

JULY

25¢

SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

HELL'S RIVER

by
Arthur Wallace



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... till 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 Weil Belt... a transformation took place... what a difference—pounds seemed to have fallen away!"



4. "My friends were astonished!... 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 make this unqualified agreement...

If YOU do not REDUCE your WAIST THREE INCHES in TEN DAYS...

... it won't cost you one cent!

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, no exercises—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 if your waistline is not actually 3 inches smaller—three inches of fat gone—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.

SAFE, QUICK REDUCTION

You will be completely comfortable as the gentle pressure and massage-like action of your Weil Belt persistently eliminates fat as you work, walk or sit.

Many enthusiastic wearers write that when the abdominal walls are returned to normal position, indigestion and

constipation are greatly relieved and that with loss of fat comes increased 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!

SEND FOR 10 DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER

THE WEIL COMPANY, INC.

3810 HILL STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Gentlemen: Send me FREE your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10-day FREE trial offer.

Name _____

Address _____

Use coupon or write your name and address on penny post card.

Read what happened



YES!

I'll take your training. That's what S. J. Ebert said. He is making good money and has found success in Radio.

to these two men

when I said:



NO!

I'm not interested. That's what this fellow said. Today he would be ashamed if I gave you his real name.

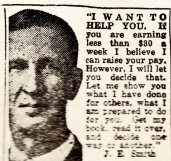
I will Train You at Home in Spare Time for a GOOD JOB IN RADIO

These two fellows had the same chance. Each clipped and sent me a coupon, like the one in this ad. They got my book on Radio's opportunities. S. J. Ebert, 104-B Quadrangle, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, saw that Radio offered him a real chance. He enrolled. The other fellow, whom we will call John Doe, wrote that he wasn't interested. He was just one of those fellows who wants a better job, better pay, but better does anything about it. One of the many who spend their lives in a slow-pay, do-nothing job because they haven't the ambition, the determination, the spirit it takes to succeed.

But read what S. J. Ebert wrote me and remember that John Doe had the same chance: "Upon graduation I accepted a job as serviceman and within three weeks was made Service Manager. This job paid me \$40 to \$50 a week compared with \$18 I earned in a shoe factory before. Eight months later I went with station KWCR as operator. From there I went to KNTV. Now I am Radio Engineer with WSUI. I certainly recommend the N. R. I. to all interested in the greatest field of all, Radio."

**Get Ready for Jobs Like These.
Many Radio Experts Make
\$30, \$50, \$75 a Week**

Do you want to make more money?
Broadcasting stations employ engi-



"I WANT TO HELP YOU. If you are earning less than \$30 a week I believe I can raise your pay. However, I will let you decide that. Let me show you what I have done for others, what I am prepared to do for you. Get my book, read it over, and decide one way or another."
J. E. Smith

ners, operators, station managers and pay up to \$5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as \$500 to \$550 a year—full time Radio servicing jobs pay as much as \$20, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts own their own full time or part time Radio businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to \$6,000 a year. Radio operators on ships get good pay and see the world besides. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio and loud speaker systems offer good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men who have taken N. R. I. Training are holding good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a
Week Extra in Spare Time
While Learning**

Practically every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets. They show you how to do Radio repair jobs that you can cash in on quickly. Throughout your training I send you plans and ideas that have made good spare time money for hundreds of fellows. I send you special Radio equipment and show you how to conduct experiments and build circuits which illustrate important Radio principles. My training gives you valuable, practical experience, while learning.

Get My 64-Page Book Free

Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to anyone over 16 years old. It describes Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Training for Radio and Television; shows you actual letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning; tells about my Money Back Agreement. MAIL THIS COUPON in an envelope, or paste it on a penny postcard—NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute,
Dept. 7GX1 Washington, D. C.**

**MAIL
THIS NOW**



FOR FREE BOOK OF FACTS ABOUT RADIO

**J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute,
Dept. 7GX1, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your \$9-\$50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

Name..... Age.....
Address.....
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SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES



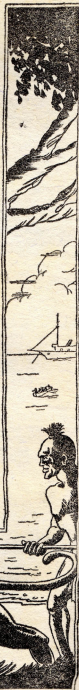
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PROOF!

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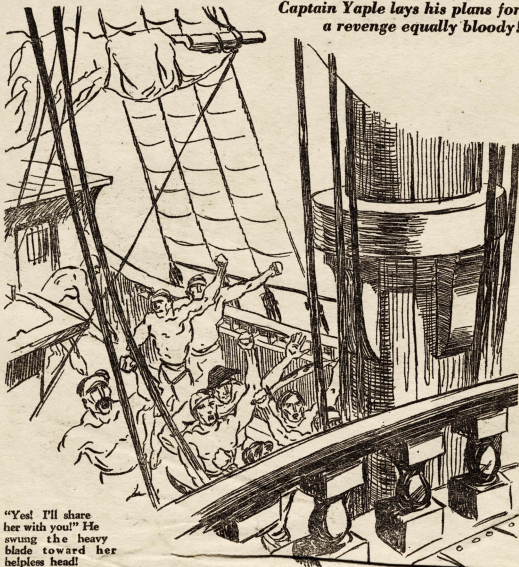
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State whether *or Man*—*Woman*—*or Child*—

When answering advertisements please mention **SPY-G-ADVENTURE STORIES**

BUCCANEER'S

His ship stolen, his wife and sister horribly put to death by pirates, Captain Yapple lays his plans for a revenge equally bloody!



"Yes! I'll share her with you!" He swung the heavy blade toward her helpless head!

CAPTAIN CHRISTIAN YAPPLE felt pretty good. He'd sailed his vessel through pirate waters, run the Windward passage and had just dropped anchor off a sizable native village on the south coast of Cuba.

"It's the place, mister," he told the mate. "We'll trade at dawn."

"Give the men shore leave, sir?"

"No. It's too late. The natives are abed. Set a double watch. Buccaneers have been known to venture hereabouts."

The mate, who'd visualized a lush-breasted native girl on his knee, accepted the orders glumly. Yapple scanned the village through his spy glass. Small details were visible in the silvery brightness of the tropical moon. A bird, frightened

VENGEANCE

By
**ALAN
ANDERSON**



from its perch, flapped over the roof of the jungle screeching discordant, angry protests. Surf broke musically on the beach. There was a breeze, but it was oven-hot.

Captain Yaple was satisfied. He was tall, broad shouldered and of good weight. Like most seventeenth century seamen, his long brown hair was gathered in a little pigtail at the nape of his neck. The open blouse revealed a hairy, muscle-laced chest. He wore knee length, homespun breeches but neither hose nor shoes.

The sails were furled, the men doled out a cup of rum and a double watch set. Yaple saw these details attended to with ill concealed impatience. He was eager to get below.

When all was well he descended to his quarters. The door was locked. He rapped authoritatively and a frightened girlish voice challenged his presence. He announced himself and soon the door opened a way.

"Don't come in!" wailed Prudence, his sixteen year old wife of three months. "I'm taking a tub."

Grinning, Christian slipped his arm through the crack. His hand encountered the soft slope of her shoulder. It was wet and silky. She protested. He laughed and dropped his hand along her arm. His fingers clutched. Prudence squealed.

"Christian!" she commanded sharply. "Your sister. Remember your sister."

"Put something on!" he ordered, knowing she was angered.

He heard bare feet scamper across the floor. Soon she bade him enter. He came in and locked the door. As always, her beauty left him breathless. Prudence was Dutch and a vivid blonde. Her long flaxen hair was of dazzling brilliance. The stark whiteness of her face was

broken by the blue of her eyes and the deep red of full lips.

A sheer silk nightgown fell loosely about her supple, well curved figure. She'd not bothered to screen her breasts with the richness of her hair and their taut skinned beauty was mistily discernible. They were full breasts but solid in the firm freshness of youth. They were high, too, wide set and boldly outthrust. Yaple wet his lips. His head spun.

"When are you to finish this venture and take your sister to Havana to meet her husband to be?"

"Soon," he said and went to his desk. He opened the log for the day's entry. Prudence moved into his line of vision. He saw the delicious curves of her hips and the breathtaking sleekness of glistening thighs. Her legs might have been called sturdy except they were too shapely for that term.

She turned. Her figure in profile was a dazzling series of sweeping curves. The move had imparted to her breasts a slight swaying. Christian got up, seized her and kissed her damp mouth. For a moment she yielded to the caressing pressure of his arms. Then she pushed him away.

"Go comfort your sister! She's been crying."

Christian went into the adjoining cabin. Ruth was in bed and asleep. The cover fell about her breasts leaving her shoulders bare. She was long and willowy with slender legs, sloping shoulders and pert little breasts. Like Christian's, her hair was brown, her eyes gray.

Christian returned to the parlor. Prudence was seated by the port staring at the moon-swept seas. He stood watching her a moment, drinking in every alluring curve of her splendid figure. Then he strode to her side, lifted her in his arms and kissed her. She was relaxed a mo-

ment, then began to respond to his ardent caresses. The tropics had swept away her innate aloofness. Now her blood was like fire. Her fingers caressed his hard muscles and her soft, silken flesh melted against him. His heart raced. He began to carry her to their cabin. She sighed in ecstasy.

A KNOCK at the door awakened him. He went there and drew back the bolt.

The door burst open, striking him in the face! He fell back and landed heavily on the floor. Stunned, he sat up. For a brief moment, shocking paralysis left him powerless to move further.

A tall, swarthy-complexioned man stood there. He wore black velvet breeches, nothing more. His body was wet. His handsome, arrogant face lighted in triumph. The rapier in his hand dripped blood.

A nameless terror numbed Christian's brain. But he got to his feet and glanced about for a weapon. The leader of the pirates moved aside and barked a command. Men swarmed into the room. The fight began. Even against such odds Christian was holding his own. Then a club crashed down on his skull. He fell in darkness.

WITH the first stir of consciousness rough hands jerked him erect. His hands were frussed and a filthy gag was stuffed in his mouth. For a moment spots danced in his eyes. Then vision cleared.

The cabin was filled with leering, dirty and evil visaged renegades. The handsome young man was perched on the edge of the table. Then Christian paled. Seated before the man was Prudence! She wore that silk gown—nothing more.

The pirate leader smiled evilly. His

dagger went out until the sharp point fell between her breasts. Prudence closed her eyes. Dexterously the point of the blade entered the cloth and ripped upward. White flesh appeared and they could see the inner slopes of her trembling breasts. Then the man flipped open each half of cloth. Her breasts were bared to eager stares. The leader wet his lips. Murmurs of admiration came from his men.

"So he's your husband?" said the leader nodding to Christian. "I am Don Pedro de Goya y Manaos. Gentleman buccaneer whose ship is hard aground nearby. We swam here and slew the crew. I expected no morsel such as this."

Prudence's eyes were tortured. A mad glaze came to Christian's eyes.

Then a man dragged Ruth from her cabin. Her face was a sickly white. Her slender young body was covered with a sheet. Tears streaked her cheeks. The man was holding her by the hair; his eyes feasted on the slimmness of her hips, about which she held the sheet tightly. Christian Yapple's body was numb.

"Ho!" cried Don Pedro. "Another wench." He laughed, then turned to Prudence. "I like best the shape of you. You will be nice to me, yes? Else this husband of yours I shall torture."

Her blue eyes were tortured. She ran her tongue about her red lips. Christian's eyes held mute appeal. She glanced at him.

"Perhaps," purred the arrogant Don Pedro, "with your husband away you can decide better."

He snapped out a command. Christian, fighting like a demon, was dragged from the cabin and out on deck. They lashed him to the mainmast facing the poop. The deck about him was wet with blood and gore in the first light of morning.

He felt sick. His brain was afire. Anguish tortured him.

The crew came upon deck and broke out rum casks. They talked in small groups and kept watching the poop. A woman screamed. Ruth! He fought like a madman, until he relaxed exhausted against his ropes. Another scream. His eyes became glassy. Blood dripped from his nose.

Finally Don Pedro came upon deck. Ruth, her limp form still covered with the sheet, was across his shoulder. The man on deck roared and ran beneath the poop deck. Hands raised. They were like beasts.

Then Don Pedro tossed her body below. Her olive loveliness turned over once then fell into eager hands. The sheet fluttered about her. The men swarmed over her like wolves. They fought each other with fists, clubs and cutlasses. Now and then Christian's eyes caught a brief glimpse of her helpless figure. He could no longer move.

Suddenly the tumult died. Men shuffled about like snarling dogs. The murmurs of discontent grew. Ruth lay face down on the deck. She was very still. The men glanced at her without interest. Their temper darkened. Finally they grew bolder.

"Don Pedro!" called one. "Bring us the other! This wench has perished."

Others took up the demand. Finally Don Pedro came out on the poop. His face was flushed with rage.

"Pigs! I have shared alike."

"But our share has died."

Don Pedro's rage vanished. He smiled a crooked, cunning smile. Then he spoke, his voice was soft and agreeable.

"Very well, I shall share her with you."

A joyous shout greeted his decision. Men seized the lifeless body of Chris-

tian's sister and threw her overboard. Again they gathered beneath the poop deck.

Don Pedro reappeared. He was dragging Prudence by the hair. Her hand hugged at the bit of cloth about her waist. She moved but there was no life in her. Her flesh was amazingly white in the hot sunlight. Those matchless breasts glistened and swayed. Her head hung in shame as fifty pairs of eyes drank in her loveliness.

Don Pedro's intentions became apparent too late. He stepped back, lifted a cutlass and took the hilt in both hands. He dropped it back of his head then came about with all the strength of his body. The razor sharp blade crashed down on the center of that yellow head! The face divided in a spurt of blood. And in a flash it was over . . . With a sickening crunch of bones, the blade had sliced her body completely in two! She fell in two parts—blood and gore stained the deck.

SNARLING like a beast, Don Pedro picked up half of her, flung it below and cried: "Here is your share!"

The half-corpsé struck a man in the face. He fled screaming. Faces were green. Many went to the rail to vomit. Christian Yapple continued to stare. His eyes saw nothing. Slobber worked through the gag. Frothy blood drooled from his nose. Time passed. His eyes remained fixed, staring, glazed. Finally a lash flecked his face. He did not feel it.

"Raving mad," shrugged Don Pedro. "Overboard with him!"

There was a sense of falling, then cool green waters engulfed him. From childhood he'd been an expert swimmer. His feet lashed out. His head broke the surface. He kicked rhythmically and did not



"So he's your husband, eh?" The leader laughed. Prudence closed her eyes, shuddering, as the blade touched her.

need his tied hands. The *Lark* receded. Then his shoulders touched shore. He spat out the gag and lay there mumbling. He saw the *Lark* make sail and scuttle away. Christian Yapple got to his feet and staggered to the village.

He was mad then—stark, raving mad. The village was deserted. Several corpses lay in the street. He managed to free his hands and found food. One thought obsessed him. Vengeance! A horrible death to Don Pedro! He forgot his family back in Boston. He was insane—his eyes proved it.

A groan from the jungle reached his ears. He staggered towards the sound. It was shadowy there. He strained his eyes. Then he saw it! A head sticking out of a mound of sand. The dune swarmed with black dots. Ants!

He knelt beside the man and began to dig. Now and then he'd pause to sweep ants from that swollen, blood streaked face. At last he freed the man and pulled him out. Both retreated and rid themselves of ants.

"Thank ye, lad!" said the man. "I be Jeff Coates. Was a gunner in the British Navy. Jumped ship here and got me a native wife . . ." He broke off suddenly and his eyes widened in alarm.

He turned and raced into the jungle. Christian followed and came to a clearing where still smouldered the remains of a native hut. Jeff Coates was standing with bowed head. Christian stopped beside him, stiffened.

A native girl! She was dead. Her belly had been slit from solar plexus to groin. The blood-oozing cavity was filled with sand. Her distorted face was mute evidence of the torture she'd suffered. Christian pulled the man away. He was crying.

"My babies!" wailed Jeff Coates in fresh terror. "My babies!"

There were four of them. The depraved pirates had taken them by the feet and bashed out their brains against tree trunks.

THEY buried the family of Jeff Coates and returned to the native village.

"Was the pirate Don Pedro," said the older man. He sighed. "Had no kin at home. No future. Planned to live in peace here."

"There'll be no peace for us till we settle with Don Pedro," declared Christian Yapple in a hollow, lifeless voice. "Come! Somewhere nearby his ship must be aground, or he wouldn't have sailed away in mine."

THEY finally found the other ship.

She had ventured into a cove and was hard aground on a sand bar. She was a Spanish man-of-war, a fact which led them to believe Don Pedro and his men mutineers were not the usual run of pirates. The poop deck was high, sloping, and contained the cabins. The main and mizzen masts were both tall and could carry much canvas. She looked like a fast ship.

They made their inspection. Jeff Coates was pleased with the cannon. They numbered forty two. Twenty on the top deck; twenty on the deck ten feet below. Two high set cannons, stubby, and wide mouthed, were in the center of the deck; one facing port, one starboard. They were for the deadly grape shot.

"Captain," said Jeff Coates, "natives hereabouts has got mules. A block and tackle hitch about yonder tree would free her."

Christian agreed that it would. They continued their inspection and found the vessel well provisioned and munitioned.

In the darkest corner of the hold they

found a woman! She was shackled to the wall and only a fragment of tattered cloth about her waist covered her. But her rich breasts were concealed by long hair—white hair. White! Yet her figure was that of a young woman. They stared at the fine length of her legs and the firmness of thighs whose skin shone palely in the dimness. Her hips were arched gracefully and her breasts had the firm fullness of youth. Yet her hair was white.

She blinked in the light of the lantern Coates was carrying. Then she threw back her head and laughed. Her mad laughter chilled both men to the bone. Christian hastened to unfasten her. She fell to her knees, tossed back her hair and deliberately clawed at her face and shoulders with long nails. Bloody welts appeared.

"You want me!" she screeched and laughed. "Here I am! It will not be pretty, though." Christian could not move. Her clawing fingers went to her thighs raking the firm flesh from knee to hip. Then she began to yank out fists full of hair.

There was a loud report. A black hole appeared in her forehead. With what seemed to be a sigh of relief, she pitched forward on her face. She was dead. Jeff Coates stood holding the smoking pistol.

"She was best dead," he said.

Christian's silence was agreement.

They threw her to the sharks. Both men were silent. Here was another of Don Pedro's sins to be avenged.

"WE CAN free the ship," said Christian Yaple sometime later, "but we need a crew."

"Some two hundred blackamoors hidin' in the bush," said Jeff Coates. "Run off from slavery. Right terror-stricken of bein' took back."

It took three days to find the blackamoors. As Coates had said, they were in mortal terror of being recaptured. Having traded at the native village they knew and trusted Jeff Coates.

"We'll terrify these waters," Yaple told them grimly in Spanish. "We'll be rich. But you must obey me."

Their leader agreed. At first Christian did not like the idea of taking the thirty women. But there was nothing else to do and, as Coates pointed out, they could prepare the food and keep the quarters tidy.

Both men and women were magnificent specimens of negro only one step removed from savagery. The women were tall, sturdy but shapely of form. Though their nostrils were broad and their lips thick, they were not unattractive. The men were all six-footers, huge chested and strong armed. Superstitious, they were in awe of Christian's madness and treated him like a god.

Their Chief, Christian chose as his mate. Coates selected his gun crew for training. The ship was easily freed at high tide with block and tackle and man power.

The training began. Christian was cautious. In two weeks the men could handle the ship very well. In a month they were perfect. The men took to discipline. They were safe, they had full bellies and their women were aboard. Christian was pleased.

"We're ready," he told Coates, "to look for Don Pedro."

"Stores is low, captain. Best take a prize and test the mettle of the crew."

It would be necessary, Christian knew, to return to the north coast of Cuba and the trade routes. But on the second day of their journey, they had a stroke of good fortune. A timid Portuguese

merchantman had taken the little-used course south of Cuba.

The lookout spotted the sail shortly after dawn. Christian came on deck and gave orders to the mate, whose loud voice sent men swarming into the rigging. All sail was crowded on. The ship gathered speed. The wind held steady.

The merchantman drew nearer. He was panic-stricken and also broke out all sail. The wind freshened. Christian shortened sail. The terrified Portuguese did not. His top mast was carried away. They drew nearer. Christian's boarding party armed and crouched behind the protection of the high gunwale. Coates stationed his gunners. The cannon was loaded and primed.

"She's a noble ship, captain," called Coates.

"Aye! A handsome prize. She's well laden."

The crew of the Portuguese were frantic in trying to set more sail. Men ran about the deck in confusion. Aboard Christian's ship everything transpired efficiently and with well practiced ease. The boarding party, eager and tense, pleased him. The grappling hooks were readied.

Christian drew abreast and began to angle in. The confusion aboard the merchantman grew.

"They prepare to fight," called Coates.

"Can you fire a ball across their bow?"

"Aye!" cried Coates and taking a torch from a gunner ran forward to a bow cannon. Carefully he appraised the roll of the ship, the distance and the velocity of the wind. He touched the torch. The cannon roared and the ship took on a slight keel. The ball struck some fifty feet off the bow of the Portuguese.

The fight was over! The merchantman

dropped sail and signaled defeat. His lookout had spotted the blackamoors lining the rail. That, more than Coates' perfect shot had done the trick.

"Tell the men to harm no one who doesn't fight!" Christian ordered the mate. The boarding party was visibly disappointed. So was Christian. He'd hoped for a fight.

The ships touched and the grappling hooks dropped. The boarding party bounded over the gunwales. The crew of the merchantman paled and cast apprehensive glances at the triumphant blackamoors.

Buckling a rapier about his naked waist and shoving pistols into the belt, Christian Yable crossed to the other ship. The crew of the vanquished vessel huddled in a shaking, frightened group. Glowering blackamoors surrounded them, hoping for resistance. There was none.

Christian's strapping mate was on the poop and had disarmed the gray haired captain. A young and quaking midshipman stood beside his commander.

"A misadventure, captain," said Christian with a mocking bow. "Where are you bound and with what?"

"Silks, spices and women's apparel. For South America."

"I'll need your ship, captain," said Christian and turned to his mate. "Put the captain and his men off in the boats. Cuba is safely near."

The captain wet his lips. Christian was quick to note his agitation. But before he could question the man a shot sounded from below.

Christian and his mate raced below with drawn pistols. The first cabin was empty. As was the second. The third was locked. Christian kicked it open and flourished his pistols.

TWO girls! One was dead. The other wide eyed and staring. When she saw Christian and the blackamoor she



As Christian snatched up a weapon to fight, the leader barked a command to his men behind.

began to mumble a prayer. They stared at her.

She was obviously Spanish, for her hair and eyes were a jet black. A low-cut red velvet gown was balanced on her shoulders, lifting ripe breasts to expose their olive, upper halves. Her lips were fine and carmine, her nose straight and her forehead high. He knew she was a great lady, but her intense beauty shocked him. Behind her moving lips gleamed twin rows of even, ivory teeth. Her shoulders were broad and sloping and of heart-stirring shapeliness.

Jeff Coates entered, turned the dead girl face up and said: "Shot in the head."

The girl ceased her prayers and said: "I shot her. Rather than see her ravished, I killed her."

"Why didn't you kill yourself?" asked Christian unaware that they both were speaking English.

"I fear no torture. I am a De Goya."

The name stunned Christian. For a moment he could say nothing. Then he asked: "Your name is what?"

"Countess Raquel de Goya y Manos."

Jeff Coates stood up like a man in a trance. Christian wet his lips. His heart pounded. The blood rushed to his head. His eyes were lighted as by fires from Hell.

"Any relation to Don Pedro de Goya?" he asked.

"He is my brother."

Christian threw back his head and laughed. It was insane laughter that chilled the rest of them to the bone. Raquel de Goya lost her poise. She paled. The mate shifted from foot to foot uneasily. Jeff Coates began to sweat.

"The sister of Don Pedro!" hissed Christian and whipped out his rapier. A vacant look came to his eyes. Slobber drooled from his lips. He lunged sud-

denly with the rapier. The point pierced the bodice of the red velvet gown below the breasts. The girl shuddered and closed her eyes.

"She closed her eyes, too!" cackled Christian. "But he did this!" He jerked the blade upward. The bodice parted. He laughed again. The rapier point flipped back an expanse of cloth. A conical, projecting breast of breathtaking beauty appeared. Her eyes opened. Color rushed to her face. Calmly he brushed back the other piece of cloth. The other nut brown breast appeared. Even in his madness Christian found the sight of such gorgeous femininity stirring his blood.

"Mister," said Christian to the mate, "go fetch the captain!"

The blackamoor departed willingly. The girl shivered. The gown tumbled from her shoulders and gathered at her waist. Leering like Satan himself, Christian touched one lush breast with the cold steel of the rapier.

"Kill me!" said the girl in a calm voice, "Slay me."

"No," he said, "No."

The mate returned with the captain.

"Captain," said Christian without taking his eyes from the girl, "speak honestly. Where were you bound?"

The captain named the port. Christian glared at Raquel de Goya. "You were to meet your brother there!"

"No. I came to New Spain to begin a new life."

"That is true," said the captain. "She brought her dowry."

"Have the men found it?" Christian asked the mate.

"Yes, master. Much gold. Many jewels."

"Have it taken to my cabin. Then crew this ship. We'll dock as expected and trap Don Pedro."

"Beg pardon, captain," said Jeff Coates. "Don Pedro daren't go to that port. No pirate'd dare. It's too well armed."

Christian hadn't thought of that. Then Raquel had planned to meet her brother elsewhere. Well, he could torture the information from her easily enough.

"Captain," said Jeff Coates, "I got the log here. Ship got good winds. She's a week ahead of schedule. Don Pedro won't be expecting her for a week."

"Good. We'll make a pirate port and sell the cargo. See that the captain and the crew are given provisions and boats. They can make Cuba easily."

THE men left. Christian turned to the girl. Her hands now covered her breasts—almost covered them, for her hands were small, too small. Her black hair was piled high on the head and was held in place by a scarlet comb. Her beauty disturbed him. The first revenge against Don Pedro would indeed be pleasant.

"Stand up!" he ordered. She did so. The dress threatened to fall from her arched hips. Christian smiled as she caught it.

"Let it fall!" he commanded. Her cheeks burned but she let the dress fall about her ankles. A black lace undergarment was drawn about her waist. She wore no hose. He stared at the long slenderness of her bare legs. Tiny feet were in scarlet slippers. Her ankles were thin, the calves nicely turned, knees narrow and dimpled. He liked the roundness of her thighs and the coppery brown of her shimmering flesh. She was tall and physically perfect.

Rapier point pressing the small of her naked back, Christian took her upon deck. The blackamoors shouted in glee. He saw the back of her neck redden.

Her smooth back glistened in the bright sunlight. Head high and proud she walked to the other ship and climbed to the poop deck. The half-naked negroes terrified her.

He took her to his cabin and locked her in. She was not, Christian reasoned, the type to destroy herself. He went up on deck and saw the vanquished merchantman get under way manned by blackamoors. His own ship followed. He placed Jeff Coates in command and went below.

Raquel de Goya had covered herself with a blanket. Christian poured himself a cup of rum. Then he went to her side, seized the blanket and tossed it away. She turned to face him. Her eyes were wet. But she did not cry. He took her into his arms and kissed her roughly. She did not protest. Her skin was deliciously cool. His hands slid along the suppleness of her back. He kissed her again and again. She didn't even object to his savagely tight embrace.

"You will meet the same fate your brother accorded my wife," he told her.

Her luminous eyes haunted him. She stared at him unflinchingly.

"You are the stronger," she said through stiff lips. She spoke like one doomed to eternal damnation. Christian sank to a chair. He stared in fascination at the beauty of her perfect legs. Thoughts formed and faded. He vaguely wondered if Prudence had been as courageous as Raquel de Goya. Finally he got up.

"The galley's on the deck below," he snarled at her. "Go down and cook me some food or I'll throw you to the crew."

He went out. Raquel de Goya smiled, then frowned. The bitterness of his hate disturbed her. She sighed. Never before

(Continued on page 120)

By
**ARTHUR
WALLACE**

*Lars Conrad wasn't going
to teach the logging bus-
iness to a city man. . . and
lose his girl to him, too!
But the log jam brought a
new test of treachery—as
well as of courage*



Bob's brain was reeling with black-
ness, until finally he gripped the
iron pipe. . .

Hell's River

THE news traveled fast once the ice began to break in Upper Darby Lake. It had been a late Spring and everyone in Granville was waiting for the thaw that would break the back of that glistening sheet of seven-foot solid ice.

There was reason enough for the waiting. Every able-bodied man in Granville knew the log run down Hell's

When the first crack came, a lot of men rode out to the lake just to see how long it would be before they were working with pike poles, shoving the chunky logs towards the river.

Two weeks of warm weather would do it. Then the work began. Hell's River came by its name fairly. There were times when it was a placid, quarter-



River to Burton's Mill meant money in his pocket. Upper Darby held ten thousand odd cords of pulp-wood, frozen in since the previous Fall. It took a big crew to get it moving down the river.

mile wide stream, moving along at a snail's pace. At other times it was a raging, yellow torrent, boiling like a devil's cauldron as it thundered down the valley.

Then it was tough. The logs jammed up, formed a miniature mountain, forced the river over its banks. You had to work fast to keep the water from pouring down into the gulch and sweeping away all of Granville.

Men had been killed in a Hell's River log jam. Crushed like paper dolls. It was dangerous work but the people of Granville waited for it because it paid well and made up for lean winters.

Lars Conrad came up from the mill a week after the first crack. Conrad was Walter Burton's boss logger. A big, massive-shouldered man, handsome in a dark, foreboding way, it was he who handled the run, saw to it that every piece of pulp got down to the hoppers.

Men hated him because he was hard, but respected him for it. Women dreamed of him at night, woke up trembling. There were rumors that he kept a dozen or more half-breed Indian girls up in the hills and over to Little Forks. But nobody paid much attention to it. Right now Lars Conrad was interested in Walter Burton's daughter. She was in the North country for good now after four years at college. Those four years had made quite some difference in Rhoda Burton.

