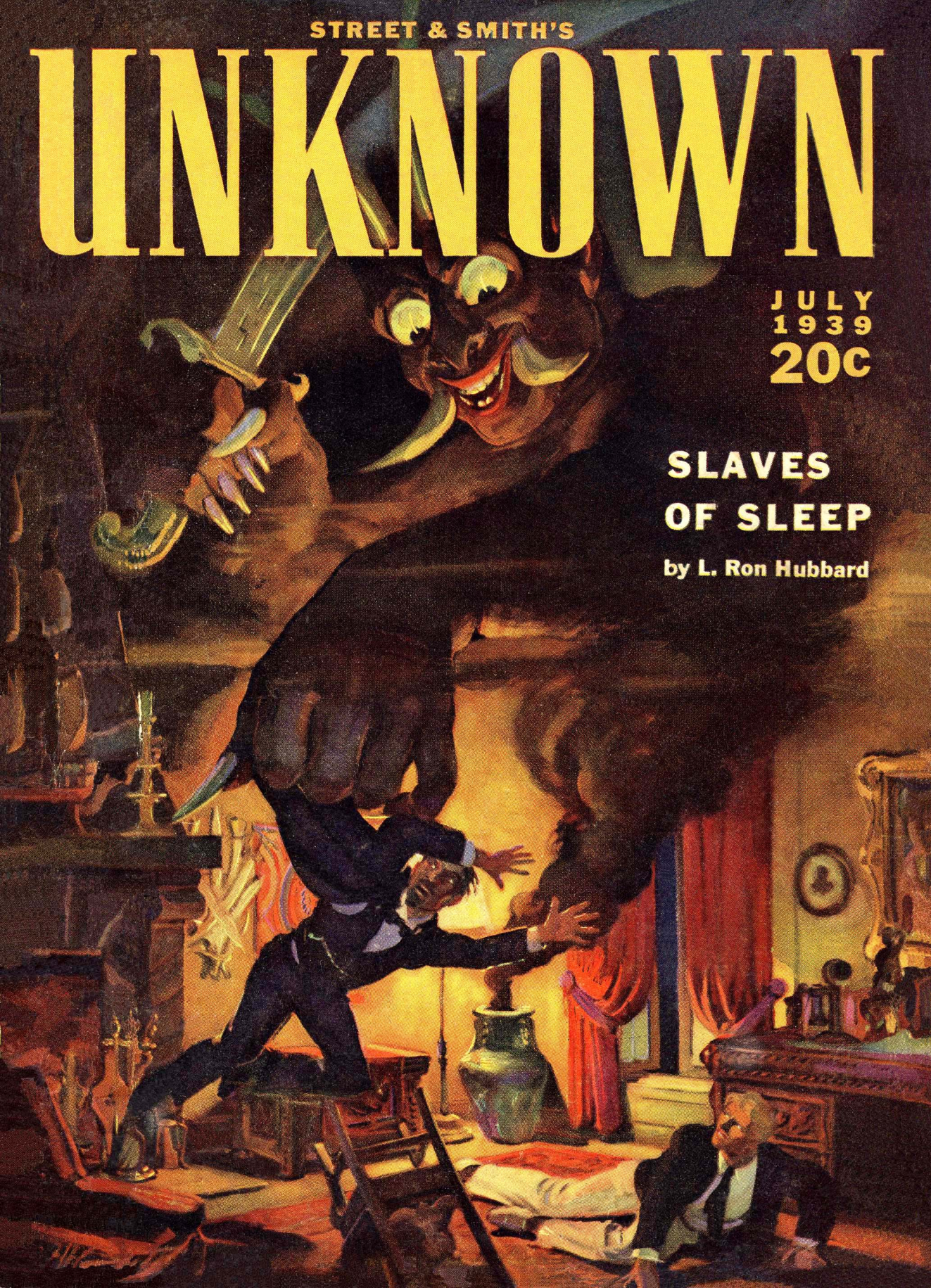
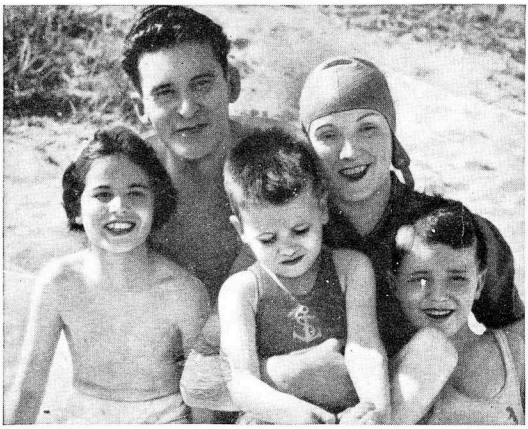

STREET & SMITH'S
UNKNOWN
JULY
1939
20c
SLAVES
OF SLEEP
by L. Ron Hubbard

LISTERINE ENDS HUSBAND'S DANDRUFF IN 3 WEEKS!



