped under the blow, with a mocking laugh, and drove his hard fist into Horn's short ribs. The astonished giant brought up on his heels with a grunt. His face twisted with pain. Adams leaped and laced at him viciously, right and left and left again.

The blood started under Horn's eye, from his lip, and he bent a little as the last blow sank where the first had landed.

"I'll kill you," announced Adams, coolly, weaving away on his toes. "I'll kill you if you push me, Horn! You started this!"

**SAM HORN'S** big mouth drew back from his teeth. He crouched, and began to move like a remorseless doom toward his slender partner. Adams could have got out of the cabin, but he did not try. Instead, when he saw the glare in the eyes of Horn, he sprang for the rifles pegged up behind the stove. But that he tripped he could have made it. A stick of firewood was in the way. His hand had just grasped his rifle when Horn reached him.

Blows did no good. An uppercut that would have knocked out an ordinary man merely made the big trapper shake his head. He pulled Adams to him, and then he worried him. He could have kicked him to death there on the floor of the cabin, but even in his blind, red rage he did not want to do that. He wanted to hurt that damned something that was behind the flesh of Richard Glendale Adams, the something that had mocked him, made him conscious that he was an uncouth backwoodsman ever since they had begun to get on each other's nerves.

So he slapped Adams up and down the length of the room, bounced him

against the log wall and hit him when he came back. He pushed his face against the rough surface and rubbed and bumped it there until Adams could no longer wear a superior sneer, and have it visible. At last he turned Adams over his knee and spanked him, and then hurled him across the room to his bunk.

Adams tried to get out of the bunk, and fell to his knees. He was hanging against the floor, trying to push himself erect with his hands, when a hail came from the night outside. The faces of the two men turned, one scratched and skinned raw and the other snarling, blood smeared.

The door of the cabin opened and for an instant it seemed to fill with men. But only three came in, muffled against the penetrating south wind, stamping their feet, crying out hearty greetings that died away as they saw the strange picture there in the yellow lamplight. Adams climbed to his feet, holding the side of the bunk.

"Come in," he said, "and make yourselves comfortable. My simple minded partner has been taking a little exercise. It is nothing to disturb you."

**THE** men shuffled as they pulled off their caps and mittens, and looked at each other. They, as Adams knew they would, recognized the speech of a man of education. But they recognized Horn as one of their own, for these were bushmen. One, at least, was French, quick and wiry. High cheek-bones and polished black eyes indicated Indian blood in another. The third was a bristling fellow, almost as big as Horn, who might be English or Yankee.

"Sacré!" exploded the Frenchman. "You play rough, you two! I don't want to play that game, me!"

"This," muttered Adams, dragging himself toward the water pail, "is

only the beginning of the game!"

Sam Horn, his face badly battered, said not a word.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next morning the three visitors ate breakfast in a silence that was broken only by brief sentences of the bush *patois* which they spoke among themselves. Adams, who knew French, could understand a little of it. He wondered if Horn, putting pancakes into his cavernous mouth, knew that they had more than once mentioned the cache of pelts of which he had boasted the night before.

ADAMS had heard the late revelry, lying in his bunk and hating his partner. The strangers had brought out a bottle of whiskey *blanc* and Horn's tongue had loosened. He had talked of his luck, of what a man he was, but he had said no word of the fight. It had been arranged this morning by Adams that he was to go out with the three men. John Two Bear, Ovide Lamere and Henry Sands, they said they were, with a hard winter behind them and barely enough skins to pay for a spree.

"Horn," said Adams, when he had finished a light breakfast, "we brought our supplies in with a horse and I was able to carry the books you have enjoyed so much. But I can't pack them out with me. So I give them to you. I hope you'll profit by the association. But, excuse me! I've forgotten—can you read?"

Horn's face grew dark. This sarcasm was a weapon against which he was as helpless as Adams had been last night against his strength.

"I could maul you again!" he said. "And I will, if you keep on!"

"The final argument of the unintelligent," said Adams, as he began to make up his pack. "Brute strength!"

"Lookit!" spoke up the man called Sands. "You two fellers don't like each other, do you?"

Adams laughed. He was now in such a state of nerves that he was perfectly willing to insult these men on whom he depended to gain freedom from the bush. For he was still too much of a tenderfoot to dare the trip alone.

"How brilliant of you!" he sneered.

"I hate his guts!" roared Horn.

A look passed among the three strangers. The Indian muttered something. Lamere shrugged and nodded vigorously. They finished breakfast, drained their cups swishingly, and stood up.

Horn, grotesque with his puffed lip and black eye, began to gather the dishes. John Two Bear hitched up his belt and dragged a bench to a corner, where he sat down. The tall and rangy Sands moved circuitously until he was within reach of the sink. The Frenchman drew his hunting knife. He tested the edge with his thumb and began to sharpen it on the stove.

Suddenly Richard Glendale Adams knew that the air of that cabin was fraught with death. He did not know how he knew it. It penetrated to him like a damp, chill fog. Then he saw the reason for his feeling. The position that John Two Bear had taken up cut off all the others in the room from the rifles, which were stacked behind his bench.

SANDS was within arm's length of the long butcher knife that reposed in a cleat above the sink. Horn had not put on his belt and sheath knife. He stood sloshing at the dishes with his back to the room. Sands could reach that butcher knife first. And Lamere was in the act of turning away from the stove, his weapon balanced on his palm, tentatively. He could throw it with a movement of the arm. Adams snapped to his feet. Sands, glowering at him under overhanging brows, barked two words.

At that Horn turned slowly from the sink. His mouth fell open as his glance traveled from face to face of the four men in the room with him. He saw, too late, that something was going to happen. His hand jerked in the direction of the butcher knife.

"Cut it out!" grated Sands. "Or Ovide'll stick you in the neck!"

The face of Sam Horn grew purple with wrath but for the moment he moved no muscle of his great body.

"Lookit," said Sands, to Adams. "You want to go out of the bush with us?"

"That was my intention," replied Adams, slowly.

"Want to get even with him for beating you up?" He nodded toward Horn.

ADAMS delayed his answer for a moment. He had to think hard and fast, and his head was whirling like a tornado. He forced a grin.

"After my fashion," he said, at length.

"You're a smooth talker," said Sands. "We're going to take his pelts. You come along and fix up a yarn about selling the pelts to us. Then let him holler when he gets out of the bush. He can't do nothing. It's better than bumping him off."

The quick, whistling intake of Sam Horn's breath rasped on the stillness.

"You're interesting me," said Adams, with deliberation. "What do I get out of it?"

"*Sacré!*" snapped Lamere. "You get even, *hein?* You bust his snowshoe! You bust his rifle!"

"You get out of the bush, for one thing," said Sands. "Don't try any of your smart tricks on me! If we leave you here that big ape's going to croak you, and you know it!"

"There may be something in what you say!" Adams managed a laugh. "I want to get out any way I can!"

"That's talking—" began Sands. He did not finish.

With an animal bellow Sam Horn charged straight at him. At the same instant a bright streak flashed before the eyes of Adams. He held himself rigid, immovable, resisting an impulse to leap into the battle. He saw the arm of Ovide extended in the air for a moment. The handle of a knife protruded from Horn's neck, just above the open collar.

Sands had been borne back against the wall by the force of that mad and unexpected charge. Now Sam's big fingers slipped away from his throat. The shaggy black head dropped forward and Horn began to slide down to the floor. Sands drew back his arm and sent a vicious, useless blow into the stricken man's face.

Horn lay on the floor with a stain growing about his head. Sands righted himself and looked across the room at Lamere.

"You hadn't ought to done that!" he growled. "We could've handled him!"

Johnny Two Bear had reached behind him for a rifle. He pointed it at Adams and looked inquiringly at Sands.

"You cussed fool!" yelled Sands. "Put up that gun! We'll leave him here with this bird and it'll look like he done it! You and Lamere'll get me hung yet!"

JOHN TWO BEAR grunted and set the rifle back behind the bench.

"Get going!" commanded Sands. "Them pelts is cached under the woodpile! Bust the rifles agin the stove and throw away the cartridges! If this bird Adams makes a move, I'll belt him so he'll stay belted!"

Richard Glendale Adams, a little sick, sat down on the edge of his bunk. There he remained when the cabin door slammed behind the three strangers. He listened. Their voices

came in faintly, and the sound of falling sticks of wood. He slipped across the room and knelt beside Horn, turning him over.

"Pull — that — dam' knife — out!" whispered the wounded man.

The blade was deep in the big muscle that runs from neck to shoulder. It had missed the jugular vein, but not by any intention of Ovide Lamere. The moving target had disturbed his aim just enough to save the life of Sam Horn. Adams set his teeth, and pulled. With a great sigh, his partner sank into unconsciousness. Adams snatched at the first cloth he could lay hands on and bandaged the wound.

**T**HEN he sprang up and ran to one of the windows. He rubbed a spot clear of frost and peered out. The three men were going toward the bush in single file, bending under their packs. Sands was in the lead, breaking trail. They had divided Horn's pelts among them. Their rifles were strapped on top of the packs.

Adams glanced around the cabin. His own rifle and Sam's lay on the floor, with the locks shattered. He snatched the knife from the sink and thrust it into his belt. Then he ran out and slipped on snowshoes. The bent back of Ovide Lamere, piled high with pack and furs and rifle, was about a hundred yards ahead of him. He began to run carefully, so that his snowshoe rims would not click against each other and give warning.

He was close behind Lamere, almost treading on his heels, before the man heard or felt his presence. As Lamere started to turn, Adams flung himself forward and seized the tail of one of his snowshoes. Lamere plunged head foremost into the snow and instantly Adams was on him, pressing him down, crowding his head so deep into the snow that no sound could come from him.

It seemed as though the wiry Frenchman would never grow still. Finally a clip behind the ear straightened him out. Adams had flung his head up a half dozen times to watch the plodding figures ahead. But they had not turned.

He rose from the body of Lamere and cut away a length of rope from the pack. He was searching for cartridges for the rifle when the tall figure of the Indian, moved perhaps by some premonition of trouble, swung around.

For a little handful of seconds John Two Bear stared, comprehending what had happened. In place of the bowed form of Ovide Lamere, he saw a bareheaded man with flapping jacket who plunged at him along the trail. The Indian drew his knife, and came on at a run. Over the man's shoulder Adams saw that Sands had turned at the edge of the woods. He also took the back trail.

Now Adams knew that the supreme moment had come. Finesse was what he needed! He drove at John Two Bear, halted suddenly in a flurry of snow, and with an inarticulate cry at sight of the Indian's drawn knife, turned and ran.

**F**OR the first time a sound above guttural monosyllables came from the Indian. He yelled, and the fleeing man knew that it was the cry of the kill. He turned his head slightly. John Two Bear was gaining. He came on with long bounds which ate up the distance between them. His arm reached out to grasp the quarry.

Adams dropped, humped over on his snowshoes. John Two Bear's leg struck his shoulder with terrific force. The Indian sprawled over him. Adams jumped and drove his knees into the back of the prostrate man. A hundred and fifty pound blow over the kidneys. John Two Bear twitched and stiffened. Then Adams was on

his feet again, and running, with Sands almost within striking distance.

If only the big man would keep coming! They were nearly to the cabin now. Adams saw the head and shoulders of Sam Horn in the doorway, hanging over the threshold. The brute had courage, certainly. He had dragged himself out to get into the battle, knowing that his death had been decreed.

Adams' snowshoes clattered. He was on the hard packed snow near the cabin, and now it was time to act. But you couldn't work the same trick twice. Sands was at his very back. He threw himself to one side with a twist and a leg out behind. Sands couldn't stop. He went down. He was like whalebone, that man. He fairly bounced up. But Adams was clinging to his back when he came to his feet, and Adams had the section of rope around his neck from behind.

**T**Ighter and tighter the crossed ends of the rope drew, while Sands clawed and struck and spun around like an enormous top. His arms began to beat futilely. A strange noise came from his throat. He dropped to his knees, head down, and clutched at the rope. But now there was no strength in him to pull that rope away. Slowly he pitched forward against the snow, and became quiet.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sam Horn lay propped up in his bunk, watching Richard Glendale Adams wash dishes. A welcome quiet held the cabin. The three strangers had lately gone limping down the trail, without Sam's pelts, without

their rifles and knives, and with a warning that if they came back they would be fed a meal of soft-nose bullets.

"**W**HAT I want to know is," said Sam, in a hoarse whisper, "did you figger out what you done or did it jest happen?"

Adams turned, polishing a plate.

"I got it out of a book," he replied.

"You didn't have no time to look into a book!" exploded Horn.

"My memory is longer than your whiskers," shrugged Adams. "I will explain as simply as possible. Three Romans known as the Horatii fought three champions at Alba Longa. Two of the Romans were immediately killed, but the third pretended to run, separated his enemies, and killed them one at a time. I remembered the procedure and applied the same principle. That's all."

Sam Horn was silenced for a moment, but only for a moment.

"Well," he said slowly, "you done a good job, anyway, even if it was out of a book. And you get half my pelts when we go out of the bush!"

Adams dropped a plate with a clatter and stared at the bunk.

"There's no necessity for that!" he exclaimed.

"You'll take them pelts or I'll cuff you up to a peak and knock the peak off?" barked Sam. "And I didn't get that out of no book, neither! We're partners, ain't we?"

"Indubitably," replied Richard Glendale Adams, with unaccustomed mildness. "It seems contrary to the laws of nature, but we are partners, nevertheless!"

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*Next Month: A Great Complete Novelette of Gripping Thrills!*

## SEVEN DAYS' DEATH

By CARL N. TAYLOR

**PACKED WITH AN ACTION PUNCH IN EVERY PARAGRAPH!**

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# HELL'S *Island*

*Joe Toller Comes to Grips  
with a Tyrant of the  
Pacific Who Rules a  
Sinister Outpost of  
the Devil*

*A Complete Novelette*

By CHARLES GREEN

*Author of "Black Docks," etc.*

## CHAPTER I

### *Ruthless Men*

**T**HE assault was swift, murderous and deadly efficient. Went off like clock-work—and Joe Toller didn't have the chance of a stray caribou overtaken by a wolf pack.

Haomara made the initial move. The squat, scarred, vicious-looking Malay half-breed threw himself on Joe from behind, pinning his arms to his sides. Muller, a giant German, stepped in and crashed a huge fist a bit behind and below his left ear. Then Haomara swung him around to face Collins, who hit him again—a short, vicious blow to the heart. Joe Toller was unconscious when he hit the floor. Collins said, crouching, an animal-like eagerness in his voice, "Finish him, Chief?"

Bellinger, at the bar, swallowed the amber liquid in his glass, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, then glanced carelessly at Joe Toll-



er's limp body. There was faint boredom in his greenish eyes. Precisely the same expression as was present when the bartender had asked, "Brandy or gin, Mr. Bellinger?" The choice now was equally unimportant.

The heat — sticky, enervating — made up his mind. He murmured, "Never mind. Just get his wallet."

Collins sheathed his knife. He bent over Joe, straightened. Bellinger received the wallet gingerly and drawled:

"You might, sometimes, wash your hands."

"Yes, sir," Collins whined, half-cringing.

Bellinger removed the rubber band around the wallet, looked in. He nodded, smiling faintly. Then he unbuttoned his spotless white jacket, placed the wallet in the inside pocket,



*One bronzed muscular arm curled around Bellinger's throat*

buttoned it again. He shrugged indifferently at the questioning look from the bartender, lighted a gold-tipped cigarette and strolled out unhurriedly, followed by Collins, Max Muller and Haomara.

A few minutes later, the bartender dragged Joe to the door and hurled him, like a sack of potatoes, out on the hot, dusty street. The dust stirred up by the impact of his body gradually settled over him. Joe Toller lay there, perfectly still, not even favored by a curious glance from the occasional passerby.

One exception—a very old and bony Chinaman, who shuffled by, stopped, looked around stealthily, then pulled off Joe's shoes. Later, he would trade them for a pipe or two, which would raise him for a few hours to the level of the gods.

The gaunt, ragged scarecrow whom men called Donaldson stumbled over Joe Toller's body. Literally stumbled and tripped over Joe's legs as he edged along the wall trying to escape the broiling heat of the tropical sun. He cursed weakly and lurched to his feet again. With burning, feverish eyes he stared at Joe Toller.

"Drunk, eh?" he said aloud. "Lucky devil!" He repeated, with bitter vehemence, "Lucky devil!"

The thought of someone having so much to drink that he could no longer stand on his feet suddenly weakened him. He sat down—by the simple expedient of letting his legs buckle from under him, then sliding downward against the wall. He rocked his body back and forth, moaning. He was dying for a drink.

Joe Toller stirred, groaned and

opened his eyes. He closed them instantly. The glare of the sun was like a knife cut. He felt sick. Dizzy, giddy, weak.

"Must get in the shade," he mumbled to himself. "Quick, too. Sun fever. What's wrong with me anyway?"

Donaldson's voice penetrated to his consciousness. "Hey, buddy! Hey, there!"

**JOE TOLLER** made an effort to sit up. Failed the first time, succeeded the second. A red glare before his eyes. A roar in his ears. A throbbing pain at the base of his skull, rhythmic with the beat of his pulse.

"Hey, buddy!"

The voice was torturing. Joe Toller shook his head groggily. Suddenly he felt himself half-lifted, dragged—and the red glare disappeared. He was in the shade now, his back resting against the wall. He felt better instantly. For the second time, he opened his eyes, and found himself staring into Donaldson's bearded face.

"Thanks," he muttered.

"A favor for a favor," said Donaldson.

"Eh?"

Donaldson brought his face closer to Joe's.

"For God's sake," he blurted out, "can you spare the price of a drink?"

Joe Toller looked at the other's twitching mouth, glaring, burning eyes. He had recognized the symptoms.

He said, "Boy, you *do* need one, don't you?"

Donaldson fought for control—a losing battle. "The price of one drink, buddy. Or I'll go nuts!" He raised his voice hysterically. "Don't just look at me like that! I asked you if—"

"In my left trouser pocket," said

Joe. "Ought to be some silver there. Gosh, I'm as weak as a kitten!"

Donaldson explored the pocket with eager, trembling fingers.

"Twenty-eight francs," he announced.

"Okay. Get yourself a couple drinks, and bring me back a gin rickey. Today, if you don't mind."

"I'll be right back," Donaldson promised eagerly. "And God bless you, friend."

Joe shrugged. "For helping you to hell a bit quicker?"

Donaldson paused, stared at him a moment. "Brother," he said quietly, "I don't need any help in that respect. I'm there already."

He turned abruptly and ran up the three steps to the entrance of the saloon. It was Joe Toller's turn to stare.

A moment later, though, he found something else to stare at: his stockinged feet. His shoes were gone. Why? And why was he lying out there? What happened?

Bit by bit, he remembered—what little of it there was. He had entered the saloon, ordered a beer. A group of men trouped in a short while later. Hot and thirsty, he had paid no attention to them. Then they jumped him. Without warning, and from the back, the dirty rats rough-housed him, knocked him cold and threw him out under that hot sun.

**THAT** part of it was easy enough to reconstruct. And Joe Toller found it equally simple to guess at the motive for the attack. Even as he jerked his hand around to his hip pocket, he knew he would find it empty.

He brought forth a battered package of French cigarettes, lighted one, dragged the blue smoke deep into his lungs. Facing him, across the road, was a long, sun-blistered warehouse.

A wooden pier jutted out from it to the beach, terminating in a small, half-rotted wharf. Several native outriggers were tied onto it. There was a stench of drying copra in the air.

Joe Toller frowned, shaking his head. "Lord, what a hole!" he said aloud.

"Right. A hell-hole." It was Donaldson, walking down the steps, a tall glass in his right hand. He looked better now, saner, his terrible craving for alcohol temporarily appeased. "A mighty bad place where to be stranded, friend," he added, handing Joe the drink. "Three miles one way, eight the other. Ringed by the Pacific, and harboring the most vicious gang of cutthroats this side of hell. I'm referring to the white men here."

JOE TOLLER emptied the glass, then looked up quizzically. "Seems to me," he drawled, "a general census should include you among the white population of this fair island."

Donaldson laughed bitterly. "I have no identity, friend. I'm a bum on the beach. Shunned by the white men. Merely tolerated by natives, who aren't very—particular. About as important as—as that bit of driftwood over there. Or maybe not even that much. One could make a fire with it."

"Say," said Joe, "how many drinks did you have?"

Donaldson shrugged. "All right, forget it. I notice someone made off with your shoes while you were trying to commit suicide by sleeping it off under this damn sun."

"I wasn't sleeping anything off," Joe said grimly. "And they made off with a darn sight more than my shoes. To state facts, I've been given a beating, robbed, then thrown out here."

"Robbed, eh?"

"Of every penny I own in this world—now that you've spent the

twenty-eight francs," Joe declared coolly.

Donaldson looked down at his long, thin, brown fingers. He said quietly, his face averted, "I suspected so. No strangers here, unless they've been brought for a—purpose. As you were. I feel sorry for you, friend, for I know what you're in for. We're both of us in the same boat now."

"That," said Joe, "we'll argue later. You seem to have an idea who pulled off this stunt."

"I have," Donaldson said promptly—"and a darn good one. Bellinger and his gang, the human scum I'd referred to before."

"You sure?"

"Positive. Bellinger controls the monopoly on crime here, as well as everything else. Why, I can describe to you the very men who attacked you—and I haven't seen the thing."

Suspicion crept into Joe Toller's eyes. "You know," he said slowly, getting up, "it just struck me that if those gents are as tough customers as you claim, you're kind of free and easy with your information. *Too* free and easy. Risking your neck a little *too* willingly."

A tiny pause, then Joe Toller leaped forward. Steel fingers clutched at Donaldson's throat. A swift wrench, and Donaldson was down on the ground, choking, gasping for air. The fingers tightened mercilessly, thumbs gouging.

"If you want to live, brother," said Joe, "talk—and talk straight. What's your game? Who put you up to this? Quick now!"

## CHAPTER II

### *Four to One*

TOLLER released the pressure a bit, waited. Donaldson said nothing, had not even made an attempt to struggle. He merely looked up at Joe Toller's set,

grim face. Contempt in that look, a bitter indifference.

Abruptly, Joe took his fingers off the other's throat, straightened. He knew he had made a mistake. The man lying so quietly there in the hot dust was a beachcomber. A bit of human flotsam. Uncombed, barefooted, filthy.

But—at one time he had been a gentleman. The beach and alcohol had wrecked his body; yet somehow he still managed to cling to that undefinable something which stamps a man a gentleman. Joe Toller knew men; he read it in Donaldson's eyes. A gentleman—at the end of his rope!

He said quietly, "Sorry."

**D**ONALDSON pulled himself up to a sitting position, leaned back against the wall. He smiled faintly.

"That's all right; I'm rather used to it. And your apology squares it up. But you were wrong before. I wasn't afraid to tell you what I have. Because it's nothing that you yourself won't find out before you're here very long.

"You're bound to meet the men who attacked you, recognize them. Refer to the robbery, and you'll get another beating. Persist—and you'll die. Simple enough, isn't it?"

Joe Toller stretched, his muscles rippling beneath his bronzed skin.

"You've got a swell imagination, stranger," he drawled lazily.

"Imagination—hell!" Donaldson snapped. "I know those men. I know Bellinger, the cold-blooded devil that he is. I know the brutes working for him—Muller, Collins, Haomara, O'Grady, and the rest of 'em. A dozen or so. Criminals, murderers, everyone of 'em, blast their black souls!"

"I think," Joe murmured—"I think I'll pay the gentleman a social call."

Donaldson scrambled to his feet. He gripped Joe's arm.

"Listen!" he said. "You've no idea what you're up against. Stay away from that gang. You'll gain nothing, I tell you."

"You don't seem to understand," Joe said coldly. "The nine thousand dollars of which I've been robbed is the result of six years of mighty hard work. I have a girl in the States.

"Evelyn has been waiting these six years. It wasn't easy. It wasn't easy for me, either. She's to join me in Tahiti, where we plan to be married. If she doesn't hear from me— Confound it, man, do you expect me to take this lying down?"

Donaldson shook his head. "Too bad, friend. Yet there is nothing—*nothing* that you can do."

"Sorry," said Joe, "but I'm not built that way. Where does Bellinger live?"

"I tell you there's no use—"

"I asked you a question," Joe cut in curtly.

Donaldson shrugged. "All right, come with me. It's on the other side of the reef, just over that hump of land there."

"Come on," said Joe.

Donaldson looked at him again, checked what he wanted to say and shuffled off up the dusty road. Joe glanced at his stockinged feet, cursed under his breath and followed.

**T**HE hot dust burned the soles of his feet—and, grinning suddenly, he realized that there was at least one thing Donaldson had that he envied: the thick protective callouses on the beachcomber's feet which enabled him to be indifferent to the heat of the sun-baked dust.

The road curved sharply to the left, then climbed upward. From the top of the incline, Joe Toller saw Bellinger's bungalow. Whatever his faults, thought Joe, Bellinger had excellent taste.

It was a huge bungalow, extremely

well built and stationed against the background of a magnificent palm grove. Freshly-painted, immaculate, it stood some distance from the beach, which curved there into a semi-circular cove.

A schooner, with the trim lines of a racing yacht, rode at anchor three hundred feet from the landing. Just behind it, Joe could see the gray stern of a powerful motor launch.

"Well," Donaldson announced, "that's as far as I intend to go. For the last time, friend, take my advice and leave that gang alone."

"Of course," Joe Toller said quietly, "you wouldn't think of risking your skin by bucking that outfit?"

"MY skin hasn't much value—even to me," Donaldson returned shortly. "But I don't relish being manhandled. And though I've been here five years now, I still haven't thought of suicide—which you propose."

Joe Toller waved his hand carelessly. "A man with nerve wouldn't reason that way. *That's* your trouble—or you wouldn't have been here five years. All right, so long!"

"Good-by!" said Donaldson.

Joe grinned. He squared his broad shoulders and strolled unhurriedly toward the bungalow. Now he could see that there were four men on the broad veranda, one swinging in a hammock, the other three sprawling on native mats. All watched him silently as he neared the steps.