Each one of them added a little maturity and the last rounded everything off. From a gangling, spindly-legged youngster to a tall, sweet-limbed woman in four years.

Lars Conrad looked at Upper Darby, heaved a heavy stone out on the ice to see whether it would break through, drove over to the Burton house.

Walter Burton was an invalid—had

been for almost two years. He spent most of his time in a wheel-chair, reading. His hair was white and his face was lined like old leather. He was on the porch when Lars Conrad drove up.

"We'll be ready to run the pulp down starting Monday," the boss logger said. "The center ice is pretty soft."

The screen door opened and Rhoda Burton came out. Her honey-colored hair was drawn back over her ears, giving her face classic lines.

"Hello, Lars," she greeted.

CONRAD'S eyes narrowed as if to conceal the sudden gleam in them. She was wearing a tweed skirt and a sweater. He could see the full swell of her breasts and the scarcely noticeable curve of her stomach. He was thinking how nice it would be when the Old Man died if he could get the mill and Rhoda Burton at the same time. The Indian girls were all right, with their firm little breasts and their supple tawny bodies, but nothing could compare to Rhoda's pink and white softness.

She leaned over her father's wheel-chair, kissed his brow. Lars held his breath watching her skirt tighten over the flare of her full hips, her breasts swing out in unfettered firmness. She straightened up again, shoulders squared, blue eyes laughing.

"I hear the ice is going out of Upper Darby, Lars," she said. "Mr. Paley at the station was telling me."

What was she doing at the railroad station? "Er—yes, it is. Should be clear by Monday." He couldn't tear his eyes away from her bosom. It was so high and round.

"That's good. I want to watch the run this year." She glanced at her watch. "I'd better be going. The train's due at 4:20."

She tripped down the steps, breasts dancing unrestrained behind her sweater, hair flying. Lars watched her pull away in a small coupe.

"I wanted to talk to you, Lars," Walter Burton said. "It's about the mill. Rhoda's taken an interest in it. She's bringing a young fellow up from the city—an engineer she met at college. Says he's smart as a whip. I'm going to let him learn the business since Rhoda's so set on it. Of course, Lars, that won't affect you. You'll still manage things."

Lars Conrad listened and said nothing. Resentment burned like smoldering fire in his heart, but there was nothing he could do about it—now. Later, maybe. He wasn't going to stand by and watch the mill ripped from under him. Not only the mill, but Rhoda. Pink and white skin . . . full, luscious breasts and curving hips.

"We'll be needing more men on the run this year, Mr. Burton," he said, ignoring the evident salve. "We cut almost ten thousand cord last Fall and the river's going to be high."

"Do as you see fit, Lars," Walter Burton said. "Now, about this young fellow coming up. I want you to take him under your wing, Lars. You know the mill from the tree down. He's liable to have funny ideas, fresh out of college."

Lars Conrad wasn't thinking of the young fellow. He was thinking of Rhoda and his thoughts were feverish. The roof of his mouth went dry as he imagined himself crushing her soft young body in his embrace.

"You'll do that, Lars, won't you?" Walter Burton queried.

"Of course, Mr. Burton." He shifted. "I'll be running along now. Be by in the morning."

From the Burton house, Lars Conrad

drove to Little Forks. He had a few drinks at the saloon, then dropped in to see one of the Indian girls. For the time being he forgot Rhoda for copper-hued charms and the thrilling heat of knowing lips. Celia had firm little apple-shaped breasts and her sleek legs were like polished copper. And she was more interested in love than in anything else in the world.

THE sun was high and bright in a cloudless sky when Rhoda led Bob Jordan to the bank of Hell's River the following morning. Free water trickled down the middle of the river but the ice was still hard-jammed against the banks.

"This is Hell's River," Rhoda said.

Bob Jordan smiled. He was a nicely set-up youngster with clean-cut features, athletically sloping shoulders and cornsilk colored hair.

"It doesn't look like it lives up to its name."

"Oh, doesn't it? Wait until the log run. When they open the sluice gates above the mill, Hell's River acts up. Last year a man was crushed to death riding the pulp down. It's awfully dangerous."

Bob drew a deep breath of the crisp air. "This is swell country, Rhoda. I hope I stay on—for more reasons than one."

She avoided looking at him, kicked at some loose pebbles with the toe of her shoe. "No reason why you shouldn't. Dad seems to like you."

"That helps." He turned suddenly, gripped her arms. "You know why I came, Rhoda. It wasn't the job. I could have stayed on at college as an instructor. It was you. These last few months have been hell. Thinking about you and dreaming about you and not being able to see you or touch you!"

Her breath quickened and she swayed

into his arms, melting against him, soft breasts and undulant figure against him, her moist, parted lips upraised for his mouth.

"Bob," she whispered.

Their embrace was an ecstasy of trembling, tense muscles and hotly racing blood. Bob's hands slipped over her back, forced the firm hills of her breasts to his chest. Mouth on mouth they clung, drunk with the heady emotion of young love, their blood pounding with all the vitality of youth's ardor.

Neither of them saw the lean, twisted-faced man who was fishing through the ice across the river and down stream. But Esar Willis saw them. He licked his thin lips. His rheumy eyes glowed avidly, burned on Rhoda and Bob. It had been a long time since a woman had looked at Esar Willis with anything but aversion. Even the Indian girls cringed from his skeleton fingers and slobbering mouth. Watching Rhoda and Bob warmed him like nothing had before. His hands trembled and his breath came in quick gasps.

LARS CONRAD lived in a company house near the mill. A woman cleaned and cooked for him, left after the supper dishes were done.

Esar Willis waited until she had gone. All afternoon and evening he had worked the juicy morsel of discovery over in his inflamed mind. Thinking of it sent hot surges of blood through his shrunken veins, quickened his pulses. When he faced Lars Conrad, he was in ecstasy.

"Seen somethin' today, Lars," he mumbled. "Thought you'd like tuh know."

The boss logger looked down at Esar Willis. "What is it?"

"Somethin' good, Lars. The simpleton's mouth drooled. 'Somethin' about Walter Burton's gal.'"

Conrad stiffened. His face went black. "Talk, you fool! What did you see?"

"Plenty, Lars. Her and a young feller on the river bank. Mushin'; kissin' an' —" He hesitated, eyes rolling. All he had seen was an embrace, but his twisted mind had conceived more.

"What else?" Conrad roared.

Esar Willis groveled. "Plenty, Lars. On the river bank, they were, mushin'. I seen him holdin' her and kissin' her. I seen—" His voice trailed off into a hushed slaving whisper as he went into details.

LARS CONRAD had some henchmen in the mill. Big, brawny Swedes who did his bidding and were not adverse to skullduggery. After hearing Esar Willis' story, he decided to rid himself of this menace as soon as possible. Nip it in the bud.

Bob came down to the mill with Rhoda a few days before the log run started. Lars took them through, explained the workings of the pulp vats, the shredders. He boiled inwardly when Bob took the mechanical explanations out of his mouth, told him things about the huge paper machines that even he didn't know. He watched Rhoda's eyes glow proudly, saw the swelling of her breasts.

"You'll be wanting to get in on the log run I suppose," Conrad said. "We don't do any felling and cutting until the Fall. The run's about the first step."

"We'll look on," Rhoda said. "I don't think Bob should take an active part. You've got to know how."

Conrad laughed. "Good thing for him to handle a pike pole. Leave it up to me." His eyes narrowed. "Right now if you've got the time I could go over the mill plans with you so you'd know the set-up."

"Then I'll run along, Bob," Rhoda said. "Plans confuse me. Lars can

drive you back. He's staying at Mrs. Pomfret's, Lars."

The boss logger nodded. "Okay." He was thinking that maybe there wouldn't be any necessity to drive this kid back.

In the mill office, Conrad pulled out a roll of blue-prints. "We've got a man on the newsprint press I'd like you to have a talk with. He knows them cold. I'll get him."

Conrad was out of the office for five



Svenson seemed to lose balance; then he lurched into Bob, sent him flying.

minutes. "Svenson's over to his house," he said on returning. "Maybe you'd better hop over and see him. Take these prints. I'd go with you but I've got to start rounding up men for the run." He pointed to a row of company shacks across the road. "The third house from the left."

Bob knocked at the cottage door. It was ajar. He heard a raucous voice cursing, the sound of an open hand striking flesh, a high-pitched scream. He knocked again. The door swung open. Ahead of him was a roughly furnished living room, beyond that a short hall leading to a kitchen. A young, tow-headed girl was cringing on the kitchen floor while a huge hulk of a bull-necked man towered over her, kicking her body and whipping his ham-like hand across her face.

The blood rushed up to Bob's head, pounded at his temples. The girl looked young—very young. Her cheap cotton dress was ripped across the front, baring her childish breasts. A vicious slap marked the whiteness of her face and shoulders with suffused blood.

Bob stepped into the house. "Mr. Svenson!" he called.

The Swede spun around, stood like a giant ape, his long arms dangling, his legs widespread. "What you wan'?" he bellowed.

Bob advanced. "I came to see you about the mill. Mr. Conrad said—"

"Get out!" Svenson roared.

The girl on the floor tried to dart between the Swede's legs, escape to the hall, but he caught her, jerked her to her feet, smashed his hand against her cheek. She screamed, fell to the floor.

Bob dropped the roll of blue prints, lunged at the Swede. For all his bulk, Svenson was agile. He side-stepped, jammed a fist through Bob's guard,

caught the younger, lighter man on the jaw.

The punch glanced off. If it had struck solid it would have broken Bob's jaw. As it was, the force of the blow knocked him against the wall, took his breath away. He stood there for a time-less moment, gasping. He saw murder in Svenson's glittering pig eyes. If the hulking giant ever got his hands on Bob's throat it would be the end. Those steel-hard fingers could crush life away in a second.

Svenson growled as he shot forward. Bob ducked, arched a fist into the Swede's stomach. It had all the force of his body behind it, but his knuckles bounced off the drum of muscle. He tried to squirm away from the wall but Svenson's massive body pinned him against it.

Down they went, Bob's face buried in the stifling, sweat-damp hair of the Swede's chest. Again and again he jabbed Svenson's chin, drew blood from his nose. But he knew the odds were against him. Unless something happened—!

Something did happen. Something that chilled the blood in his veins. Svenson jerked a short length of iron pipe from his pocket. It hung above Bob for an instant, swung down at his head. Exerting superhuman strength, he jerked aside. The pipe hit the floor, bounced out of Svenson's hand. His hand shot to retrieve it, but Bob's reflexes worked faster. His fingers gripped the cold iron. Svenson's face, black with fury, loomed above him.

Crack! The iron pipe hit the Swede's temple. His head shot back. *Crack!* Metal against bone. Svenson's muscles relaxed. His eyes rolled up. He swayed back on his haunches, crumpled.

LARS CONRAD was properly concerned when Bob reported back to

the office. "Of course, you've got to understand these Hunkies, Jordan. They don't like people interfering in their private business."

"But he was beating the girl! Would you stand by and watch a brute of a man beat a woman?"

Conrad shrugged. "This is the North country, Jordan." He was thinking that he'd better take it easy from now on. This kid wasn't so soft.

Upper Darby opened up the following day. In twenty-four hours the ice was gone and the lake boasted a blanket of yard-long logs. Lars Conrad stopped at the Burton's the morning he was starting the run. Walter Burton was still asleep in his room, but Rhoda was up. She came out on the porch wearing shorts and a jersey—her gym outfit at college.

For a moment Conrad was spellbound. He looked at her white thighs, at the swell of her hips, at her twin breasts bulging at the top of the jersey. She was standing on the top step, above him. The shorts had wide legs. Conrad choked up, seeing the smoothness of her thighs.

"You—you said you wanted to see the run," he stuttered. "Thought I'd stop by and pick you up."

She smiled. "Thanks, Lars. I'll get a coat." She turned at the door. "What about Bob—Mr. Jordan?"

"I arranged for one of the men to take him down. He's at the lake by now."

Upper Darby was three miles from Granville through rough country and a mean dirt road, little traveled. It wasn't much of a swimming lake because of leeches. Esar Willis and a few boys were the only ones who fished it for bullheads.

Conrad had timed his coming so that all the cars and wagons carrying the men to the lake had already gone over the

road. He stopped the car a mile from Upper Darby, pulled up the emergency brake, switched off the ignition.

"What's the matter?" Rhoda queried.

Conrad turned towards her. Her coat was open. His eyes licked feverishly over her scantily clad form, stared hungrily at the unaccustomed sight of the girl's sleek white thighs.

"This is the first chance I've had to get you alone, Rhoda." Conrad's breathing was heavy. "I—I wanted to tell you I'm crazy about you."

Rhoda laughed. "Don't be silly, Lars. Let's get to the lake." She reached out to turn the ignition key. His fingers fastened on her wrist, jerked her towards him. One arm circled her waist.

"I mean it!" he said hoarsely, his breath hot on her throat.

Rhoda screamed, beat her tiny fists against his chest. Conrad crushed her savagely, fastened his mouth on her lips. His free hand slid up her back. The curved softness of her moulded to him by his fierce strength, maddened him. Under that jersey her skin would be as white and smooth as it was on her legs.

"Lars!" Rhoda's voice was brittle. "Let me go!"

He released her, sat back. Her breasts were heaving and her cheeks were flushed.

"I'm sorry," he mumbled. "I—I forgot myself."

They were both silent until they reached the lake. Then it was Conrad who spoke. Things had to be smoothed over. He was a fool for trying to rush matters.

"I said I was sorry, Rhoda. You believe me, don't you?"

She stepped out of the car. "Let's not discuss it, Lars."

Bob was at the shore front together with a dozen other men, poling logs out

to the center of the lake where the surface current carried them to the outlet.

He greeted Rhoda with a big smile, leaned on his pike pole. "This is great. I can't wait until we work on the river." He looked at her queerly. There were still pink spots of color in her cheeks. "What's the matter? Something happen?" He was afraid she had heard about the incident with Svenson.

"Er—no, nothing's happened. I'm glad you like it." She touched his arm. "You'll stop by tonight, won't you?"

He grinned. "Sure thing."

THEY were alone on the porch hammock that evening. The air was balmy, sweet with all the odors of Spring. "Bob."

"Yes, darling."

"I don't want you to work on the river."

His fingers touched her cheek, urged her warm body up close to his. "Why not?"

In the darkness he couldn't see her lips working. "I—I just don't."

"Isn't that silly and illogical?"

"Maybe it is, but—" She quivered, threw her arms about his neck. "I love you so, Bob! Hold me! Hold me tight!"

His right hand pressed her to him, feeling through the thin jersey, the satin smoothness of her shoulders. Rhoda quivered at his touch, clung to him, her breasts throbbing against his chest. She leaned back, drawing him with her, offered the moist nectar of her lips.

THE pulp was in Hell's River next morning, moving slowly towards the dam a mile downstream. Bob worked side by side with Harvey Granger, a big, rangy farmer. Harvey had spent one year at the University, knew a little about engineering. He and Bob talked as they

polled the chunky logs away from the bank.

Lars Conrad watched Bob closely. He knew he had made a mistake with Rhoda Burton, but that could be rectified. This kid had to be gotten out of the way.

Hell's River was slow and sluggish but water was pouring down from the hills. In a day or two Hell's River would act up. Conrad pictured a log jam with young Jordan on it. All he had to do then would be to open the dam sluice gates. There was a two hundred foot drop to the lagoon above the mill.

It rained that night. Conrad lay awake listening to the downpour. He could see the river, yellow and boiling with Jordan riding the pulp to his death. The vision faded and he saw Rhoda, her ripe breasts out-thrust, her white legs gleaming.

Morning found Hell's River just as Conrad had pictured it. A raging, foaming torrent, thundering as it swept down the valley. When the outlet gate at Upper Darby was opened, pulp poured through, was swept along like matchsticks.

Conrad picked six men, led them to a point a half mile above the dam. Bob and Harvey Granger were among them. Already the pulp was beginning to pile up. Harvey Granger and another man went out on it, broke the jam, skipped back to shore on the rolling logs.

"Don't let it jam up here," Conrad said. "Three of you stay on each side.

"It's comin' through too fast," Granger said.

Lars Conrad snarled. "Nobody asked you. Attend to your business." He started upstream.

When he was out of earshot, Granger spoke: "He's askin' for trouble. The river's bad today. That pulp'll jam sure as hell."

ing it away from the banks. For the first time Bob noticed that one of the three men across the river was the big Swede, Svenson. A queer, prickly sensation ran up his spine, became ice at the



"I said I was sorry. . . . Don't you believe me?" Lars asked. She shrank away. "We won't discuss it. Let me go!"

The third man on Bob's side of the river nodded. Bob watched the raging torrent. It was fascinating, thrilling. The rumble of the wood sounded like far-off thunder. Up-stream, men were poll-

base of his skull.

A small jam started, developed before it could be broken. Wood piled up until the river was choked. Granger started out but the mountain of pulp shifted, al-

most caught him. Lars Conrad came down on the run, shouting.

"Break that! Damn it, can't you take orders!" He was raging. "Granger, Silsby! Go downstream!" He cupped his hands, shouted above the roar of the river, the thunder of the wood smashing up against the jam. "Brewer! Tanner! Get downstream! Out on the jam, Svenson!" He motioned to Bob. "Get out there and pry it apart!"

Bob gripped his pike pole, started forward. He had seen Harvey Granger balance himself on the rolling logs. They were thicker now, jam-packed. A hand gripped his arm, pulled him back. It was Granger.

"You can't send him out there!" he shouted. "It's murder!"

Conrad's face went black. "Damn you!" he screamed. "Get downstream."

Granger backed up. Bob could hear his breath hissing through his nostrils. He grinned at the big farmer.

"I'll be all right."

SVENSON was already out in mid-stream, working his pole into the jam. As the wood came down behind him he rose higher and higher above the surface of the river. Bob drew a deep breath, stepped off the bank. The footing was perilously uneven, but fortunately, the logs were piled one on the other. Slowly, tortuously he maneuvered out. Harvey Granger was watching him from a spot a hundred yards downstream.

He reached mid-stream, struck the iron hook of his pole into the wall of pulp, tried to pry it apart. Logs cracked against his ankles, sent knife-like pains up his legs. Svenson was working beside him, so close they could almost touch. Bob watched him, repeated his motions with the pike pole. Sweating minutes went by. Suddenly, the jam

broke. Granger shouted from the bank but all Bob heard was the sound of his voice. He felt the floor of pulp sliding out from under him. Svenson turned, faced him. For an instant Bob saw the Swede's eyes. They glowed with the same murder lust he had seen once before.

Svenson lurched, seemed to lose his balance. He crashed into Bob, sent him flying. In that hideous second before Bob struck the floating pulp, broke through to the raging, ice-cold water, he realized he had been marked for crushing death.

He came up, cracking his head against a log. It stunned him. With the jam broken, the river and its cargo of wood was rushing down at a mad, swirling pace. A log smashed end first into Bob's back, sent a hell of pain through his frozen body. He sucked in air, tried frantically to swim towards the bank. The current was too strong. It carried him downstream just as it carried the wood, whirling him, spinning him.

Rhoda was driving along the river road when she heard Harvey Granger's warning shout. Her foot hit the gas pedal. The light coupe shot forward, screamed to a stop where Lars Conrad, Granger and Silsby were standing, helpless.

"What's happened?" she screamed.

"Jordan," Conrad shouted. "Fell through!"

It was as though fingers of ice had ripped her heart out. She was stunned. Harvey Granger's voice broke the ghastly spell.

"The sluice gates! They're open! He'll go over the dam!"

He jumped on the running board. "Drive to the dam, Miss Burton! Fast as you can!"

Lars Conrad leaped on the other run-

ning board while the car was moving. Rhoda gave it all it had, gripping the wheel with cold fingers. She knew how slim the chances were. Even if the gates were closed, the jamming pulp would crush him. All that if he wasn't drowned by now.

Conrad ran into the power house when they reached the dam. Rhoda watched the gates with eyes that were stark with horror. They didn't move. Pulp was pouring over the falls, thundering as it hit the big lagoon two hundred feet below. Every second seemed like a century.

Harvey Granger started down the bank. "I'll go out!" he shouted. "Tell Conrad to—" His voice was lost in the roaring.

Conrad dashed out of the power house. "Line's down!" he panted. "No juice!"

Something snapped in Rhoda's mind. The blood in her veins turned to ice. "Get out on the dam!" she cried. "Maybe you can catch him!"

Harvey Granger was moving slowly out to the middle of the river, walking upstream to counteract the flow, balancing himself with his pike pole. The chances were a 100-1 against his spotting Bob.

Conrad hesitated, gripped his pike pole. There was no harm in going out on the dam. In case anything came up later on he could always say he did his best. Men had gone to their deaths in Hell's River before. It was nothing new.

He went up the iron ladder to the concrete top, crawled out to the open sluice gate. To make it look better he straddled the gate top, leaned far over as though intent on the river beneath, his pike pole swinging.

Rhoda counted the seconds by the mad beat of her heart. She didn't want to

look for fear she might see his tawny head bobbing out of reach, his arms waving frantically. Suddenly she stiffened. Something flashed through her mind. Maybe! Maybe!

She turned, ran to the power house. The contact switch was open. She gripped it with both hands, threw it. There was a flash of light—blue light. A dynamo hummed. She rushed outside. *The gates were closing!* Lars Conrad had lied! There *was* power.

A GHASTLY scream knifed through the air, rose above the thunder of the pulp. Rhoda saw a body hurtle over the dam, turn like a sawdust dummy and drop into the log-packed lagoon. Lars Conrad, clinging to the sluice gate had been jarred loose when it moved!

Down on the river bank, Rhoda kept her eyes glued on Harvey Granger. He had solid footing now that the gates were closed and the wood was jamming. She dropped to her knees, prayed silently, fervently.

"Please," she whispered. "Please spare him!"

She tensed as she saw Harvey Granger lurch forward and strike with his pike pole. Could it be possible? Could it? *It was!* The iron hook came up caught in the collar of Bob's suede jacket!

Rhoda raised her eyes to the blue heavens. "Let him be alive!" she gasped.

He was alive. Weak, battered, but alive. On the river bank, Rhoda pressed her palms to his cold cheeks, kissed his blue lips, brought warmth back to them. Bob opened his eyes, smiled up at her.

Hell's River roared. As though in anger. As though it had been cheated of another victim.



HOP Cargo

• A JOHNNIE PIPER STORY •



By ROBERT LESLIE BELLEM

An SOS sends the camera guy into action. It's routine stuff, photographing a sinking vessel from an airplane—until Johnnie discovers there's dynamite aboard! Dynamite, in the shape of a human beast and a helpless, altogether lovely girl!

THE HIRED pilot closed his throttles, kicked his rudder. The chartered Douglas amphibian plane lost altitude in a long spiral.

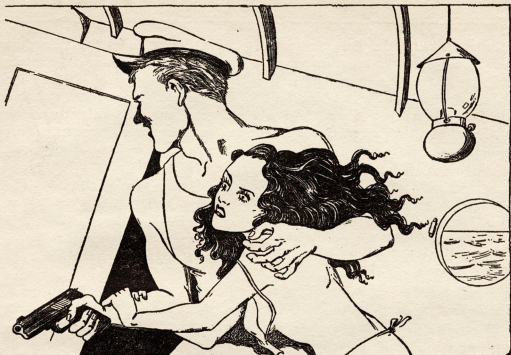
Back in the cabin sat Johnnie Piper, camera guy for World Newsreel. He stared down at the smooth Atlantic two hundred feet below, where a foundering trawler wallowed.

Less than an hour before, Johnnie had drawn this assignment. He had en-

gaged a plane, taken off from Floyd Bennett Field to grind out footage of the sinking vessel fifty miles off the South Jersey shore. The trawler's SOS had put him into action. Now he had reached the scene ahead of rescuing Coast Guard cutters.

Directly below, the disabled craft rolled heavily. Her stern was almost awash; her meager crew of four men huddled at the bow.





The girl's attacker was dragging her toward the bridge. She fought like a wildcat.

Johnnie unshipped his portable Bell & Howell; adjusted the lens. He poked it through a window, focused on the sinking boat, fingered the mechanism release.

His plane dropped lower. There was no sound except the wind whistling through struts and the lazy *chock-a-chug* of idling motors. Then, suddenly, the stillness was split by two sharp reports.

"The hell—!" Johnnie whispered. He knew the sound of an automatic when he heard it. And on the heels of the two shots, there came a thin, high scream—a woman's cry from aboard the trawler.

Piper slammed his camera back into its case slung to his shoulder; plunger forward to the closed compartment that housed his pilot. He jerked the door open. "Set this crate down, buddy!" he rasped. "I'm going aboard!"

The pilot nodded; made a flat landing in a flurry of spray. He taxied close to



the trawler's side, where a Jacob's ladder dangled.

Johnnie scrambled out along a wing, reached the ladder. He grabbed it as the distance suddenly widened between plane and boat. The wing slipped out

from under him as the pilot pulled away to prevent damaging contact against steel hull. Then the camera guy went hand over hand to the trawler's rail; vaulted to the deck.

He pelted toward the bridge. The feminine scream sounded again. He climbed the iron ladder to the bridge proper. Then he tensed.

JUST inside the captain's cabin, a man lay sprawled. There were two bullet-holes through his forehead; the back of his skull was blasted away. His uniform cap had rolled aside. In faded letters it bore the insignia: "*Captain.*"

Beyond the corpse, a brunette girl was struggling in a man's arms. She was fighting like a wildcat.

She was quite young, gorgeously pretty. Her blouse had been ripped to tatters that hung at her waist, and her black hair was tumbled about her shoulders; across one of them, as she tried to jerk away, the man's nail clawed a jagged streak. She whimpered a little; her struggles weakened, but the futile twisting of her slender, nubile form still imparted a frantic tremor to her silk-covered breasts. The torn skirt whipped above her knees, giving Johnnie an instant's glimpse of her ivory-skinned thigh.

Her attacker was huge, ape-like. He pinioned her wrists, started dragging her toward the bridge.

At the same instant, she saw Johnnie Piper. "Help me—!" she shrieked. "This man set off a bomb in the hold, shot my father—"

Johnnie got set; stormed forward. The big man spotted him; released the girl. "Where the hell did you come from?" he roared. He jerked an automatic from his pocket. "I'll teach ye to butt in—"

The camera guy swerved as the gun

vomited flame. He felt the sting of hot gases blasting past his cheek. The slug missed him. He closed in fast.

He bashed rights and lefts at his adversary's jaw. The man took three punches without a tremor; tried to bring up his automatic into firing-position again.

The brunette fastened herself to his gun-wrist, spoiled his aim. Johnnie came in swinging. Then Fate dealt him a joker from the bottom of the pack. He tripped over the slain captain on the floor; plunged sickeningly against a bulkhead. His temple cracked against the ironwork. He sagged and went down, stunned.

Dully he saw the gunman grabbing the girl. A calloused palm splatted viciously against her face. She went limp.

Lifting her, the thug raced from the cabin.

Through pain-blunted ears, Johnnie heard another shot from the bridge; heard the gunman yell: "Back to the bow, ye scum—all of ye!" Then the clatter of heavy feet going down the companionway.

Drunkenly Johnnie regained his feet, staggered out to the bridge. His throat tightened.

His chartered plane had drifted close to the trawler once more. And now the ape-like man was carrying the girl over the side; down the ladder. He leaped with her to the plane's staunch wing.

From the amphibian's forward hatch, the pilot's head appeared. "Hey—!" he yelled in surprise.

The gunman took quick aim, fired. The pilot's face vanished in a gory welter.

The sheer brutality of that murder brought black anger to Johnnie Piper's heart. "The hell!" he gasped. He plung-

ed down to the deck; raced for the rail.

The killer had already dropped the girl inside the main cabin of the Douglas. Now he scrambled down into the pilot's compartment. Twin radial motors burst into sudden full-throated roar as throttles were jerked wide.

The nearest wing was pulling away from the trawler's hull. A widening gap of green water showed. Johnnie went over the rail, down the ladder. He took a long chance, launched himself into space. He landed prone on the wing-surface.

THE amphib was gaining momentum, hopping the oily swells like a skimmed stone. The slip-stream whipped at the camera guy, plucked at him with invisible fingers that tried to tear him loose, send him plunging into the sea. He clung grimly; inched his way toward the fuselage.

He realized that the murderer was a skilled flyer; was handling the Douglas with practised ease. But because the fellow was not fully familiar with this particular amphib's controls, he didn't know that anybody had landed on the wing. He didn't look back; he merely jiggled the ailerons to compensate for the slight, unbalanced heaviness on that side.

Fighting every inch of the way, the camera guy finally reached the hatchway into the main cabin. The plane bounced across the wave-tops rocking as its elevators tilted. Just as Johnnie jerked the hatch open and tumbled into the cabin, the Douglas soared upward.

Panting, spent, Piper sprawled on the floor. Up forward, the door to the pilot's compartment was closed. The murderer was consequently still unaware of his presence.

Savagely he shook his head to clear

away the cobwebs. What the hell was it all about? Why had the ape-like man killed the trawler's captain, abducted the girl? Why had he shot Johnnie's hired pilot, stolen the plane?

None of it seemed to make sense . . . Then his gaze fell on the supine form of the brunette girl.

She was lying in the aisle just ahead. Her eyes were closed, her features death-pale. The hem of her skirt had come up past her knees, revealing satiny flesh and a hint of lacy step-ins. Her brassiere was torn and her tattered blouse still left her almost bare above the waist. Her breasts were firm, ivory mounds bulging outward through ripped silk.

Johnnie went to his knees alongside her. His palm pressed against her heart. Relief flooded him as he felt it beating, slowly and unevenly. She wasn't dead. She was just unconscious.

Her skin was like warm satin to his touch; her flesh firmly yielding. A tingle raced through him. She was pathetically helpless and young . . . but deliciously feminine. . . .

He chafed her wrists. Meanwhile, judging from the pressure against his eardrums, he knew that the murderer was hurling the plane upward into the sky, gaining every foot of altitude he could squeeze out of the thundering radials.

After a long time, the girl's eyes opened. She stared at Johnnie; started to scream.