Child's case cleared up within 10 days

"Last year my husband had a bad cas of dandruff. Nothing he tried seeme to do any good for it. Finally I pe suaded him to try Listerine Antisepti At the end of three weeks his dandru had completely disappeared. A fe months ago one of the children's hai showed signs of dandruff for the fir time. Listerine Antiseptic cleared th case up within ten days! Now we a take a Listerine Antiseptic treatmen once or twice a month 'just in case and we haven't had even a suggestic of dandruff since."

MRS. ERWIN CARLSTED
Box 507, Boynton, Fl

Did you think nothing short of a miracle could rid your hair of dirty, telltale dandruff flakes? Have you finally given up in disgust trying remedy after remedy?

Well, here, at last, is positive hope of real relief. A method which has been *proved* in laboratory and clinic. A delightful, invigorating treatment which has brought complete, lasting relief to countless men and women—Listerine Antiseptic and massage.

The secret of the Listerine Antiseptic treatment is killing the germ. It was only recently that Scientists discovered that dandruff is a germ disease . . . caused by a queer little bottle-shaped parasite, Pityrosporum ovale! Immediately things began to happen in the medical world.

In one research, at a great mid-western skin clinic, dandruff patients were instructed to use the Listerine Antiseptic treatment once a day. Within two weeks, on an average, a substantial number obtained marked relief! In another study, 76% of the patients of a New Jersey clinic who used the Listerine Antiseptic treatment twice a day showed complete disappearance of, or marked improvement in, the symptoms within a montl Now, from all over America come letters fro men and women telling us of relief they hav received from Listerine Antiseptic.

Don't waste another day before starting to ri your scalp and hair of dandruff. Start at once wit Listerine Antiseptic and massage. Even whe dandruff has disappeared, use Listerine Antiseptic occasionally to offset possible recurrence.

LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., *St. Louis, Mo.*

THE TREATMENT

MEN: Douse Listerine Antiseptic on the scalp *at least once a day.* **WOMEN:** Part the hair at various places, and apply Listerine Antiseptic right along the part with a medicine dropper, to avoid wetting the hair excessively.

Always follow with vigorous and persistent massage with fingers or a good hair brush. But don't expect overnight results, because germ conditions can not be cleared up that fast.

Genuine Listerine Antiseptic is guaranteed not to bleach the hair or affect texture.

LISTERINE THE *PROVED* TREATMENT FOR **DANDRUFF**

E. SMITH, Pres., National Radio Institute
Established 25 years

has directed the training of more men for the Radio Industry than anyone else.

Be a Radio Expert

Many make $30 $50 $75 a week

I will train you at home for many Good Spare Time and Full Time Radio Jobs

Radio offers you many opportunities for well-paying spare time and full time jobs. And you don't have to give up your job, leave home or spend a lot of money to train to get these jobs—to become a Radio Expert.

Get Ready Now for Jobs Like These

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Fixing Radio sets in spare time pays many $200 to $500 a year—full time jobs with Radio jobbers, manufacturers and dealers as much as $30, $50, $75 a week. Many Radio Experts open full or part time Radio sales and repair businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, in good-pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises to open many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio. Read how they got their jobs. Mail coupon.

Why Many Radio Experts Make $30, $50, $75, a Week

Radio is young—yet it's one of our large industries. More than 28,000,000 homes have one or more Radios. There are more Radios than telephones. Every year millions of Radios get out of date and are replaced. Millions more need new tubes, repairs. Over $50,000,000 are spent every year for Radio repairs alone. Over 5,000,000 auto Radios are in use; more are being sold every day, offering more profit-making opportunities for Radio experts. And RADIO IS STILL YOUNG AND GROWING, expanding into new fields. The few hundred $30, $50, $75 a week jobs of 20 years ago have grown to thousands. Yes, Radio offers opportunities—now and for the future!

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

The day you enroll, in addition to our regular Course, I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets; show you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and directions that made good spare time money—$200 to $500—for hundreds, while learning.

How You Get Practical Experience While Learning

I send you special Radio equipment: show you how to conduct experiments, build circuits illustrating important principles used in modern Radio receivers, broadcast stations and loud-speaker installations. This 50-50 method of training—with printed instructions and working with Radio parts and circuits—makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make good money fixing Radios while learning and equip you with a professional instrument for full time jobs after graduation.

Money Back Agreement Protects You

I am so sure I can train you to your satisfaction that I agree in writing to refund every penny you pay me, if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service when you finish. A copy of this agreement comes with my Free Book.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today. Mail the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. 9FD, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

Broadcasting Stations

Employ managers, engineers, operators, installation and maintenance men for fascinating jobs and pay up to $5,000 a year.