And even when Joe Toller finally stood on the veranda, no one spoke. The four men appraised him with a lazy, mocking insolence which brought a slow flush to Joe's cheeks.

"The poor sap who came around to give the boys a good time," Joe said to himself, controlling his rising anger. "Well, we'll see about that!"

He appraised them in return, lean-

ing carelessly against one of the supports of the veranda.

His freckled, boyish face gave no hint of what he was thinking: that each of the four men had a revolver strapped around his waist, while he himself was unarmed; that there were at least two men that he saw within the bungalow; that each, individually, was the sort of man one would hesitate twice before tackling—tough, hard, with all the earmarks of a murderous thug—

The silence grew oppressive, sinister. Joe lighted a cigarette with steady fingers, threw the match over his shoulder.

"My name's Toller," he announced casually. "Joe Toller. I've had the pleasure of meeting you gentlemen, but we weren't formally introduced."

The man in the hammock swung around to a sitting position. He had the white face of a corpse which the tropical sun did not seem to affect, greenish eyes behind drooping lids which lent his face a curious sleepy expression and a thin slit for a mouth.

"Is that so?" he murmured. "Well, we'll have to do something about that. I'm Bellinger, and *delighted* to make your acquaintance. This is Mr. Muller." He glanced at the black-bearded, giant German. "Where're your manners, Muller? Get up when you're introduced."

MULLER stood up, clicked his heels and bowed stiffly from the waist. He did that with absolute gravity.

"This," Bellinger continued, "is Mr. Collins."

The bullet-headed brute, with a stupid, beefy face and abnormally long, gorilla-like arms, beamed delightedly and made a clumsy imitation of Muller's military bow.

"Pleased t' meetcha."

He sat down again, the insolent

grin lingering on his thick, puffy lips.

"And this," Bellinger waved, "is Mr. Haomara." The scar-faced Malay said nothing, watching Joe Toller with black eyes as coldly cruel as that of a king cobra.

"They're playing with me," thought Joe. "All right!"

He turned as Bellinger addressed him again, speaking slowly, looking up at him from beneath his drooping lids.

"You say you've met us, Mr. Toller?"

Joe then flipped the ash off his cigarette.

"LISTEN, Bellinger!" he said coolly. "We may as well cut out the humor. I'm going to lay my cards on the table; then I expect you to do the same. I've been robbed. Of nine thousand dollars. And you're the hombre responsible! . . . Tell your gorillas to sit down. Plenty of time for that!"

"Well!" Bellinger no longer looked sleepy. He drew a cigarette from a gold case, looked up thoughtfully at Joe, then growled out of the corner of his mouth, "All right, Collins. You'll reach for that gun of yours only when I command it."

Joe nodded grimly. "Thanks. Now I guess you know these details, but I may as well repeat them. About three hours ago I was aboard the trade schooner *Mary Ann*, commanded by Captain 'Reds' Mulligan, with whom I engaged passage to Tahiti, having completed my six-year contract managing a plantation at Kaura. You know Reds Mulligan?"

Bellinger shook his head. "Never heard of him."

"You're lying, Bellinger," Joe said.

Bellinger took a deep drag on his cigarette, releasing the blue smoke through his nostrils. The three men on the mats were statues of stone.

"All right," he said, "I know Mulligan."

"That's better," said Joe. "What's the use of beating around the bush now? When we sighted this island, Mulligan came down with a long face and a sweet yarn. He just got a wireless. Has to run up to the Phoenix Islands. Six weeks or so, and a long, dull trip.

"I could come along, of course; but if I didn't want to—why, he could drop me off here. A launch coming out to meet the schooner now. It would take me ashore. There, at least, I could get decent grub; the food aboard was lousy.

"In six weeks he'd pick me up again. So the sap goes ashore, walks into a saloon—and wakes up, minus his money, out in the street ten minutes later. Not bad, Bellinger; did you dope all this out yourself?"

Again a short pause. Bellinger permitted his thin lips to relax in a grin.

"All by myself," he murmured.

Joe Toller's lower jaw bulged out stubbornly.

"Yeah? And you think you'll get away with it, eh?"

BELLINGER slowly got up off the hammock. Thumbs hooked in his belt, he approached Joe Toller.

"Do I think so?" he said contemptuously. "Why, you poor fool! I own this island. I own every stick, every rock, every pebble that you see on that beach. Every bit of property—and every mother's son, white or native.

"I am king here. There is no law but my word. I am law and king and God, all in one. I can kill you if I wish, or I can let you live, depending on my mood. And there is no one—nothing—to criticize me."

He paused. Joe said nothing. Bellinger pointed to a long shack to the left of the bungalow.

"Did you hear of the raid on Japanese pearlers? The booty is in there. Do you remember the liner which went aground off New Hebrides? It wasn't an accident. My nets are spread from the Aleutian Islands to South China Sea. From the southern tip of Tasmania to Punta Arenas. I am Bellinger, king of this island, Emperor of the Pacific."

With the back of his hand, Bellinger slapped Joe Toller sharply across the face. Again, now harder, flat across the mouth. Blood began trickling down the left corner of Joe's mouth. Still he said nothing. Hadn't even moved a muscle.

"To kill is to destroy," Bellinger said slowly. "So I'll let you live. I may find use for you, as I may some day find use for our beach-comber physician, *Doctor Donaldson*. You two ought to get together; you'll find lots to talk about.

"Now just one bit of cheerful information before you deprive us of your company. The only link between this island and the outside world is the schooner you see there, and the launch; ships never even *pass* within three hundred miles of here.

"You may get clever ideas about making use of either the schooner or the launch. Then you'll get a bullet through your carcass. And you better pray it kills you, otherwise it'll be the Devil's Bathtub for you. Ask Donaldson to describe *that* to you. Now beat it!"

"Yes, sir!" Joe Toller said humbly.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Trapped!*

**J**OE TOLLER turned slowly toward the steps. Bellinger reached in his pocket for a match to his cigarette. Then Joe leaped forward. Like a panther at the throat of a deer. So quickly that the four men did not realize what

was happening until Joe smashed Bellinger against the railing of the veranda, one bronzed, muscular arm around Bellinger's throat, the fingers of the other on the butt of Bellinger's revolver.

One second, two, three. Haomara leaped to his feet. The sun glistened on ten inches of steel in his right hand. Collins had his revolver half-way out of the holster.

Muller, slow-witted, was staring, mouth open, showing his black, broken teeth. And Bellinger was gurgling like a man in the noose as Joe Toller's arm tightened even more around his throat.

"Drop it, Haomara!" Joe said evenly. "*Quick!*"

**T**HE Malay looked at the blue barrel of the revolver over Bellinger's right shoulder, at the eyes of the man who held it—and dropped the knife as if it were hot.

"Thanks," said Joe. He looked at Collins, and added one word, "Well?"

No menace in his voice, but Collins also let go of the revolver as if it were hot, and bolted his hands over his head.

"Don't!" he whined, sweat suddenly pouring down his face. "*Don't!*" he repeated, half-screaming now, as Joe continued to look at him.

"It'd be doing society in general a great favor," Joe drawled, "but I'll resist the temptation. Turn around and face the wall. Come on; my trigger finger is getting nervous."

Collins obeyed. Muller began rolling to the left, his right hand creeping up his thigh to his gun.

"You're doing swell, Dutchman," Joe said pleasantly. "Another inch and I'll present you with a ticket to hell."

Muller froze, his huge paw still on his thigh.

"That goes for you, too, Haomara. Get against the wall with your boy-

friend there. Both of you. Quick, now, or do I have to tickle you with a—"

Muller got up slowly, hesitated, then shuffled toward the wall. Haomara followed surlily. By now, Bellinger's face was the color of red brick, his eyes bloodshot, popping out. Joe Toller loosened a bit his hold. He said cheerfully:

"Well, King, now maybe we can continue our conversation. The cold thing you feel behind your right ear is the barrel of your gun. If you don't behave yourself—why, it's liable to go off, sort of. And then the king of this island and the Emperor of the Pacific will have his royal brains plastered all over the palace. Have I made myself clear?"

"Perfectly," said Bellinger.

**J**OE nodded. "Good. But I notice one of your royal guards *doesn't* get the idea. You can't make it, Muller, and I *won't* warn you again. Put up your hands and *keep 'em there!*"

The German, whose right hand had been hovering a bit too close to the butt of his gun, mouthed a curse and raised his arms.

"All right, Bellinger," Joe continued, "you listen real—"

His gun wrist snapped up. The heavy .38 cracked viciously. There was a mad splintering of glass, followed instantly by the high-pitched scream of a man who was mortally wounded.

A man stood framed for a moment within the smashed window, both hands still clutching a rifle. He dropped it, clawed at his chest. More splintering of glass as he toppled forward, his shoulder crashing into one of the lower panes.

"A moral lesson," said Joe. "Hope you gents profit by it. Two things we learn early in Texas: that democracy is the best form of government, and how to use a six-shooter. Some-

times the two go together. Like in this case.

"Okay, King; you'll start backing up. Over toward the steps here. One funny move from you—and you remember what I said about royal brains being plastered all over the palace?"

Bellinger ever between him and the bungalow, Joe retreated toward the steps. For the second time, the revolver in his hand blazed, Bellinger cringing involuntarily. Muller, who had begun turning away from the wall, swung back like a puppet.

The heavy slug had smashed into the plaster wall a half-inch from his head.

"Next time," Joe promised grimly, "it'll be closer. You lads just freeze there."

"Where are you taking me?" Bellinger asked coolly.

"A fair question," Joe admitted. "We're going aboard your schooner. Then you'll get those Diesels started and we'll leave this fair island. Just you and I. Tahiti next stop, and it ought to be a swell trip. A little more energy there, King Bellinger; snap it up!"

Foot by foot, they slowly retreated from the bungalow. Bellinger said nothing; no emotion on his face. A cool devil, thought Joe. Had to be watched every moment. But it was only a six-hundred-mile run to Tahiti. They'd make it. Easy.

**T**HE sand scrunched beneath Bellinger's shoes. Joe Toller's bare feet made no sound. They were walking backward all the time, their bodies close, Bellinger's a shield for any treacherous gunfire from the bungalow. Occasionally, Joe would risk a glance over his shoulder; otherwise he kept his eyes glued on the veranda.

They finally reached the landing. A dory, canoe-like in its lightness

and obviously belonging to the schooner, was moored to it.

"Stay right where you are!" Joe commanded.

He took a deep breath, then stepped away from Bellinger, and with three tigerish strides crossed the twenty feet to the dory.

He leaped into the small boat, almost upsetting it, and crouched in the bottom, only his head and one shoulder visible above the heavy timbers of the landing.

The volley of gunfire which he half-expected the moment he left the protection of Bellinger's body did not come.

"Bellinger!" he called.

**B**ELLINGER turned slowly. "From now on," Joe said coldly, "you'll obey orders instantly and to the letter. Or I'll kill you. Understand?"

Bellinger nodded.

"All right, there's a man aboard the schooner now—just walked up from below. He's got a rifle, and he's crouching now behind the foremast, waiting for me to show a little more of myself. Sure—I got eyes in back of my head. Tell him to jump overboard."

Bellinger stared. "What?"

Joe brought up the revolver. "You heard me!" he snapped. "Quick now, or I'll blow your head off your shoulders. Tell him to jump and swim toward the left point of the cove."

For just another second Bellinger hesitated. There came the sharp click of the hammer drawn back.

"I'm going to count three," said Joe. "One, two—"

Bellinger waved his hands over his head.

"O'Grady," he shouted. "Come on out! I mean it; come on! Put down that rifle and jump overboard. Swim ashore."

Bellinger had to repeat the com-

mand before the man obeyed. Joe heard the splash as he dived in. Glancing for a split second over his shoulder, he saw the black head of the swimmer, making toward the point of the cove.

"Anyone else aboard, Bellinger?"

"No."

"You sure?"

The greenish eyes interlocked with the blue. Bellinger shrugged.

"Another man."

"I thought so," Joe said grimly. "Same orders. Confound it, Bellinger, if you don't snap into it—"

"Lopez!" Bellinger shouted, cupping his hands at his mouth.

Thirty seconds later, Joe heard another splash. Two heads now bobbed in the mirror-like cove.

"Now," said Joe, "we can proceed. Get in here, Bellinger, and grab these oars. We're going aboard."

Bellinger climbed in carefully. He picked up the oars. Joe, lying in the bottom of the boat, read his mind.

"Before that oar reaches my head," he said mildly, "there'll be a slug through you. Don't try it!"

"Think of everything, don't you?" Bellinger murmured. "You're worth ten thousand a year to me. I mean it."

Joe grinned, shaking his head.

"Fifteen," Bellinger insisted. "And a bonus at the end of every year. I need a man like you. In five years you should be worth—"

"Wasting time," said Joe.

**B**ELLINGER shrugged. He placed the oarlocks in the grooves, leaned over and cast off the line. The boat swung away slowly. Bellinger bent over the oars.

Joe watched him, a smile of quiet triumph on his lips. In three minutes they would be aboard the schooner. Wouldn't take much longer to get the Diesels started. Once through the reef, it would be an easy matter

for him to make the run to Tahiti.

If Bellinger got tricky, he'd truss him up. Should truss him up anyway. No use taking chances. A dangerous hombre. He knew enough about Diesel engines to operate the schooner himself. A cinch, in the perfect weather they were having.

Bellinger's back went up and down, up and down. Joe thought of Donaldson. A pity to leave the poor devil behind. He deserved it, though. No nerve. No backbone. Nowadays one must fight for the things he wants. Donaldson was yellow. Served him right, then. His one chance to get away. Too bad he didn't have the spunk to stick with him. Now he'd rot there until booze or the beach finally killed him.

Bellinger suddenly ceased rowing.

"Let me rest a moment," he panted over his shoulder.

"You can't be tired yet," Joe snapped. "Come on! You'll get plenty of rest when—"

The rest happened with the speed of light. A brown, glistening arm shot up over the side of the boat. Haomara's wet, scarred face, black hair plastered close to his skull. Black eyes flashing for an instant their message of hatred. And triumph. Then the boat tilted sharply. More. And over before Joe had a chance to bring up his gun.

A WORLD of green engulfed him as he went down. Down, down, down. He dropped the revolver, tried to grapple with the something which held his right ankle in a vise-like grip, ever pulling him down. Opening his eyes, he saw in the crystal-clear water Haomara's ugly face.

The Malay released him when Joe felt that in another instant his lungs would burst. Both shot up to the surface. Joe had a chance to gulp one mouthful of air before he was dragged down again. And the red

horror of semi-drowning continued—again and again and again. Continued for ages, it seemed to Joe.

Suddenly he was permitted to remain on the surface. With frantic haste, Joe sucked clean, sweet air into his lungs. Ten feet from him, he saw Haomara, effortlessly keeping himself afloat, grinning at him. The Malay was between him and the schooner. Bellinger, Muller, Collins and three others were on the beach behind him. Trapped!

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Devil's Bathtub*

HAOMARA motioned toward the beach. His meaning unmistakable. Joe either swam ashore, or he'd be given another dose of semi-drowning.

"And then they'd get me anyway," Joe said to himself.

There was no choice. In water, Joe had no more chance with the Malay than he would with a tiger shark. And rather than to gasp out his life like a drowning rat—Joe turned, and with unhurried strokes swam toward the beach.

His legs trembled when he finally touched and walked up the sandy incline. Only now he realized the physical cost of the ordeal he had just gone through. Bellinger, standing motionless as a statue, his greenish eyes inscrutable, waved to him.

"Come here!"

Joe approached him, a fixed, contemptuous smile on his lips. His hands were limp at his sides. And then Bellinger smashed his fist against the side of Joe's head—a treacherous, lightning-like sideswipe. Ordinarily, Joe would have automatically blocked the blow, but his body, limp with weariness, refused to obey. He staggered backward, tottered, dropped on his knees.

He said, looking up at Bellinger,

"got enough nerve to try it again—alone?"

"You've a big mouth," Bellinger said coldly. "There are more ways of shutting it than one." He looked at Muller, standing to the left of Joe. "Do you know of *one* way, Muller?" he asked the German.

Muller grinned. Joe tried to get up—and was a split second too late. The Dutchman hit him square across the mouth, bowling him over. Then Joe heard Bellinger's cold voice:

"Let him have it, boys!"

Like a hunger-maddened pack of wolves, the six men pounced on Joe. Only one blow Joe definitely remembered—when he smashed his fist into Collins' ugly face. The rest was a nightmare. A nightmare of pain. Fists and heavy boots.

**T**IME and again, Joe would weave drunkenly to his feet, strike out blindly. Then a coarse laugh from someone—and pounding, smashing fists. Six to one, and dirty fighting.

There came a time when Joe was tempted to lie still on the hot sand. What was the use of getting up again? Only more fists awaited him. But the fighter in him refused to quit. Get up and take it! Continue taking it—while you still have one spark of life left in your body. And smile. Keep grinning, that's what makes you a better man than those rats!

And so Joe Toller took it—a beating that was frightful in its cold-blooded cruelty, in its callous object simply to inflict pain and more pain and still more. It seemed to have lasted since the beginning of all time, absorbing past and present, and presenting the future as an endless red nightmare.

From far away, Joe heard Bellinger's voice.

"That'll be enough!"

The world of fists dissolved. Kneel-

ing, Joe looked up. He found, with vague astonishment, that he could still see out of his left eye.

"What's the matter?" he panted, grinning at Bellinger through bleeding lips. "Show doesn't amuse you any more?"

"I want you alive," Bellinger drawled, "for act two. Only two acts in this play, and the second is more interesting. As much as I enjoyed the first, I've got to save you for the second."

"Don't worry," said Joe. "We Texans die plenty hard."

"It's too late now," Bellinger said slowly, "but you'd be a bargain to me at fifteen thousand a year. Didn't know they made 'em like you any more. Can you walk?"

Joe stood up. He didn't think he could make it.

"Where to?"

Something akin to admiration flickered for a moment through Bellinger's greenish eyes.

"No," he repeated, "I didn't think they made 'em that way any more. If it wasn't a case now of pure self-preservation—I am paying you a compliment, Toller—I would—" He checked himself. When he continued, his voice resumed its normal cold drawl. "You remarked before that you Texans die hard. I'm curious. So we'll put it to test. In what I have called the Devil's Bathtub. Come on!"

**T**HE sextette surrounding him, Joe followed Bellinger. Every muscle in his body ached, but he found that he could walk quite easily, especially when he regained his breath. His muscular, bronzed body was as tough as old hickory. Years on the range in Texas. Hard physical work on the plantation he had managed. Clean habits. It all came in good stead now.

They passed the bungalow, then

'trekked single-file through a narrow path. Magnificent tropical foliage flanked them. Through it, Joe could see the red ball of the setting sun.

"Is it really so beautiful," he thought, "or do I imagine so because it's the last I'll see?" He shrugged.

The path took an abrupt upward climb, then dipped sharply. Bellinger halted, stepped aside. He motioned Joe to continue.

"Yes," he said, "*in* there. Going in yourself, or should I order them to throw you in?"

**T**HE path terminated in a circular pit. The reddish glow of sun reflected in the water which filled it. Not quite to the top, Joe noticed; at least four feet of gray, smooth stone showed above the surface

"So that's it, eh?" he said bitterly. "Like a rat in a bucket of water. Can't you even kill a man decently?"

"You heard what I asked you," Bellinger snapped. "Will you walk in yourself, or should I have you thrown in?"

"I'll walk," Joe said contemptuously.

He looked up at the setting sun. It was beautiful. Slowly, he walked toward the edge of the pit. He hated the hesitation which paralyzed him as he looked down into the black water.

"Well?" Bellinger barked.

Joe cursed him. He jumped in, feet first. The water was cold, like the cold embrace of death herself. And when he rose, spluttering, to the surface, the coldness reached his heart. For the walls of the pit threw a black shadow, and the clammy darkness reminded him of a tomb.

He tread water, keeping himself afloat. Looking up, he saw Bellinger, staring down at him, rubbing thoughtfully his long lower jaw. And again Joe forced a grin to his battered lips.

"This," said Bellinger, "is where

the wives of the natives used to pay the penalty for unfaithfulness. The water here is fed by the ocean. High tide now. When the tide goes out, the pit is empty. But the floor of it is quicksand. If you don't drown during the six hours that the tide will be in, you'll be swallowed up by the sand. The Devil's Bathtub, I think, is a fine name for it."

"We'll discuss it in hell," Joe said coolly.

Bellinger shrugged. He hesitated a moment, slowly twirling the cigarette in his left hand.

"I like courage," he said abruptly. "You have too much of it, Toller, to die that way. And though I don't often change my plans, I'll make an exception in your case. Give me your gun, Collins."

Joe heard the click of the hammer drawn back. Saw the barrel of the revolver swing down. Little black hole—another instant, and it would spit flame. Swift, merciful death.

## CHAPTER V

### *A Chance to Live*

**"I** WANT no favors from you, Bellinger," Joe Toller said harshly. "Except, maybe to remove your ugly map. It spoils the scenery."

For a long minute, Bellinger stared down at him, his cigarette unheeded in his left hand, the revolver dangling loosely in his right. He sighed.

"A dozen men like you working for me—and we could lick the world." He raised his voice. "All right, you rats, beat it! You're not fit to see a *man* die. You stay here, Collins. Hold on to that gun of yours, and if he should ask you—" He turned to look down at Joe again.

"Understand, Toller? All you have to do is to say a word to Collins. If he doesn't obey instantly, getting original ideas of his own—and I

have ways of finding these things out—he'll join you in the pit."

"Yes, sir," said Collins, his face blanching.

"Good-by, Toller. Remember—a bullet is cleaner, quicker. I'll leave you now, with the regret that we hadn't met under—other circumstances."

He walked away. Only Collins remained, squatting on his haunches at the edge of the pit. There was murderous hatred in his piggish little eyes as he looked down at Joe. But, as Joe knew very well, he would obey Bellinger's last command. A bullet—quicker, cleaner.

HE swam toward the wall and found that there were tiny cracks here and there where he could cling with his fingernails, the water supporting most of his weight.

Minutes dragged. The black futility of it began to weigh on Joe's heart. What was the sense of prolonging certain death? Like back there on the beach. Getting up and taking it. What for? What did he gain by it? Was it really courage, or just stupid bull-headedness? And ever he could hear Bellinger's words, pounding on his mind: "A bullet is quicker and cleaner."

As more minutes dragged on, the water receded. Joe constantly had to seek new holds for his fingernails. Sometimes a minute or two would elapse before he found one, during which he would have to swim, straining his cold-numbed, weary muscles to keep afloat. Like a rat in a bucket of water. Swimming 'round and 'round and 'round. Getting weaker all the time. Eventually going down, to come up some time later, belly up. Swollen belly, blown up like a balloon.

"Make up your mind!" Collins snarled. "I'm gettin' hungry."

"You—you go to hell!" said Joe.

His own voice startled him. He didn't recognize it—the hoarse croaking of a sick old hag. Not much longer. Ten minutes, maybe fifteen. Twenty, at the very most. Then he would go down. Come up once, twice. Water replacing the air in his lungs. Water in his mouth and windpipe and stomach. All over!

But why wait the twenty minutes? Why not say the word to Collins—now?

He repeated, with a weak snarl, "You go to hell!"

"All right," said Collins, "all right! You're a fool!"

They'd be making the spring roundup in Texas now, thought Joe. Longhorns. Calves bleating. The creaking of the saddle. Smell of dust and cattle. Flapjacks. Woo Ling, the cook. Round face like the moon. Best cook in the Southwest. A regular hombre, though a Chink. Played a swell game of poker. The time he took the boys over for seven hundred bucks.

SOMETHING splashed in the water beside Joe. Floated. A stick of wood. He looked up. Collins lay on his side, one long arm over the edge. Fingers limp. What now! Had he fallen asleep? But there was blood on his temple, trickling down the side of his face. His face close to the edge.

"Hey! You alive yet?"

Donaldson's bearded face.

"I'm alive," said Joe. The words amused him, but he couldn't laugh. He tried it again. He couldn't laugh.

"Hold out another minute or so," Donaldson said. "Think you'll make it?"

"We—we die hard in Texas," Joe muttered.

Donaldson disappeared. An eternity passed.

"Here! Grab this."

The end of a leather belt dangled near Joe's right hand. He clutched

it, held on with a desperate grip. "You'll have to help me," Donaldson panted.

Joe tried, drawing on a reserve of energy he hadn't dreamt existed. Hand over hand, he worked his way up the two joined belts.

"Just a little more," Donaldson encouraged.

Joe gritted his teeth. Then eager fingers clutched his own belt, dragging him up over the edge. Joe leaned heavily against Donaldson's supporting arms.

"Thanks," he whispered. "Now let me rest. Ten minutes. Then kick me awake if I'm not up." He collapsed.

**D**ONALDSON felt his pulse, nodded, then lowered him, face downward. Joe lay still, perfectly relaxed. He was conscious; it was only his body which revolted under the strain. As he lay there, he felt fresh strength seeping back. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, as the numbing cold relaxed its grip on his muscles, permitting the blood to circulate freely.

He asked without looking up, "Anybody around?"

"No," said Donaldson.

"Good. I'll be all right in a couple more minutes. Thanks again."

"Forget it." Donaldson's voice was low-pitched, strained. "I killed Collins. Crushed his skull."

"What of it? He's got more than one murder to answer for, I'll bet."

"That I know. But—it's a peculiar feeling. I mean, killing a man. I've cut 'em up in medical school. In hospitals. Saw hundreds of them kick off, without a second thought. But it wasn't the same."

Joe turned, lifting himself up on one elbow.

"Bellinger told me you were a physician. How the deuce did you manage to wind up here—on the beach?"

"One of Bellinger's men got shot

up," Donaldson explained quietly. "They brought me down from Tahiti, where I had been making out rather nicely. Of course, I didn't know what I was in for. No one knew where I had gone. I patched the man up, was fool enough to ask some suspicious questions, and so—" He shrugged.