His palm went over her mouth. He lowered his lips to her ear. "Sh-h-h!" he whispered sharply over the throbbing drone of the motors. "Don't yell! I want to help you—!"

Slowly the fright died from her eyes; was replaced by a helpless misery. "I—I remember you—n-now . . ."

Then, unexpectedly, she started to cry.

HER sobs were dry convulsions that shook her slender body; the more painful because no tears came. She put her arms around the camera guy's neck; clung to him thrillingly.

He was filled with a surging desire to protect her . . . and to caress her. She was so lost in grief that she seemed not to realize that her blouse was torn, her lovely white breasts almost wholly exposed. Johnnie could see each pouting hillock nestling in the torn silk of the brassiere she wore; could see the smooth, enticing valley between them . . . On sudden chivalrous impulse he pulled the torn blouse over her revealed charms. The back of his hand brushed resilient flesh; his blood raced through his veins at the intimate contact.

He said: "My name's Johnnie Piper. I'm a newsreel cameraman. What happened? Who's the guy up front? What's this all about?"

She choked back her sobs, "I—I'm Glory Whitney," she answered brokenly. "My f-father was captain of the trawler. Cragin was our new mate; we signed him on in New York yesterday—"

"Cragin's the lug with the automatic?"

"Y-yes. About two hours ago an explosion blew out our port bunker. Daddy rushed below; saw Cragin with an electric detonator. . . ."

Johnnie growled: "But why the devil would this Cragin guy blow up your father's boat?"

"I d-don't know. Daddy captured him with a revolver; took him to the cabin and locked him up. We sent out an SOS; waited for help to come. When your plane circled over us, Daddy thought you were Coast Guard men. He

went in to get Cragin to turn him over to you when you landed. B-but Cragin must have f-found another gun in the cabin. When daddy opened the door, Cragin . . . killed him."

"Then what happened?"

"I—I heard the shots; rushed in from the bridge. I saw the gun in Cragin's hand; saw my f-father on the floor. I screamed. Cragin jumped at me, grabbed me. That's when you came in. I—I guess I fainted when Cragin hit me . . ."

Johnnie nodded. Some of the mystery was beginning to clear. For some unknown reason, Cragin had bombed the trawler. He had probably hoped to get away with it without being detected. He had figured on being rescued from the sinking vessel along with the rest of the crew, without being suspected of having set off the explosive.

But his plans miscarried. Captain Whitney had caught him red-handed; locked him up. Then, through a port-hole, Cragin must have seen the arrival of the plane. Being a flyer, he had seen a chance to make his get-away. So he had killed the captain—and abducted the girl who witnessed the murder.

Everything was fairly obvious—except Cragin's original purpose in bombing the trawler. Johnnie couldn't get that part of it. Puzzled, he stood up; peered out through a window.

FAR below, he saw the serrated coastline of South Jersey looming in the violet dusk, marked by a fringe of white surf like icing around the edges of a broken cake. The plane was beginning to nose downward under checked motors. Evidently Cragin intended landing on the surface of one of the innumerable coves and hidden bays that marked this deserted section of the shore. Al-



He turned from the girl. "You guys take the bozo out an' drill him. I'll take care of the dame."

most directly below, a yacht ploughed out to sea, like a child's toy.

A scowl crossed Johnnie's face. The minute Cragin set the ship down, he would discover the camera guy's presence in the main cabin with the girl. Then hell would pop. Johnnie was unarmed; the killer had an automatic. Not a pleasant prospect!

Then, abruptly, Johnnie got a wild idea. If he could get the drop on Cragin before they landed—

Fists clenched, he took a step toward the closed door of the pilot's compartment. Glory Whitney grabbed at him. "Wh-what are you going to do?"

"Cragin shoved that gat into his left-hand coat pocket," he answered tersely. "I'm going to grab it by surprise. Then I can make him do whatever I tell him."

"No—no!" she wailed faintly. "He might put up a fight—the plane might fall—"

"It's our best bet," Johnnie said grim-

ly. "I'm going to have a try at it."

She clutched his shoulders, melted against him. Her whole body trembled with fear. "No! Stay here with me! I—I won't let you go!" The blouse Johnnie had readjusted slipped again, her breasts pouted into challenging view. She wrapped her arms around Johnnie's neck, clung to him almost frantically.

Supercharged heat danced through his arteries at her nearness. Her undulant body filled him with darting quivers of sensation. Her breasts moulded warmly upon his chest. Her lips were parted close to his mouth.

Automatically his arms embraced her, tightened about her seductive contours. He kissed her.

He could feel the fluttering warmth of her breath; the moist, velvet texture of her ardent lips. She strained herself against him. "D-don't leave me . . . !" she gasped.

For the moment, he forgot the danger of their situation; forgot everything except this girl whose sinuous touch and sweet, persuasive kiss thrilled his sinews. Looking down, he could see the pulsing throb of her glorious breasts as those enchanting mounds were squeezed almost out of her torn brassiere. His mouth wandered to the hollow of her throat, lingered there . . .

Her arms tightened convulsively about his neck; she closed her eyes . . . moaned softly.

THEN Johnnie came to his senses. This wouldn't do! The girl was just acting a part; trying to keep him from coming to grips with Cragin while the plane was still in the air. She was afraid of the possible consequences; afraid the amphibian would crash. So she was trying to hold the camera guy the only way she knew how . . .

He released her, pushed her gently aside. "Nix, sweetness. We're in a damned bad jam—and if we don't get out of it now, we never will." He eluded her frantic grasp; crept toward the closed front compartment.

He gained it; drew a deep breath. Then he yanked the door open, sprang upward.

Something rolled against his feet, almost upset him. It was the corpse of the murdered pilot.

Johnnie swerved. Cragin saw him; writhed around in startled fury. "You damned—!" His hands left the wheel.

The plane lurched, side-slipped. Piper's hand plunged into the killer's coat pocket, closed around the butt of Cragin's automatic. He yanked it out, jammed the muzzle into the murderer's side. "Grab those controls!"

Cragin paled; laid hold of the wheel. He righted the Douglas, leveled it off. His huge shoulders shook with raging fury.

Johnnie said: "Okay, rat. Try any tricks and I'll blast you. Head north. Floyd Bennett Field!"

Unnoticed, Cragin's left sleeve dropped over the throttles in their slots alongside him. A flick of the cuff, and the port motor began to sputter, miss, then the starboard radial's full-throated roar faded into starved popping. The ship lost headway, almost stalled.

Cragin shouted: "Out of gas—or the line's plugged! I've got to set us down right now, wise guy! Like it or lump it!"

Johnnie whispered: "The hell!" Things were breaking all wrong. Cragin would have to make a dead-stick landing. One mistake, and the amphibian would smash its guts out on the sea's surface. They'd all drown like trapped rats!

But Cragin knew his stuff. He nosed the ship over to maintain flying speed; went into a long dive. A small, land-locked inlet loomed below. The dusk-hazed sea seemed to be leaping upward at them.

At the last second, Cragin leveled off; squatted the plane down smoothly on the inlet's glassy surface. There was a flurry of spray, a momentary uncertainty—and then the Douglas was drifting shoreward.

AS IF from nowhere, a power-boat suddenly came knifing out from the wooded harbor; thumped across the cove. Johnnie heard a spine-chilling *br-r-p-p-tat-tat-tat* as a Tommy-gun cut loose from the bow of the launch. A series of jagged holes smashed along the safety-glass of the plane's forward compartment. For some unknown reason, the launch was attacking!

The camera guy leaped to the hatch directly above him. "Hey, you damned fools—!" he yelled.

He paid for that. Plenty! The instant his eyes left Cragin, the murderer went into action. A fist like a steel piston bashed into Piper's midriff, doubled him over in agony. He felt the automatic being wrenched out of his grasp. Another smashing blow took him on the jaw. He reeled.

Cragin snarled: "Now who's on top, wise guy?" and leaped past him.

Gasping, Johnnie saw the killer jump for the overhead hatch; heard him belching: "Lay off, you lugs! It's me—Cragin!"

The machine-gunning stopped. The power-boat's exhaust became a low purr. The sleek craft arrowed up against the amphibian's hull. Cragin roared: "Come aboard, you guys. I got a couple people to take care of!"

From the main cabin of the Douglas, Glory Whitney screamed as two men piled in, seized her, dragged her to the bobbing launch.

Dizzily, Johnnie tried to spring to her aid. Cragin lunged at him, belted him across the skull with the automatic. The camera guy's knees turned to vegetable soup, went out from under him. He felt himself being tossed into the power-boat; felt the launch's powerful motor being gunned. In another instant the speed-boat headed toward shore as night descended.

Over the roaring exhaust, Piper heard Cragin saying: "Did you two guys get the stuff landed okay?"

Back came the answer from one of the other men. "Yeah. It worked out just the way you figgered. That damn' Coast Guard cutter was watchin' the yacht all the time. But when the trawler's SOS came through, the cutter pulled its hook and started to the rescue. So we was clear to unload the hop off the yacht with nobody interferin'. The yacht just pulled out a while ago. We got the cans o' stuff stashed in the cabin, inshore."

AS he listened, Johnnie began to understand everything. He had stumbled into a dope-smuggling plot!

Cragin was evidently the brain of a narcotic ring. This part of the Jersey coast was a likely spot for the landing of contraband narcotics. But an alert patrol was maintained by the Coast Guard to keep all suspected ships under strict surveillance.

Johnnie remembered seeing a yacht heading out toward open water, a while back. It had been flying a foreign flag. It was probably the dope-running yacht just mentioned by Cragin's henchman.

The whole thing was clear. Under

the law, a Coast Guard cutter may not board or search any ship of foreign registry outside territorial waters. As long as a suspected vessel remains outside the twelve-mile limit, the Coast Guard can take no action; can only stick like glue to the suspected ship, keep a watchful eye on it.

In many cases this bulldog surveillance lasts many days—until the contraband vessel finally gives up in disgust and heads back to its home port. For the dope-runners to cross the twelve-mile line with a cutter in the offing would mean search, seizure.

There is only one thing that can ever draw a cutter away from its quarry; an SOS from a ship in distress. Under the regulations, the Coast Guard must drop everything else to answer such a wireless plea for aid. Every cutter in the region must go to the rescue, regardless of consequences.

Johnnie Piper knew all this. So he could easily reconstruct what had happened. That dope-running yacht must have been trying to land its hop cargo for several days. But it had been unable to come inside the twelve-mile limit because of the presence of a watching Coast Guard cutter.

So then Cragin had pulled a smart stunt. Driving up to New York, he had shipped out as mate on a south-bound trawler. At the proper spot, he had bombed the vessel to lure all cutters offshore—including the one that watched the contraband yacht. The trawler's SOS would pull the Coast Guard watchdogs out of the way, leaving the yacht free to land its illicit cargo without molestation.

Cragin had figured to explode his dynamite without being caught. Then he would have been rescued from the sinking boat without being suspected.

Right now, he was saying: "Yeah. The damn trawler captain caught me with the detonator. Then—of all the fool luck—this wise guy shows up with a plane! So I bump the captain, grab the plane for a get-away. The captain's daughter seen me croak her old man, so I brought her along. We gotta close her face so she won't talk. But first maybe we'll have some fun with her . . ."

Johnnie writhed in impotent rage. The girl's slender form huddled close to him in the hull of the launch. He could feel the tremor of terror that shook her. She knew what her captors were planning for her . . .

So did the camera guy. In the darkness, he slipped an arm about her trembling form, encountered soft, lovely flesh that yielded thrillingly to his reassuring caress. She sobbed, deep in her throat; nestled apprehensively close to him.

Piper's brain raced desperately. He had to do something to save her—and himself, too. He now knew too much about the gang for them to let him go on living. But the situation looked pretty damned bleak.

THE launch scraped sandy shore. Hard hands grabbed at Johnnie, yanked him upright, propelled him toward a shack in the scrub-oak undergrowth. A dim kerosene lamp flickered inside.

There was a gun-muzzle jammed against his kidneys. He didn't dare take a chance of making a dash for the woods. One false step, and a slug would bore through his spine. He balled his fists helplessly; staggered into the barren, cheerless shack.

Cragin grinned evilly; faced his two underlings. "You guys take this bozo out an' drill him. While you're puttin' the blast to him, I'll stay here with



As he yanked the door to the plane's cabin open, the corpse of the murdered pilot fell at his feet.

the dame. When you come back you can match dimes for her." He chuckled. "You better stay out long enough to dig a grave. We don't want no dead bodies hangin' around."

A scream choked in Glory Whitney's throat. She turned, started to race for the door.

Cragin leaped, blocked her path. His arms wrapped around her. He snatched at her already torn blouse, ripped it completely away. She crouched, tried to cover her half exposed breasts with

her arms. Cragin punched her wrists downward, hooked a steel-thewed arm about her waist. "Get goin', you lugs! Take that guy out an' burn him down. I'll take care o' the dame all right!" he laughed. Then he fastened his thick lips upon the girl's mouth; crushing her writhing figure against him.

Frantically, she tried to struggle free. But a vicious jerk at her wrists brought her struggling to her knees.

Johnnie Piper said: "The hell!" and lunged out. But Cragin's two buddies

grappled him, overpowered him; carried him into outer darkness. Back in the shack he could hear the brunette girl's despairing, hopeless protests, her whimpering moans of pain . . .

One of the camera guy's captors said: "I don't feel like diggin' no hole in the ground. Let's take this louse out past the reef, drill him an' toss him to the fish, huh?"

"Yeah. Good idea."

Johnnie was thrown into the speedboat. His two executioners piled in after him, kept him covered with their automatics. In the darkness, the engine throbbed into life. The knife-like prow of the launch sliced the black water, headed out toward the open sea.

Johnnie's throat was dry, constricted. He'd been in tight jams before; but not this tight. He had to do something—fast. But what?

And then it came to him.

HE WAS lying close to the engine. Slowly, cautiously, he opened his camera-case; unshipped his Bell & Howell. Then he worked the empty case off his shoulder until the strap hung free.

Thus far, his furtive movements hadn't been noticed. Now for his big chance! He dangled the camera-case strap over the droning motor. For a moment, nothing happened. Then the thin leather strap got tangled in pulsing rocker-arms. The engine coughed, missed, sputtered.

Swearing, one of Johnnie's captors leaned over the motor to see what was wrong. The camera guy hurled his Bell & Howell full at the smuggler's skull.

The lens-turret smashed against bone with crushing force. The man groaned, sagged over the engine. His face smacked down against working parts; was

chewed to a gory, frying pulp by hot, chattering machinery . . .

But the second smuggler was still on the job. He saw his partner go down. He yanked his automatic up; aimed at Johnnie Piper's belly. He squeezed the trigger.

Johnnie threw himself forward as the launch rocked. A slug tore past his ribs. He bashed into the fellow's knees.

The thug lost his balance, went overboard.

Scrambling, slipping, Johnnie lurched to the abandoned tiller of the speedboat. Even though the motor was missing badly at that time, the craft still had plenty of speed. Piper saw his late adversary bobbing in the water, thrashing the surface. A vicious twist of the tiller, and Piper had the launch swinging in a tight circle. He straightened it out—and aimed the knife-sharp prow at the swimming man.

The smuggler screamed wetly. There came a dull impact of copper-sheathed mahogany against human flesh and bone. A flurry of churned water. Then a dead face sinking, sinking . . .

Grimly Johnnie headed for shore. He beached the launch, went sprinting toward the shack. He heard a dull, weary sobbing inside. He started to smash the door open—

Cragin's voice roared through the timber. "Who is it—Dirk or Travis?"

The camera guy tensed. Suddenly he remembered that he was unarmed; that Cragin had an automatic. He cursed himself for not having taken a gun from one of the other thugs he had slain. But it was too late to think about that now. Cragin had heard him outside the door. And he'd be no match for the killer if there was gun-play . . .

There was only one way out. He must lure Cragin into hand-to-hand com-

bat; give him no chance to use his automatic!

Tight-lipped, Johnnie lowered his voice to a disguising growl. "It's me—Dirk," he lied through the door. "I matched Travis for the jane, an' he lost."

Cragin's chuckle filtered through. "Okay. C'mon in."

The door opened; the killer stepped out.

Johnnie leaped at his throat.

He had the advantage of surprise, although Cragin outweighed him twenty pounds. His fingers closed around the smuggler's gullet. He drove a knee into Cragin's groin.

Cragin gasped with pain. "You damned rat—" His hands clawed upward. He seized Johnnie's ears, twisted them, tried to push the camera guy's head back far enough to break his neck.

Johnnie tightened his implacable fingers. Cragin tried to scream. But the sound died as his larynx collapsed under throttling thumbs. He sagged limply.

Johnnie dropped him; drew back his foot. He bashed his toe full to the murderer's temple. Skull-bones splintered with a dull, sickening sound . . .

THEN the camera guy went hurtling into the shack. Glory Whitney was crouched in a corner, the last flimsy garments of her clothes almost ripped from her; as she cowered there, Johnnie saw that the whiteness of her bowed shoulders was marked with blue bruises. Her eyes were tear-dimmed pools of misery.

Johnnie lifted her into his weary arms. Her slender form was still wracked by convulsions, shuddering sobs. "It's okay, baby," he whispered. "I've done for the lot of them. By morning, the Coast Guard cutter will be nosing back this way again to see what happened while they were gone on that SOS call. We'll signal them; turn over Cragin's store of smuggled dope. There'll be a reward for them. Half the value of the smuggled goods. The dough will come to you, kiddo. It'll help pay you for all you've been through . . ."

She clung to him almost like a little child. "You—you won't leave me—alone—any more tonight—?" she whispered.

He hugged her close. And then, because she was so appealingly lovely, he kissed her on her trembling lips. Somehow he felt that his kiss helped erase the stain that Cragin's lips had left upon her mouth . . .

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Lord's firm sent him to India to check up on its Calcutta manager. And he went gladly, for it would give him an opportunity to see again the woman he loved—even though she was now married to another. He never dreamed that he would have almost to plead to a daughter of the devil for Margot's happiness



With Margot in his arms, he started to run. Then hell broke loose behind them.

LEOPARD

By **KEN COOPER**



SEATED at a table on the bay-side patio of Calcutta's Hotel National, Guy Lord watched the palsied unsteadiness of Orville Johnson's hand as the India manager of the Indo-American Tea Company filled his glass with scotch.

It was amazing how five years within the shadow of the equator had changed the man. There was the mark of hell on his sunken cheeks and in his deep-pitted, feverishly bright eyes. When he lifted the glass to his nervous lips, the amber liquor spilled over the rim, wet his hand. He cursed, poured the stuff down his throat.

"I suppose Hoare sent you down to

check up on me." His tone was belligerent, challenging.

Guy watched the pale blue smoke curling up from the tip of his cigarette. "Not at all. Why should there be any need for checking up on you? Both Hoare and I thought it might be a good idea to look in on you since I was in this part of the world. You got my letter, didn't you?" The lie wasn't easy to speak. Actually, the Home Office was suspicious of the Calcutta management. Indo-American's monopoly was being threatened by price-cutting. There was a leak somewhere.

Johnson reached for the squat bottle, changed his mind. His tongue circled

his dry lips. "Yes. I got it. How is business in general?"

"There's nothing much new. British East India bought up China Tea & Spice. We worked out a price agreement with them. But, hell, why talk shop now? There are more important things. I still don't understand why you insisted on meeting me here instead of at your house. You know well enough I can't leave Calcutta without seeing Margot. Certainly you don't think—" He laughed. "It's too ridiculous to even talk about."

Johnson's mouth twisted in a grim smile. "Maybe I wanted to spare you. You were sweet on her once. She's changed into a hell-cat. All she knows how to do is nag. I'm plenty fed up."

Guy choked his cigarette in an ash-tray. "That doesn't sound like Margot. Not the Margot I knew. Isn't there a possibility that you're at fault?"

The pupils of Orville Johnson's eyes dilated. His chin was grey and unhealthy under a stubble of beard.

"No, there isn't!" He poured another drink. It was his fourth within the hour. "I want her to go back to the States for a few months. Maybe it's the country getting her. I don't know." He lit a cigarette shakily. "She'd go if you talked it into her. She always listened to you. Suppose you come up for dinner tonight?"

Guy had been waiting for the invitation. "That suits me." He followed Orville Johnson to a carriage at the door. The man walked as though he were punch drunk; as though he had lost his sense of balance.

Alone in his hotel room, Guy removed a letter from his jacket pocket. It had been there, smouldering against his chest, all during the conversation with Johnson. It was from Margot.

Four pages of close, meticulous handwriting. Here and there a smudge where a tear had dropped. Guy read the last paragraph.

"There must be something you can do, Guy, if only for old time's sake. Orville is digging his own grave. If I had you here with me I could tell you all that is weighting my heart."

Guy folded the letter, slipped it back into his pocket. The phrase: ". . . for old time's sake . . ." ran through his mind. The obbligato was the soft strains of native music floating up from the patio. He remembered the first time he had buried his lips in the fragrant softness of Margot's golden hair; the first time she had given him the moist sweetness of her mouth. He even remembered the pale pink organdie dress she was wearing and how the nubile roundness of her breasts rose and fell tremulously beneath the bodice. She was twenty then and he was two years older. That had been five . . . no, six years ago. How easy it was to bridge the gap of time! Years were nothing to memory.

A MAID answered the door at the sumptuous Johnson residence, ushered Guy into the drawing-room.

"Just tell her a friend," he said, setting a huge box of flowers on a table. He felt like a school-boy again. For some strange reason he was nervous. He had laughed at his own suggestion that Orville might be jealous of him, but deep down in his heart he knew he hadn't forgotten. Something had been lost when Margot succumbed to the older man's sophistication; something that had never been regained.

He heard her coming, and his anticipation became so keen that he trembled. When she stepped into the room a wave of warmth poured over him, and

he knew Orville was blind. She had changed, yes, but only in that the lush ripeness of maturity was hers. She was a woman.

"Guy!" The name leaped from her lips. She stopped short, stared at him, unbelieving. "Guy!" she repeated.

He came forward, smiling. "Margot." He took her hands, squeezed her slim, cool fingers in his hot palms. She tore them away, twined her arms about his neck, kissed him full on the mouth. It was a kiss of greeting, but Guy felt the globes of her breasts and the warm pressure of her richly curved body against him. His head swam with the dizziness of rapture.

She backed away, her blue eyes glowing. "It's really you. I'm not dreaming it, am I?"

"In the flesh, Margot."

She led him to a divan, sat him down. "I'm just shaking all over, Guy. You can't imagine what seeing you stand there did to me." She pressed the palm of her hand over her left breast. "My heart's running away." She reached for his hand. "You didn't come because of my letter, did you?"

"Yes and no." Why worry her with something that was, as yet, only a supposition? "I was down this way on company business."

"Have you seen Orville?"

"This afternoon. He invited me for dinner."

Her teeth gnawed at her lower lip. "Then you know."

Guy tried to make it easier. "He doesn't look well."

Her fingers tightened about his hand. "He's killing himself, Guy! For more than a year he's been drinking steadily. There isn't a night when someone doesn't bring him home drunk. And that isn't all." She looked away and her

eyes welled with tears.

Guy waited, stroking the back of her hand with his thumb. There was no sense kidding himself. Nothing had died in the six years. The very nearness of her warmed the blood in his veins, made his mouth dry and his arms ache to crush the soft warmth of her vibrant body to his.

A phone tinkled somewhere in the house. The maid stood on the threshold of the room. "Lady from Master's office say he no come till late."

Margot nodded. "You see," she said huskily. "That's how it is. Night after night. He's never told me where he spends his time, but I can guess. Oh, God, why did we ever come to this hell-hole?" She shuddered and the color drained from her cheeks. Her voice was hollow, empty. "He's playing with the devil, Guy! With things that hide in the shroud of night! I heard him raving once in a drunken stupor! He screamed about a *leopard woman*! I live in constant dread! Darkness frightens me!" She clung to him, shivering, her body a tremolo of nervous hysteria. Gently, Guy stroked her arms.

"Don't worry, Margot," he said softly.

IT was midnight when Guy left the house. He walked rapidly toward the center of the town, marking it by the orange glow of lights against an ebony sky. As he reached the corner, a carriage with drawn shades came up the side street, started to make the turn into the main road. Suddenly the door flew open and the doubled up body of a woman hurtled out. A whip sang through the hot, still air, slashed across the horses' rumps. The carriage rolled off into the darkness.

Guy ran to the still figure on the asphalt, lifted the woman's limp body in his arms, carried her to the sidewalk. She was white, either English or American. The front of her sleazy silk blouse had been ripped away, baring small, creamy-white breasts under the loose net cups of a brassiere. Her cheeks were pale under pinkish circles of rouge. Carmine lipstick was smeared across her chin. She was pretty in a hard, brittle fashion.

Her eyelids fluttered and she moaned. Guy lifted her head up, rested it against his shoulder. He could smell the perfume in her hair.

"No!" she gasped. "Take him away!" A violent shudder shook her slender body. Her eyes opened, stared blankly at Guy. She cringed involuntarily. Her pupils were bright with horrible fear. "Let me go!" she panted. "Let me go!" She struggled to free herself. Guy set her down on her feet. She ran a trembling hand through straight, ash-blonde hair. Reason seemed to return. She had evidently suffered no ill effects from being thrown out of the carriage.

"Who are you?" she questioned.

"Nobody in particular. I was crossing the street when you either fell or were tossed out of a carriage."

"Yes!" Her face brightened. "I remember now! Those brown men!" She tried to draw her torn blouse together.

Guy stepped back. "If you're not hurt I'll run along."

She clutched his arm. "Don't go! Please don't go!" Her eyes pleaded. "They might get me again. You don't know what they do! It's awful!" Her fingers dug into Guy's flesh. "I'm afraid to go home alone! It's . . . it's so dark!" She shuddered.

It was hard to ignore her terror-stricken plea. "Where do you live?"

"Not far from here. Just a few blocks. You'll come with me, won't you?"

"Yes."

A wan smile flickered on her moist, red lips. "I knew you would." She led the way along dark streets, drew up before a gray adobe house the entrance to which was through a court.

"This is where I live," she said, leaning against the archway in a way that emphasized the full curve of her hips and pulled one thrusting breast taut. "I'd like to show you I appreciate what you did." There was an invitation in the sensuous working of her tongue over the moistly shiny surfaces of her plump lips. She came close to Guy, ran her hands over his shoulders. "And—I like you!"

Her breasts brushed his chest. She threw her head back, teased him with her passionate mouth and the limpid pools of her eyes.

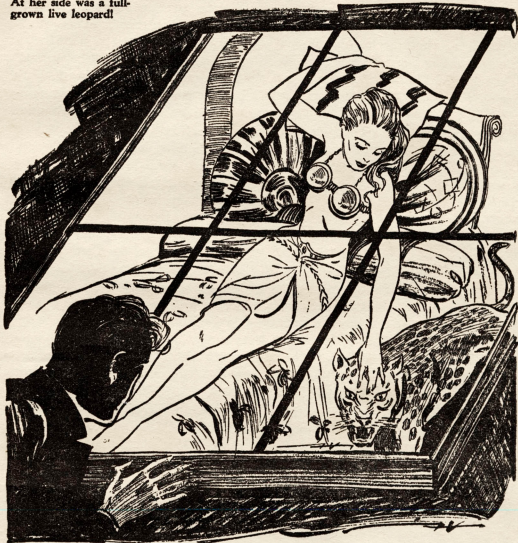
"What do you say? Why not come in . . . we can . . . talk awhile . . ." she murmured

Guy placed his hands on her waist to push her away. He felt the warmth of her bare skin through her blouse.

"Please, honey." Her voice was liquid. She linked her hands behind his neck, clung to him.

Guy didn't hear the faint scrape of footstep's behind him. But some sixth sense warned him that danger was close. He broke the girl's grip, shoved her back. A hand shot over his shoulder and a moist, cloying pad clamped down on his mouth and nose. A steel-hard arm looped about his neck, held him like a vise. Desperately he struggled to free himself. He saw the girl framed in the archway to the court, her hands on her streamlined hips, a taunting smile creasing the corners of her slitted eyes. It was the last thing he saw. Fire ran

At her side was a full-grown live leopard!



through his throat, shriveled his lungs. A black, impenetrable shroud blanketed him.

THE return to consciousness brought Guy up . . . up . . . up through the whirling vortex of a gray, tenebrous zone. He opened his eyes, found himself seated in a richly brocaded overstuffed chair. A tall olive-complexioned man in conventional Western dress faced him. Standing guard at the closed door of the room was a mammoth blackamoor, garbed in a tunic and white turban. A

curved, evil-looking blade hung at his hip. Guy gripped the chair arms, sat up. The sickeningly sweet taste in his mouth reminded him of what had happened.

"You will accept our pardon for having tricked you, *sahib*," the olive-complexioned one said. His voice was beautifully modulated and he spoke English with just the faintest trace of the Eastern sing-song. "Rest assured that no harm will come to you, providing you act in accordance with our wishes. You are to leave Calcutta at once."

"At whose request?"

"It is a command, *sahib*, not a request. There are those who have your best interests at heart. To remain in Calcutta or in India would be only to endanger your life. Death lurks in the dark."

"Why have I been singled out for this attention?" Guy questioned. His eyes swung about the room. It was without windows. The only exit was through the guarded door.

"I cannot say, *sahib*. Perhaps you have friends who fear for your safety." He smiled, placed the palms of his hands together. "One is fortunate, indeed, to have such friends."

Escape from the room was impossible. The blade of the blackamoor's knife was razor-sharp. Whatever madness this was, they had him trapped.

"All right," he said. "What am I to do?"

"You will be led blindfolded to another part of the city, *sahib*. You will board the Bombay Express in the morning. From Bombay you will take the Empress of India which sails two hours after the arrival of the train." His dark eyes narrowed. "And above all, *sahib*, you will maintain a discreet silence as to everything that has happened. You will be carefully watched and unless you carry out our orders—" He paused dramatically. "—you will die, *sahib*."