"They turned me loose on the beach. You see, I knew too much. That was five years ago. Booze was the only thing that kept me from going nuts. They'd give me a few drinks every once in the while," he added bitterly.

Joe stood up. Collins' revolver caught his eyes. He picked it up, his fingers caressing the heavy brown butt.

"How did you know I was—there?" He pointed to the pit.

"I saw them taking you. I followed as soon as I dared."

"That took courage," said Joe. "All right, Doc, we'll be on our way to Tahiti in an hour or so. Five years is plenty long. Come on!"

Donaldson fell alongside of him as Joe set off up the path. Swift tropical twilight was already casting its sombre shadow. In a few minutes it would be quite dark.

"What are your plans?" Donaldson asked.

"We're going aboard the schooner."

"But there's always someone guarding it."

**J**OE grinned. "Look on the bright side of life, Doc. Can we reach the cove there without passing the bungalow?"

"Yes," said Donaldson. "Follow me to the left here."

It was slow work through the thick tropical undergrowth. No path here; at times they literally had to tear their way through. Moonlight bathed the beach when they finally reached the point of the cove.

"Easy now," Joe cautioned.

He wiped the sweat out of his eyes and looked across to the schooner.

"Doesn't seem to be anyone on board," Donaldson whispered.

"You haven't ridden the range," Joe said. "There's a man squatting on the fore hatch, a rifle across his lap. See him now?"

"Yes."

Joe handed Donaldson the revolver.

"Now listen! I'm going to swim over. If I make it, then I won't need this, of course. But if that bird with the rifle spots me, then you start blazing away. Idea—to get him before he gets me. Is that clear?"

"Quite," said Donaldson. "I used to be rather good with the revolver."

Joe looked at the other's fingers, still twitching slightly.

"Used to—yes!" he said drily. "Anyway, it's our only chance. If you drop him, swim toward the schooner. I'll try to cover you with the rifle. Those rats will be racing for the beach pretty near the moment you fire, you know."

He stuck out his hand. Donaldson gripped it.

"Good luck!"

## CHAPTER VI

### *Against Odds*

LIKE an alligator, Joe Toller wriggled on his stomach across the twenty feet of sand and slipped into the water. He swam slowly, carefully, using the breast stroke. The first hundred feet, he knew, were the most dangerous. Then the hull of the schooner would shield him from the eyes of the guard.

It was easier than he dreamt. In a few minutes, he crossed beneath the stern. Two ropes dangled there, used to lift the dory on deck. Quickly, Joe swung himself up. A moment later, he stood on the warm deck.

He peered through the semi-darkness, then grinned and relaxed, per-

mitting himself the luxury of a brief rest. For the guard was Muller, and the giant German was fast asleep, his black-bearded face on his chest.

BREATHING normally now, Joe stepped away from the mast. Silently, on the balls of his feet, he padded toward the hatch. The German muttered something in his sleep, and suddenly jerked up his head. Too late!

Joe leaped in like a stalking jungle cat. His right fist created a short arc, landing slightly below and behind Muller's right ear. A terrific force behind the blow—and skill. Then Joe struck him again, flush on the point of the jaw. The second blow wasn't necessary. Muller was unconscious when he received it.

Joe stood over him a moment, panting, then he picked up the rifle. He waved toward the point where he knew Donaldson lay concealed. Something white crawled across the sand there, entered the water. Again Joe grinned, and raised his arms over his head. Life was good. Life!

One wing of the bungalow was lighted. All of the men seemed to be there, their bodies occasionally passing between the light and the window. He watched a while, then he heard Donaldson's voice behind him.

"That's where they eat. Probably eating now."

The thinness of Donaldson's body was accentuated by the wet clothes clinging to it.

"Boy," said Joe, "you're a walking skeleton."

"Guess I am," Donaldson smiled. "Anything I can do now?"

"Yeah. What do you know about Diesel engines?"

"What *don't* I know?" Donaldson countered. "I owned a schooner pretty much like this one."

"That's great! Now wait a second,"

and he ran toward the wheel house. Both the wheel and the Diesel controls were familiar to him. One manila hawser kept the schooner at anchor. Required only one slash of an ax.

The break in the reef, toward which the bow of the schooner already pointed, was clearly visible in the bright moonlight.

"It'll be a cinch," said Joe. "Go down and get those Diesels started."

Donaldson saluted. "Aye, aye, skipper!"

HE turned and disappeared down the companionway. Joe removed the ax supported by two brackets behind the wheel. He waited for the first stuttering of the engines, which would signal him to slash the anchor hawser.

Donaldson returned on deck. He walked slowly, his feet dragging.

"What's the matter?" Joe asked tersely.

"No one can start those engines," said Donaldson. "Bellinger is a cautious devil. He removed certain parts. Parts small enough to put into one's pocket, yet vital, indispensable."

Joe shrugged, lowering the ax.

"Okay," he said cheerfully, "we still have the launch. She's plenty seaworthy, and faster. Come on!"

Two minutes later, standing in the low, roofed cabin of the launch, they stared at each other. Donaldson began cursing, quietly but with a terrible intensity.

Joe Toller stopped him with a curt gesture.

"That won't get you anywhere."

There was a modern lock on the wheel of the launch. A lock which was impossible to break without breaking the shaft itself. Bellinger won, after all!

"Come on back on the schooner," Joe said heavily. "At least we can put up a better scrap from up there."

"A scrap?" Donaldson repeated bitterly. "For what? What can we win?"

"Nothing," Joe snapped. "But we can die like men."

Donaldson extended his hand. Joe Toller took it and said, "Smile, Doc. It's good for the soul."

Donaldson smiled.

Back on the schooner, Joe said, "The first move is to truss this gent up. Hand me that rope there."

Muller was showing signs of regaining consciousness. Joe tied his arms and legs, straightened.

"The next move," he continued, "is to canvass this fair ship and see what we can dig up in arms and ammunition. Ought to be plenty of that on board, as well as food. We should hold out quite a while, and have a good time while we're at it. With Collins and Muller out the odds aren't so bad."

"They have two machine-guns in the bungalow," said Donaldson, "but—I am still smiling, friend. It is good for the soul."

"You're not a bad hombre, by a good long shot!" Joe grinned. "Two machine-guns, eh?" He shrugged. "Oh, well, let's take a look around. Come on!"

DONALDSON suddenly moved toward the mainmast. He whistled.

"This," he said, "can do plenty of damage—if we could only utilize it."

"Utilize what?"

"Step over here a moment."

A small crate was lashed to the mast. It was about three feet square. Round cylinders, closely packed, showed through the slats. On the broad slat running across the top was stamped in heavy black letters: "Explosives—Handle With Care."

"Dynamite," said Joe. "Detonation cap on every stick. Don't know what devilry Bellinger intended this for,

but there's enough of it to blow up a good-sized city. Say!"

He sat down suddenly and stared at Donaldson, his face set, grim.

"What's on your mind?" Donaldson asked tersely.

"Wait," said Joe. "Let me think."

## CHAPTER VII

### *Last Chance*

**T**OLLER jerked his head toward the beach. Two machine-guns. A half-dozen snipers to back them up. They'd get them, surer than fate. Only a question of time. The two machine-guns spraying lead—

"Listen," Joe whispered. "Is it really a fact that ships never touch here?"

"Absolutely," Donaldson said promptly. "Unless by definite arrangement, and even so the launch goes out to meet it. As, for example, the way it met Mulligan's schooner—by previous arrangement in Tahiti probably. It's one of Bellinger's firmest policies. This island is out of the way of even the little-used shipping lanes."

"You," Joe persisted, "are sure of that?"

"Man, I ought to be. I've been here five years."

"Have they a wireless in the bungalow?"

"No."

Joe drummed his fingers on the deck.

"We'll risk it, Doc," he said abruptly. "It'll take nerve, but it should work. Anyway, it's our last chance."

"What do you propose to do?"

"You watch," Joe said grimly.

He leaped to his feet and bent over the crate. Working quickly, he unlashd it from the mast, coiling the rope over his left elbow. When it finally stood free, he lashed one end

of the rope around it, securing the knots with grim caution.

Removing the coil of rope from his arm, he stepped back and threw it over the upper topsail yard, thirty feet above him. The rope uncoiled like a snake. Joe reached over, caught the free end and tugged slowly.

The crate moved. It slid gently toward the mast and, as Joe continued pulling on the rope, ascended slowly. Joe hoisted it, carefully, a foot at a time, until it hung over him, thirty feet in the air. He turned to Donaldson, who watched him wide-eyed.

"Can you imagine what will happen if I let go this end of the rope?"

"It'll come crashing on deck."

"And then?"

Donaldson shrugged. "We, the schooner, the launch—why, it'll blow us into such infinitesimal fragments—"

"Never mind going into details," Joe said grimly. "You have the right idea. There just won't be *anything* left. Fire that rifle there!"

"Fire it? At what?"

"Just fire it in the air. I want another interview with His Majesty, King Bellinger, and it's the quickest way of fetching him. Go ahead!"

**T**HE crack of the rifle spitefully tore asunder the hush of the night. Men poured out of the bungalow. Joe coiled the free end of the rope several times about his body. It helped to ease the weight of the crate. Its dark bulk over him fascinated him. He simply had to let go the rope, let it slip through his fingers. The crate would crash on deck. Then—red destruction! He waited

Bellinger was one of the first to reach the fringe of the beach. He carried an automatic in his right hand. But no longer raised now, ready to fire. The crate hanging over Joe, impossible not to see in the

bright moonlight, checked him as if some mysterious power had suddenly paralyzed his muscles. Transformed into statues of stone, the men stood behind him.

"It's pretty heavy," Joe said coolly, his voice easily carrying in the stillness to the beach, "so let's not waste time. Bellinger, you know right well I'm not bluffing when I promise that I'll let this drop if you don't carry out my orders—sixty seconds after I give 'em."

"You'll blow yourself to hell," Bellinger said hoarsely.

"Sure," Joe agreed, "but what do you think will be left of this schooner and the launch? Ships never call here, eh? You yourself admitted that.

"THIS schooner and launch are your only link with the outside world. If I blow both up, you and your rats will rot here. Rot here for the rest of your days. Even if you knew enough about ship-building, you haven't the proper timber here. Think you can make Tahiti in an out-rigger?"

Silence for a long minute. Joe saw the men looking at each other, and sensed the fear already possessing them. Marooned!

"Reds Mulligan will drop anchor here in a few weeks," Bellinger drawled coolly.

"Bluffing, Bellinger," Joe snapped. "It's not true, and you mighty well know it!"

Bellinger shrugged. "All right, what do you want?"

"Now you're talking," said Joe. "I want my nine thousand back. Donaldson has been kept here against his will for five years. He'll have to make a fresh start. Ten thousand for him. And a key to the launch—delivered personally!"

Silence again.

"Don't hesitate too long," Joe added curtly. "I'm going to give you just

sixty seconds to make up your mind."

"I agree," said Bellinger, "on one condition. That you—both of you—forget the existence of this island once you're out of sight of it."

"That," Joe said cheerfully, "will be a pleasure. I also promise no harm to your royal exterior when you deliver the articles above-mentioned."

Without another word, Bellinger turned and strode toward the bungalow. Donaldson smiled triumphantly up at Joe.

"We win."

Joe stared back at him, frowning. He had a premonition, a hunch. Bellinger had agreed too easily. It wasn't in character with the man.

Joe was certain somehow that even now a trap was being set for them. He tried without success to stifle the feeling.

BELLINGER returned to the beach. He entered the dory and began rowing toward the schooner.

"All right, Doc," said Joe, "meet His Highness, and see that everything is in order. Don't let him get too close to the launch. Did you notice how much gasoline she had?"

"Both tanks full."

"Good enough! There he is now."

Donaldson slid down the rope to the launch, and motioned to Bellinger. Joe waited, his body tense. The premonition of evil had strengthened, became a certainty. A trap set for them somewhere. But where—where? And how? He heard Donaldson's voice:

"I have the key and the money. Start the engine?"

"Yes."

A motor coughed, louder, broke into a rich, full-throated roar as Donaldson worked the throttle.

"Ready?" Joe yelled.

"Ready."

He fastened the end of the rope to the mast. Swooping up Muller's rifle,

he vaulted the rail, dropping in the tiny cockpit.

"Hold it!" he shouted, as the launch began moving.

Donaldson obeyed, staring at him over his shoulder. Joe Toller brought the butt of his rifle to his shoulder. "Come back here, Bellinger," he commanded.

Bellinger, rowing away from the launch, paused, turned.

"What's the idea?" he said slowly.

"We're going to tow you until we get through the reef. I'm covering you with this rifle. Something tells me there's a machine-gun waiting somewhere to say good-by to us. When it goes off, you're heading for hell, Bellinger. Throw that line over here!"

Joe secured the end of the line to the launch, then muttered a command to Donaldson. Slowly, the launch and the dory moved toward the break in the reef.

Joe said, the rifle steady in his hands, "Better call him off, Bellinger—while there's still time."

Bellinger smiled faintly. "I said it

before; I am repeating it now: a dozen men like you working for me—and we'd lick the world." He stood up abruptly, cupped his hand at his mouth, and shouted, "Never mind, O'Grady. Let them go through!"

Joe nodded grimly. A man stood up from the underbrush at the left point of the cove. A machine-gun undoubtedly was concealed there. Since they would have passed within ten feet of it—

"Thanks," said Joe.

With his left hand, he freed the line from the dory.

"Give 'er the gun, Doc!"

Like a bullet, the powerful launch shot through the opening in the reef, a creamy wake trailing her. Donaldson crouched over the wheel, his long hair flying in the wind. They were making at least thirty miles an hour.

"Tahiti next stop," Joe yelled.

"Yes," said Donaldson. "God, look at that sky!"

Joe looked up. "Yes," he said slowly, "my girl's eyes are like—" He caught himself, grinned abashedly. "Anyway, Doc, it's a swell world!"

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# Crimson Trails

*Dale Callaghan, New to the Mahakam Jungle, Faces  
Savage Ordeals that Would Snap the Steel  
Nerves of an Old-Timer*

By HUGH B. CAVE

*Author of "Dyak Torture," "The Preying Hands," etc.*

**T**HE Mahakam jungle, to men who have trekked its trails and challenged its brooding secrets, is an infernal maze of mystery, savage and terrible. But to Dale Callaghan it was adventure; and "Long" John Steele, of Bandjermasin and points South, was wise enough to let the illusion remain—to keep his more mature knowledge securely bolted in the back of his brain, rather than spit it out without reason. Soon enough the jungle would prove itself!

Yet they had been fortunate, he and the boy. From Bandjermasin they had obtained passage on the government launch to Long Iram Garrison—a rare treat for men without official standing. And from Long Iram to Long Tjuo they had traveled with a band of native inlanders, Penihings. Eleven *proas*, forty strong men, to insure protection against hostile villages of Ibans and Saputans and Long-Glits!

And now, on the ninth day, Long John Steele and Dale Callaghan approached the *kampong* Ola-Baong—the final outpost of native friendship before the beginning of the Great Desolation. From white men of importance they had become mere human pygmies in a great labyrinth of primeval strength. This was the Mahakam jungle, and Long John Steele, pondering it, said suddenly

to the bent back in front of him: "Your dad will be some surprised son."

Dale Callaghan turned and grinned. That tanned face grinned easily. Those keen eyes and blocked shoulders put wistful thoughts, vague memories, into Long John's soul.

"Nothing surprises dad, John. You know him better than that!"

**Y**ES, Long John knew Mark Callaghan. Strange, that two such men should be comrades. Long John—rough, hard-fisted, bronzed from years in the tropics. Mark Callaghan—university professor, leader of a dozen geological expeditions, soft-spoken, understanding and sympathetic.

Yet from the time of their first meeting when Long John had guided Mark Callaghan into the mad jungles of Java, they had known the secrets of each other's souls.

And there was something of Mark Callaghan in this nineteen-year-old boy who sat before Long John in the *proa*. Something of the same courage. Otherwise, the boy would not be here.

Three weeks ago Dale Callaghan had been merely "seeing the sights," loafing through the Philippines, the Malay States, the Orient. Then in Singapore he had received a letter from Mark Callaghan, to say that



*With spear points pressing into his back, the prisoner paced forward*

Mark was leaving Bandjermasin to investigate native rumors of silver, copper, diamonds, in Borneo's uncharted interior. And the boy had written back, in reply, that he would be in Bandjermasin as soon as a rat-infested tramp freighter could carry him!

But Mark Callaghan waited for no man, and when the boy arrived in Bandjermasin a brief message was all that awaited him. He might join the expedition if he wished, under one condition. In two weeks' time the party would stop for supplies at the *kampung* of Chief Magani. If Dale Callaghan could persuade Long John Steele to accompany him up-river to Magani's *kampung*—

Yes, Long John mused, there was a lot of Mark Callaghan in this boy.

But it was too soon, yet, to be sure. Before long the jungle itself would frame the test.

AND now Long John had more to think about, for the shores of the river were lined with bamboo-and-nipa huts, and the crude landing-place of *kampung* Ola-Baong was alive with curious Dyaks. Slowly the proa nosed inshore and scraped against the dock. Long John said:

"Better let me do the talking, son. I'll just pay my respects to the *kapala* and get the low-down on conditions in the up-river villages. You sit tight. Otherwise, we'll have half our chop stolen."

So Dale Callaghan sat tight, and Long John Steele strode through the horde of gesticulating natives and

sat cross-legged on the floor of the *kapala's* hut, listening to words of sage advice from the chief's lips. Half an hour later, when Long John returned to the *proa*, the big man's lips were puckered at what he had heard.

"There's trouble ahead, son."

"Trouble?"

"From what I gather, the best thing we can do is turn back. But it's up to you. The up-river natives are on the blood trail. A band of wandering Ibans, from over the hills, burned a couple of Saputan *kampongs* and took heads. The whole district is over-run with Saputan savages, crazy for revenge. If we push on, we push straight into the danger zone."

Dale Callaghan stared straight into Long John's face and said evenly:

"It's up to me, John?"

"It is."

"**T**HEN we'll keep going. Dad expects us. And as long as you're with me—"

*Kampong* Ola-Baong melted behind, and the *proa* entered a fantastic world of darkness and shadow. Here the river became a smooth, sleek aisle of jet blackness, buried in jungle. At rare intervals uncouth shapes slid through the water, brushing the sides of the boat. Yet to Dale Callaghan it was still adventure, and Long John Steele said nothing. Sooner or later—

But again there was more to think about, and Long John said quietly:

"This is where we go to work."

It was an uncanny spot. Here the river narrowed so abruptly that the tiny *proa* seemed wedged immovably between frowning shores. Here the earth itself, with the aid of a matted barrier of vegetation, gulped the thin trickle of black water into its maw. To Dale Callaghan it seemed the end of creation, the end of

everything except darkness and desolation.

But Long John had traveled this route before. Methodically he hauled ropes from an open chop box and lashed the supplies in place. Without emotion he crawled out on a huge mangrove root and knotted additional ropes to bow and stern. And said, smiling:

"It's not as bad as it looks, son. The river dives underground for a few yards, that's all. Just squat here on dry ground and be ready to heave when I give the word."

Dale Callaghan stared, and realized for the first time, perhaps, that courage and fortitude were the fires which kept Long John Steele's blood warm. Like a grinning *maias* Long John climbed into the perilous upper branches of the mangrove, and there, with amazing dexterity, affixed ropes and pulleys and levers. Standing straight, stiff-legged, he shouted orders to the boy below; and before Dale Callaghan's eyes the clumsy *proa* rose skyward, as if by magic.

**I**T was a tedious task and a difficult one, to haul that dead weight from the water and pass it, in relays, over the twenty-foot barrier of impenetrable undergrowth. For an hour Long John and the boy labored mightily; then at last the boat lay in open water again, and Long John, balanced high on his perch, waved down to the boy who stared up at him.

And then it happened. Behind Long John the bole of the tree moved, and became a mottled, lunging shape of death. A vicious flat head darted straight out with uncanny speed. Dale Callaghan screamed.

Long John turned with lightning speed and leaped clear. The lashing python-coils missed their mark by inches. But Long John's feet,

seeking support, encountered moss-covered bark; and with sickening speed the big man crashed downward, clawing and twisting as he fell.

Dale Callaghan stood helpless. At his very feet the hurtling body thudded, and the floor of the *proa*, cluttered with chop boxes and coils of rope, received it. Just once the stricken man's lips opened, to close again with a moan of agony.

And then silence. Dale Callaghan was alone, horribly alone, with hideous jungle on all sides of him and an unconscious man lying limp against his legs.

In that moment the son of Mark Callaghan knew fear. For an instant he stood rigid, as mortally stricken as the man who had fallen. Then, sobbing, he sank to his knees and pawed foolishly at Long John's legs and arms and shoulders.

"Speak to me, John! Say something! Tell me what to do!"

**L**ONG JOHN did not hear. It would be a long time—days, weeks perhaps—before that broken body, that stunned brain, reacted again to normal stimuli. Bones were shattered, muscles and ligaments torn. Even to Dale Callaghan's inexperienced eyes, the truth was evident. And the responsibility rested with him alone.

Alone! He had not dreamed of facing these jungle horrors alone!

Wild-eyed, he knelt beside Long John's inert frame and stared about him. The Mahakam jungle had been a thing of glamor before. Now it was a sinister maze of fear, so close that it choked the breath in his throat and enveloped him like a great mouldy winding-sheet. And he must *think* his way out. Think! How could a man think, when his heart was numb with fear!

But this was the test of the jungle,

and after the first mad moments had passed, Dale Callaghan steeled himself to face it. Grimly he bared his companion's wounds and, as best he could, applied first aid. Desperately he considered what he must do.

Medical attention was necessary. Where could he find it? He stared at the frowning barrier over which he and Long John had portaged the *proa*. Alone, he would need hours to repeat the ordeal. And then what?

Days and days of torture-travel down-stream, past native *kampongs* where hostile faces would glare out at him. On and on, until finally he reached Long Iram, where government officials would offer help. And Long John, by that time, would be beyond help.

And if he went ahead, he faced a maze of midnight jungle. A green kid, pushing blindly through a region overrun with warring natives. Days of torment, nights of terrible fear. Yet somewhere ahead lay the *kampong* of Chief Magani, where Mark Callaghan would be waiting. Was there any choice?

The answer was obvious. Tight-lipped and trembling, Dale Callaghan took his place in the stern of the *proa* and dug his clumsy paddle into the water. He pushed on, into the labyrinth.

**J**UNGLE fear. A horrible thing to a man who must face it alone! At first, acute physical agony. Every nerve taut, every muscle tense. Mighty walls of underbrush, sunken pits of shadow, filled with leering faces. Overhead, shapeless gargoyles grinning down in derision.

Facing these things alone, a man cringes from every sound. The jangling screech of a tree-hyrax is, to him, the shriek of a human soul in agony. The boom of a great hornbill is the resonant clamor of a huge church-bell, tolling notes of death;

the hollow rattle of a *tok-tok* bird is the sound of unseen spectres shaking dice for his soul.

Then, when the brain has absorbed fear to the saturation point, the reaction becomes duller. The mind thinks of more ordinary things—of aching muscles and throbbing pulse, of strained eyes and the taste of trickling sweat. And a man goes on and on, driving himself, enduring the unendurable.

SO Dale Callaghan forced himself to continue. The paddle in his hands had become a weighted torment; the *proa* was a blundering, ungainly beast with a will of its own. And night had fallen.

It was then that he heard the pounding of his heart. Darkness brought it; and the sound throbbed through his lame body, into his brain. A wiser man would have stopped and listened, and understood—and then made haste to turn back. But Dale Callaghan knew nothing of *sabali* drums!

It was the beating of his own heart. He told himself that, over and over again. It could be nothing else. And yet he knew better, and was afraid. Drums! *Sabali* drums! In some far-off Dyak village a native *blian*, a witch-doctor, was pounding with fists and palms and elbows on a huge frame of animal skin, stretched over a hollow tree stump. And for miles and miles the sound throbbed underground.

The message was death. Instinctively Dale Callaghan realized it. The message was death, and everywhere, on all sides of him, the call was being answered.

A sane man would have turned back. A sane man would have gazed into Long John Steele's colorless face, and shrugged, and considered his own safety. But Dale Callaghan did not.

He was lost. The realization terrified him and added a final agony to those which already fought to undermine his reason. Long John had mapped the time; and Magani's *kampong* should have leaped from these midnight shores long ago. In the dark, the *kampong* might have come and gone—

Dale Callaghan kept on. Reason shrieked at him to go back. Instinct said forward. And the drums were in his brain, smothering reason and instinct alike, making of him a mindless, mechanical automaton. The heavy paddle rose and fell. The *proa* glided ever forward between leering shores. An hour passed before relief came; before Dale's heart leaped at the sight of native huts in a clearing blurred with moon-white. Eagerly he stood erect, staggering. His hoarse outcry was so violent and sudden that it almost cracked his dry lips.

"We're here! John, we're here! Look!"

RELIEF! Muttering and mumbling incoherently, he scrambled from the *proa* and stumbled into the dim amphitheater. The thunder of the drums did not matter now, though it was close and sinister. Nothing mattered. This was the end of the trek! "Dad! Dad!"

There was no answer.

"Dad! It's Dale! Dale and Long John Steele!"

The only sound in the village was the sound of his own voice, winging back to him.

He stood stock still. In the white glow of moonlight the native huts were gaunt and grotesque. Like propped-up corpses, they stood between earth and sky on their crooked stilts of *rotan*. And the village itself was a graveyard, grim and silent and menacing.

The glare of hope died in Dale

Callaghan's eyes. Black doubt assailed him. Where were the natives? Where were the members of the expedition? If this were the wrong village—if he had come too far up-river—

MUTELY he turned and stared all about him, and realized the truth. This was not Magani's *kampong*; it was some isolated village in the heart of the danger zone. It was one of the *kampongs* which the Ibans had raided, taking heads. And the drums were throbbing. The drums were horribly close and loud and triumphant. Somewhere in the jungle, in the dark, were natives—savages—marching—

Dale Callaghan had no soul left when he returned to the waiting *proa*. Mutely he stood there, looking down at Long John's sprawled body. He could do no more. His arms and legs were sapped of their strength. The constant hammering of the drums had robbed him of all power to think.

But he could not return down-river. Somehow he must carry Long John to one of the huts, and wait for daylight. That he knew.

It was a nightmare. Wearily, awkwardly, he worked Long John's heavy body to his shoulder. Drunk-enly he crossed the clearing to the largest of the frowning huts. Desperately he clawed his way up the crude tree-trunk ladder and fell to his knees in the doorway.

After that, he knew little of what he did; yet he labored patiently to make the unconscious man as comfortable as possible, and twice he returned to the *proa* to carry kerosene-tins of drinking water. And then, flashlight in hand, he sat beside his companion on the treacherous floor of the hut and listened to the ever-increasing clamor of the drums.

He sat there, listening, until he

knew that unless he did something he would go mad.

For that matter, he was semi-mad when he groped to his feet and slid down the entrance-ladder. When a man talks to himself, alone in the jungle—mutters to himself without knowing what he is saying—madness is perilously close. And Dale Callaghan talked to himself as he prowled animal-like about the *kampong* clearing, peering constantly into the shadows and stopping every few moments to listen again to the beat of the drums.

From one hut to another he crept, baring the secrets of each one with the white glare of his flashlight. It was something to do; nothing else mattered. His mind was full of one thing only—the weird, terrible din of the drums.

SO, at last, he climbed a notched ladder and looked down upon a bamboo floor cluttered with chop-boxes, packing-cases, and white men's paraphernalia. He stared, and realized only vaguely what those things meant. Then he saw, in black paint on the side of an oblong box, a name which stilled the roar of the drums and brought back memories. The name of his father.

Even then, the cry which came from his lips was slow in coming. He stepped forward and reached out with both hands, unable to believe. He licked his lips. He stood motionless.

Then, shouting wildly, he ran back to the hut where Long John lay. He gripped Long John's shoulders and screamed exultant words into the unconscious man's ears.

"We're in the right place! It's true, John! This is Magani's village! Dad—"

But where was his father? He stiffened, and stared at the empty doorway. Then fear came again. He told

himself desperately that his father had not been harmed—that Mark Callaghan had merely gone into the jungle, somewhere, anywhere. But inexperienced as he was, he knew better. White men did not go into the jungle at night. And suddenly, more than ever, he was aware of the mad clamor of the drums.

**T**HE sound was viciously close. It was primeval thunder, choking the jungle night with a million savage voices. He sat and listened, and knew the significance of it. Out there in the jungle, surging closer and closer, were natives on the blood trail. The mere sight of white men—

He had no sane reason for doing what he did. It was instinct. Here, in this hut, he felt madness coming upon him, and Long John's staring eyes were only mockery. But in that other hut — at least his father *had* been there and might return.

Again he carried Long John Steele across the village clearing. Again he stumbled and groaned under the man's dead weight. And his fortitude was rewarded, for as he lowered Long John to the floor of the other hut, the big man moaned audibly and opened his eyes.

"John—"

"Drums," Long John muttered weakly. "Natives coming—coming here. Have to keep them off—"

But Dale Callaghan was staring at something else, and fighting to remember. In the corner of the hut stood a significant row of wooden kegs. And somewhere, long ago, Dale Callaghan had read an account of white men in the jungle—

It was a strange thing that he did. Strange, too, that he found courage enough for the task, for the drums were a lurid living voice, murdering every other sound. Yet, reeling under the weight of his burdens, he carried the kegs of powder one by one down

the creaking ladder and across the clearing. Eleven times he went to his knees and scraped feverishly with his hands, to open shallow graves for the bulky kegs.

Eleven wooden corpses he buried in loose sand, after kicking them open. And he was fighting against time, and knew it—for the roar of *sabali* was merged now with sing-song cries from native throats, and the Dyaks were coming closer.

Like a spectre he raced back and forth across the amphitheater, yet he was a human spectre with human fears and emotions. His eyes were wide, glaring, rimmed with red; he breathed hoarsely. Only terror kept his tired body in motion. And when he had finished—when he climbed the ladder for the last time and stood over Long John in the hut doorway—his work seemed the work of an idiot.

Below him, at the foot of the ladder, lay an up-turned keg and a pile of spilled powder. From the pile, like octopus-arms, extended thin lines of blackness—spokes of a wheel. And each of the arms, each of the grim tentacles, terminated in a half-buried cask of the same death-dealing explosive.

**A**TORCH, flung into that central pile of powder, would send living streams of fire radiating outward in every direction. And as each fire-line reached its terminal, the hut would become the hub of a roaring, heaving circle of inferno.

And Dale Callaghan, listening again to the bellow of the drums and the chant of advancing savages, fully realized the terrible power which lay in his grasp. Years had passed since this thing had happened before; yet he had read and remembered, and now faced the same mad experiment.

But it would be a last resort. It would mean slaughter, wholesale death. No man could deal such a

hand without first trying other methods. First—

There was no time to weigh the consequences. At the edge of the clearing a great wave of torchlight surged suddenly from the jungle darkness. Dyak faces, gleaming like oiled gargoyles, floated forward. Savage voices filled the *kampong* with sounds of inferno.

**D**ALE CALLAGHAN stared. Did they know the white men were here? No—not yet. But they would learn. And then—

An oil-soaked torch blazed in the door-frame behind him. White-faced, rigid, he stood and shouted. Words, mere words!

"Stop where you are! Stop! If you come any closer, I'll shoot!"

He had never used a revolver on human targets before. His hand trembled violently now as he held the weapon—Long John's Luger—and aimed it. But he did not fire. Below him, at the rim of the clearing, the oncoming natives halted and were gaping in amazement.

The Dyaks gaped for a moment only. Then they rushed forward, shouting in triumph—a seething, screaming wave of them, until it seemed to Dale Callaghan that the whole end of the clearing was a sea of motion.

Blindly he pulled the trigger, pouring blunt-nosed bullets into the midst of them. Six, eight times the revolver leaped like a living thing in his hand. And then a white arm—Long John's arm—reached up to hand him another revolver, ready loaded. And Long John's voice said huskily:

"Give it to 'em, son! Hold 'em—"

And it was strange, queer, that the boy's feeble effort had results. A wiser man would have guessed treachery, but Dale Callaghan knew only relief. For the clearing emptied almost as quickly as it had filled, and

the sea of blazing torches receded with fantastic speed into the protection of the jungle. Only a single prone body lay near the jungle's edge as proof of what had transpired.

"They're gone, John!" Dale Callaghan cried. "We're safe! They're gone!"

There was no answer. Startled, the boy looked down. Long John lay silent again on the reed mat, unconscious from his efforts.

After that, Dale Callaghan prayed for daylight; but he was no longer terrified, no longer on the verge of going mad. The danger was over. The attacking Dyaks had retreated into the jungle and would remain there. Yet it was not safe to attempt the trip down-river before daylight. In the dark, the savages would still be watching, waiting.

**D**ALE CALLAGHAN sat and waited, and there was no one to warn him of the danger ahead. No one to tell him about Dyak cunning and Dyak treachery. And when it came—when the ordeal burst upon him with magic swiftness—he faced it alone.

There was no advance notice. The *kampong* clearing near the jungle rim suddenly became alive with torchlight, and in the unholy glare of uplifted flames, Dale Callaghan saw faces filled with triumph.

They had returned, and still the boy was not terrified. He had beaten them back before; he could do it again. Angrily he leaped to his feet and stood framed in the doorway. But he did not cry out as he had intended. He did not shout at them to go back. Instead, he stared, and his lips framed a low moan of anguish.

There, in the midst of the advancing horde, a white man walked. Fiery torchlight gleamed on white drill

and made a glittering crown of the man's *solar-topi*. With heavy, lifeless steps—and with a dozen spear-points pressing into his back—the prisoner paced forward.

Dale Callaghan needed no one to tell him the meaning of it. The word "dad" choked in his throat, and his face lost color. This was his father. The natives did not know it; any white man would have served their purpose. But this was his father!

**T**HERE was no mistaking that rangy frame. Other white men wore khaki and boots, but Mark Callaghan had always insisted on white drill—and on that queer-shaped *solar-topi* which had shaded his eyes from tropical suns for years and years.

Mark Callaghan, in their power! A hostage! And a single bullet from Dale's revolver would send rigid spears into the victim's back.

The clearing was vibrant with sound, resonant with a triumphant sing-song from countless throats. Straight toward the hut came the Dyaks, with their human shield before them. And the prisoner could do nothing. His hands were bound. He walked with head down, as if the soul had been stifled in his body.

Dale Callaghan stood transfixed. The gun dangled in his fist. This was the end—the end of hope and fear and terror and life. He could not shoot.

Already the oncoming devils had covered half the intervening space. In another moment they would reach the line of powder kegs. Then they would storm the ladder and drag the occupants of the hut into the open. What they would do then, Dale Callaghan did not know; but he guessed, and his thoughts were black with fear.

Mutely he stared down. Below him lay that grim pile of powder, wait-

ing for his decision. Beside him, wedged in the door frame, sputtered a crimson torch, also waiting. And Dale Callaghan sank to his knees, moaning.

"John! John—what shall I do? Oh God, tell me what—"

One death or three? The powder was waiting; the torch was within reach. A single heave and it would be over. Creation would become a roaring, bursting chaos, filled with mangled bodies. But Mark Callaghan, his father, would be one of them.

Blindly the boy stared at the sea of approaching torches. What would his father want? If the position were reversed, *what would Mark Callaghan do?*

He groped erect and stood swaying. Cold sweat coursed down his face, blinding him. Unintelligible words sobbed from his lips. If they would only give him time to think! But the decision had to be made *now*.

**H**E seized the torch and held it. He knew what his father would do. His face was empty of color, his eyes wide with terror. Every separate thing around him was whirling, roaring, shrieking at him. He was going mad.

And then he heard. It was a dream, a nightmare, precipitated by his tormented brain. It could be nothing else. But in all that screaming turmoil, a single voice was audible. A single voice cut through the fog of his mind and bellowed its message.

"Throw it, son! Throw it!"

It was his father's voice. It came from nowhere, from everywhere—from inside his own brain and from the interior of the hut behind him. With a great cry, he stiffened and hurled the blazing brand.

The hurtling flame struck home. A wall of scarlet fire leaped sky-

ward. A dozen macabre tentacles of fire raced toward the outer rim of the clearing.

And then, as the boy stood rigid, the amphitheater rocked with the force of mighty explosions. Night became inferno. The world upended and went mad. Hoarse voices shrieked in agony.

And, still sobbing, still hearing his father's voice, Dale Callaghan slumped to the hut floor. Above him, as he lost consciousness, hung his father's face. . . .

When he opened his eyes again it was still there, very close and very real. Of course, it was not real; it was a dream. His father was out there in the clearing, torn and mangled and—

But the blurred features were speaking, and Dale Callaghan heard the words as if from a long distance.

"Courage, John? Right. I knew what he was up to as soon as I saw those powder lines. But I'm glad we were here to see it. I'm glad we returned in time—"

"Returned from where?" That was Long John Steele's voice, husky and vibrant. "Sane men don't trek the jungle at night, John!"

"Not without reason. But when the drums began to boom, every one of Magani's Dyaks melted into the bush, John. They go mad when *sabali* sounds. You know; you've seen it before. And our own native boys went with them. Deserted. Took everything they could lay their thieving hands on, including my clothes, and vanished. So we went after 'em."

Dale Callaghan stared up into his father's face. Slowly, still bewildered, he turned to gaze at the carnage in the clearing, and shuddered at what he saw.

"That—that prisoner they had, Dad. I thought—"

"Just Dyak cunning, son," Mark Callaghan smiled. "It was one of their own men. One of their own scheming devils, dressed in my outfit. Just the usual native treachery, to pull the wool over your eyes."

Dale Callaghan stared mutely at the men around him—at his father, and Long John, and others whom he did not know. Then, with a sigh, he lay back on the reed mat, unaware of the proud smile on Mark Callaghan's lips and the significant glint in Long John Steele's gray eyes.

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# Orchid of Doom

*An Intrepid Adventurer  
Runs a Mad Race with  
Death in the Weird  
Depths of the  
Jungle*

*A Larry Weston  
Novelette*

By LIEUT. SCOTT MORGAN

Author of "The Avenger of Lo Chang," etc.

## CHAPTER I

### *White Indians*

LARRY WESTON was in the Canal Zone on a vacation. A vacation, he hoped, from fighting and adventuring. This was the last place in the world, he decided, where anyone was likely to call upon him to exercise his peculiar talents.

Therefore he thought nothing of it when a seedy individual sidled up to him, as he was taking his morning constitutional along Gatun Locks.

"Lis'en, bo, how about stakin' a poor devil to coffee and beans for one meal?"

Larry Weston paused, stared at



*The savage, maddened*

the man in white ducks. The fellow had ragged clothes, straggly hair, and appeared to have gone long unwashed. His eyes were wild, staring. His toes were visible through holes in his shoes and socks. He looked like a man who had been through hell.

Larry's nose wrinkled with disgust. A serious expression crossed the face of the beachcomber. He lowered his voice.

"I don't really want anything," he said softly. "But I do want to know this: are you Larry Weston, whose name was registered yesterday as a new arrival in Colon?"

Weston's eyes widened in surprise. He wondered what sort of a game was being played on him. But he nodded, his interest quickening.



*jungle cat attacked in a frenzy*

"Yes, I'm Weston," he said flatly.

"Ever hear of the 'Dawn Lady'?" asked the beachcomber.

Larry shook his head. The fellow went on:

"You've heard that Panama is known as the 'home of the orchid?' Well the 'Dawn Lady' is an orchid. Some call it the nightmare orchid. No scientist has ever been able to bring one out of Darien, not even myself. I discovered the orchid, but a mob of cutthroats drove me away from my find.

"They're in there now, gloating over the Dawn Ladies like misers over their gold. The first person to bring out one of the orchids will be world-famous and can name his own price for exploitation, motion pictures, and so forth.

"I'm just one man, wasted by fever and other kinds of sickness, including, at times, the madness induced by the Dawn Lady. It needs a cool hand and head to go into Darien and bring out one of those flowers. Will you take on the job?"

Larry was surprised. The demand was abrupt and unexpected.

"But it will take money," he objected. "Why should I spend my own—"

He got no further. The beachcomber delved into his pocket and brought out a roll of bills—did it with some difficulty, because it was so big for his pocket. The top bill was for a hundred dollars. The man rapidly peeled off twenty bills exactly like the top one.

"It isn't much," he said apologeti-

cally, "but there is plenty more. I need scarcely warn you that if you take this on, your life isn't worth a nickel."

"In that case," said Larry Weston calmly, "I'll do the job. You going?"

"Yes. I'll see about getting the outfit together. We need some Jamaica blacks as carriers, and—"

"You take care of the details. But if I take it on, I'm the boss. From where do we start into Darien?"

"From the headquarters of the Yavisa River."

"Tomorrow?"

"Right. And watch yourself. I'll see you at your hotel. My name is Michael Badger, of the National Museum of Natural History."

THE beachcomber sidled away as furtively as he had approached, and with his going Larry Weston had the strange feeling that all Gatun, all Colon, had suddenly become a place of eerie mystery and danger.

He felt eyes boring into the back of his neck. He looked around him but saw no one save the workers at the locks, who were easing a big liner through into Gatun Lake for the run through the Canal. Anybody in that crew, he decided, might have seen the passage between himself and Badger.

That Badger was closely watched—if he had told the truth—Larry Weston was quite sure. His expression became grim. Again he was the righter of wrongs, the world-adventurer, taking on all honest jobs that came his way.

Colon had lost interest for him. The jungle was calling, the jungle and danger. A mile from where he stood were the dark shadows of the brush filled with all manner of violent death. He would be facing it soon.

He looked like a soldier, tall, slen-

der, stern of countenance, as he strode back to his hotel. Badger had vanished as though the earth had swallowed him. That he would reappear again, Larry knew quite well. At the hotel desk, he tossed one of the century notes to the clerk.

"That the real thing?" he asked casually.

The clerk fingered the note.

"I'd like to have two carloads of 'em," he said, grinning.

"Thanks," replied Larry.

He went to his room, turned the knob, entered—and hell itself seemed to hurl itself on him from the darkness.

His blinds had been up when he had left. Now they were down, and blankets must have been hung over the windows to make the room look so dark. He caught an alien odor, a wild strange odor, mingled of unwashed bodies and something his nostrils had never before experienced.

THEN he was fighting for his life. His fists began to lash out. He felt his knuckles collide with flesh and bone.

He felt the bone give before the savage ferocity of his blows.

His feet moved in the darkness with the surety of the ballet dancer. He was a master fighter, even in the dark. His keen ears gauged distances by the barely audible breathing of his adversaries. He knew there were four of them, and that they attacked with knives.

Something hot slanted along his side, ripping coat, shirt and undershirt to ribbons. A knife blade had pinked him. He gauged the slant of the knife, knew exactly at what angle it had struck.

His hands darted out, caught the knife hand as it was raised to strike again. He yanked the man toward

him with his left hand, and drove his right to where he was positive the would-be killer's face was. He had the satisfaction of feeling his knuckles strike full and true to the jaw of his enemy.

The man wilted in his hands. He allowed him to drop as softly as possible, unwilling for the noise of this fracas to reach the ears of the hotel people. The enemy, too, apparently desired to do all this in absolute silence, for they fought without sound.

**T**HEY gave back now for a breathing space, and Weston realized under what a terrific disadvantage he was laboring. His enemies had been long enough in the darkness for their eyes to become accustomed to it. He had just come in from the brilliant sunlight and was virtually blind, would be for several seconds.

But he didn't wait. He was glad that his door had a spring lock. But he could always see anyone against the door if it opened, and get them before they got away.

He flung his arms wide and hurled himself forward. His right arm encircled a waist. It slid swiftly up to a neck, fastened in the throat of a rough garment. His left hand grasped a throat.

He stopped, held back by the inertia of the man he had grabbed. This put both of them slightly behind him. He had an arm fast to each. He gritted his teeth, exerted all his force, and brought the two of them together ahead of him before they could even have time to comprehend what he intended doing.

They came together with battering-ram force. Their skulls cracked against each other with a sickening smash. He dropped the two as though they had been hot poker. Three out of the running. One left.

This one had plenty of courage,

for now he hurled himself at Larry Weston like something shot from a gun. Larry knew that his knife was lifted, ready for a savage down-stroke, or that it was coming up from below in a disemboweling stab.

He crooked one knee ahead of him to protect his loins, held his left forearm over his face to shield himself against the stab.

A hand, a wrist, crashed down on his forearm. Larry allowed his arm to give a little with the blow. His right hand shot forward, under the knife arm of the attacker, then back over behind the elbow, so that his hand could grasp the wrist whose hand held the knife. Then, with all his power, he jerked.

A scream, instantly shut off as his attacker remembered, gurgled in the throat of the man. Larry loosed him and the man staggered back. Larry was on top of him, pounding away. His left shook the invisible enemy. His right drove savagely to the heart, and the unknown went down.

**L**ARRY'S breathing was scarcely accelerated. He stepped to the window, yanked down the blanket, slid up the blinds. The brilliant sunlight poured in.

He came back, stared down at the four who had attacked him. They were all white men, with hair that was almost golden, blue eyes, and faces with rather rounded contours. They seemed typical Nordics, large and powerful, but it came to Larry Weston that there was something unusual and other-worldly about them; something strangely weird.

Weston remained quiet just for a moment. He could have called the police and sent them to prison, but he was curious.

That they were in some fashion connected up with his recent contact with Michael Badger, he knew

very well. Certainly that man's enemies had wasted no time. Only fifteen minutes ago Weston had agreed to do a job, and already an attempt had been made on his life.

## CHAPTER II

### *Hostages of Hate*

**T**HE men stirred, one after the other. All were very much alive, and quickly returning to consciousness. Weston ripped sheets from the bed, turned the men over, noted that each wore sandals, and bound their wrists behind them. Then he sat back and considered his next move.

It was obvious that, whatever the mystery behind this attack, the future was filled with danger if he went through with his promise to Badger. And he had no intention of not going through. He lighted a cigarette. His hands did not tremble, even after his tremendous exertion. They never did. He was always in perfect physical trim.

His telephone rang.

"Someone reported a disturbance—" began the hotel clerk.

"It's nothing," said Larry. "I stumbled over a chair." He clicked up the receiver.

One of his attackers returned fully to consciousness. He opened his eyes widely, but made no sound. He merely looked around him, as though orienting himself.

Then his eyes settled on Larry Weston. Something began to grow, deep down in those eyes. It seemed to be madness. The light in the eyes was flecked with little spots of gold.

Weston understood it. This man was actively hating him, and the longer he stared at Larry the more savage and bitter became his hatred. The anger increased until murder, plain, unadulterated, unhidden, glared

satanically out at Larry Weston. In spite of himself, Larry shuddered at what he saw in that gaze.

But it wasn't this that troubled him, for he had seen murderous hatred in the eyes of men before now. It was the aura, the emanation, from the man, which was distinctly—well, *different*—the only word by which he could describe it to himself.

One by one, the four men returned to consciousness. Each, without making a sound, first oriented himself, then stared bitter hatred at Larry Weston.

Then the bound men, turning their heads slightly, exchanged glances. Their lips did not move, nor did their eyes. They seemed to be concentrating on something, and Larry had the uncanny feeling that, without words or gestures, they had clearly communicated with one another.

**I**T was a queer sensation. It came to him that they, all four of them, were invisible radio sending-and-receiving sets. The room literally filled with the tension of cruel, murderous hatred.

There was a knock on the door.

Larry's right fist was against his hip, clenched and ready for action, when he stepped to the door. He hesitated for a moment, then swung the portal open, moving aside just on the off chance that whoever knocked might instantly start shooting.

The man who came in was Michael Badger. The result of his arrival was strange. His eyes fell on the four bound men. Their eyes clashed with his. The four men were utterly still. Badger's face convulsed with fury. He hurled himself forward. His right hand came out, holding a knife. He was a man beside himself.

Weston flung himself on Badger,

hurled him against the wall before he could stab one of the defenseless men. Then Weston stood before him, his face grim, his lips a firm straight line.

"I won't countenance murder, Badger!" he snapped.

"You would," croaked Badger. "You would if you knew what I know. Do you know what those people are?"

"No. They look like Swedes, Norwegians or Danes."

"They're not. They're white Indians from the heart of Darien, from the land of the Dawn Lady. No scientist save myself—and now you—has ever seen one of them and returned to tell about it.

"Some of them go into the outside world, passing for white, almost unnoticed. Only those with a faculty of tongues emigrate, and always they return to their own.

"Expeditions into their lands all vanish from the face of the earth. I am the only white man ever to go among them in their own territory and return alive—and they hate me beyond the power of white men to hate.

"They have sworn that none shall ever bring a single specimen of the Dawn Lady to civilization. Just now they are working with my enemies to prevent my return. When I have been done away with, my enemies in turn will be ruthlessly slaughtered."

"You mean there are others like these in the heart of Darien?" asked Weston incredulously.

"**Y**ES. I estimate their number at four thousand odd. They are protected by all other Indians—Chacoy, San Blas and the like—against any encroachment by outsiders. The red Indians regard them almost as gods.

"They don't intermarry, zealously guarding the purity of their mys-

terious strain. Their women are gorgeously beautiful, but to look on one of them means death for a white man.

"God, Weston, I went mad when I saw them. If you hadn't stopped me from slaying them, and I had knifed them, nothing on the face of this earth would have saved either of us from destruction!"

"But who would have known?" asked Weston. "Obviously, they came here unobserved. They wouldn't have been missed."

Badger's face worked spasmodically.

"They're stranger than strange," he said. "Stories, legends about them, have been current since the Spaniards first landed in Darien. They are credited—and rightly, too, Weston—with almost unbelievable powers of clairvoyance.

"**I** CAN tell you this, right now: every white Indian in Darien knows at this moment what has happened here, and they have told their red brethren. These four have doubtless sent messages, by some telepathic means, to their people.

"If I had slain them—we couldn't get into Darien with an army! We'd be followed to the ends of the earth by their executioners, and no matter where we might be—in a Greenwich Village studio or a Park Avenue apartment—the executioners would find and destroy us."

"Then what do we do?"

"Turn them loose," said Badger. "Then guard ourselves from every angle against murder at their hands."

Badger turned on the white Indians, spoke to them swiftly in a *patois* of which not a single word was comprehensible to Weston. They received his words in silence. Badger motioned Weston to stand back and cover the four with his automatic.

Then Badger swiftly slashed the

bonds of the four killers. They rose to their feet. They seemed on the verge of resuming the attack on Weston.

Badger stood beside Weston. His own hand now held an automatic. The Indians hesitated, looked at one another in that wordless way they had. Then they stared at the window, then at the door. They went through the door as silently as cats.

Weston and Badger looked at one another for a moment. When they went to the door, peering cautiously out, the four white Indians had vanished.

Nobody in the hotel reported having seen them. They had apparently disappeared into thin air.

**T**HE two men were grim as they sat down to dinner that night. Badger, now dressed in the habiliments of civilized society, reported that he had prepared for departure the following morning at four o'clock. Weston took charge.

"You will act as guide," he said succinctly. "If our numbers permit, there will be advance guard and flankers, also a rear guard. For I'm telling you something, Badger: even if I'm all alone at the wind-up, I'm going into Darien and come back with a specimen of the Dawn Lady—if there is such a thing."

"There is," said Badger quietly. "I've seen it—they, thousands of them!"

"Then to procure one should be easy," replied Weston.

Badger shook his head. There was a fanatical light in his eyes. His next words made cold chills race along Larry's spine, despite the fact that the steamy heat of the tropics had bathed his whole body in clammy perspiration.

"I won't come back," said Badger. "I know that. They've told me, and they keep their promises. I've left

twenty thousand dollars in a bank here, which will be paid to you when you produce a Dawn Lady—fully described by me to the bank's president—with the assurance that Michael Badger receives credit for its discovery and classification. You'll do that?"