Not for a moment did Guy doubt the seriousness of the threat. Whoever was behind it had some connection with the leak through the Calcutta Division of Indo-American. And, woven somewhere into the warp and woof of the mysterious fabric was Orville Johnson and the nebulous *leopard woman* Margot had mentioned.

"It is all clear, *sahib*?"

Guy nodded. The olive-skinned man

stepped forward, whisked a silk kerchief over his eyes, tied it securely with deft fingers.

"One false move, *sahib*," he warned, "and you will not board the Bombay Express." He issued an order in Arabic. A hand closed about Guy's arm, raised him from the chair. He walked through the door, down a flight of steps, out into the open. He strained his mind to think of some method whereby he could ascertain the location of the place. It was certainly not the adobe house where he had been overpowered. They would be too clever for that.

"Step up, *sahib*," a voice said. "You are entering a carriage."

The solution came to Guy in a flash as the carriage rolled away. He began to count to himself in a slow, monotonous rhythm. *One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . .* The carriage turned right at *nineteen*. He made a mental note of the number, started all over again. There was a left turn at *twenty-six*, another right at *twelve*, then a straight drive until the carriage stopped at *forty-nine*.

The blindfold was removed and the carriage door swung open. "You may go, *sahib*."

Guy stepped out. The carriage rolled away. He was on the same corner where the adventure started. He brought out pencil and paper, set down the numbers. In reverse order, they were straight *forty-nine*, left *twelve*, right *twenty-six* and left *nineteen*. It wasn't the most accurate way of measuring distance but, when the time came, it would have to do.

AT THE Hotel National, Guy went immediately to his room, removed a small automatic from his suitcase, slipped it into his pocket. He knew he was taking a desperate chance but it

was a desperate situation. If Orville was involved, he had to be saved from himself for Margot's sake.

A block from the hotel he engaged a carriage, drove to the all-important corner. "Keep going straight along this road," he instructed. "Turn when I tell you to do so."

The moment the carriage moved, Guy began to count. It worked like a charm. The three turns were made perfectly. When he reached *nineteen* on the last straightaway he found the carriage opposite a two-story house with a flat roof set back from the road and surrounded by towering teakwood trees. Chinks of light showed through drawn shades. It had all the earmarks of the place Guy wanted. He dismissed the carriage some two hundred yards ahead, returned on foot.

The thick carpet of the lawn surrounding the house muffled his footsteps. He climbed a tree whose spreading branches permitted him to drop lightly on the flat roof. A glass skylight, brilliantly aglow, drew his attention. Down on his knees he crawled towards it, peered over the edge. The sight that met his eyes stopped the beat of his heart, stilled the flow of blood in his veins for a breathless moment.

There, directly below him, her lithe, half-naked body stretched out on a low divan, was the most exotically beautiful woman he had ever seen. Down on its haunches beside her, close enough so that her carmine-tipped fingers rested on its majestic head, *was a full-grown, live leopard!*

The picture resembled some old Persian print or some imaginative conception of Roman opulence. Polyglot blood flowed in the woman's veins. She had ebony hair that fell in a glossy cascade about her naked shoulders. Her dark,

long-lashed eyes were slumberously almond-shaped. Her skin was a delicate saffron broken only by the blood-red fullness of her lips. She wore a chiffon skirt, slitted to the lush roundness of her upper thighs. Cone-shaped breasts rose and fell in an even rhythm beneath the spun silver cups of her bandeau. Looking down, Guy could see the deep, enticing shadowed valley formed by the sleekness of the curving globes. She was the high priestess of voluptuousness, the *leopard woman!* The undulating curve of her supine body almost matched the feline grace of the great jungle cat that was her pet.

A cold shiver ran through Guy. He could see how a man might be made to grovel at such a woman's feet, to kiss the hem of her skirt. She was a product of the world's melting pot, a lithe, soft-breasted houri, magnetizing with the ripple of her witch's body, luring with the promise of ecstasy.

She stretched indolently, sensuously, motioned with her hand. Another figure entered the startling picture—the figure of a man. He came forward on his hands and knees, knelt beside the divan, buried his lips in the pulsing, hollowed throat above her silvered breasts. Once again, Guy held his breath. *The man was Orville Johnson!*

Guy watched as his trembling arms stole around that slender, half-clad figure. Her lips moved and he raised his head, joined his mouth to hers. For all that Guy tried to fight down, he could not help falling prey to the thrill of watching her supple body quiver in the other man's feverish embrace. She twined her fingers in Orville's hair, twisted spasmodically as he crushed her savagely until her breasts cushioned hard against his chest.

It was no ordinary kiss that joined

them. Her lips were glued moistly to his mouth. Orville's hands crept over her shoulders, slid into the polished hollows beneath them. The chiffon skirt fell away from her knees, slid in sheer folds along the columnar smoothness of sleek, saffron thighs.

Even from his spying position, Guy felt his breath shorten, felt the blood pound in his temples. He knew it would be suicide to break through the skylight to enter the room. Men were one thing; jungle beasts another. It would be wiser, both to avoid publicity and safeguard himself, to work through Orville Johnson, now that he was certain the man had sold himself into the spell of this devil's-daughter.

HE retraced his steps, climbed down the tree, reached the lawn. Crouching low and seeking the shelter of dark shadows, he walked rapidly back over the route he had taken in the carriage. Not a sound broke the intense, heavy stillness of the night. The house of the leopard woman was in a residential section of the city, far removed from Calcutta's great port, alive with ships from the four corners of the globe.

Guy had decided what course he would take before he reached the Johnson house. Margot had to be apprised of the situation. She would learn it sooner or later and there might yet be a chance to reinforce the crumbling structure of the man's self-respect; to save him from the complete disgrace into which he was headed. In any event, Margot had to be protected.

There was a light in a second-floor window of Orville Johnson's residence. Guy rang the bell. After interminable minutes, Margot herself, clad in a transparent velvet negligee, answered. The

color drained from her cheeks when she saw him.

"Guy! What is it?"

He stepped inside, closed the door behind him. For all her deathly pallor and for all the trembling of her body, Guy knew, as he looked at her, that, to him, she was the most beautiful creature on God's earth. Even the animal magnetism of the leopard woman failed to strike the same responsive chord in his heart.

He led Margot into the drawing room, sat down with her on the divan. Beneath the diaphanous negligee, a chiffon nightgown failed to do more than exotically veil her globular, milk-white breasts and the lushly curved swelling of her nubile hips. She gripped his hands, dug her nails into them.

"What is it, Guy? For God's sake, tell me!"

"You must be calm, Margot. It's about Orville. I thought it best for you to know that the reason for my coming to Calcutta was to discover, if possible, some suspected mismanagement in the Indo-American office."

Her voice was dead, toneless. "I thought as much."

"From what you told me and from what I observed, I gathered that Orville was mixing in bad company. I traced him down, found where he was tonight. I intend remaining here until he returns. Possibly between the two of us we can make him see the light."

Margot's breasts swelled voluptuously as she drew a deep breath. "It's too late, Guy. I don't care any more. Everything I felt for him has died within me. You haven't told me all, even now. There is a woman; possibly *women*. I know, and yet that means nothing. I made my mistake five years ago when I traded decency for sophistication. I

The door opened and the doubled-up body of a woman hurtled out.



knew it all along. I was sure of it the moment I saw you this afternoon."

Something tugged at Guy's heart. "You mean—"

"I mean that I'll go back with you—if you want me."

"Want you?" He swept her into his arms, buried his lips in the fragrant softness of her hair. "I've always loved you, Margot! I've never stopped wanting you!" He could feel the mad throbbing of her heart under the warm, soft cushion of her breast. Her arms slipped

over his shoulders and the palms of her hands straining on his broad back forced him closer to her. She lifted her head, yielded her lips, half-parted, moistly warm.

Somehow, her negligee fell from the smooth slope of her shoulder. His kisses traced the softness of her throat; she quivered, moaned softly as she lifted his head until she could see his eyes.

"You're not doing this because you're sorry for me, Guy?" she breathed.

His arms tightened to draw the warm

length of her supple form closer. "I'm doing it because I love—because I've always loved you!"

A beatific expression illumined her face. She pressed his face between the palms of her hands, guided his mouth to the honeyed well-spring of her lips. Gone was all pretense, all uncertainty. Her mouth burned against his and her breasts were crushed to his chest in the fervency of their embrace. Margot's eyes—misty, glowing with ecstasy—slowly closed, the long, curled lashes brushing her cheeks. As though by some mystic legerdemain, her negligee slid from her shoulders, leaving only the gown of thin chiffon. . . .

IT was Guy who brought himself suddenly alert at the grinding of carriage wheels.

"Orville," he whispered. "They're bringing him home." He stepped to the door, drew his revolver. Two men were half-carrying and half-dragging Orville Johnson up the walk. Guy waited until one of them slipped a key in the lock, swung the door open. He snapped on the hall light, faced them. One of the men was the olive-skinned Hindu who had issued the warning of death to Guy. His dark eyes were pin-points of light.

"So, we meet again, *sahib*," he said.

"This time I'll give the orders! Carry Mr. Johnson in!"

They obeyed. Margot stared at the strange picture, one hand at her white throat, the other holding her negligee together.

Guy waited until Orville was stretched out on the divan. He covered the olive-skinned one and his black companion. "Now, call the police, Margot."

The Hindu's lips paled. "You are being very unwise, *sahib*."

"Call the police, Margot!" Guy repeated.

She stepped into the hall. Guy heard a click as she lifted the receiver. The next thing he heard was a shrill, high-pitched scream that cut through the silence like a knife. Every muscle in his body came taut. Again the terrified cry and the sounds of struggling in the hall. He turned to go to Margot's assistance. The split-second when his attention was diverted served the purpose of the agile Hindu. He leaped for the light switch, snapped it. The room was plunged into darkness. Guy's automatic roared. Forked flame tore a hole in the black but the crash and tinkle of glass told him the bullet had gone wild. His finger tightened on the trigger but he was afraid to shoot again. Margot might be in the line of fire. He stood there, wrapped in the darkness, silently cursing his impotence.

The light switch! If he could only find it! He stumbled forward, searching blindly. At any moment he expected a blade to hiss through the air and bury itself in his body. He reached the wall, groped feverishly, found the switch. *Click!* Darkness gave way to blinding light. The room was empty save for the sprawling figure of Orville Johnson on the divan. Guy rushed out to the hall.

"Margot!" he cried. "Margot!"

Through the open door he saw the carriage rolling away. He raised the automatic. No, he couldn't shoot! Margot was in the carriage! They had taken her with them!

Guy returned to the living-room, lifted Johnson to a sitting position, slapped him awake. "Orville! Listen to me! They've kidnaped Margot!" Laboriously, Guy worked over the drink-numbed man, brought him back to some semblance of consciousness.

"They've kidnaped Margot!" Guy

panted. "The two men who brought you home! Shall I call the police?"

Orville Johnson's brain cleared. He licked his dry lips. "For God's sake, no!" He passed a hand over his damp face. "It's late. What are *you* doing here?"

No longer was pretense necessary. Guy told him the truth: why he had come to Calcutta; what he had seen at the house of the leopard woman. Johnson's face turned green.

"They know," he mumbled. "Hoare knows."

Guy's fingers dug into his shoulder. "That's not important now! Nothing is important but Margot!"

Johnson nodded vacantly. "Yes . . . Margot. We'll get her." He looked up and there was a strange light in his eyes. "When we do . . . you'll take her back . . . back to America. You will, won't you?"

"Yes."

He rose, cold sober now; a beaten man with hunched shoulders. He walked into an adjoining room, returned in a moment.

"No guns," he said. "Leave it here. We won't need a gun."

Guy placed the automatic on a table. He trusted the man now.

THEY left the house, walked the dark streets in silence. Johnson's step was heavy, leaden. He led the way to the very door of the flat-roofed house of mystery Guy had quitted only a few brief hours before. His triple knock echoed eerily. A panel slid back and glinting eyes peered through it.

"*Tama gore*," Johnson muttered.

"*Tama gore*," a voice replied.

Heavy iron bolts clanked and the door swung wide. But Orville Johnson didn't step across the threshold. Instead

he spun on his heel, rasped out something in Arabic, lunged at Guy. The attack was unexpected. Guy lost his balance, went down. As he fell his heart sickened within him. Johnson had trapped him! Betrayed him!

He fought back, his fists moving like pistons, but the odds were against him. Two black giants leaped through the open door, pinned his arms behind him, dragged him into the house. He was led up a flight of steps, shoved into a brilliantly lit room. A door slammed behind him and a bolt went home.

"Welcome, my friend," a soft, musical voice said.

Guy blinked, stared straight ahead of him. The leopard woman was stretched out on her low divan with her great, sleek jungle cat beside her! He was in the room he had seen through the skylight! There she was, her hand resting on the leopard's head, her conical breasts pushing up the silvered cups that only partially covered them, the curve of her saffron body a rhythmic undulation from throat to ankle.

"You were courageous, my friend, but not wise," she murmured. Her voice flowed like thick honey. Her accent belonged to no race, no people. It was a blend of many tongues. She toyed with the leopard's ear. "Now you must die."

Guy saw that the mammoth cat's eyes never left him. At a command from the woman, it would probably spring at his throat. He could picture it coming off its haunches, fangs bared and slashing claws aimed at his face. It was a horrible, ghastly death.

"You have nothing to say?" the woman queried.

"Yes! Spare the girl! I don't care about myself!"

Green rings, fine as silken threads,

(Continued on page 109)

SPY TRAP



Partners in espionage, Warwick and the incomparable Countess Dagmar penetrate Germany to steal the war plans of the General Staff. Perhaps they should have known that the Countess's femininity could never be hidden beneath man's garb. At least Warwick should have known that adventure's lure would prove to be a small thing beside the Countess's charms—but he didn't care!

By PATRICK O'CONNOR

They were all a little drunk, and now that they had found her out, they were going to make the most of it.



“ONE hundred and fifty thousand American dollars,” said Laird Warwick, with finality. “Cash on delivery.”

The Frenchman tugged thoughtfully at his whiskers. He was, the American knew, translating that sum into francs. The other man, an elderly Swiss, maintained his poker face.

“But *M’sieur*,” protested the Frenchman, “already we. . .”

“Have sent your best operatives,” Warwick interrupted. “What happened to them? They were shot as spies. I know. I was there.”

“But you did nothing. You made no preparations. You did nothing but go

sight-seeing. Spies of two nations watched your every move."

The Swiss silenced the sputtering Frenchman with a wave of his hand and said: "Let us face the facts. What we seek is in a castle near Freiburg. General von Baur and his staff are there. Also a guard of two hundred soldiers. Yet. . ."

"Gentlemen," broke in Warwick impatiently, "you exasperate me. For three days we've been bickering. You say it's impossible. I say it isn't."

"But all Europe knows you for a spy," said the Frenchman. "As soon as you cross the frontier you'd be trailed."

"Perhaps you plan to sneak in," suggested the Swiss.

"I do not! I shall go in on the train," declared Warwick and glanced at his wrist watch. "Gentlemen, I'm sorry but I have a broadcast to listen to in fifteen minutes." He turned to the Frenchman. "I asked of you a woman who could speak German and drive a car. Of Switzerland I ask even less."

He walked to the window and stared at the quaint city.

"Basle, Switzerland," he mused. "I would hate to see it in ruins. Germany holds war games. Any minute it might cease to be play. If you only knew what they've planned for years!"

"M'sieur Warwick," interrupted the Frenchman with a sigh, "we accept your terms. When may we expect delivery?"

"By this time tomorrow morning. Have you a woman?"

"Yes. An Austrian Countess embittered with her own country. She is brave and willing to perish for the cause of peace."

"Where is she?"

"Suite twenty-one. Here is the key. She will be sleeping."

Laird Warwick took the key. Again he glanced at his watch.

"Gentlemen, please leave. Return in twenty minutes with a pair of hair clip-pers and two policemen. I want a man arrested."

Shaking their heads at the mad request, the two men left the suite. Warwick went to a radio, tuned in a German station and listened attentively to the guttural speech already in progress. When it was finished he turned off the set, went to the desk and took out a sheaf of photographs.

Pictures of two men. One was gray mustached, square jawed, blue eyed. The other was young and handsome. His eyes, too, were blue but his hair was black and his face deeply burned. Long minutes he studied the portraits. Then he tore up the pictures of the older man, put the fragments in an ash tray and burned them. He glanced at his watch.

STILL ten minutes. And suite twenty-one was only three doors away. He went there, opened the door noiselessly and entered the living room. The door to the bed chamber was open. He went toward it.

Seated at the vanity at the opposite end of the room, a young woman was running a comb through yellow wavy hair that fell to the nape of her neck. Startled a moment, Laird Warwick's eyes took on a softer hue.

The girl wore pajama trousers—nothing more. Her torso was barbarically nude and shimmered whitely in the hot summer sunlight which fell into that part of the room. Her shoulders were broad, yet gently sloping, and her back a sleek, flawless expanse of curvesome flesh. Now and then a swaying breast

would come briefly to view: a breast gently protrusive and pear shaped.

He saw her put down the comb. Then in one fast movement her left hand pulled a scarf from the vanity to cover her breasts, her right hand snatched an automatic from nowhere it seemed and she spun on the bench to face him. The automatic aimed between his eyes.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "What do you want?"

Her eyes were a peculiar, tigerish shade of brown; her mouth full and scarlet, and her nose very straight. For a moment Warwick couldn't speak. Her beauty was breathtaking. The scarf exposed the outer slopes of her superb breasts. Her legs were long and slender yet possessed ample thighs, and the creaminess of her flesh shone through the dark material of the pajamas.

"I'm Major Warwick," he told her.

Her eyes widened. "Not *the* Major Warwick?"

"Yes, and you?"

"Countess Dagmar."

Reluctantly, he lowered his eyes to his watch. Then he went to the phone and called his suite. The Swiss answered. Warwick told them to wait for him.

He turned to the girl, who'd taken advantage of his preoccupation to put on her pajama coat. She'd gotten to her feet and was shielding her breasts from view with her hands. He appraised her thoughtfully. About five feet six, he surmised, and of good weight.

Then he walked to her side and said: "Put down your hands, please!"

She did so. Then he amazed her by staring critically at the lush globes of her breasts. Their flesh looked soft despite the way they lifted firmly with each breath. Color surged to her cheeks. He lifted his eyes to hers.

"I'd prefer a girl with smaller breasts," he told her, "but you'll do. Go out and get a brassiere that will flatten to your chest. Then come to the Imperial suite."

HE turned and left the suite. The Swiss had brought two policemen. The Frenchman was playing with the hair clippers to hide his nervousness. Warwick turned to the Swiss.

"You will arrest Don Salvro, understand! You will hire a room here and keep him under guard until morning."

"But *M'sieur!* He is a wealthy South American. It will cause trouble."

"Nevertheless, you do it. Have his bags packed, check him out and bring his things here. Especially his passport."

The Swiss shrugged and departed with the police. Warwick turned to the Frenchman.

"You go to the depot and get a compartment on the evening train to Berlin. And tickets for two."

"*M'sieur* is very clever. He goes as the rich South American."

"Yes."

The Frenchman put down the clippers and left greatly heartened. Warwick lighted a cigarette. It *was* a cunning stroke. Don Salvro was known far and wide as a rich playboy overly fond of women.

The Swiss returned with the South American's passport and luggage. Don Salvro, he reported, had been too befuddled with drink to voice serious objections to arrest.

Laird Warwick took out one of the South American's flashy suits and put it on. It fitted well, being loose about the waist, a fact for which he was thankful.

"Take the rest of the luggage to the depot and check it," he told the Swiss.

"Then come back."

The Swiss departed with the baggage. Warwick glanced at his watch. Almost dinner time. His brain spun. There were so many minor details to remember.

The girl returned. She wore a dark knit suit that hugged the ripeness of her hips and moulded the rich protrusiveness of her breasts. Again he stared at the twin mounds of flesh. They bothered him—but not as she might have thought.

"You got the brassiere?"

"Yes."

"You drive a car?"

"Expertly."

"We leave on the evening train to Berlin. I, as Don Salvro. You, as my mistress. You will obey my every order, understand?"

She stared at him. "I am a desirable woman."

"Very desirable," he interrupted, "but we are facing great danger. I will not annoy you more than absolutely necessary."

"You are a hard man, very hard."

He sighed. "Perhaps. But I like you. Love you perhaps. But there's no time for such things. Take that chair and go to the bath room."

She did so. He picked up the clippers, fastened a towel about her neck and said: "This is too bad. You have lovely hair. But it must come off."

He sheared it as close as a man's military cut. Then they exchanged places and she cut his hair as short as possible. When she finished, he swept the hair from the floor and flushed it down the toilet.

In the other room he gave her a wig; red hair that was a compact mass of glossy ringlets. She put it on. He had a wig for himself. An oily black one

combed long as Don Salvro wore his hair.

At the vanity he deftly tanned his face, made his lips more sensually thick and broadened his nose with a covered spring device which left breathing space. He compared the result with the photograph of the South American. The likeness was adequate.

"Have some food sent up!" he told Countess Dagmar.

THEY ate in silence. The Frenchman came with the tickets. The Swiss, with the baggage checks. Warwick got out a map of Freiburg and the surrounding countryside. A field was outlined in red crayon.

"Have a plane there at five in the morning," he told the Frenchman who began to sputter protests. But it was finally so arranged. The two men were almost tearful in their good wishes. Then they left. Countess Dagmar became increasingly nervous.

Laird Warwick put a make-up kit into his pocket, also a .38 automatic and the South American's papers. He turned to the girl. "Your passport in order?"

"Yes," she said.

"Better give me the brassiere!" She did so. He put it into his pocket. Countess Dagmar went to the window and looked out. Warwick watched her. She was far more beautiful than he'd first thought. His eyes stared at the ripe curve of her hips and the nubile fullness of her sleek thighs.

"What do you have on under the suit?" he asked.

"A slip, stepins, brassiere."

"Good!" He glanced at his watch, then out of the window. It was just dusk. "Time to go," he said. "As Don Salvro, I speak no German. As soon as we entrain have the porter make up

our berth. Well, let's go!"

As prearranged, they went down the freight elevator and out to the cab waiting in the alley. Both were operated by secret Swiss police. At the depot Warwick turned the checks over to a



He lifted her free of the train's window and dropped her.

porter who claimed their luggage, or rather, the baggage of Don Salvro.

Presently the train chugged in. Countess Dagmar ordered the berth made up and they went forward to the dining car for a drink. The train pulled out. Before long they reached the border. The custom's inspector was polite. There was no trouble. Don Salvro's reputation had preceded him.

They returned to the compartment. The berth was made up.

"Now call the porter and tell him not

to disturb us until we reach Berlin. Tip him well."

She did so. The man grinned knowingly at the orders but was pleasantly surprised at the size of the tip. Beaming and bowing, he closed the door. Warwick bolted it. Countess Dagmar was seated on the berth and lounging back against the pillow. His eye followed the tapering lines from slender ankles to the full shapely flare of thighs and hips. His sigh was eloquent.

Then he opened one of Don Salvro's bags and pulled out a heavy terry cloth bathrobe which he rolled compactly and tied with the cord. He opened the window. It was very dark out.

The brakes were applied. The train slowed for Freiburg. He switched off the light and groped for the berth. His hands touched her shoulders. He pushed her over and stretched out, fully dressed, beside her. Then he covered them with a blanket until only their heads were visible. The train stopped. He pulled her tightly against him. Thrills raced up and down his spine.

Suddenly a beam of light glared through the window. He kissed her on the mouth—hard. Her lips were wet and soft and soft breasts were crushed against his chest. The light vanished. He released her swiftly and got to his feet. The train started. He turned on the lights.

"Now we go into action," he told her. "If your skirt's tight fasten it about your waist."

She stood up and tugged up the hem of her skirt and knotted it about her waist. She wore sheer black stockings that didn't quite meet the edges of black lace step-ins. Below the lace gleamed flawless white flesh. Her legs were beautiful.

"Sit on the berth facing the window!"

he ordered. She did so. "Now put your legs out the window." She wiggled forward until her thighs rested on the sill. He crawled beside her.

"In a mile we slow for a bridge. I'll drop you. Soon as you're safe, crawl as near the track as you dare so you'll be out of the light from the windows."

The train was picking up speed. His arm went about her shoulders. He felt her tremble. What the hell was wrong? He'd seen every train slow for the bridge on his previous visit. He began to sweat.

JUST then the brakes began to grind. He lifted her free of the window. She was heavy. His arm ached. The train slowed. When he heard the hiss of the releasing brakes he dropped her and stuck out his head. She'd landed on her feet and was just dropping prone.

He tossed out the robe, went feet first through the window and struck the loose cinders with a thud. He flopped to his belly and edged to the rail. He was in darkness now. The wheel journals whizzed past his shoulder. He stayed there until the train passed. No one on the rear platform, thank God!

He looked back and saw the girl's white face raised toward him. He scrambled to his feet, got the robe and ran to the girl. She'd lost her wig! Panic seized him. But they found the wig and she put it on.

Hand in hand, they ran to the edge of the woods flanking the tracks. At the summit of the hill in the distance gleamed the lights of an imposing castle. They headed that way.

They'd reached their objective! And to German secret police Don Salvro and his woman were enroute to Berlin. They'd have until morning before their absence was discovered.

They came to a road that wound deviously to the castle. Finding a spot where the trees along the road were less close set, Warwick took the girl into a mass of bushes. They sat down. He looked at his watch.

"I spent days in Freiburg," he told her. "Every second I was watched. But I learned many things. I thought of this mad plan. You must do as I say."

"I will do as you order," she said.

"Our success depends on two things. Man's habits and German discipline. General von Baur is methodical. Nevertheless you must be ready. Please undress!"

She did so; quickly, efficiently. She stood before him attired in that form-fitting brassiere, black step-ins and long stockings. His throat felt hot and dry. His heart hammered. She was the most gorgeously formed woman he'd ever seen. Sighing, he undid the robe and helped her into it. When his hand touched her bare shoulder, electric thrills ran through his body. They sat down again.

"We are apt to be killed?" she asked.

"Very apt," he told her. She frowned.

"What must I do?"

"Stretch out in the road, half-dressed. Every night at eleven the General drives to a beer garden in town. It's a regular ritual with him. You stop the car and the driver will come to your aid. You knock him cold. I'll handle the General."

"How long before eleven?"

"An hour."

She leaned back against him. Her eyes were bright; her mouth moist. He kissed her and the savagery of her response amazed him.

"Again—before we face death!" she commanded him and her lips rained kisses about his face and neck. Her fingers bit spasmodically into the muscles

of his arms and those superb breasts were flattened warmly against his chest. Her emotion overwhelmed him. It was moments before he could return her ardor.

TEN fifty-five! Countess Dagmar was stretched out in the road on her left side facing the castle. Her right hand fell limply in back of her, the fingers curling about the muzzle of Warwick's .38. The position strained the brassiere in such a way that her right breast had almost escaped the encircling cloth.

Warwick wet his lips. He glanced at his watch. The minute hand touched the hour mark. From the castle came the soft purr of a Mercedes motor. A lump grew in his throat. So far, so good. Faced with the necessity of split second action, his nerves became electric, his muscles tensed.

Two bright head-lights appeared at the top of the hill. The car was coming fast. Supposing the driver couldn't stop in time? The lights vanished around a curve. Then the road in front of him was drenched with white light. Countess Dagmar's body fell in their rays.

Tires bit into the loose gravel. The car slithered to a stop. Warwick heard a guttural curse. The ruse had worked!

The driver climbed out. Warwick slipped behind the car and peered over the lowered top. General von Baur was leaning forward watching the driver. Warwick watched him too.

He saw the man stoop, heard a thud and the driver fell across the girl. At the same instant, Warwick uncorked a vicious jab. It caught the General on a nerve center. With a sigh he collapsed to the floor of the car.

Warwick dimmed the lights and ran around front. The girl had pushed the

driver off and was getting to her feet.

"Drive into the woods and turn off the lights!" Warwick snapped. He grabbed the driver by the collar and dragged him to the side of the road. Countess Dagmar snaked the car in between the trees and doused the lights. Warwick dragged the driver into the bushes.

"Undress him!" he ordered her and pulled out the general.

They took the men's outer clothes off in record time. Then Warwick ordered her to get into the driver's uniform. As she did so he got out a filled hypodermic needle and gave both men a shot in the arm. They'd be out till morning.

Then he hastened to put on the General's uniform. It was loose fitting. The General was rather pot bellied. The hat fitted, however. Warwick tugged the visor close to his nose. The girl was dressed now. She tossed her wig to the bushes and pulled on the driver's cap.

Warwick threw the bathrobe into the car, took the driver's Luger and shoved his make-up kit into his pocket. The girl was already behind the wheel. He climbed in back.

"Drive to town," he told her, "or the sentries at the gate will be suspicious. Pass them fast!"

She backed onto the road, turned on the lights and raced down the road. The gates were already open. They whizzed through and turned left toward the city. Warwick opened his make-up kit and turned on the small flashlight that lighted the mirror. Quickly he removed his swarthinness. More padding now. Into cheeks and lower lip. He attached the gay mustache and etched lines about eyes and mouth. Then he discolored the whiteness of his teeth.

They were nearing the city. He ordered her to take a road to the right

and drive slowly. Then he removed the hat and wig. Delicately he whitened the hair that would not be covered by the wig. Without the wig the hat was too large. He padded the band.

"Start back!" he told her, and taking out a knife began to cut up the bathrobe. With the pieces he padded his stomach. Once more he appraised his reflection. One thing in his favor—the lower, soldier-filled hall of the castle was lighted by candles. Only the General's apartment boasted electric lights.

"When you reach the castle, swing right and circle to a stop in front of the door!"

He arranged the mustache and pulled back his chin to make his neck bulge. His lower face held too healthy a glow. He paled it and slipped the make-up kit under the lap robe on the floor.

His heart began to hammer. They were going up the hill now. He moved so he could see Countess Dagmar's face in the mirror. She'd removed lip stick and rouge.