Weston hesitated. He licked dry lips with his tongue. On the point of telling Badger that he wouldn't come back without him, Weston changed his mind, for it came to him as he looked at Badger that he saw a man already as good as dead. He shrugged.

"I think you're right, Badger," he said, and it was as though he added his own words to the sentence of death against the man. "I won't pretend to believe otherwise. Maybe you had better not go."

"You'll go anyhow, even if I don't. You'll bring back the nightmare orchid. The white Indians will blame me for your success. And whether I go or stay, or wherever I go, they'll find and destroy me. I'd rather die facing them and fighting them for what I regard as the most precious thing in my life."

Weston marveled at the fanaticism of scientists like Michael Badger. He didn't try to understand the man, which wouldn't have been difficult—for Weston himself belonged to the strange tribe which would not take a dare, though he never worded it like that even to himself.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Into the Jungle*

**A**ND so in the steamy dawn of the next day, with a dozen carriers, Weston, dressed for the jungle—armed with guns, his hard fists and the canniest wits that had ever gone into the Panamanian wilderness—started out with his expedition. Four men had been sent

ahead the previous night, to have burros and additional carriers ready for them when they left the Yavisa Valley.

He went to Cristobal, thence down the Isthmus to Yavisa, where dugouts were waiting.

Now and again crocodiles splashed into the stream. Ocelots, pumas, jaguars screamed from the jungles at night, and sometimes stared with golden eyes at them from the limbs of overhanging trees. Tapirs, disturbed at their feeding, slipped into the stream and vanished. Badger explained that these animals walked along the bottom of lakes and streams as easily as on the ground above.

**S**NAKES sunned on the banks. Bush dogs showed themselves, slinking figures in the jungle's gloom. Deer flashed through clearings like streaks of light. Huge boa constrictors sometimes were seen hanging from trees like fat lianas, waiting for the passing of unwary victims.

Death lurked in the jungle everywhere. Tiger fish filled the waters. For a man to fall overboard meant that his flesh would be stripped from his bones before he could ever be pulled in again.

They came to the place where they were to leave their dugouts; to the place whence, really, they were to start their grim dash for the heart of Darien and the valley where Badger said the Dawn Lady would be found.

Weston's eyes were grim. He seemed oblivious of the ghastly heat which shriveled the flesh even of the tropic-born Jamaican blacks. Nothing appeared to trouble him. He drove his carriers like a slave master.

The grim procession started away from the Yavisa. Badger looked back, said softly:

"My last look. I shall never see

it again." Weston didn't answer, feeling again in his heart that what Badger said was true.

Three men went ahead as an advance guard. They were burly Jamaican blacks who ordinarily didn't fear anything that lived. But their faces wore that sickly, fish-belly color which shows when a black man is deathly afraid. They carried rifles in the crooks of their arms, and went on with many backward glances over their shoulders.

All the carriers were likewise armed with rifles and each man had been supplied with plenty of ammunition.

One hour passed one hour during which the procession dropped the valley of the Yavisa behind them.

Ahead, blue with distance, showed the peaks of the mountains which masked the mysterious land of the San Blas, where no foreigner might stay after sundown. Nearer at hand, somewhat lower down, was another mountain range. Between it and the first, according to historians and geodetic survey topographers, ran a mysterious river, along whose banks were the white Indians and their red brethren. All of them had remained aloof from the outside world for centuries, and had destroyed without mercy—as far as the world knew—every expedition which had entered their land.

**T**HE mountains themselves seemed to hold up their hands to bar the passage of Weston's expedition. They were a menacing rampart, thrown the length of a continent across the east.

The procession turned around an outcropping of land and came upon the three members of the advance guard. They were piled together, as though flung there by the hand of a giant or the blast of a hurricane. A poisoned arrow stuck

from the throat of each. None had had opportunity to fire a shot.

The carriers looked, then whirled. They started back toward Weston, fright in their eyes. Instantly his automatic leaped to the fore, together with that of Michael Badger.

"Back to your jobs!" snapped Weston. "We're going on. Don't turn your backs on the enemy or you're finished!"

Just what they would have done was to remain forever afterward a mystery, for at that exact moment, as though they had sprung from the soil, scores of red men appeared on all sides of the procession. Savagely painted, they were armed with ancient weapons and with bows, arrows and spears.

"Down!" barked Weston. "Throw your packs ahead of you as protection. Prepare to commence firing!"

**W**ITH the first move of the procession, the Indians opened. Arrows smashed into the burros first, killing the entire train. Arrows, spears, bullets, streaked past the ears of Weston and Badger. Two carriers flung up their arms and crashed down, dying even as they fell.

Weston realized that even to be touched, to have one's skin broken by one of those arrows, spelled instant death. He flung himself down behind one of the dead burros, dragging Badger down with him. Badger was babbling:

"It's the nightmare! It's the nightmare!"

Weston turned on him without a word and slapped him cruelly across the face. Badger looked stunned, but something of the madness went out of his eyes.

"Sorry," he mumbled, "and you're quite right. My raving would make the carriers turn back in spite of everything you could possibly do. I had it coming."

Badger, there beside Weston, began to fire. The carriers, now under cover, such as it was, were unlimbering their rifles.

"Shoot to kill!" barked Weston.

His own automatic began to bark. He fired over the back of the burro behind which he was ensconced. He never once missed with that automatic of his.

The Indians were so close he could see the fanatical light in their eyes. He fired at one, saw a hole appear in the man's forehead, and held his breath when the man—who must already be dead on his feet—charged forward. With mouth open, eyes set in a blank stare, the man did not drop until he had stumbled over the burro from behind which Weston had slain him.

Weston's heart felt cold. If the Indians who still lived took it into their heads to charge, not all the bullets in the party could keep them from slaying every man in it.

"Rapid fire!" barked Weston.

He again fired. This time he shot twice at his man, once at the heart, once at the legs. The man went down, unable to charge. Weston hated to use two bullets on each man, but it wouldn't do for each to charge, even in death, upon him. One might destroy him with a poisoned blade or an arrow. Again and again his gun roared.

**O**THER Indians came out of the woods to join the attack. Now the Jamaican blacks were firing rapidly and with deadly effect. They, too, got wise to the necessity of making sure that an enemy dropped when struck with a bullet, and concentrated on the knees of their enemies.

The Indians fell in windrows. Ten minutes of fighting and fully a score of the Indians had fallen dead within plain sight. Others, shot through

heart or skull, had whirled and vanished into the jungles, to die beyond sight of the interlopers.

Then, as quickly as they had come, the Indians vanished, and utter stillness took possession of the wilderness. Weston rubbed his eyes. The Indians had taken away their dead and their wounded, doing it so quickly that he had scarcely been conscious of their actions.

Fearfully, the blacks raised their heads. Nothing happened. No arrows, spears or bullets came out of the woods.

AND then, just as the carriers would have risen to their feet, a solitary figure appeared on the trail ahead, right hand upheld in the universal token of amity or truce. A voice spoke to Weston, calling him by name! The English was excellent!

"Your party wins for the moment," said the red man. "But it is impossible for you to go into Darien and live! One by one you will fall, until none is left. Our people will die, gladly, to the last man, to make sure that none of you escape. Go back, and you will not be molested. Come forward, and you will die."

Weston looked at Badger. Badger's face was utterly white; but his eyes were filled with grim purpose.

"I go forward," he said, "whether I live or die." Badger raised his voice in answer to that of the Indian.

"We shall not turn back," he said.

The Indian vanished. One moment he was visible; the next moment there was a blank space where he had been standing, beyond which was the wall of the jungle.

The carriers were gray-white with terror. They rose to their feet, surged on Weston. He stood staring at them. Jamaica Jim, straw boss of the carriers, spoke to Weston with chattering teeth.

"We're going back, boss," he said. "Ain't enough money in the world to send us agin them red fellers."

"The families of each of the dead will receive five hundred dollars, Jim," snapped Weston. "The same goes for anyone who dies hereafter. And each of you who gets back receives a thousand dollars, in addition to your regular wages. Get your men going. Take the packs off the dead burros and increase the loads of your men to take care of the extra duffel. Get going!"

But the blacks stood their ground. Their rifle muzzles menaced Weston and Badger. Weston's eyes narrowed to razor-edge sharpness. Grimly, he moved forward. His right hand held his automatic at his hip.

"The first man to pull a trigger dies," he said softly. "I'll get him, even if I take a bullet through the heart at the same time."

He could see black fingers, trembling, tighten on triggers. But he moved forward. He stood facing Jamaica Jim. The black stared at him fixedly. The whites of his eyes were showing, red-rimmed with a horrible fear.

Casually, Weston pushed aside the muzzle of the man's rifle, stepped in and felled Jamaica Jim with a blow of his fist. Then he looked at the others.

"I'm not disarming you, because they may come back," he said calmly. "But you're going ahead with us."

JAMAICA JIM sat for a moment. Then he rose to his feet, picked up his rifle and felt of his swelling jaw, which had almost been broken by Weston's fist. He grinned at the man who had downed him, and whirled on the blacks.

"What's the matter 'a you fellers?" he bellowed. "Didn't you hear Mista Larry say we go on? Get going before I sink my feet into you. Ain't

a one of you wouldn't kill for a thousand dollars—guess you kin die fer that much, if you has to!"

The blacks hesitated. They rolled their eyes at Weston, looking for him to relent. But the grimness never left his eyes. His fist held his automatic in readiness. The blacks turned back, refitted their burdens, slung their rifles over their backs, and took up the trail again.

Three went ahead, when the trail at last came to an end, to cut a way through with machetes. Sweat poured from their ebon bodies. But something had gone into them. The determination of Weston, which took no thought of death, had been forced into them. It was as though they themselves had refused to turn back, even for death. Something of their leader's grimness of purpose became their purpose. too.

A half hour passed. Weston was driving the men without mercy, as though they raced against time to cheat death. Once, as they slowed for a breathing space, a gray streak flashed from the jungle. It struck a carrier. He dropped. His throat had been ripped open. He died with his hands at his throat, blood spurt- ing through between his fingers.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Scent of the Death Flower*

**W**ESTON turned to Badger. The scientist's eyes were wide with amazement.

"That was a jaguar," he said. "I never heard of one of them deliberately attacking a man. But I *know* what it is. It's the night—"

Then Badger remembered, fell silent. As the carriers, with a long look at their fallen member, again took up the trail, their speed still more accelerated, with no time out now for rest, Badger dropped in beside Weston.

"They're trying some other way," he said softly. "That animal was mad. It's the nightmare orchid again. To breathe of its odor means madness! That cat didn't know what it was doing, else it would have run away instead of striking."

As though in answer to his words, something streaked again from the jungle, this time from the other side, into which the jaguar had gone. Weston's automatic leaped forward, spat. The gray streak dropped into the newly cut trail.

**T**HE carriers started to look back. Weston barked at them to keep going. He and Badger paused beside the dead jaguar. Its yellow eyes glared at them. Its claws made convulsive movements, as though even in dying he would rip out their throats. A strange, giddy odor came from the dying cat.

"It's the orchid," whispered Badger. "The cat has been caged and literally bathed in the odor of the Dawn Lady. If we took time to go into the jungle, we'd find the cage from which the Indians released him."

Weston's teeth showed as though, like the jaguar, he snarled. But not once did he look back the way they had come.

"Will the Indians attack again?" asked Weston.

"No. They're smart. They know our rifles are too good for them, have too great a range. They'll turn the jungle against us."

But in spite of Badger's dire forebodings, nothing further happened that day until after the sun had dropped into the invisible Pacific and utter darkness possessed the world.

Then the carriers threw up a hastily built barricade of logs and brush, in the center of which they built a fire to keep off mosquitoes. Around it they huddled in wordless

fear, their white-irised eyes never still as they searched the surrounding blackness of the almost impenetrable jungle. Tents were thrown together for Weston and Badger, but Weston knew that he would not sleep.

He had started to enter his tent when one of the carriers screamed, jumped to his feet, and yanked something from his neck—something about two feet long which writhed sinuously. The black dropped it on the ground, where he started to stamp it to pieces with his feet.

**B**UT after his first frantic jump, his movements slowed, as though a mighty weight had been dropped suddenly on his shoulders. He staggered, stumbled to his knees, fell forward on his face—and the little snake which had bitten him in the neck crawled into the brush of the barricade and vanished before it could be slain.

"I saw it come into the barricade," said Badger, running up. "It came sailing in, end over end. But thank God none of the carriers saw it come. I just happened to be looking in the right place. If they blamed that on our enemies, not even our automatics could keep them from bolting."

"We've got to play fair," said Weston. He raised his voice to the carriers. "That snake was thrown in, fellows," he said. "If any one of you want to go back now, he is at liberty to do so."

The blacks did not answer for a moment. Then Jamaica Jim spoke for them all.

"You'll go with us to see we gits back safe?"

Weston shook his head.

"When I go back, it will be with the thing I came for."

"Then I guess we has to go with you," said Jamaica Jim simply; and

forever thereafter, no human being would ever be able to convince Larry Weston that color had anything to do with the shape and form of a man's courage.

Weston hesitated.

"Break camp," he snapped. "We can't stop now until we've done our job. If we stay here, we may all be dead by morning."

As though to emphasize his words, queer sounds came out of the jungle. The first was the far muttering of drums. The next was the muted screaming of men. And in and through these sounds went others which were oddly like the screaming of frightened women, or the squalling of newly awakened babies.

**B**ADGER seemed to be cataloging these latter sounds. Weston watched the moving of his lips.

"Pumas! Ocelots! Jaguars!" Then Badger turned to Weston. "I know what they're doing," he said. "They are either capturing, or driving before them, all the jungle cats they can gather. And the time will come when, in some fashion or other, they'll turn them all against us."

Weston sighed with relief.

"We can cope with things we understand," he said. "It's the unknown that frightens people. The blacks won't be afraid of the cats!"

Grimly Badger shook his head. In less than five minutes the camp, so recently made, was dismantled. By the light of flaming torches, which afforded any enemy excellent targets—though not a man was fired on during the ghastly, grueling night which followed—the procession cut and hacked its way through the lianas and underbrush which guarded the way into the heart of mysterious Darien.

Once a negro took a sleeping boa for a liana and struck it with his machete. Instantly it whipped around

him, and the man was dead before the others could slash him free of the constricting coils. The other blacks scarcely bothered about it. Boas were common, a way of dying they all understood. They drove themselves as mercilessly as Weston had been driving them.

And all the time, as they drove forward and upward—the last proof that they were ascending the mountain which would take them into the valley which no man had seen and returned to tell about—the drums kept beating in the night. The darkness was filled with the shouts of men, the beating of spears against shields, and the screaming of Panama's big cats.

AND so, finally the sun started out of the east, signaling its coming by a crimson streak which was the color of blood. Scarcely had the dawn started breaking than a ghastly thing happened. A strange, terrible, heady odor came through the jungle, rousing it to ecstacy, mad life.

Badger pressed in close against Weston and whispered:

"It is the time when the Dawn Ladies open their petals," he said. "All the jungle goes mad when it smells the odor—all save the red and white men who live here and are accustomed to the nightmare orchid!"

The carriers became erratic. One sang a song, dancing as he moved forward with his burden. Two began to fight. Weston, himself, resisting a desire to scream with laughter, hurled himself at the fighting blacks.

With blows to the chin he knocked them out. Then he kicked them in the ribs until they returned to consciousness—and they laughed in his face like fools as they rose and staggered on.

"We've got to resist the desire to go mad," whispered Badger, "or

we'll scatter into the jungle and the natives will get us, one by one."

Weston nodded grimly.

He was everywhere at once. Every time a black man tried to break free of the procession, as though to run wild in the woods, Weston, now dripping with perspiration and panting like a spent runner, drove him back with his fellows.

They paused once for a few minutes. Badger and Weston, both chattering nonsense until each called the attention of the other to his chattering, secured the packs to the ebon backs so that the carriers could not throw them away. Then, with feet and fists, they forced their men on; while every minute, as the sun climbed higher, the odor of the nightmare orchid, possessing all the jungle, became more and more overpowering, more conducive to the craziest, wildest fancies.

They reached a hilltop and Badger pointed. Directly beneath them was a valley, formed like an amphitheater. And its floor was covered with nodding stems, topped by flowers—which were visibly opening—with petals as red as the blazing orb of the rising sun!

Badger screamed and started forward. He ran past the carriers without seeing them, forgetting even Weston. Weston watched him go. The carriers stood, or danced, or sang—depending on the effect of the ghastly odor of the flowers on each individual—and watched the scientist race into the very midst of the vast area of Dawn Ladies.

## CHAPTER V

### *Wall of Flames*

"GREAT God!"

The exclamation burst from the lips of Larry Weston in a great explosion. For now he understood the devilish clev-

erness of the men against whom he had, at Badger's request, arrayed himself.

Tongues of flame were shooting up from the hillsides all around the valley. The tongues joined. In a few seconds, the valley was walled in by the rising fire. And the nodding stems of the Dawn Ladies, dry and brittle, would burn like tinder!

"AFTER him!" yelled Weston. "We've got to reach Badger!"

Driven forward by blows and kicks, the whole procession raced after Badger. He was babbling when they came up to him, with his arms filled with the crimson flowers he had picked; his face was buried in them as though he deliberately drank of the nightmare.

And at that exact moment, Weston realized the full extent of the catastrophe. For in and among the underbrush on the hillside, in and among the nodding stalks of the orchids, flashed countless cats—ocelots, pumas, jaguars!

They wouldn't attack men of their own accord, but now, by the devilish ingenuity of the Indians, they were being forced to fall on the interlopers. For they were hemmed around by the flames, even as the interlopers were; and the flames were closing in, their heat forcing the jungle cats closer and closer to Weston's expedition.

Neither Weston and his men, nor the cats, could penetrate those flames. In the end, all would be destroyed—but not before the cats, driven mad by the flames and the odor of the Dawn Ladies had torn every last man asunder.

Grimly, Weston decided on the only course open to them as he saw it. He yelled at the blacks:

"Grab as many of the flowers in your left hands as you can hold. Then gather around me. We're go-

ing back out, understand? Two of you grab Mister Badger. He doesn't know what he is doing."

Two men hurled themselves at Badger, but the scientist, utterly mad, screamed like a great cat himself and dashed straight away from them, running with the speed of a deer. Before the eyes of them all, he ran full tilt into a jaguar which was pawing at flames that bit into his fur. Badger went down, his precious flowers flying in all directions, and over his body the screaming jaguar went mad.

Now Weston formed his men into a sort of flying wedge, turned them about. They cast their packs from them, ripped them apart, kept only the pieces of canvas in which their duffel had been wrapped. Weston led the charge.

The carriers carried flowers in their left hands. Their rights held their rifles. They raced toward the closing wall of flames.

The cats they encountered charged at once.

WESTON'S automatic spoke repeatedly. The black men fired when their rifle muzzles actually touched the bodies of ocelot, jaguar or puma. Two men were dragged down, torn apart. Weston wondered if the Dawn Lady were worth all this, realized that many lives—in the name of science—had been given for orchids far less important and mysterious, gritted his teeth and rushed on.

Now the flames were almost against them. Weston yelled to his men to cover their heads with the canvas and dash into the wall of flame. They obeyed. Their screams as the fire touched their skin were ghastly. Weston himself suffered the torments of the damned.

But they were through. The wall of flames was as thin as paper. The

carriers flung themselves down, clawing at their burns.

The Indians who had planned all this charge, were driven back by bullets from the rifles of the maddened blacks, the automatic of Larry Weston.

And Larry Weston made a strange discovery.

**N**OT a carrier had succeeded in getting through with a single specimen of the Dawn Lady; and of all he had plucked himself, his left hand held but one. He tucked this one into his shirt and buttoned the material over it, thus shutting off some of its odor. But already it was almost imperceptible, and he knew why: the Dawn Lady closed its petals when the sun had entirely risen.

Then began the race back. Once, a mile from the valley of hell, a shout came from the woods, in the voice of the Indian who had given them the first warning:

"You shall all die this side of the Yavisa! Badger is dead. His enemies have served us and they, too, are dead!"

But Larry Weston did not believe in failure.

One week later, with three black men who looked like scarecrows, he re-entered Colon. Scarcely pausing in his stride, he went to the bank, took the Dawn Lady from his shirt and showed it to the bank president.

Without a word the official placed a fat packet of bills in Larry Weston's hands. Weston turned to the blacks, one of whom was Jamaica Jim.

"I can trust you to divide this properly among your people?"

"Yes!" And Larry Weston knew that Jamaica Jim had gone through too much to consider cheating anyone. He had learned how unimportant life was, how simple and sudden death might be.

Weston gave the whole packet of bills into the black hands of Jamaica Jim, thrusting them at him as though the bills were impregnated with the venom of all the reptiles in Panama. Then he shook the hand of the faithful, courageous black.

Later Weston went to his hotel. He spoke grimly to the hotel clerk.

"Listen," he said. "I'm going to sleep. I don't wish to be disturbed."

"Yes, sir, Mister Weston! You are enjoying your vacation?"

There was a queer light in the eyes of Larry Weston, just finished with one of the most amazing experiences he had ever undergone, as he answered:

"Oh, definitely! And, listen, mister, don't even send up the mail or newspapers—and if anybody else asks if I am enjoying my vacation, tell 'em you don't know. Tell 'em to go to the devil, tell 'em anything—but don't tell any of 'em that I am anxious to make expeditions into Darien!"

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# Haywire History



*Paddy was a bit wobbly, but held Red-Clothes by the throat*

*You'll Get a Kick—And a Laugh—Out of this Rip-Roaring Story of Two Reckless Buddies Who Fight Their Way Through a South American Revolution*

By JAMES P. OLSEN

*Author of "Death Grins," etc.*

**I**N FRONT of that dirty little hash joint, history was in the making. Had not the zealous proprietor put that sign in his window, "Dreamy" Dunne and Paddy Kelly would not have gone to the banana republic of Bazatlan. Had they not gone to Bazatlan, the revolution would not have gone haywire, causing history to do the same.

Therein lies the story. The sign started it. It said: *Come In and Eat—Or We'll Both Starve.*

Smart advertising, perhaps. It reminded the lanky, far-eyed Dreamy that he had postponed far too many meals. It made the squat, red-headed side-kick think of ham and eggs and trimmings. Dreamy read:

"'Come in an' eat, or we'll both

starve.' Them sounds like true words. Glory be that somebody 'preciates the feelin's of the inner man. Shall we turn down the invite, Paddy?"

"It says nothing about money," Paddy reflected aloud. As always, impulse moved them. They went inside and took stools. After his third dish of ham and eggs, Paddy was constrained to complaint.

"It's whang leather and antiques they serve," he allowed.

**T**HE man behind the counter wiped big hands on greasy apron. They were gnarled hands, matching his beaten-down brows and his cauliflower ears.

He leaned across the counter and snarled.

"Nobody ast you to come in," he declared. "If you don't like them aigs and bacon, pay up and scram!"

"Pay up?" Dreamy blinked at Paddy. They both got the idea. The sign was a trick. It was to lure hungry flies into this greasy web with offer of salvation from starving. Paddy started to vent his opinion of the place and its proprietor. Dreamy cut in. As long as they were to have trouble—best have it on very full stomachs.

"I'll have cream pie," he decided.

"You'll have peach pie, or you won't have any." was the belligerent retort.

"Peach pie—with coffee," they both decided, seeing no sense in debating the issue.

"They said it was coffee, but oh, how they lye-d," Paddy mumbled, making a wry face.

Dreamy sighed sadly. He pried with a spoon, trying to make a mouldy portion of peach part with the cement-like crust. "I bet this pie will stick to our ribs," he said. "I bet they're Cling peaches. Lookit how this piece clings to the crust. Peach pie with a raisin in it."

"Your raisin is walking off the plate," Paddy warned.

"I'll not stand for your belittling any more!" Tin-Ears roared, yanking off his apron and vaulting the counter. He yelled, and another specimen of prize ring has-been came a-running.

It would be impossible to chronicle solitary events. The thing resolved itself into a revolving bit of action in which events were a blurred, continuous reel.

Dreamy's sad, thin face, never changing in expression, became marked with splotches of red and his nose was somewhat askew. Tin-Ears and the cook rallied in the picture and Paddy's battered face, distorted and working madly, could be spotted now and again.

Tin-Ears made a bad mistake. He grabbed a catsup bottle and whacked Paddy across the noggin with the same. Paddy wobbled crazily. Dreamy kicked the cook in the face and trod on him. Through his one good eye, he saw Paddy's head in a welter of red. To Dreamy, red meant blood or anger, or both.

**T**IN-EARS had elected to play more than somewhat gentlemanly. Dreamy could but follow suit. He was never one to renege. From somewhere on his person came a heavy, single-action .45.

"Just an old Arizona custom," Dreamy ground out as he warped the heavy barrel over Tin-Ears' top. Whistles were shrilling outside the wreck of the restaurant. Dreamy knew what that meant. Just an old copper custom.

Paddy was cursing and pawing at his eyes. "Begawd, and it's a hamburger he took me for!" he swore, mopping catsup as they made for the door.

Dreamy-like, Dreamy forgot he still packed his old Peacemaker in

his right paw. Their exit to the sidewalk was signal for shrieking bystanders to remember the innocent bystander always gets the lead.

A copper applied his brakes, lost footing and sat down in a very hard way on a very tender spot. More whistles tweeted. The cop on the walk tore out his gun and had fireworks.

Dreamy and Paddy became suddenly interested in far parts—to say nothing of their own parts. Heads down, coat-tails popping in the salt breeze and fish scent of the waterfront, they did knots away from there.

Fate directed they escape the pack that howled behind them. Fate's beckoning finger led their steps down an oil-splattered old wharf and over the side of the rusty little tramp, *S.S. Fleabitten*. The little tub warped suddenly out into the harbor, as if she recognized the blue-coated figures pounding that way as enemies of her kind.

SHE headed out to sea while Dreamy and Paddy confronted a fat, sweating and red-faced man in the litter of the main cabin. Dreamy still clutched his gun openly. The fact seemed to awe the fat man, but not too much.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "Trying to lead the bulls onto us at the last minute? Uh?"

"We was tryin' to shuck them bulls," Dreamy sighed.

"It was a nice little war—until the coppers put in an oar," Paddy mourned, digging catsup from his left ear.

"You like wars—ja?" the fat man inquired with interest.

"If the eats is reg'lar an' the pay the same—we like 'em," Dreamy admitted. He gazed out a port, his sad eyes seeming on some far-off scene. Dreamily, he sighed.

"Know anything about machine-guns?"

"Sure, and it's me that has killed no less than a million krauts with one of the damned things," Paddy spoke up. He eyed the fat man closely, as if daring him to take exception to the reference to krauts. The Dutchman paid no heed. He was grinning.

"I'M General Plotz," he informed them. "This boat is really a warship of the revolution."

"I reckon Sherman was sure right, then," Dreamy disparaged.

"We have guns aboard. We sail to Bazatlan to fight for a great cause. I can use you two."

"Which is a great cause?" Paddy desired to know.

"The downfall of the president," said Plotz. "There has been oil discovered in Bazatlan. The president has given one company the oil and drilling rights. He gave them to the wrong company. So—"

"So the company that wants this oil concession has decided the president should be changed." Paddy nodded.

"It is a great cause," Plotz declared. "I give you ranking of captains. You will get two thousand—not Mex—when we win the fight for the cause."

"I'm a major, or I don't play," Dreamy decided.

"Majors, and four thousand apiece, after we win these oil wells for the downtrodden people and the company that will give them a square deal," Paddy appended.

"I'll go you one better," Plotz declared. "You are both major-generals of machine-gun. You shall help lead the cause. You get three thousand apiece."

"The position appeals to me," Paddy admitted.

"I've always wanted to fight for

a cause," Dreamy said. "Fate," Plotz was almost gloating, "has led you here."

"Nobody led us here," Dreamy denied. "It was a sign—an' then the cops chased us here."

"Dumb." Plotz assured himself, and felt better. He had reason to feel better.

**B**EHIND these two, whom he would set up as dummy leaders, he would hide if the plot failed.

They had annoying habits of shooting the creators of revolts in Bazatlan, he knew full well. But the plot of Plotz could not fail. With a couple of good gringo gunners and the guns to arm a few hundred always-eager-to-shoot-holes-in-the-air natives, the gushers of Bazatlan were as good as won.

The S.S. *Fleabitten* dropped her hook in a sheltered lagoon around the coast line from the capital city of Mucho Cerveza. Her whistle emitted steam and a pair of weak toots and out of the jungle came many brown monkeys who walked upright and wore straw hats and chopped-off cotton trousers.

There was a man on horseback in the van. He was resplendent in gold braid and brass buttons and perspired freely and odorously under these trappings.

"*Viva!*" he called, brandishing a heavy saber and knocking off his plumed cockade.

"That," Plotz said, "is General Felipe y Leon. He is the Jefe Rural of Mucho Cerveza and a great helper of our cause. I don't know—but I may decide to make that guacharo—oilbird—dummy presidente."

Felipe y Leon came aboard from a dinghy and strutted pompously across the blistered deck of the ship. He saluted Plotz and dog-eyed Dreamy and Paddy.

"The gon for the battle sheep?"

Leon demanded. Plotz jerked canvas from a couple of dilapidated one-pounders mounted aft.

"And there's rifles in the hold, to say nothing of a pair of machine-guns—and two major-generals to work them," he advised.

"I don't not troost too mooch," Leon growled. "Have them about the beezness go and would I talk to you then? I would—*si!*"

Plotz called Dreamy and Paddy to one side. "You know the password," he said. "You go into town. The machine-guns will be packed in and you will be advised where to set them up. We will strike quickly. You will be advised of more later."

"What," Dreamy asked, "does Mucho Cerveza mean?"

"Much beer," Plotz answered.

"It isn't needed that you hurry," Paddy put in. "I think I am going to like the place."

They struck into a dusty road, tilted their hats low against the near-noon rays of the sun and sloughed into Mucho Cerveza. As a town, it was little more than a poor excuse. It centered around a plaza wherein were benches and sleeping figures and a few dispirited tropical plants.

**O**N an eminence behind the town stood the palace of El Presidente, a sprawling, two-story edifice of carved wood, red tiles and white-washed adobe.

And here, headed across the plaza, were the first of the advance combat forces.

They had no eyes for the palace of El Presidente; no curiosity about the jungle-bound derricks beyond the town. Noses wrinkled to damp, moist odors of a shadowed cantina. The war, as far as Dreamy and Paddy were concerned, lay within the cantina.

The place was almost deserted. A weary-mouthed peon dozed behind

the bar. Seated at a table was a dusky *señorita*. Paddy eyed and admired her while Dreamy prodded the bar-keep to wakefulness.

THEY had a pair of foamy cervezas. The *señorita* yawned and came over to them. They had another round of cervezas and the three of them went to a table and sat down—and had more cervezas.

"In Mexico," Paddy said, "they drink lots of tequila. How about tequila in this place? Hell—it's hotter than Mexico."

Certainly they could get tequila and palm wine and French wine and gin in Bazatlan. So they had then to make sure Bazatlan could live up to its boasts.

They were getting along swimmingly when the door opened and a little rooster in a red uniform came toward them.

"So!" he stormed and yanked the *señorita* away from the two men. "Have I not tell you—ten t'ousand time—" he whacked her sharply on the cheek.

Dreamy did not change expression. There would be no enjoyment in watching Paddy take this brown boy to pieces. Consequences? Were they not major-generals of machine-guns in the glorious army that was soon to move in on the place?

The girl screamed when Paddy buttoned the little bozo's lip with a bunch of knuckles. She was all over Paddy like bad eggs rolling down a washboard.

Dreamy was forced to take a hand. He plucked her free and chucked her over the bar. Just like a woman, taking up for that little red-trimmed monkey after he'd slammed her on the kisser.

Paddy was a bit wobbly, but that was all right. He was holding Red-Clothes by the throat and aiming with the right.

"El Patriot!" the little monkey hissed.

"El Patriot" was the password of the revolution. Paddy's paw ceased forward motion and he glared at the other.

The *señorita* was back now, screaming at Paddy. "Carlos ees gran' hombre weeth soldados of El Presidente. Beeg Rural guard, ees he. To the carcel, Carlos, weeth thees—"

Bam! The *señorita* staggered back. Carlos glowered at Paddy and again hissed, "El Patriot." He lowered his voice. "The house at the end of the square; the building top at this corner. Your guns are there. Set them up. Begone!"

War was indeed hell. Grumbling, Dreamy and Paddy wobbled out. They found the house where one gun had been carried. They sat it up on a balcony that overlooked the plaza and the wall about the palace of the Presidente.

SOMNIFEROUS heat caused Dreamy to fumble, his eyes half closed. Sweat poured off of them and their exertions set up a strange mixing of the assorted drinks within them.

"I don't understand it," Paddy sighed, sitting down and trying to connect a match with the end of a cigarette. "First off, this general who is chief of these Rurals is on hand to greet the revolutionists. Next, this Carlos monkey hands us the password—and they are the ones supposed to guard El Presidente."

"Oh-h-h!" Dreamy groaned. "I—I got it, Paddy. Spies!"

Paddy mulled this over as they made erratic progress to the top of the building where the second machine-gun awaited setting-up. The sun beat down on them mercilessly and it became increasingly difficult for them to manage things.

"Spies, eh?" Paddy grunted finally:

"Sure, I see it. They've pulled the wool over the eyes of Plotz. We'll be set upon, after we have incriminated ourselves."

"YOU don't need to tell me what that will mean!" Dreamy exclaimed.

"No Kelly ever ran from a mess of treacherous greasers," Paddy muttered direly. "Spies or not, I'm intending to show them how Paddy Kelly fights."

"Stay here, then," Dreamy hiccupped. "I'll be with you when the fun starts."

"You'll be at that other gun?" Paddy queried.

"I'm puh—hic—practic'ly there now. An' don't forget about the whites of the eyes." Dreamy admonished.

"And three thousand apiece—American," Paddy answered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Flies droned sleepily. Mucho Cerveza slumbered. Out of sight around the palm-studded shore line came a trio of toots from the whistle of the *Fleabitten*.

A group of red-coated Rurals materialized from nowhere. They yawned sleepily and hitched at their cartridge belts. From the jungle road came sounds of a marching group as the rusty little steamer came down the coast and steamed toward the town.

Treachery was in the air. Those red-coated Rurals, sworn to guard the life and well-being of El Presidente, now awaited the coming of the Jefe Rural, *Señor* General Felipe y Leon. They awaited the coming of the revolutionists that they might join forces with them, sweeping back the few who remained loyal to the government and the frijoles obtained with government pesos.

Now was the time to acquaint the gringo gunners with the full plan.

They were not to turn the guns on those red-coated ones in the plaza; only upon those inside the palace walls.

A red-coated figure with handlebar mustachios entered the building where Dreamy dozed beside the gun on the balcony. Carlos started for the top of the building where Paddy held forth.

Bleary-eyed, Dreamy saw the Rural approaching. At the same time, came more shrill toots from the *Fleabitten* as she dropped anchor near the town and sent a poorly-aimed shot whistling toward the palace. Mucho Cerveza awoke with a bang.

"Spy!" Dreamy shouted. He forgot his machine-gun, yanked his Peacemaker from his belt and let drive a wobbly shot at the messenger who approached.

"*Señor!*"

Bam!

Howling, the would-be messenger fled.

**A**CROSS the way, a red-coated figure that was Carlos, jumped clear off the top of the building and sprawled in the sand of the plaza. He howled at the top of his voice—"Traitors! Spies! Gringo dogs! After them!"

A ragged, yelling mob broke from the jungle.

Down from the palace poured the faithful to El Presidente. The attack wavered as Carlos ran toward General Leon.

Spurts of dust and chipped adobe ran erratic lines back across the plaza as Paddy tried to make his eyes and hands coordinate and turned his weapon loose.

More shots from the one-pounders on the ship were screeching over the town. Rifles were crackling. Shrill shouts, hoorays and laughter rent the welkin. Enthusiastic rebels triggered much lead into space; aim was no

consideration. It was the "boom" they loved. Boom they got.

Like cattle, they milled and bawled. Leon gathered a rush to the house where Dreamy was holding forth. Carlos urged attack upon Paddy's stronghold. Like angry hornets, and aimed at nothing in particular, machine-gun bullets laced the plaza like red-hot hail.

"They're all spies!" Paddy shouted.

"El Patriot!" Dreamy thundered. "Spies—come an' get me."

**F**ROM the palace wall, a little brass cannon bellowed angrily. A great splash showed to starboard of the *Fleabitten*. Winches rattled and the little tub commenced seagoing rapidly.

Red-coats poured into the plaza. Friend mingled with foe in joyous abandon of "Vivas" and shooting. It was great sport.

From his balcony, Dreamy witnessed the mingling of the mob. Was he shooting at his own side or the other side? He stopped shooting and sat down to think it over. It was a good day for sleeping—

Across the way, Paddy heard the cessation of Dreamy's gun. He left his roof-top perch, passed through a cantina and took first aid to his partner.

He used his fists and his feet in getting through the yelling mob in the plaza. A few guns still drilled holes in the air; would, until all the "booms" in shell belts were exhausted.

Back to the wall, Dreamy snored on his balcony. Paddy shook him. Dreamy grunted. He opened his eyes.

"Who won?" Dreamy wondered.

"El Presidente! El Presidente!" came a loud shout from below them.

Paddy and Dreamy looked down. Directly below them was all the gold braid and trimmings of the rest of the outfit put together. A brown, fat face looked up at the pair. He said:

"Señores, but for you the government would have fallen to traitors. But for you, turning the so-rapid gun upon those devils what wear the red coat of my protection—"

"My gawd!" Dreamy groaned.

"Our three thousand bucks—American!" Paddy wheezed.

**H**ISTORY was repeating itself. Dreamy and Paddy stopped in front of a greasy little restaurant. Fly-specked now, the sign was still there: "Come in and Eat—Or We'll Both Starve."

Dreamy did not exchange expression. Paddy's eyes glistened. "It's an invitation," he decided.

Dreamy grabbed him. He shook his head. "They ain't no profit in starting another trail from *here*," he warned.

"I'm hungry," Paddy persisted.

Dreamy pointed to three golden balls hanging over the sidewalk a bit down the street. He fished in his pocket and dragged forth a shining medal. Paddy reached into his pocket and matched it.

"We should get the price of a meal for them," Dreamy said.

Medals clutched in grimy paws, they walked toward the three gilt balls.

History had completed another epic cycle.

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# Great God Honi



*Red Morgan's huge fists bowled natives over left and right*

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By WAYNE ROGERS

*Author of "Pearl Bait," "Blood of the Sea," etc.*

### CHAPTER I

#### *Storm Cargo*

**M**OUNTAINOUS waves, blinding torrents of drenching water, furious bursts of tropical hurricane. Then, with a rending of snapped timbers,

the battered, ill-fated schooner crashed down into a foaming trough for the last time.

Out of the miniature maelstrom that momentarily marked the grave of the *Island Queen*, there floated a little whaleboat, a mere cockleshell in that watery inferno. A whaleboat

in which huddled two men and a girl.

Miraculously, the small craft stayed afloat through those hours of darkness until the gray light in the east brightened. The wind went down, the sea quieted, and the fury of the tropical storm subsided as quickly as it had risen.

When the sun was well up in the heavens, the three survivors of the *Island Queen* looked out over a boundless expanse of blue-green water which reached to the horizon on all sides of them. Nowhere was there a sign of the schooner or her crew and passengers.

At one end of the boat sat John Flynn, his revolver conspicuously tucked in his belt. At the other end crouched "Red" Morgan, the big red-haired man whom Flynn had been taking to Honolulu as a prisoner; while amidships sat Mary Horton. She had been the only woman on the *Island Queen*, bound for one of the islands to engage in the work of a missionary.

**D**URING the storm she had found herself afraid of Red Morgan, but now she realized it was that mop of uncut flaming hair and his untidy beard that gave such an unfavorable impression. If he were shaved and had his hair cut, she decided, he would be a very presentable young man.

"It's just as if we were here in a little world of our own," she observed thoughtfully. "Mr. Flynn, can't we forget for a while that you are a police officer? You are an officer of some sort, aren't you?"

"A cheap private dick," came Red Morgan's sneering comment.

"A deputy sheriff, as far as you're concerned," Flynn reminded quickly, "with a warrant for your arrest and extradition papers to take you back to 'Frisco to stand trial for murder."

"To face a frame-up!" Red retorted with a flare of rage that brought fiery animation to a face that had been stolid and masklike. "To be railroaded to the gallows for a dirty job I had nothing to do with, so that the crooks you're working for can save their necks and keep their paws in the public treasury!"

"Yeah, I've heard that line before," Flynn yawned. "You'll have lots of chance to tell it to the judge. But until I get you back where you belong, I'll be watching you and keeping this gat handy—remember that!"

**A**GAIN the mask of dejection slipped over Red's face. Flynn turned his attention to the little closet-like compartment at his end of the boat.

"Let's see, now," he considered aloud as he studied the unbroken horizon. "We were somewheres east of the Marquesas Islands when the *Island Queen* went down. Best thing we can do is head west and try to make one of them. Lucky thing there's a compass in this tub. You're husky, Red; get at the oars."

Hour after hour Red Morgan toiled at the oars, keeping the whaleboat headed always into the west, while the girl napped and even Flynn nodded on his seat in the stern. Hour after hour with nothing but sparkling water on every side—nothing but bitter memories to keep him awake.

Less than a year ago, big Tyler Morgan—Red to everyone who caught a glimpse of his fiery thatch—had been a celebrated athlete and a hopeful young member of the California bar. He was engaged as private investigator for Harrison Harmon, who was conducting an investigation into San Francisco politics.

All was in readiness for the show-down. The subpoenas were about to be served, the revelations about to be made public property—when Har-

rison Harmon was murdered. He had been found dead in his office, with damning evidence pointing to Red Morgan as the slayer. The frame-up was beautifully planned and executed; there was no doubt about that. No loophole had been left for his escape.

As soon as Morgan sized up the case against himself, he knew that he was licked. Without money and without Harrison Harmon's powerful aid, he knew that it was useless for him to attempt bucking an unscrupulous and firmly entrenched political organization. Arrest meant a "fixed" trial, conviction, and a felon's death.

With his belongings in a suitcase and his small savings in his pocket, Red had slipped onto a boat bound for the Orient. He was fed up with cities and their corruption. Perhaps somewhere out there in the vast Pacific, he would find an opportunity to begin life anew.

**A** RUBBER plantation on one of the lesser known French islands offered just what Red sought; San Francisco had begun to be only an unpleasant memory to him when the hand of John Flynn fell on his shoulder. John Flynn, with his bulldog determination, his warrant and his extradition papers. The long arm of corrupt political power had reached far for its victim.

Monotonously Red pulled at the oars and the wavelets splashed dully against the prow of the boat. Hours passed and again night descended. Carefully Flynn doled out the limited supply of water and hard-tack the boat's locker contained.

With the coming of dawn, a dim haze to the west broke the eternal rim of the sea. Gradually, it resolved itself into land!

Almost straight up from the dark shoreline, the forbidding cliffs of black basalt reared their uninviting

sides, their tops shrouded in dark clouds that blanketed the sun's brilliance. At the foot of the cliffs the breakers roared, and nowhere did there seem to be a break in their solid walls.

An uninviting place, but at least it was land after countless hours of nothing but water. The thrill of it penetrated even Red Morgan's indifference and he put greater power behind his oars. Nearer and nearer came the island. Then the whaleboat forged ahead almost of its own accord; Red lost control of it.

The surf was pounding against the cliffs ahead of them. On the wave crests, the whaleboat shot forward. Then all was a maze of flying foam and churning water as the little boat catapulted its occupants toward the shore, to fight their way out of the undertow and lie, drenched and panting, on the narrow strip of sandy beach.

Of the three, Flynn was the first to regain his composure—and to turn a vigilant eye on his prisoner. With satisfaction he assured himself, and Red, that his revolver was still safe in his belt. Then with the weapon in one hand and a pair of handcuffs in the other, he advanced.

"Time to put on the bracelets, Red," he grinned. "I'm taking no chances of having you take a walk-out on me."

**U**NRESISTINGLY Red laid out his hands for the steel manacles. Then Flynn turned to survey their unprepossessing surroundings—and to stare into a pair of eyes that were regarding the trio curiously.

"Welcome to Vita Luma," said the owner of those eyes, as he stepped out of a clump of ferns and brush that broke the solid wall of the cliff some fifty feet away.

He was a barefooted man of medium build, dressed in unpressed white

duck trousers and a soiled white shirt. Black hair was brushed and plastered back from his forehead, and bright black eyes stared brightly from his tanned and somewhat flat-featured face.

Around his waist hung a cartridge belt, with a capable looking revolver holstered at his side.

When Flynn noticed how close to the weapon the fellow's fingers hovered, he made no attempt to reach for his own gun.

"Permit me to introduce myself," the islander went on, with a disarming grin. "I am Bill Jones."

Blank amazement stared at him from three surprised faces.

"Don't be so surprised," he chuckled. "I am a white man—just the same as you are. Educated in Tahiti, and all that sort of thing. Vita Luma just about belongs to me and I'll be glad to have you make yourselves at home at my place as long as you care to stay. Permit me," and he helped Mary Horton to her feet.

Quickly Flynn introduced himself and the girl and explained the status of Red Morgan.

"THAT'S fortunate," Bill Jones said with evident satisfaction, as he turned a malignant glance on the prisoner. "It simplifies my problem. I can't take him up to my place like that. My people would make trouble. Red-heads aren't popular on Vita Luma."

"But—but what are you going to do to him?" the girl asked nervously.

"Don't concern yourself, Miss Horton," Jones reassured her promptly. "We'll not harm him. Just make him safe. I'll be back in a few minutes."

With that he disappeared as quietly as he had come, leaving the castaways to speculate on this surprising development. When he reap-

peared he carried a small bowl, half-filled with a black mixture that smelled like shoe polish.

"Now, Mr. Flynn, if you will dye your prisoner's hair and beard, the possibility of trouble will be averted," he suggested.

Quietly Red Morgan sat on the sand while Flynn and Jones worked the dye into his hair and transformed it from fiery red to midnight black. It made no difference to him; nothing made any difference to him—not even the look of pity the girl turned on him as he sat there, staring broodingly out over the sea that had fiendishly refused to solve his problem by swallowing up either Flynn or himself.

## CHAPTER II

### *Brutal Bargaining*

FROM the beach, Bill Jones led the way along a narrow, winding path that twisted upward through a thick jungle of intertwined lantana and pandanus. Palms, banians, breadfruit, mangoes and limes towered on every side of them, and occasionally they passed an overrun clearing in which stood a *paepae*, one of the great stone platforms on which the Marquesan always built his home. The *paepaes* were deserted and the dwellings were falling in decay.

"My people are dying off," Jones explained these deserted habitations. "It was different when my grandfather came here, more than fifty years ago. Then the Marquesans were a healthy, proud race. My grandmother was a king's daughter."

They came to a broad valley, laid out in rubber and cane groves, but even here sloth and decay were working their ruin. In the groves they passed brawny Marquesans, their tattooed bodies naked save for bright yellow and red *pareus* about

their waists; the natives were making only a lazy pretense of work.

What a valley this must have been at one time, Red thought, as he looked down upon its vast extent. His training on the Tahiti plantation filled him with disgust and regret as he observed the poor condition to which the groves had been allowed to sink.

In the hands of the proper man, this valley could be made to produce a fortune. It was the sort of place he had often dreamed about—a place where a man could wrest a fortune from the land itself. If only he had an opportunity to take charge of it. . . .

"And here is my house," Bill Jones announced, as they stepped out into a clearing. In its center stood a large two-story wooden building.

**A**T one time it had been a fine residence, but, like the rest of the island, it had been allowed to go to pieces until now it was barely habitable. But neglect could not deprive it of its splendid view, looking down on the shore and out over miles of blue sea. From his front porch, the master of Vita Luma had been able to watch their approach to the island for hours before they reached the shore.

A glorious view. Red thrilled to its majesty, as he filled his lungs with the fresh air coming in from the sea. But his enjoyment of the view was short lived.

"I have no cell in my house," Jones was saying regretfully, "but there is a room that should serve equally well for your prisoner. I doubt that he will escape from it if you keep him handcuffed."

Again Red was aware of the peculiar animosity which gleamed from the fellow's eyes when they were turned in his direction.

Jones led the way to a tiny room,

with only one high and stoutly-barred window. The door was provided with a heavy bar on the outside, and Red soon found that although the cubbyhole might not be a regular cell, it would serve admirably for that purpose. Handcapped with the manacles around his wrists, it was hopeless for him to attempt escape even if the surrounding jungle had offered a more practical haven.

Apathetically, Red resigned himself to his fate and uncomplainingly ate the food that was brought to him. In the evenings, the huge *pae-pae* in front of the house were filled with natives, and their dancing and singing went on far into the night. By day all was quiet about the house, except when Jones and his guests sat talking in the main room.

The walls of the building were far from soundproof, and Red could hear as much of this conversation as if he were sitting in the main room with them. Curious tales of the Marquesans; of the first Jones, who had landed there from a British whaler and ruled the island like a king.

"**T**HE great god Honi, they called him," his grandson laughed. "My father succeeded him as head of the island, but not as a god. An old devil of a wizard who was alive then, saw to that. He told them that Honi would return, and they've been expecting him ever since."

There was more: about the intertribal wars that once raged on the island, until Honi's followers wiped out their enemies; about the beating drums and the cannibalistic orgies that once featured their victories.

Red paid no attention to their chatter, until one night about a week after they had landed on Vita Luma. Then suddenly he strained his ears as he caught the import of the quarter-breed's conversation.

"You want to get your man back to America as soon as possible, don't you, Mr. Flynn?" Jones had asked.

"Yeah—I sure do," Flynn agreed quickly. "You said there might be a boat—"

"Yes, I said there might be a boat this week, but it has not come. 'Trader' Charley is never late. If he is not here by this time, he does not come. Perhaps the storm blew him too far off his course to make it worth his while to call here."

"Well, then when's the next one due?" Flynn wanted to know.

"You are unfortunate," Jones sympathized. "The regular inter-island packet made her semi-annual trip last month. She won't return until five months from now."

"Five months!" Flynn roared his amazement and concern. "We'll be cooped up here five months! There's no other boat?"

"None, Mr. Flynn." Without seeing his face, Red could detect the quiet note of satisfaction in the quarter-breed's answer. "Strangers never call at Vita Luma."

FOR long minutes Red could hear nothing but the rumble of Flynn's low curses and useless protests. The girl did not seem to be with them; she had evidently gone to sleep. Then Jones interrupted with a suggestion.

"There is a schooner that calls at Nuka-hiva," he remembered. "It will be due next week."

"Nuka-hiva—what good'll that do me?" Flynn stormed. "That's another one of your infernal islands, ain't it?"

"Nuka-hiva lies south of us," Bill Jones answered quietly. "It is a long paddle from here. My men can do it in a day."

"They can!" Flynn jumped at the suggestion. "That's just the answer. How soon can you get us started?"

"You could start in the morning," the quarter-breed offered tentatively. Then his voice sank, so that Red had to press his ear close to a crack in the wall. "Unfortunately, my canoe will hold only six people, four of whom must be paddlers."

"Hmm," Flynn considered. "How about the girl? What'll we do with her?"

"I shall be very glad to have Miss Horton stay with me," the Marquesan answered smoothly. "I have been looking for a wife—and I think the young lady does not—er—dislike me. I shall be very pleased to marry her, or, if she will not have me, she can leave Vita Luma when the packet calls."

"Five months from now, eh?" Flynn grunted. Then, "Well, she's no responsibility of mine. I've gotta see to getting my prisoner back to 'Frisco. I'll take you up on that, Jones."