Then he cursed his stupidity! He'd forgotten the brassiere! In the frantic haste they'd both forgotten it. Perhaps the heavy tunic would serve? He leaned forward with bated breath. No! Even the heavy fabric could not subdue the exquisite richness of her breasts.

"We forgot the brassiere! Soon as you stop, fold your arms."

Her face paled. But she nodded agreement. He sprawled back against the cushions.

THE car reached the castle. She circled right and drew up smartly in front of the stone steps. Two sentries there snapped to attention. Warwick opened the door and stepped out. Countess Dagmar sat with arms folded across

her breasts. Warwick took a deep breath.

Then he started up the steps in that short, choppy stride of General von Baur which he'd been so careful to study. He



"Who are you?" she demanded. "What do you want?"

saluted the sentries smartly, he'd practised that too, and entered the hallway.

The place was crowded with young officers who stood in small groups laughing and talking. They were plainly off duty. It was a long hallway. At the end an oak staircase spiraled to the second floor. Greatly assured by the faint light thrown off by the candles Warwick clumped towards the stairs. Groups

stiffened to attention as he passed. Not too fast! Not too slow! His heart thumped, his forehead was wet.

Suddenly a young officer stepped from a group and confronted him. Warwick stopped and tugged out a handkerchief. He coughed into it. The young man spoke; asked if he'd be needed any longer.

"*Nein!*" grunted Warwick imitating the voice he'd listened to over the radio that afternoon. "*Gehen sie zu bette.*"

The young man saluted and departed for bed as ordered.

Warwick started up the stairs. Two more officers came up to him. He dismissed them with a curt: "Don't bother me. I'm busy."

The second floor now. The General's quarters were in front on the right. More officers. They stiffened to attention as he clumped past. He was a little taller than the General but not noticeably so. The silence was oppressive. The only sound was the click of his boots.

He was near the door now. The two sentries came to attention. His hand closed on the knob. He turned it and pushed. The door swung inward.

A drop light hung over a large table. Maps! The table top was littered with maps. His heart raced. And the room was deserted. He closed the door and glanced about. To his right was an open door. The room beyond was lighted.

He tip-toed there. A huge four posted bed stood in the center of the room. In it was a sleeping woman. He frowned. He knew the General had recently married a woman much younger than himself, but he hadn't expected her to be in the castle.

She was evidently of peasant stock for her figure was large. Her flaxen hair flooded the pillow. She wore a low necked gown intended for a smaller

breasted woman, and one lush breast had escaped entirely and pressed against the mattress. He stared at her a moment, then went to the table.

With trembling hands he raised a map. Success! Here was the entire campaign for a future war with France! For years the General Staff had worked on such a campaign. Without them, the war must be postponed. And by the time new tactics could be devised France would be ready. But first the maps must be delivered to France. That would insure a few years of peace.

He began folding the maps. Soon he had them in a neat pile. He tied them with a cord. Then he took out the padding from beneath his coat and replaced it with the maps. It made his stomach larger, but by puffing out his chest he could make it seem natural.

He tip-toed to the bed chamber. The woman had kicked down the covers and her gown had crawled up to thighs of surprising circumference. Her flesh was white, with a pale, smooth lustre. Warwick glanced at her, then went out.

The soldiers in the hallway seemed surprised at his reappearance. But he was General von Baur, and above questioning. He went to the staircase and descended. The lower corridor was deserted. Not too fast! He was near the door now. Then he passed through it. The sentries clicked to attention.

His heart plunged to his ankles!

The car was gone!

STEADY! Act natural! He plunged his hand into a coat pocket and drew out one of the General's cigarettes. He lighted it and took a deep drag. Without turning he addressed the guards.

"*Wo ist der drofchte?*" he demanded as if angered.

The sentry stammered an answer

which he took to mean that the car was in the garage. Hell! Where was the garage? Out back, he supposed. He stepped into the road his lowered eyes straining to pick out the freshest tire tracks. He followed them around to the back of the castle.

There was the car! Two men were changing a wheel. He hastened his step. Where was the girl? Concern left a hollow feeling at the pit of his stomach. He'd never abandon her, never.

There was a stone structure to the right. From its windows came yellow light. The men changing the tire had not noticed him. He angled to the windows and glanced in.

He saw a group of officers. All were apparently a little drunk and he could hear the sound of their voices.

Then he saw her! Her cap was off and her arms were being held from behind. Standing in front of her and leering was a scar-faced, bulletheaded young Prussian officer.

He was unhooking her tunic. Very deliberately he opened it and tugged it off her shoulders. The brassiere protrusion of her breasts thrust forward joyously. Then his hand yanked the brassiere from her torso. Twin mounds of delectable, taut-skinned flesh swayed and danced as she broke free. Her hands flew to her breasts.

Burning with rage, Warwick went through the door. The room was filled with roaring laughter.

"*Seien Sie ruhig!*" he snapped. The silence was instantaneous. Officers snapped to attention. The girl hastened to hook her tunic. Warwick began to sweat. What now? How could he get her out of this mess without evoking suspicion?

Realizing his predicament, she broke into an angry torrent of German. Was

she not of the Army Intelligence from Berlin? Was she not on special duty? Would not headquarters punish these stupid pigs?

To each question Warwick replied with an ominous, "*Ja!*"

The officers were too frightened to protest. They had, it seemed, committed an unpardonable blunder.

GLOWERING, Warwick left the place. The girl followed. The tire had been changed. They got into the car. Countess Dagmar drove off.

"My . . . my breasts were too noticeable," she said weakly.

"Noticeable! They're perfect."

"Why didn't you escape without me?"

The question surprised him. "Why . . . why," he stammered then blurted out: "I love you, that's why."

Before she could reply, an auto horn tooted in the distance. Warwick looked up. A car was speeding up the hill horn tooting excitedly. He stiffened in the seat.

"Better stop!" he ordered.

She braked the car to a stop. The other car, a taxi, drew alongside. The window lowered and a young, platinum blonde woman stuck her head out. Her face was attractive, if cruel, but Warwick took no comfort in it. Baroness von Orman of the German secret service.

"You got my message? You hid the new maps and put the old ones on the table?" she asked excitedly.

"*Ja!*" he was able to mumble. "Why?"

"Because I have every reason to believe that Major Warwick is near here."

Warwick sucked in his breath. He distrusted the Baroness. But he had to have those maps. His brain spun. Do something! And do it fast! He opened the door and said: "*Kommen Sie hier!*"

The Baroness paid off the taxi driver
(Continued on page 102)

Diana Daw

DIANA HAS MADE
HER ESCAPE
FROM AN INDIAN
RAJAH'S HAREM.
TAKING A
NUMBER OF WO-
MEN WITH HER,
SHE HEADS FOR
THE MOUNTAINS

By
CLAYTON
MAXWELL

IN THE FASTNESS OF THE MOUNTAINS, DIANA
SETS UP TEMPORARY CAMP

WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS PLACE EASY TO DEFEND! WE
CAN'T GO ON FOR AWHILES--WE MUST REST A BIT,
AND WE DON'T WANT TO BE SURPRISED BY SOME
OF THE RAJAH'S SOLDIERS AND TAKEN BACK
TO A SLOW DEATH BY TORTURE!



I CAN'T
STAND THIS
WORK. I'M
TIRED OUT!

WE'RE NOT
USED TO THIS
SORT OF LIFE.
I WHIH I

I DON'T BELIEVE THE
RAJAH WOULD TORTURE
US IF WE DID GO BACK.
PERHAPS HE WOULD TOR-
TURE DIANA BECAUSE SHE
PLANNED THIS BREAK. BUT
WE COULD SAY WE WERE
FORCED TO GO WITH HER.

NAIDA, WHO HAS BEEN ON SCOUTING DUTY,
REPORTS TO DIANA

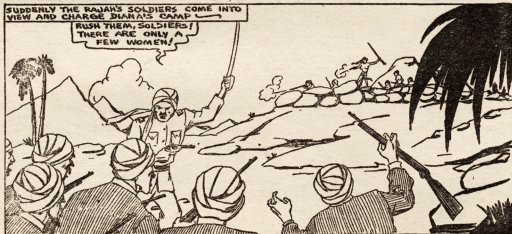
THEY'RE COMING,
DIANA. SOME OF
THE RAJAH'S
SOLDIERS! I
SAW THEM!

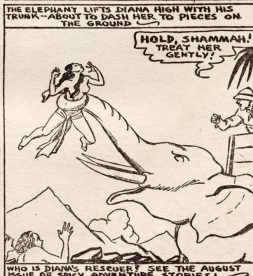
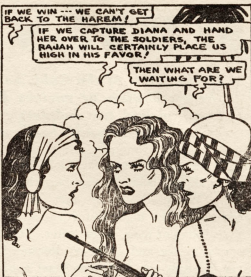
LOAD YOUR GUNS AND MAN
THE DEFENCES. WE'LL GIVE
THEM A WARM RECEPTION



SUDDENLY THE RAJAH'S SOLDIERS COME INTO
VIEW AND CHARGE DIANA'S CAMP

RUSH THEM, SOLDIERS!
THERE ARE ONLY A
FEW WOMEN!





PRIESTESS OF THE

In the midst of the Gobi, he came upon all that was left of the civilization of ancient Egypt. . . . And the fate of a hundred and two helpless girls depended on the Princess he himself had raised from her tomb!

THE moon over the Gobi plain slipped behind a vaporous cloud.

Warm drops of rain falling through the hot night ended at last the minor ballad of their patter-patter. Stillness, awesome and ominous, descended over the ages-ago forgotten Temple of Anghapand—the House of The Dead That Live.

In the center of the temple yard two

flames were blazing. Before these twin fires, in a great semi-circle, one hundred and two maidens, their bodies almost bare, sat on the ground. The arms of each were stretched upward, lifting young breasts, while feet were tucked under the bend of outspread knees.

There were not just a *hundred* of these maidens, whose unclad bodies were of surpassing loveliness, but one



By
**STEWART
GATES**

LIVING DEAD



Shuddering beneath the whip
lashes, they wavered between
torture and death in the blaze!

hundred and *two*. And because of that extra two, the fires burned brightly.

They burned eagerly, as if they knew that two of those maidens were for them. Into each fire one supple and virginal body soon would be driven, and the tongues of flame seemed to leap in anticipation. Any girl in that semi-circle would be delicious to the caress even of a consuming flame.

In a corner of the temple yard, waiting and watching, I stood with two other maidens kneeling at my feet. These, also, were clothed only in little more than the amber tints laid upon them by the blazing fires. Each knelt with her head bowed until I should command her to lift it.

"How long," I asked Ra-mose, who knelt at my right foot, "will it be before She appears?"

Ra-mose lifted her face, and sat erect. In her great sloe eyes there was gratitude that I should choose her, instead of her sister, Ra-sen, to answer my question. Her little breasts, that were like mounds of rapture fashioned into the mold of newly ripened fruit, quivered with the lift of her shoulders; and her silky skin brushed against my knee, so close was she to me. The warm rain that had bathed her a little while before, drained from those treasures of her bosom and made a little rivulet of velvet dew in the hollow between them.

"Soon now, O Lord of Dreams," said Ra-mose, "the Princess Heth-put, Priestess of Those Who are Dead, and Queen of Those Who Live, will come from the Temple. Even now she is crossing the Lake of Demons. Then will two maidens be given to the Sacrificial Fires."

IT WAS with untold joy that little Ra-mose spoke of the maidens who

would be bestowed upon the Sacrificial Fires. For herself she could have no fear: Because she and her sister had been given to me, it would not be they who, at Heth-put's command, would know the sting of whips on their backs and soft thighs until, in their desperation of agony, the flames would be a refuge of mercy.

As long as they were in my care, Ra-mose and Ra-sen would know no other fire than the warmth of my lips.

Ra-sen stirred at my left foot and I knew she wished that she might lift her face and speak. I touched her warm shoulder and lifted her chin. Instantly her upper body was erect and I thought that even the touch of my fingers to her shoulder had sent a rosy flush across her firm little breasts, down across her stomach and along the smoothness of her thighs. She too, like her sister, called me "Lord of Dreams," which was as pleasing to my ears as was the sight of her arched hips and the tapering sweep of her young legs.

"Lord of Dreams, from the World That Lives, Ra-sen is humble at your feet. Will you put me away when the Princess Heth-put commands you to her arms? You must punish me for asking My Lord a question, but all pain will be beautiful if I may know my arms too will sometime again receive you."

And her arms lifted up to me, almost supplicating, though I knew full well there was more joy in them than supplication once they went around me. But I scolded her.

"You have said before, Ra-sen, that she whom you call Princess Heth-put, priestess of this temple the world so long ago forgot, would shower her favors upon me. In the first place, I'll have something to say about that. I don't

even know what she looks like. She'd have to be more beautiful than you, and have lips that are wiser in the art of kissing, before I'd trade you. In the second place—what should she care about me?"

Ra-mose the sister had dropped her head, when she had finished telling me that Heth-put was even then crossing the Lake of Demons on her way into the yard. Now, without my bidding, she raised it with a jerk that shook her out-thrust breasts and sent a tremor along her bare thighs to her knees.

Said Ra-mose, solemnly, "Of all maidens in the world, the World of the Dead, or the World of the Living, the Princess Heth-put is the most beautiful. Did you not see that when you released her from her tomb?"

Ra-sen said something about me having been set aside by the gods for the arms of this unknown "Priestess." But I gave Ra-sen no heed.

Ra-mose had said, "When you released her from her tomb!"

MY brain leaped backward, across the full twelve months of a year. The scene in the temple yard before me, its fires and its waiting maidens, faded and in its place I saw dim objects slowly taking shape in the shadowed interior of an Egyptian tomb at Thebes. I had led the archaeological expedition that had found that tomb and opened it. It had been my first expedition and it had been thought that because of my inexperience I would never succeed in discovering an ancient burial vault of any consequence.

But in the rocks beside the Nile I found the most important tomb of all the Rameses dynasty. On the sarcophagus that lay in the center of the great chamber hewed in the rocks lay the

Book of the Dead. I can hear today the echoes of my wild shout of excitement when my lantern helped me decipher an inscription on the papyrus roll that read, "O Gods of Egypt, take to Thy Nine Eternities Egypt's Daughter and with her keep in Thy Guardianship the Pearl of Romen-apet, until it is Thy will that there come to dwell in Egypt again a Daughter chaste as She whom Thy Will has called to Your councils in the sky."

"Daughter of Egypt!" That meant a daughter of the Rameses. Only the heiress to the throne was called, in that ancient day, "Daughter of Egypt."

And so great was this princess that even in her Book of the Dead, no record was put down of her name. Great indeed had she been, to be identified only as "Daughter."

And—"The Pearl of Romen-apet!"

For a hundred years, adventurers and scientists, all who have learned the secrets of the hieroglyphics of the Nile, had dreamed of finding in tombs or temple ruins, the fabled "Pearl of Chastity," that was the crown jewel of the Queen of Sheba and lost by her when she submitted to the caresses of Solomon.

There, before me, in the shadowed tomb, lay the sarcophagus and the coffin that would reveal to me the mummified body of a "Daughter of Egypt," the Egypt of four thousand years ago, who was so great that the gods would recognize her without her name being inscribed in the Book of the Dead. And so chaste that Egypt sent back to the gods the fabled pearl, because none other was worthy of wearing it!

THE semi-circle of maidens before me now, in the temple yard, were watching the temple arches with fear

in their eyes. Presently a figure would emerge, Heth-put, Priestess of the Dead and the Living, and two girls would go to the flames. But, almost naked and enticing as they were, their skin gleaming in the fire rays, their breasts rising and falling with their anxious breaths, they still were blurred to my eyes. I remembered that moment when I lifted the gold and alabaster cover from the coffin of that Daughter of Egypt.

MY own fingers had raised it, for I was leader of the expedition. My heart raced with eagerness for sight of the linen-wrapped mummy within.

The lid came away and there the mummy lay, its death mask the image of a woman of such beauty as I had never dreamed. My fingers reached toward that death mask reverently, slowly—four thousand years were about to be lifted from a face.

But my fingers never reached the shining mask. Across the Valley of Thebes a slash of blinding lightning came down from the heavens. Just a single flash, that reached into the dark and musty tomb and illumined it with the brilliance of a thousand floodlights. And in that flash I saw a vision—afterwards I assured myself my brain was crazed, but I *saw that vision!*

A woman—a mere girl—majestic and proud, thoughtless of her nudity, floating up from that coffin of the Daughter of Egypt! The face of the gold death mask was above a stem-like neck. I saw her breasts filling out into the roundness of youth, as if they were little balloons being blown up. I saw the curve of hips blossoming to fulsome curves and of legs that were golden, taking shape. I saw arms reaching to me, hands flattened so that their palms were toward me, the ancient gesture of

fealty. And lips that had grown as red as a poppy while I looked on, moved.

A voice came from them, a voice that was the flow of molten gold across the vibrant strings of a harp.

"I shall send for you, O my beloved. I am Egypt and you have set me free. You shall be my King."

In the instant of its burning the lightning flash was dead. The tomb was dark. Only my lantern dripped a yellow ray upon the coffin of the "Daughter" on whose mummy I had expected to find the priceless Pearl of Chastity.

Again I gave a shout that now, standing in the temple yard in the middle of the Gobi Desert, I could still hear ringing.

The mummy wrappings lay flat on the coffin floor. A moment before they had wrapped a "Daughter of Egypt." Now they wrapped—only the musty air of a chamber that had known no air for four thousand years!

The Daughter of Egypt and the Pearl of Romen-apat were both gone!

It had been months before my brain returned to peace. My associates had recoiled before that lightning flash. They had not yet looked into the coffin. They derided me when I told them the mummy wrappings had wrapped a body, and that I had seen that body rise and disappear in the vision of a nude girl whose lips had promised me that I should be her King. It came at last that I did not believe my own memory. Then I was sane again.

MY brain bridged back from that moment in the chamber of the dead to the present. That vision I had seen in the tomb, that ancient Princess had promised, while her unclothed body was resuming its shapely roundness: "I shall send for you!"

And here was I, in the court yard of the Temple of Anghapand, in the middle of the Gobi, where no stranger's foot had been for countless centuries!

The princess of the tomb indeed had called me!

A year before, I had not known that such a temple existed in the world. No books or ancient records seemed to include a record of it. Only fifty miles

away was Urga, capital of Inner Mongolia, famed for its prison cages in which condemned persons can neither stand, nor sit nor lie down, and die a

From the coffin she floated up
... up ... seeming to take on
the color of life.



slow and torturous death. But no travelers to Urga ever had brought away a story of a great temple rising so near on the Mongolian plain, a temple where a hundred priests and hundreds of maidens prayed at every dawn to Ra and Isis and Astarte and other gods and goddesses of old Egypt.

Yet month on month, after that lovely figure escaped the coffin in the tomb, a voice had come to me every night. Always it came sharp on the stroke of midnight.

"Come to me, Beloved, come to Anghapand!"

Whether I danced in a cafe or slept in my rooms that voice sounded in my ears. Sometimes it seemed close; at others far away. But always it was like the dripping of wet gold through music, and always when it sounded I seemed to see that glorious form taking shape while it floated in the air above the coffin I had opened at Thebes.

AT last I had found trace of the temple in an old parchment manuscript in the London museum. It was in the report of the great traveler, Tavernier, who stole the Hope diamond from a buddha in Siam and delivered it to King Louis XVI of France. In his report, Tavernier described a vast temple in the heart of the Gobi where a colony of men and women who were neither Mongolian nor Chinese nor Tibetans, lived in isolation and worshiped ancient gods.

"Your Majesty, (wrote Tavernier) it shall not be said that I am credible of the fantastic or imposed upon by the unbelievable, but it is impressed upon me by the Emperor Akhbar, ruler of India, that the monks and maidens of Anghapand are dead. They appear to live, so it is said by Akhbar, and in fur-

therance of that appearance they move about and dance and sing and make devotions. They eat of food, and to each monk there falls such of the maidens as please him. Yet all these activities are as those of dead people, so swears Akhbar.

"It is said these priests and monks and maids are very ancient. The faces of priests and monks are seamed, as if the delta of the Nile ran through their parchment cheeks. Of the young women, it is said, they are willowy as the young grass of April. Their bodies are as fresh as lotus buds and their kisses are ripe with those emotions which belong not to the dead, but to the living. They are scantily clothed and thus it is known that their forms are as delectable as are those of the mistresses of kings."

Tavernier wrote much more of this mysterious retreat of the dead. He described the desert in which, according to his friend Akhbar, the temple was located. I recognized the Gobi—and here I was at last, with plump little Ramose, and the slim Ra-sen, kneeling at my feet, obedient to my every mood as I touched the smoothness of their velvet skin.

I HAD come in a donkey train through Khyber Pass. At Svengow and Sanaw, last of the Inner Cities, I found Lama priests who had heard strange tales of an old temple, and they pointed into the desert's heart. My donkeys brought me at last to the stone gates! It was useless to knock, it seemed to me, for who would hear the tapping even of a hammer? And useless to shout, for the winds of the Gobi drown out the human voice.

Suddenly they opened—while I still considered how to make my arrival known. Ra-mose and Ra-sen had stood

there, their hands linked together. Unashamed, they were, of their near nakedness. The breasts of Ra-mose were full, like ripe tangerines, and the flare of her pliant hips was wider than her sister's. The legs of Ra-sen were tapering columns of living, sinuous ivory.

"In the name of the Gods of Afterwhile," said one of these startling visions, "we bid you welcome, Lord of Dreams. The Princess Heth-put commands us to be your slaves."

Surprised, for they seemed to expect me, I asked, "Your mistress awaits my coming?" And the same one answered, "Aye; we are bid to be your slaves, your companions. And you may know that no man has yet touched his lips to ours. We come to you as maidens, Lord of Dreams, to be utterly yours." Of Ra-mose I asked, grinning a little, "What then do you know of love?" I looked to Ra-sen and added, "And you?"

Ra-mose looked down. "I know, Lord of Dreams, that it is the ecstasy of those who live. It is a force that transforms a maiden into the likeness of a goddess. I am dead, Lord of Dreams. Through your love, I shall live again."

That speech I couldn't digest all at once. While I stared at the head-bowed Ra-mose, watching the sleek young flesh that rippled from her shoulders to her knees, Ra-sen lifted her head to speak.

"We both are dead, Lord of Dreams. It will be good to live again."

I found my tongue.

"Dead? You two? Flowers of loveliness—and dead?"

It was Ra-mose who answered. "We were slaves of Heth-put four thousand years ago. It was right that we should die when our mistress died. Please to see the wound of the knife."

She turned around, putting her back

to me. Ra-sen turned too. Each put a finger behind her and laid it on a spot on her back I could have found at once without their pointing. Just a blemish on smooth velvet skin, close above the small of the back. It was a scar that might have been left by the deep thrust of a slender bladed knife. Ra-sen said, "Hat-nuffer, the Eunuch for Heth-put, placed us in a row, the five hundred maids of Heth-put, on the marble floors of the palace at Karnak. In each of our backs he inserted his knife. Two hours, by the hour-glass, I lay on the stones waiting until Hat-nuffer should reach me. He would not leave one of us until we had died. He came to Ra-mose before he reached me. I died much quicker than did my sister."

"Heth-put?" I echoed. "Who was this Heth-put whose maidens had to die with her?"

I felt, at that moment, a premonition of the answer. I waited, breathless. A tremor ran through both girls. Each dropped her head for an instant and made a sign with her hands, a gesture of lifting dust from the ground and placing it on her forehead. Each covered her lovely breasts with her palms.

It was Ra-mose who answered me. "Lord of Dreams, it was the Princess Heth-put whom you freed from her tomb at Thebes. She is the daughter of Thut-shep-Amun, last of the Rameses."

Ra-mose paused, and both she and Ra-sen bowed their heads until their lips were at my feet. The archs of their backs were like sculptured rhythms. Ra-mose took up her pause as solemnly as if she were reciting an incantation.

"Heth-put, who bids us be yours until you may go to her, is Egypt, my lord. We have waited four thousand years for her to come to us. She still is dead, but your arms will give her life and she

will reign over Egypt once more and you will reign with her."

THAT had been yesterday. Now, while I waited for Heth-put to emerge and send two maidens to their fiery death, as Ra-mose and Ra-sen had explained that she would, I had a fresh memory of the night before—the Gobi night. It was a night under the stars with clinging kisses on my lips. A night of change from death to life! For yesterday, when I stood at the gates, Ra-mose and Ra-sen had gravely assured me, frequently, that they were dead, but before the coming of dawn they had almost hysterically cried out that they lived again!

While the stars blinked and the Gobi moon swept across the temple yards, little Ra-mose quite suddenly stiffened in my embrace and her two arms reached up to the skies. I touched her, I wanted to finish the kiss I had begun to travel across her lily-like throat, but she stopped me.

"Please, Lord of Dreams! I am becoming different. Do not intervene. I feel my blood flowing. My toes—I can count them without looking at my feet. My heart beats once more as it beat when my mother sold me to Thut-shep-Amen, Lord of the Nile and the Three Headed Serpent. My heart beat fast then, for I hoped I might become the King's favorite. But Heth-put demanded me as her waiting maid. It was not hard to die by the knife of Hat-nuffer, for I knew nothing of the touch of a man's lips on mine. You have restored life to me, my Lord, and it is good to live again."

Ra-sen jumped to her bare feet and turned them into dancing birds. She

too held her arms aloft, her palms flattened to the gods.

"I also live!" she cried out. While she danced about, the moon tinted her shapely thighs with silver and her breasts trembled and gleamed. "I shall go with my mistress, when she lives again," Ra-sen went on, "to kneel at the Pyramids. I shall take to the shrine of Ra at Karnak a scarab of gold. I shall tell my godfather, Ra, that the arms of my lord have made my blood warm again."

I caught her hands and pulled her to me. So hard was she breathing that I thought her breasts would shake free and float away from her bosom. She didn't know that the shrine of her "godfather" Ra, at Karnak, had been lost to history for thousands of years!

"Ra-sen," I cried to her. "Remember the knife of Hat-nuffer? If I could bring my brain to believe you—that would have been forty centuries ago. And you are thousands of miles from Karnak—where your shrine ceased to be, long ago."

She subsided all at once and wilted in my arms. She laid her head on my shoulder and the fragrance of her was like a heady perfume. I felt that scar on her back, and ran my hands up to her bare shoulders, and I could have sworn that her flesh had taken on a new warmth and smoothness. It had become more resilient to the touch and there was a strange quality of new life in the lustrous tints of her skin.

ABRUPTLY, while I watched for the coming of Heth-put into the yard, a chant arose. The semi-circle of maidens lifted their voices in a song of religious rapture, but there was a poignant tone strung through the chant. Two of those voices soon would be shrieking in agony.



He dashed forward, against restraining hands, but too late!
The girl had leaped into the fire!

A double line of priests emerged from the pile of stones. It was my first glimpse of the monks. They were hooded and cowed and their faces made me shudder, so startling were the signs of immeasurable age.

Ra-sen whispered up, "Priests of my godfather, Ra. They too died when the Egypt of the Kings died. When Hethput lives again, they too will have life."

Of Ra-mose, I asked, "How did they come here—across half the world?"

"The gods transported them," Ra-mose answered simply. "Just as they transported us. The gods ordained that we, who are all that are left of the Egypt that was great, should wait here for the coming of the Daughter who is to rule again."

She said it quite simply, with utter belief. I had to shake my head to clear it of the insane impulse to believe her!

I counted the priests. There were fifty of them. Each face I looked into, as the monks circled the blazing fires, seemed older than the one before. Eyes that were like empty caverns stared at me without expression.

They took their stand in two lines, twenty-five off to the right, facing the fires and the maidens, twenty-five off to the left. The maidens quieted their voices and the chant was taken up by the priests.

Their voices sounded as old as the Nile!

SUDDENLY, there was a thunderous roar somewhere inside the temple. A wild, uncanny tumult crashed out, as if a thousand maddened beasts were tearing at each other.

"The Demons have seen Heth-put," Ra-mose explained, but without alarm.

I was about to ask Ra-sen about the "demons" when the chant of the priests died out on a shrill note. Ra-mose and Ra-sen touched their foreheads to the earth, as did the maidens who watched the fires. The priests lifted their hands in silence.

And then Heth-put stood framed in the shadow of a temple arch. I averted my eyes to hold off the full vision of her until the chaos in my brain stilled.

The proud, half-draped figure that was advancing slowly, haughtily, was the same I had seen recapturing its cur-

ving lines in the tomb!

On each firm, outthrust breast, she wore only a hibiscus bud. Around her hips was a brief girdle of lotus flowers. Her thighs and lower legs were as they had been that day at Thebes, and her hips glided with a rhythm that matched the undulant grace I had seen when she floated above the mummy coffin.

Slowly, she moved into the yard. Before each fire she stood for the space of a minute, reciting an incantation. Her voice was the same voice of gold that had come to me through all the months at midnight, bidding me come to Anghapanda.

Not until she had stood before the sacrificial fires did she look across to me. A joyous smile crossed her carmine lips. Her bare arms stretched out to me. I felt the bent bodies of Ra-sen and Ra-mose quiver at my feet. They seemed to know that when Heth-put reached her arms to me, I would go to her no matter how hard I struggled against the impulse.

She stood there; her smile like a ray of sunlight, her body like an alabaster carving. Her outstretched arms touched the outer halves of her breasts and pushed out their hibiscus flower adornments.

I felt myself moving toward her slowly, propelled by some inexplicable inner force. Crossing through the semicircle of bowed maidens, I drank of the perfume of them. I passed between the twin fires and at last the outpointed fingers of Heth-put touched my chest.

Her smile faded and a rosy glow traveled down her sinuous figure from her eyes to her feet. Her arms opened a little and I could not keep myself from walking into them.

"At last you have come, Beloved," said the golden voice. "You have come

to bring me life, and you shall be Egypt's King. Come, stand beside me. To Ra must be sent a sign of my joy. Choose his maidens, Beloved. Choose the most beautiful of all, that Ra may be content that I have sent him worthy messengers."

In a hypnotic spell I looked along the semi-circle. Each maiden now had lifted her face and sat erect, hands folded. Their eyes waited upon me dutifully. I knew the horror of what I was about to do. But when I looked into the eyes of Heth-put I knew, too, that I would have to do her bidding.

I WENT up to the semi-circle. Before one maiden, I stood, and she rose to her feet. Her face was deathly white but her body kept its gleam. She raised her arms and held them out toward one of the fires.

I stood before another. She too rose instantly, stretched out her arms, and moved toward the blaze. Dimly, I was conscious of her trembling breasts, of the sway of her supple hips, of the dazzling beauty of her thighs and legs, but I was more conscious of the beauty that waited for me the glistening beauty of Heth-put.

From each line of priests two black-robed figures moved. I saw, with a dull sense of revulsion, that each of the four men carried a long whip. I wanted to leap at them and tear those cruel thongs from their hands before they could touch the bare backs that waited at the fires; but I could not move.

I heard the lashes whistle in the air. I heard the sickening sound as they cut into tender flesh. But I heard no cries from the tortured maidens. Again and again, in that solemn silence, the whips scarred and tore the slender backs until, at last, one girl could stand it no

longer and, with a tortured scream, ran toward the fire.

Still my senses were too dulled to allow me to move, but I must have shuddered and Heth-put must have seen. Her hand touched me lightly on the wrist. She drew me close until her pliant, slender figure was pressed warmly to me, my hands flattened on her back.

"Would you have me anger the gods by not sending my messengers to them to tell of my gladness that you have come?" asked the golden voice.

Somehow my wits returned and broke the spell of this woman whose insidious caress had dazed me. I gave a shout and leaped to save the girl from the flames. But even as I leaped she disappeared into the fire. I would have rushed in after her but a dozen hands caught and held me. A sharp command from Heth-put brought my release but then I knew full well it was too late to save the girl.

The other still endured the lashing thongs. Her back was a cruel criss-cross of welts, yet she remained motionless, though with huddled, cringing shoulders, trembling only as each blow fell. It was not too late to save her! I caught her up in a single sweep while fifty priests bore down upon me, snarling their rage.

I ran into the temple with my burden. Feet running behind me, the voice of Heth-put echoing, I plunged blindly along dark, damp corridors. I cried out to the girl in my arms, "Which way? Tell me how to get you to safety."

"The priests will not come after me across the lake of demons," cried the girl. "It is at the end of the corridor."

MY pursuers were too old to run as fast as I—even if they were not

(Continued on page 106)

SPAWN OF

The Empire demands tremendous sacrifices of those intrepid men and women who play the Great Game, but no man should be asked to choose between dishonor to the woman he loves and betrayal of those he serves



HE appeared to be an outcast, an Untouchable, one of India's fifty millions, so degraded that their very shadow, falling on one of a higher caste, is a pollution. A member, no doubt, of the native settlement deep in the forests surrounding the town of Purnow, capital of a Native State. And he was daring to come into town!

He, the Untouchable, the defiled one, with filthy rags about his loins and body,

was moving slowly along the street in the evening. There was a sensation. Pious Brahmins, seated at their stalls, spat, cursed, and fled into their shops behind, leaving the way clear.

The Untouchable turned into a grogshop in a low part of the city, and here he was less alien, since neither Brahmin nor Mohammedan partakes of intoxicants—officially, at least. The inmates of this place were half-castes, quarter-

SIVA

By
CLIVE TRENT

castes, hillmen, Chinese, Gurkhas, all the miscellaneous riffraff that composed the city of Purnow.

In a recess at one side of the grog-shop, two lithe and coal-black Moplah

their small breasts undulating on their arched ribs. They were of the dancing caste, and, if you wanted to see anything

Hacked beyond recognition he went down before the throne.



girls were writhing and swaying in dance, their sole attire the loin-cloths about their sleek and glistening hips;

more entertaining than that, you would have had to go to a higher-priced place.

A little hill girl, wearing a sheer cotton garment that hardly reached to her knees, stretched out her brown, henna-stained feet, and looked at the men with enticement smoldering beneath long lashes. A plump Baluchi, wearing a garb that seemed entirely of spangles, was making eyes at a little Gurkha across the room, and, as she moved, brown limbs and vibrant, swaying breasts appeared and reappeared with every ripple of the shimmering costume.

Yet even these spat derisively as the Untouchable One, after fumbling in his rags, produced a coin, planked it down on the bar, and grunted a demand for whiskey.

There was hardly a woman in all India who would demean herself by paying any attention to an Untouchable except those of the same pariah class.

"*Wah*, do we drink with such as this?" growled a young Pathan, fingering his dagger.

THE Eurasian bar-tender slopped the glass toward the outcast, who drank, muttering, and scanning the faces of the hostile gathering. As soon as he had downed the liquor, the huge, hawk-faced Pathan bouncer stalked up to him.

"Now that thou hast drunk, get thee hence, unclean one!" he shouted, laying a ham-like hand upon the Untouchable's shoulder. At the same time, winking at the crowd, he applied the tip of his boot with force and precision to the knot of rags that was twined and bound behind the fellow's body.

Next instant something amazing happened. It was something that probably doesn't happen in India more than once in a century. For the fist of the Un-

touchable shot out with terrific force, and connected with the Pathan's jaw, making a crack like a pistol-shot. The huge man dropped to the floor, where he lay dazed, and blinking groggily.

"*Wah wallah*, it is the end of the world!" screeched the Baluchi with the spangles, as she slid to hiding, all brown and plump resilience beneath the shifting glitter.

There was a terrified backward scurry on the part of the grog-shop inmates. Then somebody yelled, "A Sahib! A Feringhee in disguise!"

Yes, even Gale, of the Secret Service, had betrayed himself when he felt the swift impact of that boot-tip applied to the rear portion of his anatomy. He realized that in an instant.

That chance, unlucky spasm of anger had probably doomed thousands of white men and women to death by torture, and had destroyed his last desperate hopes of averting the anti-British outbreak that the priests of Siva were preparing for the next day, when the new Rajah would be solemnly crowned in the great Temple.

For an instant Gale's eyes swept the crowd. He saw the flashing knives. Even among these non-Hindus the excitement was at fever-heat. They guessed his mission.

He leapt like a bull into the midst of them, battering them down with flailing fists, dashing their knives aside. Once a man tripped him, and he all but fell. Then he was up again, swinging the fellow, a puny, whining Eurasian, around his head like a war-club.

A thrown knife flicked his face, a bottle, hurled by the bartender, crashed against the wall beside his head, the interior of the grog-shop was a howling, shrieking bedlam. But Gale had gained the door and was already in the dark,

narrow street. He sped up it like a hare, with the crowd at his heels, and new members joining it at every instant.

The sudden opening of a dark alley presented itself. Gale turned and dodged down it.

"This way! He went this way!" yelled one of the leaders of the mob, which halted irresolute for a moment.

"No, no, there is the accursed Ferin-ghie!" shouted another of them, pointing up the street. "Quick, let us overtake him!"

There was still hesitation, but the pressure of those behind forced the crowd onward, and in another moment it had gone roaring up the street, leaving Gale flattened against a wall.

Gale waited a moment, then slipped across the alley and knocked twice and then three times at a shuttered window. Instantly a voice spoke from within:

"Who is there?"

"He from the forest," answered Gale.

The door opened noiselessly, and Gale slipped into a perfectly dark room. He had no means of gauging its dimensions, but he knew — he sensed that another person, a woman, was within.

A low laugh, and, in Urdu, "So it is the great Gale, come to keep his appointment with the temple girl. Behold her, then!"

A tiny light flared on a carved brass lamp. Gale saw that he was in a well furnished room, after the Indian fashion, probably that of some petty banker or trader. Reclining on a heap of cushions was the loveliest woman Gale had ever seen.

Not more than a year or two above twenty, and yet mature. Her silk *sarong* was so sheer that it displayed every contour of the two softly rounded breasts, and the ivory limbs that were extended beneath it. A wealth of black hair hung

about her face, whose exquisite beauty for a moment took Gale's breath away.

"The great Gale," whispered the temple girl. "Come, sit down beside me."

Gale took his seat upon the couch. The girl shifted her position slightly, so that one of her knees touched his. She let the folds of the *sarong* fall away, revealing the small, mounded breasts.

"I am awaiting the great Gale's message," said the temple girl.

"**H**ERE is the message that the British Raj sends you, O Shastini," answered Gale. "Tomorrow your lover, Sivananda, will be crowned Rajah of Purnow in the great Temple of Siva. And that is to be the signal for a widespread revolt against the British Raj."

Shastini laughed musically. "And so?" she asked.

"The common folk believe that you are a reincarnation of the goddess Mahadevi, come back to earth to drive the *Mlech* out of India. The priests of Siva have fostered this belief. Tomorrow you are to appear before the multitude as the reincarnated goddess, and spouse of Rajah Sivananda—you, a temple girl, who once frequented the sacred groves and passed from hand to hand like a bale of rugs, before you won the Rajah's fancy."

He was insulting her deliberately, to break down her sense of power. He saw her little hands clench with fury.

"You are a very bold man to dare say that to me, when I have come here in disguise to meet you," she answered.

"I dare say more than that," answered Gale. "Rajah Sivananda is a usurper, who poisoned the old Moslem King of Purnow. But the old King's daughter fled, taking with her the little heir to the throne, who is now a grown man. Before Sivananda acceded to the throne, Purnow was a Moslem State, and there

are still as many Moslems as Hindus in Purnow. Has Sivananda thought that the British Raj may know where the rightful King, Abdul Shah, is living? That the gamble is a desperate one for him and for you?

"The British Raj offers you five lakhs of rupees to flee with me tonight to the Residency, and take refuge there."

Five lakhs—fifty thousand pounds! Gale watched Shastini's face. Not a muscle quivered. Then came again that low, musical laugh.

"So the great Gale misunderstands a woman's heart," said Shastini. "Never for money have I given my love, or betrayed another, Gale. Only love will win me. And I love thee, whom I have long desired to meet."

Lithe as a panther she clung to him, her warm breasts throbbing against him, her arms a barrier about his neck that it was impossible to break. Shastini's perfumed mouth was moist and fervid upon his own.

"For thee," she whispered, "I will renounce all and flee to the Residency. For thee alone!"

Gale's heart was hammering in his breast. The closeness of the contact, the faint, exotic perfume that emanated from her, all but made him forget his mission. Then he remembered it, and smiled—bitterly, because men like Gale do not tread the lonely path of the Great Game to be ensnared by women.

"Come, then!"

"Nay, say first that my love is welcome. Am I not fair? See!" in the dim light she let the folds of the *sarong* fall still farther from her exquisite ivory body. Her half bare figure gleaming and warm, she clung to him, each separate fibre of her trembling with a barbaric fervor.

"Do you not love me, Gale? Then hold

me closer." Soft moans of yearning came from her lips. Gale's hands wandered over the velvet softness of her back. And, through the throbbing ardor that the girl communicated to him, suddenly there came measureless contempt. For one does not lightly enter on the Great Game, nor lightly abandon it, and the Test of Women is the third, and hardest for the aspirant.

"Not here," Gale whispered. "Come to the Residency."

"Ah!" The cry came from her lips like a pistol-shot. She knew she had failed. They were both playing a game. But Gale was wary.

His fist shot out, hard enough to jar her arms loose. He whirled on the two forms creeping toward him.

They leaped silently, two lean and powerful figures clad only in loin-cloths, knives in their hands. Gale, doubling, caught the foremost in the stomach with his head, and sent him flying over his shoulder. The phut of the little automatic with the silencer, that he had drawn from his rags, sounded no louder than the drawing of a cork, but the second man dropped, shot through the forehead.

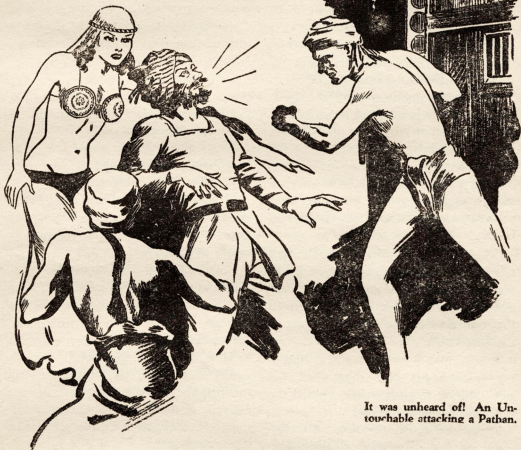
Next instant the brass lamp crashed down on Gale's head from behind, half-stunning him. At the same time the first assassin leaped. Gale felt the knife's edge graze his thigh. It caught in the twisted rags about his loins, and, as the man strove desperately and vainly to withdraw it, Gale's little gun phutted three times in succession.

As the murderer fell, with a bubbling scream, Gale whirled upon the girl, caught her hand with the knife, and twisted the weapon from it. He grasped at her.

He caught nothing but flying draperies. He groped forward and felt an

open doorway in the wall, where previously there had been none. He knew Shastini was no longer in the room.

STAGGERING back, retching and dizzy from the blow upon his head, Gale heard the front door open. "Sahib! Sahib!" a voice called.



It was unheard of! An Untouchable attacking a Pathan.

"Make a light, quick!" Gale's own fingers refused to function. But next instant the splutter of a match showed the two dead men upon the floor, the open door, and—no Shastini.

"Sahib, you should not have struck that blow with your fist in the drinking-place, for only Sahibs strike that way. It was with the utmost difficulty that I

misled the mob and enabled you to keep the appointment here. I hastened back as quickly as possible, fearing treachery, which, Allah be praised, you have averted."

The speaker, a lean, lithe young Pathan, who had been in the grog-shop. struck another match, saw the blood on

Gale's head, and uttered an exclamation of fear.

"It is nothing," said Gale. "That woman struck me with a lamp. Where is she now?"

"On her way to the Rajah, Sahib, and we must act quickly. I have the robes of a Brahmin—cursed be the idolators—which you requested."

Five minutes later, Gale, now attired in a Brahminical robe, with the priestly caste-mark in red paint upon his forehead, was moving stealthily beside the young Pathan through the streets.

Proceeding uphill toward the Residency, which was guarded by a troop of Sikhs, he felt the coolness of the night relieve his aching head. On his right, upon a long ridge, rose the royal palace, blazing with lights, and the huge, dark temple of Siva, where unknown rites were observed, said to be bloody beyond belief.

"Go, now, to the forest folk. I shall follow you," said Gale, and proceeded to the cantonment. The sonorous *Koi hai?* of the Sikh sentry brought forth a word that brought the man's rifle clattering to the "present."

A half-minute later, Gale was hurrying, as fast as his robes would allow, beside a young English officer, toward the Resident's private entrance.

A hammering at the door, a sleepy *chuprasti*; Gale thrust them aside and, ignoring his companion, hurried in. Time was too precious to be wasted.

A door opened, and, in the dim light burning in the corridor, Gale saw Joyce Denby, old Colonel Denby's daughter, standing before him.

SHE was barefooted, and wore nothing but a nightdress, close-fitting enough to reveal the lovely maidenly curves of her breasts and shoulders. She drew

back with a little cry, one hand over each breast, as she saw the two men.

Just a fair-haired English girl in her early twenties, simple and sweet, with a youthful figure as slim as a boy's. A Sahib's woman, for the Sahibs had incomprehensible standards by which they measured their women's charms.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "Who is this man?" She shrank away from Gale—then suddenly she recognized him, and went to him, unafraid. "What is it?" she whispered.

Gale suddenly knew that there were bigger things in life than the Great Game, as he looked at her, though his grave face never quivered.

Old Colonel Denby came out of his bedroom, in pajamas and dressing-robe. "What is it?" he asked tersely.

"I advise you, sir, to call out the garrison at once, and stand to arms," said Gale. "I'm inclined to think Sivananda means to strike."

Colonel Denby, who, of course, knew Gale's mission, turned to young Clifford.

"Call out the detachment at once," he ordered. "Serve out ball cartridges. Get the machine-guns in position—"

That was all of his speech that was audible. A hellish racket broke out upon the instant everywhere, the fierce, fanatical yells of the Rajah's soldiers, swarming to overwhelm the little British-Indian detachment.

And, if that succeeded, it meant the letting loose of the fires of revolt and wholesale slaughter through the length and breadth of India.

THE attackers had crept up so close in the dark of the moon, that they had been able to overwhelm the sentries at a blow. Now they were rushing the barracks, in which sleepy Sikh soldiers were trying to gain possession of their

arms. They were rushing the Residency from all sides.

Gale observed one fact. The Rajah had not sent his own uniformed troops to the attack. If it failed, he could plead that these men were an unauthorized mob, of whose intentions he had had no knowledge. For the most part they were attired in nothing but loin-cloths, though they carried swords and automatics.

Outside, a pandemonium of screams and a hell of slaughter, through which the loyal Sikhs were trying to fight their way back into the Residency; inside, a score of murderous fanatics, already cutting down the gibbering servants.

Gale leaped into the midst of the throng, with Clifford at his side. In the dim light, his Brahminical attire seemed to be unnoticed. He emptied the remaining chambers of his automatic into the midst of the howling mob, snatched a sword from a fallen man, and clove a way into the midst of the fanatics. He lopped a head clean from its shoulders, and sent it spinning and bouncing along the polished floor.

So fierce was his onset, that just for a moment it seemed as if he would be able to clear a pathway to where the few remaining Sikhs were locked in desperate battle with the Rajah's troops in the cantonment square without.

Then young Clifford, at his side, stumbled and fell forward on his face, with the back of his head blown away.

The Colonel was at Gale's side now, emptying the last rounds of an automatic into the fresh throng that came swarming in. A sabre swept and cut the old man across the head. Old Denby was down, and Gale was alone.

He slipped in a pool of blood and fell into the midst of a heap of dead and dying men. The attackers surged over him.

Gale looked up and saw Joyce struggling in the grip of three of them. He could hear her wild screams above the uproar. They had torn the night-dress so that it hung precariously from one shoulder, and were gloating over the smooth whiteness of her skin, and the small, girlish breasts.

"See that the girl is unharmed, and bring her and her father forth!" shouted a man, evidently an officer, in Urdu.

They did not mean to kill them, evidently—if the old Colonel was still alive. The wily Sivananda, who had been afraid to send his troops in uniform, was keeping an ace in the hole in the shape of hostages.

For the moment a sudden silence seemed to fall. Even Joyce, dragged along the dark passages, over the heaps of dead, had ceased to scream, perhaps palsied by fear. And the hell without had subsided, for the last of the defenders had been overcome.

Gale saw the officer snatch away the robes from the old *chuprasti*, the butler, who lay dead in the entrance, and fling them about the girl. And then and there he fought out the battle that all who play the Great Game alone must one day fight.

As a man, he would be dishonored eternally if he did not take the sword, which still lay beside him, and rush into the midst of the fanatics once again, and die, rather than let Joyce become the victim of the vile Sivananda.

And to do so meant to let his Government down. It would mean the deaths of uncounted white men and women through the length and breadth of the peninsula. It was better that Joyce should become the victim of the bestial Rajah than that these greater ills should happen.

It had to be. Then and there, within

the space of a few seconds, Gale fought out his battle, a battle that no man should have to fight.

And he began crawling slowly toward a door that showed a little ahead of him.

He was through just as there came another rush of the fanatics. They were swarming through the house to plunder, before setting it on fire. As they swarmed they thrust their swords into the bodies of the dying servants.

Gale gained the window, dropped into the cantonment. A man ran at him, saw his Brahmin's dress, and recoiled abjectly.

"You have done good work, brother," said Gale, and passed on.

None molested him. Even the most blood-crazed of the fiends dared not molest one garbed like Gale. Quietly he ascended the hill and made his way toward the forests.

All Purnow was humming like a beehive. In a few moments a great spire of flame, lighting up the sky, showed that the Residency was on fire.

AS the moon rose, Gale saw that his robes were stained with blood. Hiding the sword that he still had beneath them, he strode on and on for three hours under the fragrant deodars, until he came to a little clearing in the forest, with a circle of rude huts about it. This was the village of the Untouchables, from which he had originally been supposed to have come into Purnow.

As he strode into the clearing, a sentry uttered a cry of alarm, and in an instant gaunt, filthy wretches came crowding out of the huts and gathering about him. At their head was the young Pathan whom Gale had sent on ahead of him.

The young man pointed to the horizon, which was still red from the glow of the

conflagration. "Is the city in flames?" he asked.

"No," answered Gale, "they have burned the Residency and massacred the Sikhs, and taken Colonel Denby and his daughter away."

A growl of fury broke from the lips of the other.

"If you would ask me why I am here to tell the tale," said Gale, "you know the first rule of the Great Game that we both play, my friend."

"Aye, I know it," answered the other, "and the Game must verily be played. I thought that fox Sivananda would strike, as soon as Shastini's plot to assassinate you failed. It is war, then, between Sivananda and the Raj?"

"It is war," answered Gale, "and yet the fury will not break until the woman Shastini is shown to the multitudes in Siva's temple as the goddess reborn. Then all India will be afire."

"And—your commands?" asked the Pathan, speaking to Gale as if to an equal.

"First, let these idolator's robes be washed," said Gale, "and give me new ones. Then give me five men, dressed even as I am, and do you follow in two hours, with all your men, in accordance with the plan that we have made."

Half an hour later Gale, in new robes, accompanied by his five men, strode back through the forests in the direction of Purnow.

DAWN was breaking over Purnow when the six entered, walking separately, but the city still hummed and buzzed with excitement. At last the blow had been struck against the hated *Mlech*, and later, after the reincarnation of the goddess was proclaimed, millions would arise from all parts of mighty Mother India, to kill, to loot, to burn.



He caught her hand just in time, twisted the knife from her.

As soon as the six struck the highway they found it crowded with countryfolks coming in to see the great spectacle of the coronation. Peasants trudging with their wives, babies in shoulder-litters, men on oxen with their womenfolk walking behind, big *ruth*, tinselled and painted bullock-carts with curtains shielding women of high-caste; Brahmins, Sudras, members of fifty castes were pouring into Purnow. Only the Untouchables were absent, for their presence in the holy city

on such a day would mean certain death.

From all the temples came the sound of gongs, conches were being blown, maimed men begged for alms by the roadside, fakirs wound into elongated skeletons with tight hoops of iron, and limbless men rolled and crawled on their way.

Followed by shrill blessings from the pilgrims, the six apparent Brahmins pushed through the throngs and made their way up to the ridge on which the

palace and the mighty temple stood.

The sun's rim rose above the horizon. There was a stir in front of the palace, where the State elephants were being led out to be accoutered. Already a few worshipers were kneeling in the outer court of the temple, whose front, carved with strange symbols, seemed to waver in the morning sunlight.

The six strode on into the inner court, reserved only for Brahmins, in general, though on that day the multitude, above the Sudra caste, would be admitted not only into this court, but into the temple itself.

Gale approached the great bronze gates and beat upon the sacred conch that hung beside them, a huge fossil shell, fabled to be the ear of a god.

An old priest opened a side door, and, seeing that the six were Brahmins, with the caste mark on their foreheads, admitted them.

Now, stretching ahead of him, Gale saw the immensity of the temple, with the huge, squat image of Siva, and the stone carvings about him.

"Come hither, brother," Gale whispered, turning aside into the little porter's lodge.

As the old man followed him unsuspectingly, Gale drew his sabre from beneath his robes and sliced through the throat. He rolled the corpse into a corner. This was the Game, as it had to be played.

FOR a while Joyce seemed to have lost consciousness. She came back to herself to find herself in a cart that was jogging, jogging along a road, surrounded by crowds of shrieking fanatics. Another figure was curled up on the floor beside her. She put out her hand and touched it, peered through the moonlight that came through the curtains, and dis-

covered that it was her father.

She bent over him in terror, momentarily forgetting her own. He was still alive, but breathing heavily, stertorously, and there was blood all over his face.

Tenderly she wiped some of it away with the old *chuprasti's* robe that covered her. Surely it was all a frightful dream—that sudden awakening from sleep, the figure of the Brahmin who had come into the Residency with Clifford—the rush of the fanatics and the slaughter!

She tried to preserve the remnants of her sanity. Where were they taking her? That she and her father were the prisoners of the Rajah seemed certain—she had heard rumors of some anti-British movement. But how had they dared? Did they not know of the punishment that would follow?

On and on went the cart. Now and again some blood-crazed fanatic would raise the curtains, peer in at her, and shout words of opprobrium that meant nothing to her. On and on through the moonlight. Joyce knew, from the hum about her, that she was in Purnow now. The horses that drew the cart were straining up an incline. Then the cart stopped.

Joyce was pulled roughly out, her father flung to the ground. She knew where she was now—in one of the enclosures of the palace that towered above her.

Palace servants were ordering back the mob. Joyce was dragged inside, down a dark corridor, flung into a dark room.

Then hours seemed to go by, until of a sudden the lock of the door clicked, and Sivananda entered. He was wearing loose silken robes, and in the light from a huge electric bulb outside, Joyce

could see an enormous single stone in the front of his turban that seemed to glitter all colors of the rainbow.

He stood looking at her insolently, mad with blood-lust, reckless now that he had played his cards.

But there was more than blood-lust in his eyes as he looked down at the shrinking girl. Behind him, in the corridor, Joyce could see another figure standing, but Sivananda paid no heed to it.

WITH twitching fingers he tore at Joyce's grotesque robes, tearing them away almost to her waist, and, catching her up, held her with one arm, while with the other hand he pawed at her slight body.

She screamed and beat at him. "You dog, you black dog!" she cried. "Do you think you can do this to an English girl?"

But Sivananda had gone mad with more than blood-lust. He tore ribbons of calico from the robe, exposing the white columns of her legs. His horrible mouth was pressed to hers, and Joyce felt herself growing weak, fainting, as she beat ineffectually at his face. His hands were knotted on her bare back, drawing her to him, drawing her. . . .

Suddenly Joyce became aware that another figure was in the room. It was that of an old, bearded priest. He came up to Sivananda and uttered words of sharp command.

Sivananda, still holding the girl, turned, snarling like a dog. Again the old priest spoke. For a moment longer the Rajah held the girl, then flung her to the floor.

Hellish laughter poured from his lips. "I, even I," he said in English, "must obey my priesthood. Know then, little

fighting cat, that I cannot make you mine until you have been purified with the bath and perfumes, and the sacred thread bound about you, in accordance with the laws of Manu. But today, in a few hours, after the temple ceremony, all shall be done. If you are sensible, I may even spare the life of the old fool, your father!"

He stalked out, and the lock clicked. Outside, Joyce could hear the yells of the multitude, the thudding of gongs.

The door opened again. A troop of laughing brown girls came in and seized Joyce with shrieks of derision. She was dragged away, down dim passages, into a room that reeked of perfumes.

Shrieking with mirth, they stripped the struggling girl nude and anointed her with oils and sandalwood, bound up her hair. Joyce knew only a few words of Hindustani, and, half-crazed with terror, was only dimly conscious of the way in which they handled her, staining her breasts with henna, staining her soles and palms. The frightful gestures that they made passed but dimly through her consciousness.

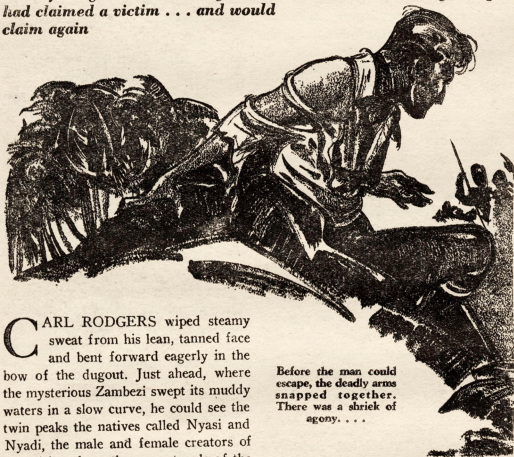
One of them, who spoke a little English, was bawling in her ear. She was teaching her the arts of love, according to one of the Sutras. Joyce had heard some of those words in childhood. But a merciful amnesia was stealing over her. Shuddering, she submitted to their ministrations.

IN THE packed temple, Gale watched the frenzied antics of the mob. Once, for six months, he had officiated in the temple of the Juggernaut, as an assistant priest, undetected, and this experience was going to stand him in good stead now.

(Continued on page 111)

JUDGMENT OF THE GHOST GOD

Rodgers returned from his expedition to find his sweetheart in the power of the nitrate camp's boss. Where was the friend he had left to guard her? Rodgers learned too soon! The ghost god had claimed a victim . . . and would claim again



CARL RODGERS wiped steamy sweat from his lean, tanned face and bent forward eagerly in the bow of the dugout. Just ahead, where the mysterious Zambezi swept its muddy waters in a slow curve, he could see the twin peaks the natives called Nyasi and Nyadi, the male and female creators of life, rising above the green tangle of the jungle. Midway between those curiously shaped eminences of volcanic rock lay the Halfway Camp of the Zambezi Nitrates Company, and in Halfway Camp he would meet Veronica Edwards again.

The two blacks behind him plied their

Before the man could escape, the deadly arms snapped together. There was a shriek of agony. . . .

painted, broad-bladed paddles industriously. They, too, had women waiting for them in the rude *kraal* between the deified mountains—full-breasted, wide-hipped ebony women with rings in their ears and their noses, whose love songs

By
C. A. M. DONNE

made a murmurous melody among the straw huts when darkness had fallen over the tiny stockaded village. Yes, the blacks were as sick as he was of the silent river and the devil-haunted jungle, after a week of serving the young American engineer whose sole interest seemed to be bits of rock and topographical formations.

Only four years out of college, with no experience of the far places of the earth, Rodgers had jumped at the chance to go to Mozambique, in Portuguese East Africa, to make a survey of ter-



ritory being worked by the Zambezi Nitrates Company, an American concern carrying on mining operations under a grant from the government of Portugal.

He had landed at Beira three weeks before, confidently expecting to find adventure. But he had never expected to find, in that outlandish part of the world, a girl like Veronica Edwards.

She had been born and schooled in Ohio. In New York she had worked as secretary to one of the officials of the syndicate which owned Zambezi Nitrates. The adventurous spirit was in her, too, and before long she had wheedled her boss into sending her to Beira, against his better judgment.