Indignation had been boiling up within Red Morgan as he listened to this bargaining. Now rage swept away the indifference that had been riding him for weeks. He could see through the quarter-breed's thinly veiled proposition, and so, he knew, could John Flynn. That was what made the deputy sheriff's acquiescence so damnably low. In order to bring back his prisoner, Flynn was ready to sacrifice this helpless girl.

THE girl meant nothing to Red, but the thought of leaving a white woman at the mercy of this smooth-spoken devil aroused his fighting instinct, as his own peril had been totally unable to do. He wanted to get his fingers around the quarter-breed's throat; wanted to smash his fists into Flynn's face.

Grimly he resolved that they would not get away with this miserable deal. But how was he, a handcuffed prisoner, to prevent it? Now

he gave his cell-like room a really thorough examination.

The walls and floor were solid. No hope of escape there. When he pressed against the door and shoved with all his strength, there was not the slightest give to it. He would need an ax to batter his way out through its strong panels.

There remained only the window, but when he grasped its lower ledge and chinned himself up to it, he found, as he knew, that it was far too small for him to squeeze through, even if he could tear the bars loose.

Escape from this cell was out of the question. Disappointedly he sank down onto the couch that served as his bed, but this time there was no dejection or apathy in his set face. Instead, there was a grim determination that boded no good for John Flynn and his quarter-breed ally.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Back to Vita Luma*

**T**HE sky was still gray the next morning when the door of Red Morgan's prison was opened and Flynn stood in the doorway, gun in hand.

"Come on, Red; we're moving," he announced tersely. "All aboard for 'Frisco."

Anxiously, Red watched for the slightest opportunity to make a break for freedom, but Flynn seemed to sense his prisoner's changed attitude and took no chance. The revolver never left his hand and its muzzle followed Red's broad back like a compass needle seeking the north.

Outside the building, Bill Jones and four husky Marquesans awaited them. The rest of the house, and the native village behind it, were still. With Jones leading the way, the little procession left the clearing in single file and descended through

the half-dark jungle tunnel to the beach.

Certainly, Red thought, there would be an opportunity to make a break somewhere along this winding route, but always the hard revolver muzzle jabbed warningly into his back. The opportunity had not yet offered when they stepped out onto the beach, where a long native canoe was drawn up, ready for launching.

"Get in," Flynn commanded, motioning Red to a position in the middle of the craft.

Desperately Red cast around for some means of escape. Once in that canoe, he felt that any chance he might have to help the girl would be gone. It was now or never.

"How about the girl?" he demanded, as he braced his feet defiantly on the beach. "We're not leaving without her."

"Mind your own damn business!" Flynn snarled savagely, as he jabbed the gun viciously into Red's ribs. "Get in!"

Then the loathing in his prisoner's eyes was too much for the deputy's guilty soul. Wickedly he brought the gun down on Morgan's head. Red ducked just in time to avoid the full force of the smash, but the glancing blow dazed him and engulfed him in a billowing blackness.

**W**HEN light broke through that curtain of darkness, Red shook his head and looked around him. He was slumped in the bottom of the canoe. Two broad-backed natives were bending at the paddles in front of him; two more were similarly occupied in the stern. Immediately behind him sat Flynn, his ever ready revolver jabbed into his prisoner's back.

Of Bill Jones there was no sign, and the shore of Vita Luma was already several hundred yards away. In the haze that enveloped the cliff

top, Red picked out the spot which concealed the quarter-breed's house. What devilishness was going on up there, he wondered?

As if his thoughts served to apprise the girl of her danger, the muffled notes of a terrified scream suddenly came to them above the noise of the surf. Red stiffened tensely and half turned to confront his captor. But Flynn had also heard that scream, and had no desire to discuss it.

"Shut your yap!" he barked, jabbing the gun brutally into Red's ribs. "Try anything and you'll get another wallop!"

Mary Horton's shrill scream rang fresh in Red Morgan's mind long after Flynn's warning, but as the hours sped past he sought in vain for a way to go to her assistance. With the odds five to one against him, handcuffed and with a revolver muzzle jammed against his backbone, he was utterly helpless.

And every dip of those gleaming paddles carried him farther away and left the girl more completely at the savage mercy of Bill Jones. That tantalizing knowledge drummed ceaselessly at Red's consciousness.

**T**HE sun shone down blazingly from directly overhead, then passed its zenith and moved slowly toward the western horizon. Still the paddles rose and dipped with machine-like regularity and nothing but open sea surrounded the canoe on all sides. Ever farther from Vita Luma.

Suddenly Red's heart seemed to miss a beat. His muscles tensed and every nerve was taut. Behind him he had heard a match being struck. Flynn was lighting one of the native grown cigarettes Bill Jones had given him. With lightning speed, that knowledge and all it connotated sped to Red's brain. And in the same split second, he acted upon it.

Like unleashed springs, his tensed leg muscles shot him erect as he swung his cuffed hands over his head. With all his strength, his manacled fists crashed down on the head of the paddler in front of him. With a groan, the Marquesan dropped his paddle and slumped in a heap over the side of the canoe.

But before the unconscious native slipped from his seat, Red had whirled and swung his clenched fists in a vicious circle. Trying to avoid that deadly swing, the surprised Flynn half staggered to his feet and made a futile grab for his revolver, as it bounded out of his lap and fell overboard. He pitched headlong into the water after it as Red put all his weight on the edge of the canoe and overturned it.

**I**N three powerful strokes, Red was at Flynn's side, pounding the deputy over the head with those terrible clenched fists.

"Open these handcuffs!" he panted, as he drove his fists into Flynn's face. "If you drop the key, I'll pound you until the dirty life is beaten out of you!"

With one hand, Flynn clung to the overturned canoe and tried to defend his face. With the other he fished in his trousers pocket for the key, clutched it desperately and held it up to appease this roaring madman and to stop those awful flailing fists.

Red Morgan was a truly terrifying sight. Streams of inky black water ran down from his head and beard. The dye covered his face, his neck and his shoulders in a bath of ebony. Only his madly blazing blue eyes shone out of the blackness, until his fiery hair, freed of the dye, began to reassert its natural flamboyant color.

"Here! Here!" Flynn panted. "For God's sake, let me unlock

them!" Then the manacles were unlocked and dropped away on their trip to the ocean bottom. Without another glance at the cringing deputy, Red whirled, ready to meet the onrush of the Marquesans.

Instead of the attack he expected, he found a spellbound audience. The three unwounded natives, supporting the body of their unconscious fellow tribesman, were huddled in a group, treading water and staring wide-eyed at the raging giant undergoing such a chameleon-like change. Excitedly they gabbled in their native tongue, a jargon in which Red could distinguish nothing but the awesomely whispered, "Honi!" It dawned on him that there was a personal meaning to the word as far as he was concerned and he took advantage of it at once.

"Get into that canoe!" he shouted to them, pointing to the overturned craft to demonstrate his words. "Back to Vita Luma—you understand? I have an argument to settle with your precious Honi!"

**H**AD they been college graduates they could not have understood his orders more clearly or carried them out more promptly. In a few minutes, the big canoe was righted and bailed.

Two of the Marquesans took their places in the front, and a much subdued Flynn squatted behind the wounded native in the center. After washing the running dye out of his eyes and rinsing it from his hair as well as possible, Red seized one of the recovered paddles and took his station behind the paddler in the rear. With the sun as guide, the canoe turned on its course; and four willing backs bent to send it skimming swiftly over the water toward Vita Luma.

The tropic night had fallen before the canoe got back to Vita Luma. As

he bent over his paddle, putting all of his great strength into each stroke, Red Morgan stared ahead of him through the starlit night, searching for some sign of the island.

**A**T last his vigil was rewarded. Far in the distance, its black bulk made a dense smudge against the dark sky. Gradually it grew larger and blacker.

Only once during the afternoon had Flynn attempted to protest or make a suggestion.

"What're you going back to Vita Luma for?" he argued. "We'll only run into trouble with Jones, and now we ain't even got my gun to defend ourselves with. You've got me; I know when I'm licked. Tell these fellows to head for Nuka-hiva and you can go scot free, Red. You got my word on it."

"We're going back to Vita Luma to do what you didn't have the guts to do yourself," Red told him evenly. "We're going to get Mary Horton out of that devil's clutches."

"Aw, Jones ain't so bad," the deputy defended. "He'll marry her, if she'll take him—and she could do lots worse, believe me."

But Red was paying no attention to him, so Flynn's arguments dribbled off into silence.

Now, as the black bulk of Vita Luma began to tower ahead of them, out over the water came the throbbing, pulsing beat of a drum. Weirdly it boomed out into the night, fastening on their imaginations and making the blood pound excitedly in their veins.

With the first reverberating note, the Marquesans lifted their heads, missed a stroke in their paddling, and then went at it with renewed energy. Now their strokes were shorter and more choppy, attuned to the beat of the drum.

Red, too, could feel its influence

on him. The throbbing notes hinted at all manner of evil and stirred strange desires within him. It was a bestial cadence.

"Sounds as if Jones is celebrating his wedding," Flynn snickered. "He's a fast worker, that boy!"

"Wedding!" Red scoffed angrily. "That's no wedding march. Unless I miss my bet, you're going to attend quite another brand of hellishness tonight. Ever hear of cannibalism in these islands, Flynn?"

"Go on—you're crazy. That's been stamped out years ago," Flynn derided. But now there was a note of uncertainty in his voice, and he quieted to listen intently to the increasing tempo of the drum.

**I**N silence they paddled the rest of the way to the island, shot through the surf, and beached the canoe on the shore. Then, before Red could get to his feet, the Marquesans bounded from their seats and disappeared like darting shadows into the darkness.

Without attempting to pursue them, Red turned to Flynn and faced the deputy squarely. "Stick by me in this and I'll go back with you without a kick," he offered.

Then, without waiting for the deputy's acquiescence, he turned and led the way down the shore to the opening in the cliff and plunged into the dark, tunnel-like path. Floundering and stumbling in the dark, they crept upward at the best possible pace.

Now the moon was rising and shedding some light on the clearings they passed, but its beams were unable to penetrate to the floor of the jungle passageway.

At last the quarter-breed's house loomed before them. All was dark and deserted, as were the native houses behind it. Nowhere was there a sign of life, but the throb of the drums—there were two now—came

to them louder and faster than ever. "Where are you going now?" Flynn asked uneasily, as they came out on Jones' deserted porch. "We don't know the way any farther than this."

"No, but we have ears," Red cut him short. "We're going wherever those drums lead."

At the end of the native village, they found a path leading up into the jungle. Along it they picked their way, stumbling, falling, tearing through thorny brush and battling through clinging vines. Often the path would disappear entirely and there was only the sound of the throbbing drums to guide them.

It was uncanny, this virile, pulsating voice of evil speaking so plainly there in the jungle from which all human life seemed to have vanished. Still Red plunged on, deaf to Flynn's objections and pleas.

What would he do at the end of this wild chase? What would he find when he tracked those throbbing notes to the drums from which they sprang? Red did not know or care. To him that bestial throbbing had become synonymous with the deviltry of the quarter-breed, Bill Jones. Each throbbing beat whetted his desire to get his fingers around the smooth fiend's throat!

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Red One Comes*

**B**OOM! Boom! Boom! The drums throbbed in their ears and beat against their temples as they climbed steadily upward, scrambling from rock to rock, clinging to bushes, barely seeing their way in the moonlight. At last, a mile up the valley, they came out onto a little plateau and crouched in the shrubbery, awed by the sight before them.

In the center of the plateau stood

the ruins of an ancient stone temple. Most of the building had long since fallen to pieces, but enough of the rear end remained to form a manger-like arch. Under this were grouped half a dozen huge black stone seats for the chiefs and priests. The temple stood in a grove of shadowy trees, a huge banyan writhing and twisting its distorted limbs through and over it.

Candlenut torches, stuck into niches in the rocks, lit the scene eerily, their flickering flames reflecting somberly from the polished black rock of the seats and floor and disappearing among the shadowy limbs of the banyan.

**I**N the center seat was Bill Jones, his quarter portion of white blood now lost in the primitive lust which possessed him. He and the elderly savages who occupied the other seats gazed with fiendish exultation at the wild dance that was going on before them—hundreds of capering Marquesans abandoned completely to a wild orgy, their excitement kept at fever pitch by the throb of the two huge drums.

"*Ai! Ai! Ai!*" screamed the dancers, in savage ecstasy.

It was a scene snatched from the dark ages, a scene which the white rulers of these islands said could no longer occur.

But there it was in all its hellish barbarity. Red was revolted by it—until he saw what was going on there in the center of the howling, prancing mob.

There, among the gnarled roots of the banyan, was a deep pit in which a leaping fire roared. Suspended above the roasting pit were half a dozen wild pigs, their hind legs tied by stout cords of cocoanut fiber to the bending branches of the tree. One by one the priests seized the roasted animals, deftly cut them

loose, and threw them out among the dancers.

"*Ai! Ai! Ai!*" the natives howled as they fell upon the animals, tearing them apart and wolfing the half-baked flesh.

Only then could Red see beyond the pit. Crouched against the trunk of the banyan, Mary Horton sat watching the orgy with horror-filled eyes. Her bound white feet dug into the ground as if to push her back as far as possible from that terrible pit. Her face was as ashen as the straight white robe she wore, and her arms were lashed behind her back with a rope of cocoanut fiber, the rest of which lay coiled at her side ready to be thrown over the banyan limb when it was her turn to swing over the roasting pit.

That much Red saw in a single, all-comprehending glance.

"There's your wedding feast!" he snarled at Flynn.

"My God—the devils!" came unbelievably from the bush behind which the deputy crouched.

**W**ITH an evil grin, one of the priests arose from his chair and started toward the bound girl. Then Red Morgan went completely berserk, throwing strategy and caution to the wind.

With a wild yell that rang out over the bedlam of the feast and the throbbing of the drums, he leaped from his concealment and raced straight into the thick of the massed natives, his huge fists bowling them over right and left. Close at his back came Flynn, to snatch a club from the hand of one of the surprised Marquesans.

"*Ai! Ai! Ai!*" The howl rose higher, but this time it was one of fear as the natives turned to face this flaming demon who was descending upon them. Red Morgan was, indeed, an awesome sight; enough to

scare braver souls than these superstitious islanders.

His long flaming hair and fiery beard, now dry and cleaned of the dye, waved crazily about his head. Coming up the hill, the remains of his tattered shirt had caught on a bush until he tore it from his shoulders and left it hanging there. Now, naked to the waist, his huge torso was bleeding from a dozen cuts and scratches.

The firelight, playing on him, transformed him into a huge red avenger, with flashing eyes and lashing fists.

"*Ai! Ai; Honi! Honi!*" the cry went up all around him.

**I**NSTEAD of returning his blows, the natives were falling away before him, running in terror for the protection of the trees and throwing themselves flat on their faces. Not until he had reached the roasting pit did Red encounter real opposition. There he met the charge of a dozen husky young bucks, evidently the quarter-breed's bodyguard.

Seizing the first two in his great arms, he crashed their heads together. But the others were now upon him, their clubs raining blows on his shoulders, striking wickedly at his head. Knives flickered in the torchlight. One flashed across his chest and left a trail of blood behind it before Red's fist crashed into the face of the wielder.

Desperately he glanced around for a weapon. Flynn had his hands full, pounding heads with his club. The deputy was surrounded; then he was beaten down.

In that instant Red spied a weapon. Fastened by thongs to the rock wall above the central seat was a huge harpoon. Its rope was rotted away, but the heavy weapon seemed otherwise undamaged by the years through which it must have hung

there. With a sudden sweep of his arms, the red giant cleared a way through his attackers. In a bound he was beside the seat, standing on it, ripping the harpoon from the wall.

"*Ai! Ai! Honi!*" screamed an incredibly wrinkled old fellow who squatted in one of the seats. "Honi! The Red One come! Me know him you, Honi!"

"*Ai! Ai! Ai!*" the chant rose louder, but Red had no time to try to understand this new development.

With the great harpoon gripped in both hands and flailing in a deadly circle around his head, he charged into the pack around Flynn, cutting men down as if the weapon had been a scythe. In a few moments he stood alone, the last of the attacking Marquesans creeping off out of range.

Then, the deputy's safety assured, Morgan turned to look for Bill Jones, who had leaped from his stone seat the moment Red charged toward it. Behind the heavy seat the quarter-breed crouched, his revolver trained over its back. As soon as Red was in the clear, that revolver started to speak—wildly.

**T**HREE shots rang out before Jones scored a hit. The fourth bullet burned into Red's side, but the impact of the lead did not stop him. Grimly he came on. Again the revolver spat, and again. This time something hot seered through Red's left arm, but a triumphant smile came to his set lips as he realized that the gun was now empty.

Jones realized that, too, and complete panic seized him. With a cry of terror, he scurried from his hiding-place and raced to the banian tree. In a moment he had the girl in his arms, holding her in front of him as a shield.

In that moment one of his wounded henchmen, lying on the floor of the temple in Red's path,

reached out and tripped the American. It took but a few seconds for Red to free himself and regain his feet, but Jones was quick to take advantage of his opportunity. With the unresisting girl in his arms, he turned and ran swiftly for the cover of the jungle. When Red got to his feet, the fugitive was already racing over the moonlit clearing, and the girl's scream rang out in terror.

ONCE Jones reached the security of the jungle he would be at home, and Red's efforts to overtake him would be helpless. There was only one chance to stop him. It was a desperate chance, but Red Morgan remembered and gave thanks for those college days when his javelin-throwing had established a record.

For a moment he poised the heavy harpoon, while his great muscles swelled. Then it sailed into the air, out into the clearing—to find a sheath in the cowardly back of Bill Jones, the quarter-breed.

"Ai! Ai! Honi come back!" howled the wrinkled oldster in a voice that croaked and wheezed with age.

"Ai! Ai! Ai!" chanted the natives, and every face was bowed before the reincarnation of the great god Honi, the flaming haired giant from the British whaler who had established his sovereignty and his deity over them fifty years before and whose return they had long awaited.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was two weeks before the wounds Red and Flynn had sustained were sufficiently healed to permit the long canoe trip to Nuka-hiva. During that time, the new Honi had taken hold of things on Vita Luma with a will. Already the plantation house was far more habitable, and the fields showed the results of his supervision.

Regretfully Red looked out over the plantation as he stepped down from the porch in the light of the rising sun. Mary Horton and Flynn were there waiting for him, and four husky Marquesans stood ready with their paddles.

As on that morning two weeks before, the little company started down the winding trail to the beach. But today there was a change in each of them.

Instead of the desperate determination, the fighting spirit, that had dominated Red Morgan on that morning, he was now a prey to a new regret and was once more helpless against circumstances. He did not want to leave Vita Luma, but he had given Flynn his word that he would return to San Francisco peaceably.

Flynn had thought much during those two weeks, too, and he regarded the big red-head—now trimmed and shaved, but still a red-headed giant—thoughtfully and doubtfully. Could it be that Red would really be fool enough to give up this island paradise he had won—or had he a last minute trick up his sleeve?

THE Marquesans laughed more gaily and stepped out more happily, for today they were serving Honi, the god who had brought power to their tribe in the long ago and who would again work miracles for them. And the girl—her eyes were inscrutable as she glanced from Flynn to Red Morgan.

Carefully he helped the girl into the craft and take her seat. Flynn would sit just behind her. Red would take his place farther up front. He wanted solitude, and he wanted to be as far away from that shore as possible so that there would be no chance for him to weaken and change his mind. Resolutely he

(Concluded on page 158)

# "Stop Worrying..."

NOW I CAN TELL YOU THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT

# SEX!



**WOULD YOU** like to know the whole truth about sex? All of the startling facts that even the frankest books have heretofore not dared to print are explained in clear, scientific manner, vividly illustrated, in the revolutionary book—"The New Eugenics". Here at last, the naked truth stands forth, stripped of all prudery and narrow prejudice. Old-fashioned taboos are discarded and the subject of sex is brought out into the bright light of medical science by Dr. C. S. Whitehead M.D. and Dr. Charles A. Hoft, M.D., the authors!

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Sex appeal and sex satisfaction are the most powerful forces in your life. To remain in ignorance is to remain in danger of lifelong suffering. It is the purpose of this great book to show sex-ignorant men and women how to enjoy safely the thrilling experiences that are their birthright. It not only tells you how to attract the opposite sex, but also how to hold the love of your mate throughout a blissful married life.

### DANGEROUS!

... Unless you know the true facts about sex! Ignorance leads to shame, despair, worry and remorse.



Do you know how to add variety to your love-making? The most innocent kias may lead to tragedy if you are ignorant of sex relations.

### WILL FEAR

grip you on your wedding night? ... or will it be the tender, thrilling experiences that is your birthright?



### SEND NO MONEY!

You send no money — just fill out the coupon below and then when it arrives, in plain wrapper, pay the postman \$1.98. Keep the book five days, then if you are not satisfied send it back and we will refund your money immediately and without question. This book NOT sold to minors.

## Banish Fear and Sex Ignorance Forever!

**SEX IS NO LONGER** a mysterious sin, mentioned only in the conversational gutters—it is the most powerful force in the world and can be made the most beautiful. Thanks to this bravely written book, it is no longer necessary to pay the awful price for one moment of bliss. Science now lights the path to knowledge and lifelong sex happiness.

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- What Every Man Should Know
- The Truth about Masturbation
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- The Sexual Embrace
- How to Build Virility
- How to Gain Greater Delight
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# The GLOBE-TROTTER



**C**APTAIN CARRIGAN — that's all the name he signed on his *Globe Trotters Club* application blank.

No first name. No initials. Just plain Captain Carrigan.

"But we've got to have more information than this," protested the little lady who keeps the records straight so that we'll know where to locate you bozos when we want you. "We'll have to have his first name—or at least his initials."

"Captain Carrigan!" barked the little runt who sat beside my desk, with his chair tilted back against the wall and his stubby black pipe rapidly making my cubbyhole uninhabitable. "Lemme see that application, will you?"

Clint Dawson doesn't look much like an adventurer. He's too short; he's too light; and his face is too soft and innocent looking. Naw, he'd never do for an adventurer—but



that little half-pint has soldiered under twelve different flags that I know of! He had dropped in on his way back from the hotel where he'd signed on with the Colombian air force, just in case the Colombians should happen to have an argument with their Peruvian neighbors.

"Captain Carrigan!" he marveled again, while the look of the far-

away places came into his gray-green eyes. "Whether or not she has to have Captain Carrigan's first name, let me tell you, that gal's gonna have one swell time getting it! If she succeeds—well, she's a better hand than I am, and better than some of the toughest hombres that ever bumped from one crazy corner of the earth to the other."

Ye Olde Globe Trotter can scent a good yarn a mile away. When one pops up right beside his desk—

"You know this mysterious guy, eh?" I prompted.

But Dawson didn't need urging. That name, "Captain Carrigan," had done the trick. Dawson wrapped his legs around the chair, puffed deep on his vile pipe, and opened up—well, here's the story that Clint told.

## *Captain Carrigan!*

**T**HAT name didn't mean a thing to me years ago when I was so sure that a fortune in diamonds was waiting for me in the wilds of South Africa. All I thought I had to do was stroll out to the diamond fields and pick it up—just stuff my pockets with the glittering baubles.

The only trouble was that about every other footloose adventurer got the same idea. When I landed in a sprawling, tin-shack town a dozen miles from Kimberley the place was swarming with them.

Australian sheepmen, New York toughs, California and Alaska gold-diggers, London cockneys, raw-boned Scotsmen, stocky little Welshmen, shaggy-bearded Boers, hilari-

*(Continued on page 150)*

# If DEATH Should Strike YOU Suddenly...



## THIS AMAZING NEW CERTIFICATE PROVIDES DEATH .. ACCIDENT AND OLD AGE BENEFITS Up to \$1,000 and...

DO YOU want to GUARANTEE greater happiness and security to your loved ones? Do you want to spare them from an unkind fate in the event that ever-present death or possible maiming accident should strike unexpectedly, as it so often does? Every man owes it to his wife and children or mother, father, sisters and brothers to make certain of the future by protecting them NOW! Don't gamble with fate for another single day! For a cost of about 4¢ daily per each \$1000.00 protection you want, you can obtain an amazing new TBA Certificate that pays a benefit of up to \$1000.00, \$2000.00 or \$5000.00 in event you should meet with death, permanently disabling accident or, when you reach the old age specified, PAYS YOU as much as \$1000.00, \$2000.00 or \$5000.00 IN CASH!



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### SEND NO MONEY! We Will Mail This Certificate To You For FREE INSPECTION

See this extraordinary Three Point TBA Certificate for yourself—you can do so without obligation or the payment of a single red cent! Let us send you YOUR Certificate ABSOLUTELY FREE for 10 days' inspection! Merely fill in and send the coupon—that's all you have to do! By return mail you'll receive YOUR TBA Three Point Certificate. Determine for yourself, then, whether or not you can afford to be without this marvelous, LOW COST, three way protection. After inspecting YOUR Certificate decide to keep it in force. If, however, you DO NOT want the protection it provides send the Certificate back to us. Fair enough. Isn't it?

## FREE INSPECTION OF 3 POINT PROTECTION MAIL THIS COUPON for TBAs 10 Day Offer

TBA NATIONAL PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION,  
Dept. 200, Lafayette, Louisiana

GENTLEMEN:

Certainly I want to take advantage of your fine offer to allow FREE inspection for 10 days of your new Three Point TBA Certificate. I have checked at the right the amount of protection in which I am interested. I am not obligated in any way by accepting this offer. I hereby warrant that I am in good health and free from constitutional or chronic disease.

My Name..... My Age.....

My Address..... Street

Town..... State

My Beneficiary's Name is..... Relationship.....

CHECK THE AMOUNT OF TBA'S 3 POINT PROTECTION THAT INTERESTS YOU

- \$1,000.00 CERTIFICATE
- \$2,000.00 CERTIFICATE
- \$5,000.00 CERTIFICATE

(Continued from page 148)

ous Irishmen—that sure was a fine collection of hard-case humanity sweating and stewing out there under the broiling African sun. Tough, hard as nails, two-fisted drinkers and scrappers. A man had to stand up for his rights, or go down under the heap.