Veronica had greeted Rodgers when he first strode into the company offices in the long, whitewashed, shed-like building at Beira. She had hair like fine spun gold clinging in tight curls to her small, proud head. He was six feet tall and the top of her head came about to his shoulder, so that she had to tilt her head back to look at him. That brought her bold, young breasts into sharp relief against the thin stuff of her white waist—for it was far too hot at that season for even the wispiest brassiere—and made him realize that it had been a long time since he had been interested in any woman. Made him realize, too, that the face of this woman was prettier, and her body slimmer and daintier than those of any woman he had known.

HE HAD spent three days in Beira, learning about the country he was to prospect, and in that time he got to know Veronica better. So well, in fact, that the day he was to start up the Zambezi with Reginald Turner, a well-mannered young Englishman who had been with Zambezi Nitrates for several years, Rodgers told her he loved her.

"Then you won't mind my being with you so much," she said. And, to his amazement, it developed that she had cajoled Williams, the Beira manager, to

allow her to accompany the engineers into the interior. The news gladdened him and filled him with misgivings at once.

A launch took them as far as Half Way Camp the first day, and the moment they arrived there Rodgers knew that Veronica should have stayed behind. Pascal Brant, boss of the camp, was the only white person there. He lived in the most pretentious hut of the *kraal* with the prettiest black girl of the village, a slim, shy creature named Bara. He was brutal and thickset and ugly to meet, and the natives were terrified of him.

Rodgers could have smashed Brant's whiskery jaw when the latter said to Veronica, letting his little dark eyes rove over her in a way that left no doubt as to his thoughts: "So you're goin' to stay here while the others go up the river. You and me ought to get pretty well acquainted before they get back."

"No," Rodgers contradicted, changing his plans in that second, "I'm going to take a couple of natives and go up the river alone. Turner is staying to take care of Miss Edwards."

Rodgers could trust Turner. He kissed Veronica goodbye without any undue fears for her, expecting to be gone ten days or two weeks. But in the jungle a vague disquietude had come over him and he had hurried his work, driving his native paddlers to the limit. And now he was back—almost.

More than glad to be back . . .

THE blacks began to jabber to one another excitedly behind him. Twisting about, Rodgers found them gazing at the shore with eyes that bulged whitely with superstitious awe. Following the direction of their gaze he saw that they were passing the rocky headland where-on, clearly outlined against the back-

ground of the jungle, stood the image of the most terrible of all the devil-gods of the district—Zubuk, the ghost-god, to whom is reserved the power to pronounce and execute death sentences upon his subjects.

"See how he holds his arms curved in front of his chest?" Turner had explained to Rodgers the day they reached Halfway Camp. "Well, they tie the suspect and stand him on Zubuk's lap, so that he is within those arms. If the poor devil is to die, the arms simply fold against the chest and crush him to death, very messily. I saw it once and don't ever want to see it again. Of course, the arms are moved by ropes and pulleys and weights, and old Ana-Niki, the witch doctor, pulls the lever that works 'em. But you can't tell that to the natives."

With a shudder Rodgers saw that the god had lately claimed a human life. The arms were folded tight against the wooden chest, and the crushed body of a man, tiny at this distance, hung limply from them. It made him sick to think of the death scene, probably the night before, with the red firelight flickering on the gray wood of the hideous fifteen-foot image, the voodoo drums thumping a mad tattoo, the circle of black faces leaning close to watch fearfully, the dance of old Ana-Niki in his dress of feathers and human skulls and, when the madness had reached its peak—the *thud* of the mighty wooden arms clamping shut, the agonized squeal of the dying man, the crunch of bones and the spurting of bright blood.

Rodgers' eyes narrowed as he looked more intently at the dead man. Somehow, the body did not seem as black as a native's should, since the men of the *kraal* never wore more than a narrow loin cloth. This body appeared brown, almost the color of khaki.

With sudden apprehension, he whirled again toward the paddlers. "Go ashore!" he ordered. "Quick!"

They shook their heads, terrified. "Taboo!" they muttered. In all Africa no native would transgress on ground sacred to a god so fearful until he had been consecrated and had seen the witch doctor perform the dance that would keep him from evil.

Rodgers took the big revolver from the holster at his thigh and aimed it at the gleaming chest of the black nearest him. "Ashore," he repeated, "or you die and your body will be eaten by crocodiles."

The dugout swerved and came abreast of the current. Their eyes rolling with fear, the blacks propelled it toward what seemed the immediately lesser of two evils. The prow grated on land and Rodgers leaped out. Before he had taken ten steps toward the horrid idol he knew that the man it held in its crushing embrace was Reginald Turner.

The young Englishman had not been dead many hours, Rodgers guessed, as he brushed a swarm of flies from the still sticky blood that had welled from a dozen places in his broken body. The flesh was cold, but *rigor mortis* was not yet complete.

He tried to pry the great arms open, but their embrace was tighter than his strength could manage. Horror gagged him so that he could not do much more—horror, and a mighty fear of what might have happened to Veronica.

The dugout had not waited for him, its terrified crew speeding it on downstream as soon as he left it. But Rodgers preferred the jungle path anyway, which led in a straight line to the *kraal*, barely half a mile away. And as he ran along the path at top speed, between impenetrable green walls that hid mysteries he would never know nor wish to know,

he cursed himself, first for permitting Veronica to visit Halfway Camp and, secondly, for not keeping at her side every minute.

THE men were at work in the mine cut in the side of Nyasi and only a few women moved about the *kraal*, some of them carrying naked babies on their shoulders. He saw Bara, Brant's mistress, sitting alone beside a hut, her eyes fixed stonily on nothingness.

"Where is your master?" he demanded of Bara.

Her dark eyes, no longer soft, flashed hatred. She lifted a slim arm and pointed significantly toward the main hut at the far end of the *kraal*.

Ana-Niki, hideous in his ornaments made of human bones, barred Rodgers' way at the door of the hut. "Magic is being made," he warned, grimacing to show his toothless gums. "No one must enter."

Rodgers thrust him aside so impatiently that the old witch-doctor sprawled in the dust. The engineer strode through the low doorway of the hut. For a moment he could not accustom his eyes to the darkness.

Then he saw Veronica and Brant in a close embrace. She seemed only half dressed, and the curved whiteness of her flesh gleamed as he held her with eager, grimy paws.

RODGERS' impulse in that first moment of terrible realization was to kill them both. In a moment, however, the red mists of fury had passed and he intended to leave silently, never letting them know he had seen them, never letting Veronica know how deeply she had wounded him. But even as he turned, his eyes, used to the gloom by this time,

detected something strange about that intimate embrace.

The girl held herself rigid, her body arched away from the man—not at all like a woman responding to his caresses. Brant's sweaty shoulder was pressed against her mouth in such a manner that, even if she had tried, she could not cry out. Her arms were pinned to her sides by his left arm, circling her shoulders, as tightly as though they had been tied with rope. Her clothing had not been loosened or removed to expose the creamy curves of her body—the cloth had been torn almost to tatters.

Rodgers was surprised by the steadiness of his own voice as he said, not loudly: "Brant!"

The mining boss dropped the weakened girl to the floor and whirled, snarling an oath. Crouching, his broad body hunched and his feet wide apart, he reached for the butt of the revolver on his hip. His hand never touched it.

Rodgers took a single long step toward the man and swung his right arm stiffly from the hip. His knuckles battered into the center of the ugly face of the snarling Brant, flattened the fellow's broad nose, spattered blood in all directions. Brant went backward to the floor. He reached for his gun again as he struggled to his feet, but it had fallen from its holster. At the same time Brant discovered his unarmed state. Rodgers' left fist drove into his face, straight from the shoulder, flooring him again.

Brant would have lain there, whipped and groveling, but Rodgers grasped the khaki of his shirt and yanked him to his feet. He shook the man as a terrier shakes a rat.

"What happened to Turner?" he demanded.

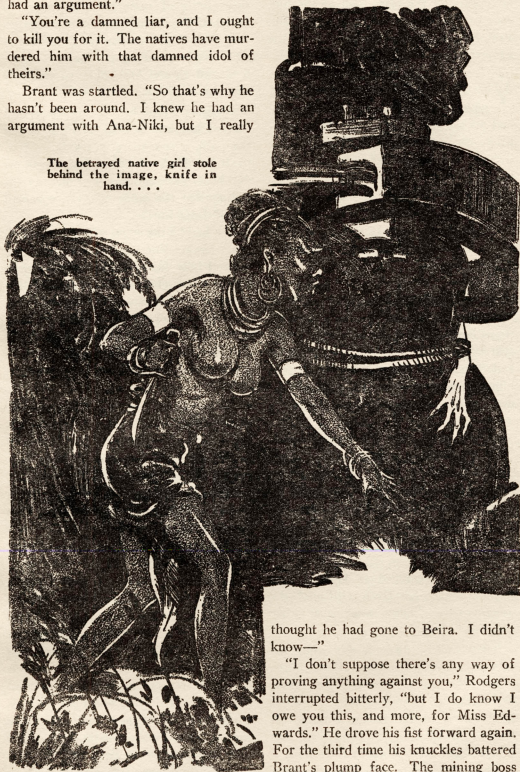
Brant looked at him blankly, dazed.

"Turner? He went back to Beira. We had an argument."

"You're a damned liar, and I ought to kill you for it. The natives have murdered him with that damned idol of theirs."

Brant was startled. "So that's why he hasn't been around. I knew he had an argument with Ana-Niki, but I really

The betrayed native girl stole
behind the image, knife in
hand. . . .



thought he had gone to Beira. I didn't know—"

"I don't suppose there's any way of proving anything against you," Rodgers interrupted bitterly, "but I do know I owe you this, and more, for Miss Edwards." He drove his fist forward again. For the third time his knuckles battered Brant's plump face. The mining boss

flew backward, crashed head and shoulders through the glass wall of the hut, so that his face was in the sunlight. Rodgers heard startled cries from the women in the *kraal*.

VERONICA had not moved. Her blue eyes, wide with apprehension, had watched the scene. Tears of gratitude came into them as Rodgers took her arm and helped her to her feet. Her lushly contoured breasts quivered with her inner emotion, imparting a shimmer to their white-glossed skin.

"I don't know how to thank you," she said. "If you hadn't come just when you did, the beast—"

"I know," Rodgers said shortly. It made his stomach squeamish to think of it and he did not want to talk about it. Some imp of jealousy was trying to suggest to his mind that perhaps Veronica had flirted with Brant, had encouraged him in some manner to take violent measures, and he wanted to silence the voice.

"We'll go down to the river," he said. "My two black boys should still be there, unloading the dugout. I'll have them take us down the Zambezi immediately. Then I'll have the Portuguese authorities look into the matter of Turner's death. I still think Brant had something to do with it."

"Turner threatened to knock Brant down when he got fresh with me," she volunteered. "That was what they quarreled about."

They walked through the camp, his arm protectingly about her. She held the edge of her torn blouse together below her throat as though ashamed to show her breasts to the native women, although the most any of them wore was a brief cotton kirtle about their hips.

The quarter-mile path from the *kraal*

to the river was uneven and rutted by the wheels of carts used to carry the fruits of the mining operations to barges that visited the camp at regular intervals. Midway along it Veronica stumbled and turned her ankle so suddenly that she cried out in pain.

Rodgers lifted her in his arms and carried her into a little clearing beside the path, where there was a fallen tree to sit on. He knelt before her, taking off her boot, although she was already insisting that the ankle was not sprained and did not hurt.

She had let the edges of her blouse fall apart again. For the first time Rodgers noticed how far apart her breasts were set, how the white skin was shaded delicately in the deep valley between them, how they drooped just a trifle of their own weight, and how they rose and fell with her breathing. Fascinated, he forgot her ankle, and his own breath quickened.

He had kissed her before, but she had never stirred within him this blood-heating emotion that gripped him now and made his hands tremble as they supported her calf and ankle.

When he did look up, it was to meet her eyes, wide and deep and shining with a strange light. They held him like a magnet, seeming to draw him into their aquamarine depths.

Suddenly she leaned forward with a little murmur, put both her arms around his neck and drew him to her, until he could feel his heart beating against her bosom, maddeningly warm and soft and vibrant. He heard the surge and tumult of her heart. He put his arms around her, so eagerly that he ripped her already torn skirt anew and found his hands sliding over the satin flesh of her sides and back. As he tightened the pressure of her pliant form against his, her

lips touched his mouth and he felt her whole body quiver. He kissed her tremulous mouth, her throbbing throat. He swept one hand up to her shoulders, leaving the other at her waist, crushing the yielding mounds of her breasts, the long curves of her figure to him. Her breath was hot on his face and she clung to him with all her strength, her body eager, restless, seeking . . .

Rodgers forgot that the jungle had eyes and ears. Lost in ecstasy, he did not hear stealthy footsteps about him, feel the hot gaze of malignant eyes, sense the nearness of peril. . . .

WHEN strong hands grasped his shoulders and jerked him to his feet he was too surprised at first to fight, and then he saw the utter uselessness of resistance. Angry blacks ringed him in, menacing him with knives and *assagais*. Ana-Niki, with a neckless of infants' skulls rattling around his neck and his wrinkled face streaked with red and yellow paint, danced and grimaced in front of him.

Veronica screamed once and fainted. Hardly had she fallen to the ground than Brant stepped into the clearing and lifted her in his arms. Brant's face was so bruised and battered that it looked hardly human, but there was no mistaking the savage leer that twisted the swollen lips.

"Maybe I can get you out of this, and maybe I can't," he told Rodgers. "I understand you insulted Ana-Niki, and the natives will want to kill you for that. I'll see what good my influence will do." He grinned evilly. "Meanwhile, I'll take good care of the little girl. If you'd waited to find out the truth, instead of crashing in and starting to fight, you'd have found out I wasn't doing anything she didn't want

me to do. If only you knew the truth about her, she's your girl, or my girl, or anybody's girl!"

UNDER Ana-Niki's direction the blacks led Rodgers to the taboo clearing beside the sluggish Zambezi and spread-eagled him before the image of Zubuk, the ghost-god. His wrists and ankles were lashed to stakes set far apart in the firm soil. Then he was left alone so that the god might gaze upon him and contemplate the extent of his transgressions and decide his fate.

All through that long afternoon the pitiless sun beat upon him, burning his body through his thin khaki garments until he felt like one great cinder, searing his eyeballs beneath their lids, creating in him an almost unbearable craving for the cool water he could hear flowing over the stones of the point, not fifty feet away and yet as unattainable as though it had been on another planet.

Swarms of flies came and settled on his face, clustering about his lips and eyes, sucking his blood with tiny mouths that felt like wasp's stings. If he shook his head they would rise in a little cloud a foot above him, hover for just a second and then return—and there came a time when he was too tired to shake his head.

By craning his neck he could look up at the ghost-god. It was of hard wood, made gray by the weather, and must have been many years old. It squatted on a great flat rock like an altar, glaring balefully at him with eyes that were great green stones. It had massive hips and bulging breasts, the latter curved in such a way that the mighty arms, when they were folded, would fit perfectly against them.

The arms were open now and Turners broken body had been removed—

buried in the jungle, or perhaps thrown into the Zambezi to feed the crocodiles and propitiate Amadok, the river-god. But Turner's blood still stained the figure's belly, mingling with the blood of numberless unhappy black men who had offended Zubuk and Ana-Niki, priest to all the evil deities.

Even greater than the tortures of the sun and the flies and the knowledge of the fate that awaited him were the tortures of the thoughts that whirled in Rodger's brain. By now, perhaps, Veronica had succumbed to Brant's brutality. . . .

It drove him mad to remember Brant's words: ". . . she's your girl, or my girl, or anybody's girl. . . ." He couldn't believe it. And yet—when he came upon the two of them in the hut she was not struggling, although at the time he had thought it was because she was exhausted and helpless. And when she had come into his own arms, she had made the first move, although he had believed it was because she loved him so greatly she couldn't help herself. Had he really given his love—yes, even his life—to a girl who held it cheaply?

Even so, he would have killed Brant as he would have killed a snake. The red mist made his mind hazy, blinded him, stifled him, when he thought of her—perhaps even now—in the bestial mining boss's arms. There were times when he felt, in his madness, that he could break the thongs that held his hands and feet to the stakes, could arise and walk to the *kraal* and strangle Brant and carry his squat corpse to the river and give it to the muddy waters. But when he tried, the cords only broke the flesh they encircled and attracted flies thirsting for blood and redoubled his agonies.

IT SEEMED centuries before the sun dipped behind the peaks of Nyasi and Nyadi and cool twilight settled over the jungle, driving away the pestilential flies and quenching the fires in his flesh. Then darkness came and blotted out even the terrible visage of the silent ghost-god, and other centuries passed and he lay in a lethargic state of utter exhaustion.

When he heard the rustle of many bare feet in the grass and over the rocks of the little headland he did not even open his eyes, but he knew the natives were gathering for a ceremony and he could tell by the lurid light that forced itself beneath his eyelids that a great fire had been lighted. He told himself the end was near and, curiously, he did not feel tremendously upset about it.

The thongs that held his wrists and ankles were loosened suddenly, as though they had been cut with a sharp knife. Rude hands hustled him to his feet and other thongs were twisted through his arms, drawing the elbows so far back that his shoulders ached. He looked around him then and saw half a hundred tense black faces gleaming in the light of a great fire—the faces of men squatting in a wide semi-circle before the image of the god, and the breasts and faces of women standing behind them. He recognized the young face of Bara, whom Brant had sent away when the white girl came. She seemed to have forgotten her jealous anger; her eyes, like all the others in that assemblage, were shining with excitement.

In the dancing light of the flames the visage of the ghost-god was thrice dreadful. The play of shadows across it made it seem alive, made it seem now to laugh fiendishly and now to scowl dreadfully.

they moved the deep voodoo drums with their monkey-skin heads began a rhythmic muttering. The sound grew louder, faster as the prisoner was led up a rude stairway until he stood in the very lap of the god, and the awesome arms encircled him at the height of his chest. As he stood there, staring at the scene below with more curiosity than fear, ropes were passed around the fat body of the idol and around his own body, binding him firmly against the bloated belly of Zubuk.



She winced in pain when
he touched her ankle.
He did not hear the
stealthy movement
behind him. . . .

Two gigantic natives propelled Rodgers toward the monstrous figure, and as

The drums were deep-throated thunder, presaging a storm. The fire leaped

higher in a burst of vivid colors as some chemical powder was cast into the flames. Suddenly Ana-Niki was in front of the idol, crouched in a fantastic dance posture, his head surmounted by a tall headdress of feathers dyed in barbaric colors and his face hidden by a mask made from the skull of an animal. About his neck and his loins were strings of human skulls, large and small, and his arms were covered to the shoulders with burnished copper bracelets. Otherwise he was naked.

Slow and carefully timed at the beginning, Ana-Niki's dance grew more savage, became a thing to marvel at. His body jerked in furious rhythm, postured in horrid symbolism. The spectators watched with hot eyes, mumbling a half-audible chant.

SUDDENLY the witch-doctor leaped high in the air and a curved dagger glittered in his hand. Six times he drew the point of the keen blade across the naked flesh of his chest, cutting three crosses there. The crimson blood spurted like a fountain. He paused, looked expectantly at the circle about him, searching for a face.

The girl Bara came forth, walking with syncopated steps. Her eyes were half closed and her head thrown back. Her firm breasts, still shapely with the grace of youth, quivered with her every move.

From Ana-Niki she took the knife. With its point she cut a single tiny cross between her own breasts. The blood ran down her sleek flesh in a tiny rivulet. The drums speeded their tempo and the girl ran back to her place in the circle, at the end nearest the image of the ghost-god.

Ana-Niki seemed to be waiting for something. He glanced toward the

farthest point of the circle. Rodgers saw men and women step aside to let another couple through. All at once his cloak of indifference dropped from him and he strained afresh at his bonds.

The man was Brant, his bruised face still swollen from Rodgers' beating. Beside him, her arm casually in his, gazing fearfully at the faces about her, walked Veronica. They walked around the fire and stood directly in front of Rodgers. Brant looked up, sneering, but Veronica kept her eyes lowered.

"So you thought she was *your* girl?" Brant laughed. "You'll see in a minute whose girl she is, Rodgers. At ceremonies of this kind Ana-Niki always entertains the god right! Keep your eyes open and you can see for yourself whether she's your girl or not!"

The taste of blood was in Rodger's mouth, squeezed out of his gums by tight-clenched teeth. He spoke without opening his jaws.

"If I come out of this alive," he swore, "I'll kill you, Brant, as sure as you lay a finger on her! If I die, I'll come back from heaven or hell to get you!"

Brant laughed again. "I'll take a chance on that," he said. "Ana-Niki, strike up the band!"

The drums commenced a slow, soft throbbing. From the mouths of the natives came a mellow chant, broken now and then by a gasping, high-pitched scream. It was a weird, passionate love song. The throats of the women gave out little moans at intervals. The squatting men swayed backward and forward, and the women undulated from side to side.

Brant held out his arms, grinning expectantly, and Veronica moved toward him.

RODGERS tried to force his eyes closed to keep out the nightmare, but they would not stay shut. They insisted upon tormenting him, showing him the incredible spectacle of Veronica, like a girl in a trance, submitting to Brant's brutal caresses.

His thick, misshapen lips fastened upon her tiny mouth. With clawing fingers he tore at her garments, leaving streaks of blood across the whiteness of her shoulders. Veronica's flesh shone with pearly lustre in the firelight, and the blacks, men and women alike, leaned forward with smoky-burning eyes licking at her beauty. Her eyes were open, but her head lolled back and she was passive, resistless, as Brant's coarse mouth fastened on her soft throat.

The damnable chant never changed. The moans of the women, the occasional off-key yelp from one of the men, the throaty whispering of the drums cast a spell over the gathering. Only Rodgers was immune to it, immune to every influence in the world except those of enraged jealousy, mingled love and hatred, an infuriated sense of futility. He would have welcomed death at that moment.

Turning his head from side to side, seeking for anything else to look at save this scene that he would have given his life to prevent, he noticed how tense and bitter the face of Bara had become. He felt pity for her, knowing she must be experiencing something very like his own torture. He turned his eyes away from her, and when he looked back he saw her slipping silently from the circle, moving toward the darkness behind the idol.

If only he could have slipped away into the darkness, too, and spared himself this final punishment!

Then he realized that the ropes that

bound him against the belly of Zubuk had loosened, that they no longer held him there immovably, and he understood why Bara had slipped away. She had kept the witch-doctor's ceremonial knife, and with it she had slashed the bonds. He knew what courage it must have taken to dare both the witch-doctor and the supernatural wrath of the god himself. A sense of gratitude swelled his heart.

He would have hurled himself forward, even with his arms still bound behind him, to part Brant and Veronica, but now the mine boss was approaching the idol. Veronica lay before the fire, motionless. Brant looked at her and then leered at Rodgers.

"Take a good look at her!" he said. "It's the last time you ever will see her, before I have you killed as I had Turner killed when he meddled. Look at your girl!—and think about her while you're having hell squeezed out of you!"

Then he noticed that the ropes had fallen from Rodgers and his expression changed. "Ana-Niki!" he yelled. "He's free! Pull the lever, quick!"

The witch-doctor took one look and ran toward the rear of the image. Rodgers stepped forward. Seeing that his arms were still bound, Brant leaped upon the stone pedestal and put the flat of his hand against Rodgers' chest, keeping his own head bowed out of the way of the wooden arms. He pushed Rodgers back into his former position against Zubuk's belly.

"Now!" he shouted. "Hurry, Ana-Niki!"

Rodgers twisted, crouched and whirled out of the circle of the arms. Brant stumbled forward into the lap of the idol. Terrified, he gathered his feet be-

(Continued on page 115)

SPY TRAP

[Continued from page 63]

and got in beside him. The car returned to the castle. Warwick and the Baroness entered the castle. Only the guards to see them now. That was some comfort.

They went to the General's suite. Warwick closed the door. The Baroness slipped from her coat. She wore an evening gown that bared her white back. It left Warwick unmoved.

Then she turned to face him.

The bore of a big Lueger covered his chest!

"Please sit down, Major Warwick!" she ordered, nodding to a chair at the table.

He was neither surprised nor dismayed. He'd been in the game long enough to be shock-proof. He sat down.

"You are your usual clever self, Baroness."

"Thank you. You shouldn't have come back. As soon as I saw the maps were gone, I knew it was you. The train to Berlin was derailed. The South American was missed. And why should he escape unless he was Major Warwick?"

"I had to come back," he told her. "I had to make sure I had the real maps."

"Where are they?" she demanded, the Lueger in her hand never wavering.

To tell her that the maps were in the car or elsewhere would be to let the guards outside in on the secret for she'd be certain to sound the alarm. So he patted his stomach and said: "Here!"

A WHITE blur in the doorway to the bed chamber caught his attention. But he did not look that way. The General's wife! Warwick smiled at the

Baroness—a crafty smile that brought a frown to her forehead.

"I prepared for this," he told her in a soft voice which he hoped would not carry to the woman in the doorway. "The woman standing beside you is my aide—not Frau von Baur."

The Baroness's face was a study in shocked dismay. She half turned her head, saw that someone was there and wheeled to face the new danger.

There was a heavy inkwell on the table. In one fast move Warwick scooped it up and flung it. It struck the Baroness on the forehead. She slumped to the floor. The pistol clattered over the wood.

"Ernst! What is this?" asked the woman in the doorway her face stupid with sleep.

Warwick stood up and walked toward her. She still stared at the prone figure on the floor. That the man coming toward her was not her husband was a thought that never entered her head.

The flimsy gown concealed nothing. But her sturdy body held no interest for Warwick. His eyes centered on the point of her chin. He hated to do it, but he uncorked a hard one and slugged her flush on the jaw. Then he caught her limp figure and lowered her to the floor.

Get out, his brain warned, and get out fast. He descended the stairs and went outside. The car was there its motor running. He jumped in and ordered Countess Dagmar to drive to where they'd left the General. She snaked the car into the trees and turned off the lights.



They were out in a second and changing costumes. Even then he had to pause and glance at her vibrant young form so white in the blackness. He shoved the maps into the loose trousers of the South American.

"We'll have to hurry!" he warned, knowing full well that as soon as the Baroness or Frau von Baur recovered the alarm would be out.

Dressed, they ran through the woods, crossed the railway tracks and plunged into the forest on the opposite side. They came to a dirt road and turned right. Hand in hand they ran until their tortured lungs sobbed for air.

Finally, they reached the field where they were to be picked up by the plane. Exhausted, they threw themselves in a thicket. Warwick glanced at his watch. Time for the plane. Minutes dragged.

The plane was ten minutes late. Then fifteen. Twenty.

Then came the low moan of a motor. Warwick got to his feet and helped up the girl. The hum ceased. A lump grew in his throat. Then his heart raced.

A shadow swooped down at the far

The chauffeur stooped over the girl, failing to notice the gun in her hand.

end of the field. The plane landed with a bump and settled down to a joggling coasting. Warwick whipped out his

lighter, spun the wheel and waved twice. The plane came toward them. It was a metal, low winged monoplane. The cabin door opened.

They started toward it. Warwick let Countess Dagmar go first. She reached the door and was about to step in. Warwick grabbed the neck of her coat and yanked with all his strength. She came back hard and fell on her haunches.

He whipped out his .38. The pilot was slow on the draw. Warwick shot him between the eyes. Countess Dagmar was on her feet shaking like a leaf. Warwick glanced at the dead pilot.

ANOTHER plane was drifting in for a landing. Warwick heard the whine of wind in the struts. He grabbed the Countess and ran toward the woods. The plane loosed a burst of machine gun fire. The slugs thudded into the trees about them. But they were safe.

"He was drifting over the field," Warwick said. "Probably saw my shot."

"Then . . . then it wasn't the French ship?"

"It was the French ship. With a German pilot."

"How did you know?"

"I saw the wing. It was peppered with machine gun bullets. They forced the plane down, found the map and decided to keep the rendezvous."

"Then we have lost."

"Not yet. I always expect the worst. I prepared another crazy idea."

They went through the woods and back to the railroad. There they walked the ties toward Berlin for perhaps a mile when they came upon the lighted switch of a little-used sliding.

"We can stop a train," he said and examined the light. It showed green

toward the east. He looked at the lock, pulled out his automatic and shot it off. He turned the switch so the red light glared toward oncoming trains.

"Hide in the bushes here!" he ordered her. "When the train stops turn the switch again. Then hop on the locomotive cab. Hurry! I hear a train."

She sneaked into the bushes behind the switch. Warwick ran down the track a bit and concealed himself on the other side of the roadbed. The beam of the headlight appeared. The engineer whistled shrilly, then applied his brakes. The train was not coming fast. It slowed. The front of the locomotive passed Warwick. He sneaked out and reached for the cab rail.

He caught it and eased himself up.

He got his pistol by the muzzle and stepped into the cab. As he'd expected both fireman and engineer were hanging out the opposite side watching the light. He tip-toed forward. The butt fell in two sharp blows. Before the men had stretched out he'd kicked off the brake lever and yanked the throttle.

The train rolled on. The locomotive began to chug. He glanced out. Countess Dagmar had turned the switch. She was beside the track now. He watched her come up and opened the throttle farther.

"Strip them!" he ordered. "Just the overalls and the caps."

She did so. The train was moving briskly then. He left the cab and seized one of the men by the coat collar. The road-bed was banked there. He lifted the man and heaved. The body struck and rolled down the embankment. The other man followed. Being unconscious both would land limp and probably be unhurt.

They put on the overalls and caps. Then they smeared their faces with coal dust. Warwick leaned out and glanced back at the train. A freight. That helped. It might be routed through direct to the border. He was grim. Well, they'd soon find out. If the dispatcher at Freiburg didn't switch them in to the yards they'd be all right.

He glanced at the water gauge and steam pressure. Then at the air brake pressure. Everything was all right. Freiburg was approaching. He opened the fire door. The fire too, was adequate. Heart in mouth, he hung out the window. Quickly his eye sought out the signal above their track. He felt sort of hollow inside. The signal to go ahead!

He crowded on more speed. Only about thirty-five miles to the border. He watched ahead. Then he suddenly had that terrible feeling of certain defeat.

AHEAD a red light waved violently to and fro. He dare not go on. He might smash another train and innocent lives would be lost. He jammed the throttle closed and eased on the brakes.

Soldiers! His headlight beam fell upon an imposing number of soldiers.

All were armed. He cursed. Too late now. He was going too slow. And train brakes do not instantly release. Nor can a locomotive pick up sudden speed. He put the pistol on the seat beside him. He glanced at Countess Dagmar. Her face was chalky beneath the soot.

The train ground to a stop. The locomotive was in the midst of the soldiers.

An officer held up his hand and shouted: "Hold this train until we make a search!"

Warwick nodded. A new hope was

born. Perhaps they thought he and the Countess had hopped the train. Perhaps their actual accomplishment would be too mad to occur to German minds.

That was exactly what happened. The soldiers searched the cars thoroughly. That took time. Two men even climbed up on the tender and searched that, raising the covers to flash lights into the water compartments.

Finally they were given the signal to go ahead!

Warwick opened her up. Dawn was breaking. Soon the border appeared. And the bridge. Across the river was Basle and safety. He slammed the throttle closed and let her roll. The bridge was close then. They started over it. The German frontier guards stood with mouths agape. The cab whistle shrilled as the conductor yanked the cord for a stop. Warwick let it roll.

Then they were in Switzerland. Warehouses appeared. He jammed on the brakes. They ground to a stop with a groan of protesting metal. They hopped out and ran for the street. A cab was there. They jumped in it and were raced away.

IN an obscure French fishing village Countess Dagmar and Laird Warwick faced a beaming, bewhiskered official.

"Superb! Superb! But you two must leave Europe at once. The money is safely deposited. But German operators are combing all Europe for you. France will provide a refuge at some outpost. The gunboat in the harbor will take you there."

"How about a French island in the South Seas?" asked Warwick.

"Yes, that would be excellent. Why did you think of that?"

Warwick's eyes fell to the low-cut

bosom of Countess Dagmar's gown. Milky flesh swelled the bodice to capacity. He sighed.

"Oh," he explained. "My future wife would look perfect in one of those native skirts."

The Frenchman sighed as he glanced at what had captured Warwick's attention. A dreamy look came to his eyes.

"The point is well taken, *M'sieur*

Warwick. Your mind has a most romantic turn. I quite agree with you."

He had the delicacy to stare out the window. But the lens of his spectacles mirrored exciting events. He was first embarrassed, then he began to feel twenty years younger. He tugged his mustache and let out a little snort. He could have fired a cannon. Neither would have heard him.

Priestess of the Living Dead

[Continued from page 77]

"dead," as Ra-sen and Ra-mose swore they were. I came to a foul pool of water within a great, balconied chamber. I almost dropped my soft and tortured burden when I looked into that water and heard that mighty roar break out again.

The "demons" were those vilest of water reptiles, crocodiles, and I saw the hideous shapes of hippopotami churning the murky liquid. Other beasts that I could not identify, fought their way to the stone rim that surrounded this foul, indoor lake, and malignant eyes gleamed hungrily in the darkness.

"Quick, across the bridge," the girl whispered. "Heth-put will save me then, if My Lord demands."

I got her across a narrow, shaking bridge and came to what I thought would be the chambers of the Princess. Here was a splendor that dazzled. Jeweled damasks covered the walls, chairs of solid gold and cushions of priceless ancient velvet were strewn on divans of ebony. In the center of one of these chambers a great pile of tapestried cushions were spread on the floor and I knew, without being told, that these made the couch that luxuriously

received the seductive form of Heth-put.

I lowered the girl gently to the heaped cushions, for her wounded back deserved the softest resting place. She moaned and lay back, her lips drooping over her wet and suffering eyes. Her legs stretched out gratefully and her arms relaxed. I reached down to pull strands of her shining black hair over the rounded mounds of her bosom.

I heard no more patter of feet, but there was a chorus of angry shouts. Then sudden silence. I turned from the girl on the cushions and faced Heth-put.

Silently she had come across the bridge. No priest followed her to her private chambers. In her face there was no reproof, only a little of wonder. Her eyes shone when she gazed into mine.

"The will of my beloved shall always be done," she said slowly, "even to the anger of all the gods of Egypt. One messenger alone shall carry aloft my thankfulness."

To the girl she gave no heed, but took my hand and led me into another chamber. Here, too, were chairs of gold and cushioned divans of rosewood and

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ebony. To one of these Heth-put led me. Her arms went around me slowly. The warmth of her, the smoothness of her, melted against me. The golden voice murmured in my ears, "I have waited long, beloved, for the kiss of your lips. Soon I shall live again."

PERHAPS Heth-put lived again. I shall never know. Once more I was blinded by a mighty flash of lightning—just as I had been at Thebes. And just as the streak of dazzling light had reached into the tomb then, it reached now into the chamber of Heth-put.

Unseeing, my eyes burning with an agonizing pain, I felt her arms drop away from me. I heard a little cry come from her throat. I heard her whisper, "The priests of Ra! They have brought down the anger of the gods!"

My senses left me and blackness shrouded my burning eyes. How long I was unconscious, I do not know, nor why I should have lapsed at all into oblivion. I felt no blow, only the pain in my eyes, but a stygian blackness came down and enveloped me.

When I came to, I cried out for Heth-put, but my voice was smothered by the fierce winds of the Gobi. Desert sand was under me, instead of Heth-put's cushions. When I rose it was a long time before I could make out, in the far distance, the dim bulk of the Temple of Anghapand. I stumbled toward it. "I can not lose Heth-put now!" I kept repeating to myself over and over. Not after I had held her crushed against me, not after I had tasted the honeyed promise of her kiss!

THE temple yard was silent. The gates were open, but there was no Ra-mose or Ra-sen to welcome me. I ran into the dark corridors, fearless of

the priests, so eager was I to find Heth-put. Here was silence too, grim, foreboding. Even the beasts in the Lake of Demons were still.

When I stood at the rim of the pool, I drew back with a cry of horror. I knew then, what that dread silence meant.

Cowls and robes of the priests floated on the dark water, now stained with crimson. And at the edge of the lake were two little hibiscus buds, the flower jewels that had ornamented Heth-put's enchanting breasts!

I knew enough of what had happened! All that I ever wanted to know. The priests had appeased the anger of Ra—by feeding to the demons in the pool all that was left of the civilization of ancient Egypt—including themselves!

SPOTS of the LEOPARD

[Continued from page 51]

formed about her dark, slumberous pupils. A smile that was like no smile Guy had ever seen before, curled her lips.


"You are chivalrous as well as courageous, my friend. It is too bad you were not wise. Yes, too bad." She arched her lithe form, and her breasts were drawn tightly upward. Her body rippled like water. "Down on your knees," she said. "Let me see you grovel."

Guy obeyed. She laughed mockingly, biting. The door behind Guy opened. The woman's face lit up. "Look, my lover, how he pleads for the life of your

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woman by law! He bears for her a great affection, no? Look!"

Orville Johnson loomed over Guy, but the expression on his face was not one of sardonic victory. His lips were a thin line and his eyes glowed almost maniacally.

"Send for my wife, Luana!" he roared.

The leopard tensed, ears pointed. The woman scowled and blood flamed her cheeks. Orville Johnson reached into his pocket, brought out a phial of colorless liquid.

"Send for her!" he screamed, "or I'll blow you and your cat to hell! This is nitro-glycerine! Enough to smash this house into a million pieces! Send for her!"

PALE as a ghost, the woman reached out, sounded a bell. She issued orders to the giant black who opened the door. Guy, still on his knees, gaped in wonderment.

"You must have thought I was a rat of rats," Orville Johnson said. "Well, it was the only way of getting Margot free." His lips twisted. "And clearing my slate. Yes, I diverted tea shipments because this she-devil drugged me with her kisses. God knows how much I've stolen from the firm. It all went to her and her henchmen. Tell Hoare I can't pay it back in cash. Tell him I paid—I paid in another way. You'll find records of everything I've done in my safe at home. I planned to make restitution some day. I will—soon."

Guy leaped to his feet when the olive-skinned Hindu led Margot into the room. He took her shuddering body into his arms. She was sobbing hysterically, jerking in spasms.

"Quickly!" Johnson rasped. "Out that door!" He pointed to a door at the

back of the room. "It leads to a passageway that will bring you to the street!" He walked over to Margot, kissed her gently on the forehead. "Take care of her. Now, go!" His glistening eyes swung on Luana. Something in the movement of her hand warned him. "Don't let that leopard spring!" he cried. "If he does—" He held the phial aloft.

Guy lifted Margot in his arms, carried her through the door. He knew there was no time to waste. Orville Johnson had work to do. The leopard was changing its spots.

Out on the street, still carrying Margot, Guy ran to the corner. Hell broke loose as he reached it. He turned to see a geyser of flame shoot through the roof of the house, watched its walls crumble like rotted wood.

Margot stiffened in his arms. "Guy!" she screamed. "Guy!"

He kissed her cold lips. Soon they would be warm—for him. The leopard had changed its spots.

SPAWN OF SIVA

[Continued from page 89]

Sivananda sat on a golden throne facing the huge statue. Shortly, Shastini would emerge from the belly of the squat god as the reincarnated goddess Mahadevi. That was what all were awaiting. And that would be the signal for the unloosing of all the forces of rapine, murder, and bestiality throughout the peninsula.

The altar in front of Siva's statue was reeking with the blood of a dismembered and disbowelled sheep, a goat, and a fowl. The chief priest was bending for-



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ward, peering at the belly of the squat god.

The belly-door slid back. She stepped forth, almost nude and incomparably lovely, arms raised above her head, firm-breasted and sleek-hipped, the incarnation of India's dream of womanhood. Again, as he looked at her, Gale caught his breath. For that loveliness of hers, though it was physical perfection, was the shrine for a spirit dauntless as Lucifer, and almost as evil, driven on to destruction by the black powers of the ancient gods.

Gale saw the Rajah lean forward on his throne. He heard the frenzied shouts of the multitude, acclaiming this woman who, they supposed, had been born in the dark depths of the black god.

Suddenly a man yelled, "The *Mlech* prisoners! The man and the girl! Bring them here, O King! A human sacrifice to Siva!"

Instantly the cry was taken up by a thousand throats. Gale, watching, saw Sivananda rise angrily in his throne and shout to the multitude. But the cries grew louder, more insistent. Arms were even extended menacingly toward him.

Sivananda was learning that he had unloosed forces mightier than he could control. The mob was threatening him now. They were all drunk with fanaticism. He shrugged his shoulders. His passion for the *Mlech* girl had had time to cool, and what must be must be.

"Let them be brought," he ordered.

The multitude roared its applause. Upon the platform in front of Siva's statue Shastini still stood like a graven image.

THEY were dragging them in, old Colonel Denby, conscious now, and fighting valiantly, and Joyce, with her

breasts bare, and her hair hanging about her, and only a few shreds and tatters twisted about her hips. Up to the sacrificial altar, through the blood of the slaughtered beasts, to where the officiating priest stood with his dripping knife.

"Sacrifice them!" shrieked the mob. "A human sacrifice to Siva!"

The chief priest raised the knife and laid it on the altar. From beneath his robes he drew a sabre. Simultaneously all his assistants did the same. In an instant they had ringed themselves about the girl and her father.

Colonel Denby's eyes fixed themselves on the chief priest's face. "You! You, Gale!" he muttered incredulously.

Gale didn't answer him. He raised his voice and shouted. From all parts of the temple men in Brahminical robes, but with drawn swords in their hands, were streaming toward the throne, where Sivananda sat among his counsellors. And at their head was the young Pathan.

At the same time bedlam broke loose in the town without and in the temple courts.

More and more armed men were streaming in. Sivananda's guards gathered about him. For one moment they resisted that torrent of pent-up fury. Then they were down, and Sivananda lay hacked and mutilated at the steps of his throne.

Their fanaticism turned to terror, the mob was trying desperately to escape from the temple. But the swordsmen showed them no more mercy than wolves among sheep. Yelling the cry of "Allah!" the swordsmen hacked and slew until they ceased from very weariness.

Bodies were piled thick everywhere in the temple. Outside, the yells and uproar seemed never-ending. In the town

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itself, rifles were cracking everywhere, and a dull, hoarse roar, blended of all imaginable sounds of horror, rang out to the skies.

Through the whole slaughter, Shastini had stood like a graven image, watching as one to whom life and death are the same thing. Suddenly she stepped down to the altar. Before Gale could intercept her, she had picked up the sacrificial knife and driven it into her throat.

There was a mocking look in her glazing eyes as Gale bent over her. "I could have loved you, the great Gale," she whispered, as she died.

"Gale Sahib, the town is ours again, and we Moslems shall once more rule this State," said the young Pathan, standing breathless, and dripping with blood, before Gale. "So once again we come into our own."

"I thank you in the name of the British

Raj, Abdul Shah," said Gale. What you have done will not be forgotten."

"Oh, that was nothing," said the young king. "It was living as Untouchables in the forests, when we were good Moslems—it was wearing the robes of idolators that I disliked. But Allah will pardon that, since we have worked for him."

"And for the Game," said Gale.

"Ah, yes, the Game," said the young king, and a proud light came into his eyes.

Gale had seen Joyce and her father, who were resting in bed in the palace. He would have to leave Purnow as soon as possible, to report in person to Delhi. He would probably never see Joyce again. But that was the Game, more demanding than a woman, and Gale was satisfied that he had played his part in it.


Judgment of the Ghost God

[Continued from page 101]

neath him, desperate to scramble out of his dangerous position. One hand reached for the gun in his belt.

Knowing that his life and Veronica's depended upon it, Rodgers moved with all the speed of which he was capable.

The revolver in Brant's hand was swinging to bear upon him. Rodgers lowered his head and leaped forward, butting the mine boss in the chest, flinging the man back against the belly of Zubuk and staggering backward himself to fall from



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the flat rock to the ground beside Veronica.

AS HE lay there he heard a *thud* and a hellish scream, and then a sickening crunching of bones.

He struggled to his feet and faced the startled natives. "You see?" he cried. "Zubuk has chosen. Free me!"

They hesitated, chattering, waiting for Ana-Niki to reappear and direct them. When the witch-doctor did not return from behind the idol, one grew brave enough to peer back there. He gave an alarmed cry and presently others joined him and carried the body of the aged evil-worker into the light of the fire.

Ana-Niki's own ceremonial knife was plunged to the hilt in his back. Rodgers looked from it to the face of Bara, who stood nearby. Her face was stony, inscrutable.

Some one cut the ropes that held Rodgers' arms. He flexed them to restore circulation. Then he stooped and shook Veronica until she opened her eyes, and helped her to rise. She looked at him dully, shuddered as she saw the bloody thing that had been Brant crushed in the arms of the ghost-god, and averted her eyes from them both. Her hand went up to gather the torn edges of her blouse beneath her throat, hiding her breasts. In the firelight her hair coiled around her shoulders like spun gold mingled with threads of shining copper.

"I'll be leaving now," Rodgers said, keeping his voice even with an effort because of the tumult within him. "You have nothing more to fear. Tomorrow I'll see that you get downriver safely."

"Wait!" She put out her hand as if to grasp his sleeve, yet did not touch him. Her eyes met his and he saw desperation in them, and something else he

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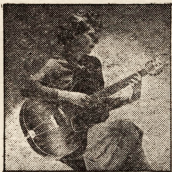
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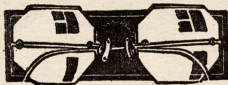
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could not fathom. "Before you go I must tell you something. You mustn't think—what you're thinking."

"I'm not thinking what I *want* to think," he reminded her, "but seeing is believing in some cases. I really don't wish you any harm. If there had been any way to do it, I would even have saved the life of your—lover."

"Lover!" she stormed. "I hated him. Oh, you stupid idiot, can't you see what I'm trying to tell you? He'd been bullying me, threatening me, ever since I came here. Tonight I played up to him for just one reason—because he told me the natives would kill you unless I did. I know now he would have had them kill you anyway, but I didn't know that at the time. Can't you understand?"

He took a deep breath that seemed to clear away some of the mists in his brain. "So that was the way of it," he said softly.

"I wanted you to know that much. Not that I want it to make any difference." Her voice trembled. "I—I know you'll find some other woman. It's best that way, because I know there are some things a man can't forget." She laughed shakily. "I came here looking for adventure, and I guess I've found it!"

Looking down at her, he was conscious again of the richly curved loveliness beneath her tattered garments, of the ivory white of her skin where it showed through the rents. He made no effort to sort out the mixture of emotions that swept through him. He reached out and gently took her hand away from beneath her throat so that the edges of the torn cloth fell apart. He gazed at the full, tremorous spheres of her breasts, rising and falling with her breathing.

mention SPICY-ADVENTURE STORIES

"Yes," he said, "there *are* some things a man can't forget."

Her eyes were startled, then suddenly bright with tears. "Don't!" she said faintly, her voice tense to keep from sobbing. "I tried to make you realize that I'm not cheap. And you. . ."

As if he had not heard he went on: "One of the things he can't forget is loving a girl as I love you, in spite of everything. If a man keeps thinking of a thing like that, he needn't remember much else. Back home again, we can bury the past. Shall we, Veronica?"

THE mysterious Zambezi flowed with scarcely a sound between its jungle walls, under the male and female peaks of Nyasi and Nyadi. The ceremonial fire had died until it cast only a dull glow over the huddled natives, fearful of an evil god who had just stricken his highest priest in a fit of holy anger. Only the girl Bara was not awed; she was standing at the base of the ghost-god's image, gazing with mournful eyes at the twisted thing dangling from its wooden arms.

Watching her, Veronica did not reply for many seconds. A shiver passed through her figure. Tears starred her lashes finally when she nodded, wordlessly, and moved into his arms.

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Buccaneer's Vengeance

[Continued from page 15]

had she known a man so big and strong. Then she found a pair of breeches and a shirt.

IN TWO days they sighted the island. It was a barren, rocky place near the coast of South America. About the cove that served as harbor a city had speedily grown. Here pirates brought their prizes to be sold. A flourishing commerce had grown. Plundered cargos were taken ashore, sold and sent to the far corners of the earth.

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Christian, Coates, the mate, and twenty armed blackamoors went ashore. They found three buyers interested in the cargo of the merchantman.

"Take them back!" Christian told Coates. "I'll tarry and seek news of Don Pedro."

The social center of the town was the casino. You went there in search of liquor, gambling, women or trouble and found a plentiful supply of each. The liquors were varied and potent, the women of diverse nationalities, sizes, ages and colors, and the games of every conceivable sort. Trouble could be found anywhere.

The place was jammed when Christian and his mate entered. A dainty little

blonde attired in a ruffled dress sat drinking with a scar-faced Chinese. A blackamoore wench wearing only a loin cloth stood talking with a small Spaniard. A man seated nearby reached out and pinched her thigh. She wheeled to slap him and her ebony breasts swayed dizzily. Christian's mate eyed her lush charms with favor.

They went to the bar and had a mug of buttered rum. When the bartender was not busy Christian asked: "I am looking for my friend, Don Pedro de Goya. Is he about?"

The man shrugged.

"Chita, that's his woman, ought to know. That's her, dancing."

Christian turned. On the floor a Cuban girl had thrown herself into the wild abandon of a native dance. Her flowered skirt swirled about her thighs, revealing plump brown legs. Beneath the thin blouse her unconfined breasts danced vibrantly. She was a beauty—smoky eyed, red lipped, softly round of form. Dan Pedro's woman! Christian's heart began to thump.

She ended the dance by flipping up her skirt high in a defiant gesture. Amid furious applause she went to the bar. Christian followed her and shouldered aside many who wished her company. She smiled up at Christian and let him buy a drink.

"You are lovely," he avowed. "The beauty of the town." He threw an arm about her supple waist, let his hand nestle in its pliant curve. He could glance down into the deep brown valley formed by her boldly thrusting breasts. She sighed.

"My lips burn for kisses," she said, "only I am Don Pedro's, and all fear him."

"Don Pedro! Why, he is my friend," said Christian and began stroking the satiny curve of her shoulder. She snuggled against him.

"Don Pedro does not share me," she whispered.

"For your kisses I would willingly cross rapiers with him."

"Then come!" she said with bated breath.

He followed her up the stairs. Her sleek legs flashed before his eyes. A toothsome dish, he decided. In the gloom of the corridor he seized her and kissed her roughly. Her body mashed hard against him. Her mouth was like moist fire, melting eagerly to his.

Then she pulled away, took his hand and led him into a room. It was gayly furnished and smelled of perfume. He sat down on the divan. She smiled and said: "It's hot." Her hands fumbled with the skirt of her dancing costume. It fell. A small, dainty garment still clung about her waist and hips. Her bare legs were plump and brown. He stared at them, then glanced at the roundness of her breasts. She turned off the light. He got up and groped for her. His hands encountered warm flesh. He forgot Don Pedro.

WHEN he sought information, Chita, thanks to champagne, was talkative. She snuggled in his lap, with her head against his cheek.

"Don Pedro," she said, "goes to meet a sister from Spain."

"Where?" asked Christian trying to conceal his eagerness. He ran his hand up and down her bare arm. She giggled and threw an arm about his neck.

"Where?" he repeated. She shrugged. "No one knows."

A loud knock at the door startled them. Chita jumped to her feet and stood shaking. Then, with a crash, the lock tore from the jamb and a wild-eyed man charged into the room, rapier in hand.

It was Don Pedro de Goya y Manos! He was resplendent in black velvet. Elegant silk hose sheathed his legs, and his shoes had silver buckles. White ruffles circled his wrists and neck.

"Unfaithful one!" he screamed. "I kill you both."

Christian snatched up his rapier. He faced Don Pedro on guard and there was sheer joy on his face. But his eyes were twin pools of burning hatred. The assurance of Don Pedro was shaken. He wet his lips.

Christian charged. Don Pedro parried and thrust at Christian's throat. The American caught the blow with his rapier hilt. Don Pedro thrust again. Christian

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executed a brilliant riposte and pierced his enemy's arm. Blood came. Don Pedro was fast. But Christian had a wrist of steel. Again his perfect riposte drew blood.

Don Pedro turned and fled! Before Christian could take a step, two arms went about his knees. He fell. Chita was strong. He turned over and lashed her across the back with the rapier blade. Shocked, she released him. He scrambled to his feet and raced down stairs. He looked wildly about.

Don Pedro was not there!

HE FOUND the blackamoor mate. They raced to the harbor. Christian stopped. The *Lark*! As he watched, men scurried to the rigging. Sails were broken out. The *Lark* moved slowly to sea.

There was a rowboat by the quay. They got in and took an oar apiece. The boat skimmed the water. Even the powerful blackamoor's strength was strained to keep up with Christian's mad rowing.

They reached the ship and went up the anchor chain. Jeff Coates was aboard pacing the deck.

"Up sail!" screamed Christian. "Yonder goes Don Pedro!"

At Coates' piping whistle men swarmed up from below. Black bodies went up the rigging like monkeys. The anchor chain slowly rose. They began to move. To the east the first pinkness of dawn streaked the sky. Christian could still see the *Lark*.

All canvas was set. They moved. The *Lark* was fast for a merchant vessel. But the man-of-war had been designed to catch or escape warships. They gained. Jeff Coates saw the cannon charged. The boarding party lined the rail armed to the teeth.

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"Take Don Pedro alive," Christian ordered the mate. "He is wearing a black velvet suit. Slay the others."

The order was passed. They were not far behind then. Don Pedro was getting full speed from the *Lark*. But it was not enough. They drew alongside.

Suddenly smoke shot from the side of the *Lark* and the ship listed heavily. Two balls shot through the rigging. One thudded against the side. Several fell short. Christian swore. He hadn't expected the *Lark* to be cannoned.

He nodded to the eager Jeff Coates. His whistle piped. The starboard cannon roared. The ship keeled well over and slowly righted. In a moment the smoke cleared. One of the *Lark's* masts had fallen. The deck was a mass of spars and rigging. Men were chopping the debris away. Christian angled in. He saw Don Pedro high on the poop.

"Rake them with grape shot but spare the poop!" he called to Coates. The big mouthed cannon was moved in place by ten blackamoors. The torch fell. The gun exploded with such force that the cannon recoiled across the deck and struck the gunwale.

Screams came from the *Lark*. Men fell as the grape shot slashed the deck. They were close then. Christian saw the cannon. The gunners were floundering in their own blood.

THE ships touched. The boarding party leaped to the *Lark* with a yell. Christian's mate leaped to the other poop. Don Pedro ripped off his clothes and dove off the other side. Christian raced after the mate. The blackamoor dove. Christian reached the opposite rail.

A black fist had knocked Don Pedro insensible. The mate was towing him by

his oily black hair. A rope ladder was dropped. Other blackamoors descended. Don Pedro was carried to the deck and lashed to a mast. They doused him with water. He revived.

"You shall die a suitable death," said Christian in a very calm voice. He turned to his men. "Take him below, strip him and tie him on the floor face up!"

They took the Spaniard away. Christian turned to one of the negresses who'd come over to the deck of the *Lark*.

"Fetch me an iron pot this big!" he indicated a pot perhaps a foot and a half in diameter. To another man he ordered: "Bring a bucket of red hot coals."

The mate was grinning. "Master," he said, "I know what else you need. I get."

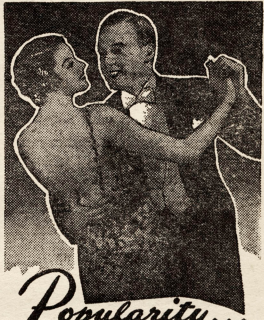
He took some men and departed. Christian sought out another negress and ordered her to return to the man-of-war and keep Raquel de Goya confined to her cabin. Then he and Jeff Coates went below. Don Pedro was spread eagled face up on the floor. The pot was there, also a bucket of sizzling coals and a small shovel.

Soon the mate appeared and said: "We find." He held up a cage. In it were three good sized rats. Grinning like the devil himself Christian set the iron pot upside down on Don Pedro's naked belly. Then he captured a rat. With difficulty he slipped it beneath the mouth of the pot. The Spaniard screamed as cold little paws raced about his stomach. The two other rats joined their companion. Don Pedro was sweating.

Christian stood there gloating. Jeff Coates mopped his sweaty forehead with a trembling hand. The mate's eyes were as big as saucers. It was very quiet. Don Pedro's breathing filled the hold with a rasping sound.

"Now," snarled Christian, "we do this!"

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He scooped out a shovel full of red coals and carefully placed them atop the bottom of the kettle. Don Pedro shivered as the rats ran about his belly in panic. Christian added more coals.

Then a high, piercing scream came from the lips of Don Pedro. He struggled fruitlessly. Again and again that terrifying scream shattered the gloomy silence of the hold. Footsteps overhead ceased. The Spaniard's face distorted with agony. Slobber flew from his twisted mouth.

Jeff Coates turned a chalky white. He swayed drunkenly, then fainted. The horrified mate carried him from the hold. Christian staggered up to deck. Those agonized screams followed him.

The rats, panicstricken, sought the only means of escape. *They were gnawing, chewing, clawing and fighting their way into Don Pedro's belly!*

Christian went to the rail and vomited. Then he went back to the man-of-war. He found Coates and said: "Get under way. Sink the *Lark*."

THEN he staggered to his cabin. He dismissed the negress. Raquel de Goya was seated on the divan. She wore a blackamoor's loin cloth, nothing more. But her glossy black hair fell about her superb breasts. Christian stumbled to his cabin and stretched out on the bunk. The ship was under way. They took a sharp list as the cannon roared. It was the end of the *Lark*. His eyes misted.

A soft hand touched his forehead. Raquel de Goya! She sat beside him. Her touch soothed him. Magically, it seemed, his brain cleared of the black clouds of madness. He was weak. Past events seemed a vague, shadowy nightmare. He shivered.

"I have slain your brother. You'll find

charged pistols on the table. Slay me. I'm weary of life."

"You have suffered much at the hands of my renegade brother," she said in her low, melodious voice. "His family, too, has suffered. We live in disgrace. Mother died of the disgrace. I was an object of contempt. That is why I sought a new life in this world."

"Then you weren't going to meet him?"

"I would have looked for him. I would have slain him as one slays a mad dog. Yes, you have suffered. I will atone for that."

"How?" he inquired and looked at her. Her beauty dazzled him. Through the black hair he could discern the loveliness of her breasts. The long bare leg beside him was deliciously tempting. He wet his lips and inhaled deeply.

"I will wed thee. With all my riches I will thee endow. We will return to where this venture started, free these blackamoors and go overland to Havana. In this Boston of yours you will be a merchant prince. I will make you a faithful wife."

"How do you know all this?"

"Jeff Coates told me. Your madness worried him. Now that you are again sane you find favor in my eyes."

"But . . . but love?"

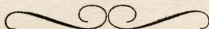
She shrugged her naked shoulders. "I know nothing of love. I lived a nunlike, like. You were the first to kiss me. Love can come later. Is it agreed?"

"Yes. Oh yes. We can begin a new life together."

She bent and kissed him. Her lips were soft and damp. He closed his eyes. Bare arms slipped beneath his neck and lifted his throbbing head. Silken hair grazed his cheek—then yielding flesh pressed the side of his head. Her heart thundered. She kissed him again—fiercely this time. Her breathing quickened; She shivered. He put his arms about her; her flesh was deliciously smooth and cool. She caught her breath ecstatically. She pressed her lips to his ear and whispered:

"Love will not come later. It is with us already."

Christian Yaple replied not in words. Their new life had begun.



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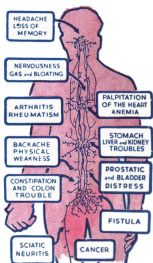


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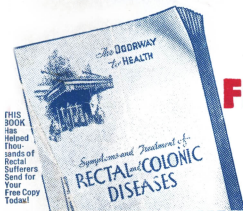
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