When a burly, bearded fellow roughly elbowed me out of my place in line before the Diamond Mining Licensing Bureau I jostled my way back in again. We didn't waste any words after that. He swung and I ducked—to come back with a round-house swing that landed smack on his jaw. The mob howled and jeered



when he picked himself up out of the dirt and cursed me as he stalked off. "Better watch that bloke," a cockney beside me in the line warned me. "That's Dutch Turner. 'E's a bad un."

*I. D. B.*

I'D forgotten all about Dutch Turner a couple hours later when a fellow came up to me and handed me a little package with the brief explanation that, "This here's for you."

In the package was what looked like a little lump of dirty glass. It was the first uncut diamond I'd ever held in my hand—and it came mighty near being the last. Before I had time to take my eyes from it up strolled two other men, one on each side of me.

"You're under arrest," they told me. "What for? I. D. B.—Illicit Diamond Buying, if you have to be told. I suppose you didn't just buy that stone, eh? I suppose that chappy gave it to you because he liked your looks, eh?"

My protests were useless, and when I tried to break loose that didn't work at all. Handcuffs clicked on my wrists and they started to drag me through the gathering crowd.

I. D. B.! That meant Cape Town Prison! Perhaps as much as five years of hard labor on the break-water! I felt mighty sick, I can tell you, when I realized how weak and dumb my explanation sounded. It was a cinch that nobody would believe me, and I didn't have a friend in all Africa to call on for help.

### *A Big Six-Footer*

Not until a broad-chested, tanned six-footer strode through the crowd and blocked our way. He towered over the detectives who had arrested me, and his blue eyes flashed from one of them to the other. His jolly Irish face was stern and his eyes were hard.

"This game's gone far enough," he clipped. "I saw the whole stunt. Take those manacles off this man or I'll—"

That's where one of the diamond syndicate's detectives made a mistake. He made a pass at the big fellow. A second later he was sitting on the ground holding his head and wondering what hit him.

The other chap had better sense. He took one look at the newcomer and lost any idea of scrapping he might have had.

"Captain Carrigan!" he gulped. "If you say it's all right, sir; that'll be sufficient, sir."

Without a word of protest he unlocked the handcuffs and turned me loose.

"Here, take this diamond with you," Captain Carrigan reminded them, as he fished the incriminating stone out of my pocket. "Take it back to Dutch Turner."

That was my introduction to Captain Carrigan. I saw a lot of him after that. Everybody in Kimberley seemed to know him, but none of them knew much more about him

(Continued on page 152)



# Must Men Suffer *after 40?*

**A**RE you one of the millions of men over 40 who suffer certain embarrassing, little discussed symptoms—which many men seem to think are caused by "old age?" Do you believe that just because a man is over 40 he must always suffer from night rising—getting up to answer two to ten calls a night?—must put up with mysterious, sometimes painful "bladder" symptoms?

Then you should know what science has discovered about these signs. It is now known that many times these symptoms point to a fearfully common, yet little understood failure of what is considered to be nearly the most important of the male glands!

You should know, too, how an astounding discovery has made it easy for victims to combat and in many cases to quickly relieve this gland weakness. "Prostate gland hypertrophy," as this ailment is called, gives absolutely no warning. There is no pain in the gland itself. But it is recognized by doctors that when serious trouble threatens this gland, night rising, certain so-called "bladder" symptoms, and other painful signs are likely to appear. Among these other signs are headaches; weakness and pain in back, legs and feet; blues; and lack of courage and endurance.

Now, however, comes this treatment. It has already shown thousands of men that when these symptoms appear, as a result of prostate weakness, suffering can be relieved. This treatment is called Thermalaid. It is entirely drugless. It depends on no exercises, diets, massage, violet rays, etc. Instead it employs a method recommended by leading medical writers. Over a hundred thousand men have tested it. Thousands have written extravagantly grateful letters, telling how Thermalaid relieved the trouble—and seemingly prevented its return.

So many men have tested Thermalaid successfully

that you may now try it under the terms of a most astounding offer. If you do not seem to feel "ten years younger" after using Thermalaid one week, you may return it and your money will be immediately refunded.

Send now for full facts about Thermalaid and this agreement. A vitally interesting and extremely valuable book is available to you without cost or obligation. It will help you judge the true facts about your present condition. If you have any of the above symptoms, or if you know you have prostate trouble, you should have this book called "Why Many Men Are Old at 40," for reference. Act today. The book is absolutely free. Why not have these facts now while they can still do you **FREE** real good?

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Name.....  
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City..... State.....

(Continued from page 150)

than I did. He was Captain Carrigan, that's all.

Captain of what? Well, nobody seemed to know just what. There were rumors that he had won his commission in the British army. There were rumors that he had been an American officer, a South American commander, the military instructor for an Indian prince.

Rumors, rumors — nothing but rumors. Captain Carrigan never referred to them, and there was something about the man's quiet, blue-eyed gaze that didn't encourage questions.

When I left South Africa—without my fortune in diamonds!—I knew no more about him than the day he stepped in and saved my hide for me.

Since then I've crossed Captain Carrigan's trail half a dozen times. In a riot in a tough dive in Singapore—on the staff of a Chinese war lord — hobnobbing with Parisian Apaches—as confidential advisor to a North African prince. Always it was only Captain Carrigan, no more and no less.

What is his first name? What are his initials? Why does he insist on this peculiar partial anonymity? Figure it out for yourself. All I know is that Captain Carrigan is a name to be reckoned with in places that are mighty high and in places that are as low as they come. Yeah, and I know that I'm not the gent who's gonna ask him why there's not more to it.

### Run to Earth!

CLINT DAWSON tossed that final significant declaration back from the doorway as he ducked out of the office and left Ye Olde Globe Trotter wrestling with the mystery.

But Captain Carrigan slipped up when he scrawled his signature on our application blank. That was his undoing. It set Ye Olde Globe Trotter on his trail with a whoop of joy. That's why, fellow adventurers, I can rise with a grin from ear to ear

and announce that Captain Carrigan just walked out of this office. He left two things behind him.

First is one of the swellest, rip-snorting, knock-down-and-drag-'em-out yarns I ever read through without stopping. Second is his promise to turn out at least a dozen more of these knockout yarns based on his worldwide experiences—and to write them exclusively for **THRILLING ADVENTURES** and our companion magazines!

### Join Up With Him

Captain Carrigan knew a he-man outfit when he saw it. That's why he joined up with the Globe Trotters. If you haven't gotten in line yourself, it's time you hopped to it.

Remember, there are no dues, no initiation fee, no charges at all. Just fill in the application blank on page



160, send it in with a stamped and self-addressed envelope, and we'll do the rest.

We'll enroll you and see that you get a handsome membership card. Then you're all set to sit in with the rest of the gang and start doing things to give the old spark of adventure a chance to flicker!

Here is one of the best ideas for Globe Trotter activities received this month:

Dear Globe Trotter:

There are several young men here in Lima, Ohio, who have traveled plenty and as fast as I can see them I have been putting them wise to **THRILLING ADVENTURES** and the *Globe Trotters Club*.

One of the fellows who is sending in his application today suggested that local members get together once in a while for a powwow and have some of the subjects discussed printed in the Globe Trotter section of the magazine. What do you think of the idea?

Lima, Ohio.

Elgin F. Ralston.

There's an idea! Local units of

the *Globe Trotters Club*. Local clubs to meet and have their own activities; to plan their own adventures. Why not?

Let's know what you think of the idea. If you're for it, Ye Olde Globe Trotter will see what can be done about getting charters prepared and local units organized.

**Buried Treasure**

Are the Globe Trotters interested in buried treasure? And how! The ink wasn't dry on last month's columns of this department when my little spiel on lost fortunes began to bear fruit.

Right off the bat came a letter from a fellow who had just been waiting for an excuse. Says he:

Dear Globe Trotter:

Your buried treasure talk hits me right where I live! For some time I've been going to write to you and ask you to help me find three or four fellows that wanted adventure. If I found them it was my idea to meet and talk things over and plan some sort of expedition in search of lost treasure.

We could use the Globe Trotter Department as a sort of base to which we could write regularly reporting our progress.

As I see it each of us should have at least one hundred dollars and should be independent of family ties; resolved to stick with the search until we met success.

To some people this idea may sound a little fantastic, but I think it's better than sitting around and waiting for the depression to blow over. I'd like to get in touch with fellows who agree with me.

George Bano.

Buffalo, New York.

**Deep in the Desert**

Our Globe Trotters meetings are never complete without a few words from one of our writing gang, so I'm going to crowd in here part of an unusual letter that dropped on my desk this morning. A letter from one of the itchy footed brethren of the typewriter:

Dear Globe Trotter:

If this letter smells a bit strong you'll probably guess its contents before you open it. It's going out to you by camel post; and those critters are scented highly enough to odorize even the best of literature!

Where is this place? Get out your map

(Continued on page 154)

**This is FIGHTING Talk**



IF YOU'RE a quitter you won't read far in this advertisement.

If you're not—if you have the courage to face facts—you want to know who is responsible for your not getting ahead faster. It's YOU. The man who won't be licked can't be licked. If you're a drifter you'll always wish for success but never do anything about it. The earth is cluttered with that kind.

If you're a fighter you will do something about it. You'll get the special training that fits you for advancement, and you'll go on to a bigger job.

In spare time, right at home, you can get the training you need through the home-study courses of the International Correspondence Schools. Thousands of other men have lifted themselves out of the rut and into well-paid, responsible positions by I. C. S. study. Are they better men than you?

The time for action is *this minute*. Find out about this practical educational method that lets you learn while you earn. Check the subjects that interest you in the coupon below and mail it today. It doesn't obligate you in any way to ask for full particulars, but that one simple act may make all the difference between failure and success. *Do it now!*

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If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

(Continued from page 153)

of Arabia and see. It's right at the gate to Nowhere, in the middle of one of the most storied places of ancient times. To the north lies the great Ruba el Khali Desert. Six miles inside that desert and about a hundred miles from here two French aviators recently flew over the ruins of a great city.

They saw towers, minarets, buildings still standing, saw a wall running around the place. It seemed to be deserted except for the tents of hostile Arabs camped around it.

They think they found the ancient capitol of the Queen of Sheba.

Archaeologists are taking issue with them, claiming that this can't be Sheba's capitol but must be Karna, the capitol of the ancient Minaeans. I don't know who is right, and I don't care. I do know that those boys saw something mighty startling and unusual out there in that great sea of sand. And I know that since their return the story has been hushed up very significantly.

Why? I'm the sort of gent who asks that question—and tries to find the answer. If I can get together a strong enough caravan, with the men I want to enlist—well, maybe I'll tell you more about Sheba later!

Meanwhile my best to you and all the little Globe Trotters!

Wayne Rogers.

Sawa, Hadramaut, Arabia.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

With Summer right here on top of us lots of you fellows are on the prowl after outdoor jobs, and you're putting it up to the Globe Trotter to round them up for you. Sorry, fellers; there's nothing I'd like to do better than to locate every mother's son of you on farms, ranches, prospecting claims, boats, big timber jobs or any of the hundreds of other outdoor berths—but it can't be done.

A few years ago I could have come pretty near doing just that, but times have changed.

Jobs of any sort are at a premium these days.

W. H. Bogart, of Westfield, N. J., wants an outdoor job for the summer and says, "I am willing to travel anywhere within reason if there is a job available, and I am not look-

ing for a salary so much as for adventure."

Mighty sorry, Bogart, but there are hundreds of others with that idea. If I could locate jobs for all you gents I'd start up an employment agency and clean up a fortune myself! I'm sitting here glad to sling out any of the information I can, but you'll have to rustle the jobs yourselves.

### Prospecting

THE lure of the gold pan seems to lead all the rest these days. In the March issue I gave E. DeLury what dope I could on spots for placer mining, but still the letters come pouring in. Says this one:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have been through the West several times and my one ambition is to spend at least one winter and summer in the mountains. For this reason two of my friends and I are asking you for information.

-We intend to go somewhere west of Denver in the Rockies. We'd like to spend the summer panning gold. Can you suggest some place where we can make a little money? We are all six-footers and not afraid of work.

We would like to build a permanent shack or dugout, work at panning during the summer, buy grub and equipment with the results of our labor, and spend the winter trapping, in the same locality if possible.

Please send me whatever information you can regarding a suitable location for this scheme.

Peter Gonia, Jr.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Answer:

Colorado is an excellent state to try out a scheme such as yours, Gonia, but the same thing goes for you as DeLury: I'm not going to try to tell you the best spot. However, the Colorado State Department of Mines is particularly helpful to prospectors. They'll send you a booklet and a lot of other dope that will probably fix you up okay.

That's all the dope I can give you, Gonia, but the idea of the *Globe Trotters Club* is to have you fellows help each other. So up steps a Globe

(Continued on page 156)



**and 55 OTHER Grand Cash Prizes**

**SEND ONLY THE COUPON BELOW**  
*and we will tell you how YOU can qualify to—*

# Win \$2,250.00

**or Buick Sedan and \$1,250.00 Cash!**

**H**ERE'S a lot of cash for some one. Would you like to have it? I am going to give it away. We want to advertise our business quickly and get wide distribution for our products. Someone, maybe you, will receive new Buick Sedan and \$1,250.00 cash extra for promptness or if you win 1st prize and prefer all cash you get \$2,250.00. Duplicate prizes paid in case of ties.

Surely you would like to have this magnificent prize. Then fill in the coupon below and you can easily qualify for the opportunity to win as much as \$2,250.00.

This is our unique way of advertising. We want people everywhere to know us and to share in this great distribution

of money. Besides the first grand prize, \$2,250.00 including promptness, there are 59 other big cash prizes. The second grand prize is \$750.00 cash, third grand prize is \$300.00 cash and many others. Thousands of dollars more in Special Cash Rewards which we will tell you all about when we get your answer. This is your opportunity. Answer today—qualify for your share of this money that must be given away. No subscriptions to buy or sell. No more puzzles to solve. There is nothing hard to do to qualify to win the Buick Sedan, but you must act quick to make the most of this opportunity. Just mail the coupon if you find 5 of the hidden faces. **Do it NOW!**

## Can You Find 5 Faces?

It is fun to look for the hidden faces in the trees, clouds, etc., in the picture at the right. Are your eyes sharp enough to find them? Some look straight at you, some are upside down—others are sideways. It is not as easy as some people may think, but don't give up—keep looking and you may find them. When you do, mark them and send your answer right away. Quick!



Many people have received big cash prizes from companies with whom I have been associated. Some have received several thousand dollars. Names gladly furnished on request. Answer today and see for yourself if you can win the first prize. Oh Boy! what you could do with \$2,250.00 all in cash at one time. I will be glad to pay it to you if you are adjudged the winner.

Hurry—mark the 5 faces you find, send your answer quick. You may be the one to receive the \$2,250.00 prize.

## Send No Money, Just Mail Coupon

**FOR Promptness**  
**\$1,250.00 EXTRA**  
 or a total of \$2,250 if you are prompt and win 1st prize.

Remember, send not one penny with this coupon—all you do now is to find 5 faces, if you can, and mail the coupon. We will answer you right away and tell you how you stand. The money to pay every prize is on deposit in a big strong Des Moines bank. Get your share of \$4,305.00 in cash prizes, besides thousands of dollars in Special Cash Rewards. Sixty grand prizes in all. All prizes will be paid promptly. Hurry! Just mark the faces you find and send with coupon right away. Some one wins—maybe you. Send your answer and see for yourself if you win first prize. **DON'T DELAY! ... Mail your answer today.**

G. F. STAYTON, President Dept. 110  
 1912 Grand Avenue,  
 Des Moines, Iowa.

I have found 5 faces in the enclosed picture and I want to win. Tell me how I stand.

My name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

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method in positively guar-  
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normal road conditions. This guarantee is backed  
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Size	Rim	Tires Tubes	Size	Tires Tubes	
30x4-40-21	2.15	00.55	30x4-40-21	2.35	.75
30x4-40-20	2.15	.55	30x4-40-20	2.35	.75
30x4-40-19	2.40	.45	30x4-40-19	2.60	.85
30x4-38-19	2.45	.55	30x4-38-19	2.65	.85
30x4-38-18	2.50	.65	30x4-38-18	2.70	.95
30x4-36-19	2.55	.65	30x4-36-19	2.75	.95
30x4-36-18	2.55	.65	30x4-36-18	2.75	.95
30x4-34-19	2.60	.65	30x4-34-19	2.80	.95
30x4-34-18	2.60	.65	30x4-34-18	2.80	.95
30x4-32-20	2.65	.65	30x4-32-20	2.85	.95
30x4-32-19	2.65	.65	30x4-32-19	2.85	.95
30x4-32-18	2.65	.65	30x4-32-18	2.85	.95
30x4-30-19	2.70	.65	30x4-30-19	2.90	.95
30x4-30-18	2.70	.65	30x4-30-18	2.90	.95
30x4-28-19	2.75	.65	30x4-28-19	2.95	.95
30x4-28-18	2.75	.65	30x4-28-18	2.95	.95
30x4-26-19	2.80	.65	30x4-26-19	3.00	.95
30x4-26-18	2.80	.65	30x4-26-18	3.00	.95
30x4-24-19	2.85	.65	30x4-24-19	3.05	.95
30x4-24-18	2.85	.65	30x4-24-18	3.05	.95
30x4-22-19	2.90	.65	30x4-22-19	3.10	.95
30x4-22-18	2.90	.65	30x4-22-18	3.10	.95
30x4-20-19	2.95	.65	30x4-20-19	3.15	.95
30x4-20-18	2.95	.65	30x4-20-18	3.15	.95
30x4-18-19	3.00	.65	30x4-18-19	3.20	.95
30x4-18-18	3.00	.65	30x4-18-18	3.20	.95
30x4-16-19	3.05	.65	30x4-16-19	3.25	.95
30x4-16-18	3.05	.65	30x4-16-18	3.25	.95
30x4-14-19	3.10	.65	30x4-14-19	3.30	.95
30x4-14-18	3.10	.65	30x4-14-18	3.30	.95
30x4-12-19	3.15	.65	30x4-12-19	3.35	.95
30x4-12-18	3.15	.65	30x4-12-18	3.35	.95
30x4-10-19	3.20	.65	30x4-10-19	3.40	.95
30x4-10-18	3.20	.65	30x4-10-18	3.40	.95
30x4-8-19	3.25	.65	30x4-8-19	3.45	.95
30x4-8-18	3.25	.65	30x4-8-18	3.45	.95
30x4-6-19	3.30	.65	30x4-6-19	3.50	.95
30x4-6-18	3.30	.65	30x4-6-18	3.50	.95
30x4-4-19	3.35	.65	30x4-4-19	3.55	.95
30x4-4-18	3.35	.65	30x4-4-18	3.55	.95
30x4-2-19	3.40	.65	30x4-2-19	3.60	.95
30x4-2-18	3.40	.65	30x4-2-18	3.60	.95
30x4-0-19	3.45	.65	30x4-0-19	3.65	.95
30x4-0-18	3.45	.65	30x4-0-18	3.65	.95
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bile necessity - a nationally advertised product.

(Continued from page 154)

Trotter with what seems to be just about the stuff you're after:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have prospected a number of years and trapped fur-bearing animals during the winters. Those are my hobbies, but I always like to have a partner. A fellow gets too lonely by himself.

I saw E. DeLury's letter about placer gold mining and agreed that your answer was the best that could be given—gold is where you find it. If E. DeLury will get in touch with me maybe we can form a partnership and DeLury won't have to hunt all over the West for placer gold mining. Colorado is where I do my mining.

This offer is open to any other footloose hombre. Let's hear from some of you trappers.

Saginaw, Michigan. John Maniats.

Answer:

Well, there isn't much to answer in that one, is there? Maniats is the gent who is doing the answering. Guess he has the dope some of you would-be prospectors and trappers are after. Sounds as if he's worth having a powwow with anyway.

Here's another Globe Trotter with a favorite panning ground all picked out for himself. The trouble is he has other ideas, too:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I've worked as a mechanic, fruit-picker, hop-picker, artist, sign painter, store clerk, farmhand, dairyman and barber. I've bummed the castles (houses), cooked mulligan, and have ridden the toughest railway in the West (the Santa Fe).

My next intention is to buy, beg or steal a gold pan and hit for Feather River Canyon, California, to try my luck. That canyon hasn't been picked over as much as most of the country.

From there my tracks are very likely to lead to the Argentine. One question I would like to ask: is it possible for an alien to bum his way in South America if he has a smattering of Spanish?

Henry L. Lewis, Jr.  
La Roche, South Dakota.

Answer:

They say anything is possible, Lewis, but your South American bumming expedition should be impossible, if it isn't. Yes, there is a type of rolling stone called the Tropical Tramp who rolls and bums his way around South America—or

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who has done so for a good many years.

But, first of all, get this straight: the Tropical tramp of South American fame has a far more useful equipment than a smattering of Spanish. In most cases he is a thoroughly capable all-around man. In many cases he is a trained engineer. He can fit in most anywhere and tackle most any job.

Even the Tropical Tramps are finding the going mighty tough these days. In South America, as in the U. S. A., jobs are scarce and the men with training get them.

Take my advice, young feller, and don't tackle the South American thing until you have a good substantial stake and, preferably, until you have made connections that insure a job for you there when you arrive. If you can't wangle these you'll do a lot better if you settle down for a while in Feather River Canyon.

*A Home-Made Schooner*

Dear Globe Trotter:

My cousin and I have been to sea as messboys on a freighter and wish to build a small, two-masted schooner of our own to knock around in. We wish to go around the coast of all the Gulf states, down around Central America and maybe around some of the South American coast.

Is it possible for a boat with a crew of two to do this? Wouldn't it be necessary to have an engine? A license or a permit? And a passport? Would it be necessary to have any past experience to get a license or permit?

Where can plans for a two-masted schooner between thirty and forty feet be bought? What will they cost?

Bud Perkins.

Greer, South Carolina.

Answer:

It is perfectly possible for a thirty or forty foot schooner, handled by two men, to navigate all the waters you mention, Bud. No reason why you shouldn't go right around the Horn in her—if you are good enough sailors. It's been done lots of times.

The matter of an engine is another thing that must be governed by your seamanship. An engine makes things lots easier for a fellow who isn't a first class seaman. You don't need  
(Concluded on page 160)



Do You Realize The  
**POWER**  
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ARE you aware that hypnotic power lies dormant in all of us...in you? You have complete control over anyone under your hypnotic power... they must say anything...tell anything...do anything that you command. Think what that means!

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## IMPERIAL NOVELTY CO.

175 FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK CITY

## GREAT GOD HONI

(Concluded from page 146)

strode out into the surf and grasped the side of the canoe—only to have his hand brushed away from it.

"Nix," John Flynn grunted in a voice that sounded hollow and strange in his effort to conceal the emotion that was playing curious pranks with his throat. "You ain't going. You're staying here."

"That wasn't the bargain, Flynn," Red reminded quietly.

"Bargain, hell!" the deputy snarled. "I ain't taking you back to face that frame-up. You know you ain't got a chance to beat it. They've got the skids all greased for you. I'm going back alone. So far as I know, you went down with the *Island Queen*. I got my man; I can't help it if the sea took him away from me." For long moments, Red Morgan said not a word. Then his hand stretched forth and clasped the deputy's in a grip of understanding, a grip that said more from man to man than all the words they could have spoken.

"There is a gold mine here, when the plantations are run properly," he said slowly, the light of eager ambition kindling in his eyes. "In two or three years, I'll be wealthy. Then I'll be able to go back and vindicate myself—and carry on where poor old Harmon left off."

"Good luck, Red," Mary Horton called, as the Marquesans ran the canoe through the surf. And, "I'll be waiting for you," she whispered softly.

But already Red Morgan had turned his back and started happily up the trail to the plantation house and the job that lay ahead of him. The people of Vita Luma expected great things of the great god Honi, and he did not intend that they should be disappointed.

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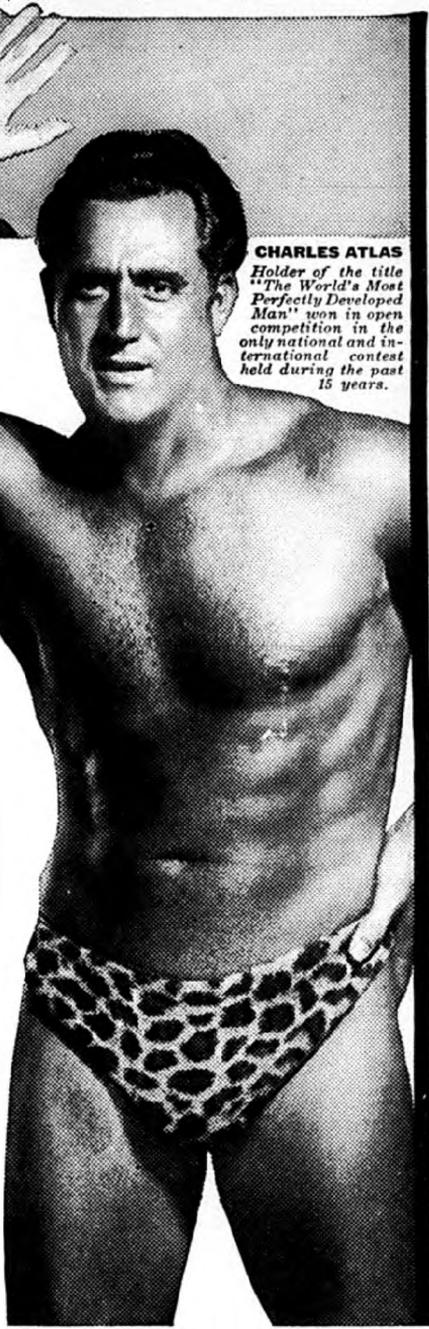
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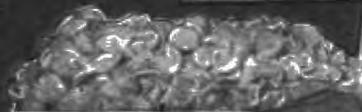
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