Set Servicing

ixing Radio sets in are time pays many , $10, $15 a week tra while learning. ull time repair pays much as $30, $50, 75 a week.

Loud Speaker Systems

Building, installing, servicing and operating public address systems is another growing field for men well trained in Radio.

HERE'S PROOF OF WHAT MY TRAINING PAYS

$50 Monthly in Spare Time

"I work on Radio part time, still holding my regular job. Since enrolling seven years ago, I have averaged around $50 every month." JOHN B. MORISSETTE, 809 Valley St., Manchester, N. H.

Makes $50 to $60 a Week

"I am making between $50 and $60 a week after all expenses are paid, and I am getting all the Radio work I can take care of, thanks to N.R.I." B. W. SPANGLER, 126½ S. Gay St., Knoxville, Tenn.

Operates Public Address System

"I have a position with the Los Angeles Civil Service, operating the Public Address System in the City Hall Council. My salary is $170 a month." R. H. ROOD, R. 136, City Hall, Los Angeles, Calif.

This Coupon is Good For . . . One FREE Copy of My Book

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9FD
National Radio Institute, 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 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....

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STREET & SMITH'S

UNKNOWN

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CONTENTS FOR JULY, 1939

VOLUME I NUMBER 5

COVER BY H. W. SCOTT

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

NOVELETTE

SHORT STORIES

READERS' DEPARTMENTS

Illustrations by: Cartier, Kirchner, Orban and Slater.

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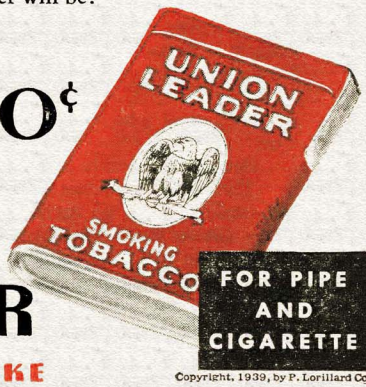
"Some Things, Son, Just Can't be Beat!"

YOU young fellers are proud as Columbus, when you discover Union Leader Tobacco! You praise its fragrance. Its freedom from bite. The mellowness of its hill-grown Kentucky Burley. The economy of its big 10 cent tin . . . either in a pipe or "roll your owns."

All true! But it isn't news to an old-timer who's enjoyed Union Leader for more than 30 years. What you've really discovered is this:—There are some things—like deep-dish apple pie, steak broiled over charcoal, and a pipeful of Union Leader—that have never been topped! And I'm hopin' they never will be!

10¢



FOR PIPE AND CIGARETTE

UNION LEADER

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKE

OF THINGS BEYOND

Man, being the weakling of the animals, learned that he must trick the powerful beasts—or die. Old as the proverb, that none is so easy to fool as the clever man, is, we seldom see how Man forever tricks himself. Psychologists, by laborious tests, found that men so thoroughly befuddled themselves with trick systems of remembering things that we have no realization of our actual abilities.

One thing they learned is this: Innately, Man can think of but five quantities; one, two, three, four—and the sink into which all greater quantities must go, and there become equal: *many*. Incredible as it seems, Man's mind cannot actually conceive in innate number-sense, the fingers of one hand!

And astronomers, paleontologists and the like speak in terms of billions. The Earth is two billion years old. Life has existed not less than a billion years. The saurians ruled the world briefly—for a period a hundred times the length of Man's existence! Uncounted, unknown millions of years. In that time, continents that were, have gone, and land that was sea, now exists. Mountain ranges have come and gone and become deep seas.

No mountain existent on Earth's face today *is as old as you who read these words*. Each of us is a life that stretches back, unbroken, a link in the chain of life, to a time beyond Man's knowing, beyond the birth of the oldest hills.

The hills, the land, the seas as they are, are younger than life by far. In a flickering instant of Earth's vast age, we've built a civilization here, discrete in time and space—and call it Earth's first! Six thousand years—some optimists say twenty thousand—which is, in any case, less than a millionth of Earth's time.

And those who know, say Man's understanding of number stops at four.

Are we the first in all that time? The first of all Earth's ages?

There is no evidence of any other civilization—no broken blocks of tool-worked stone, no carven bits of metal, enduring gold or platinum. There are no fossilized bones of pre-human, intelligent animals.

But—in half a million years—five thousand centuries—how much of mighty New York, or our wonderful Chicago or San Francisco will there be? New York will, in all probability, slide off into the sea under the gnawing teeth of the Hudson River. San Francisco has the waters of two rivers to worry about. And Chicago need look back only a few million

years to the great inland sea that swept over its site, or half a million to the time a mile of ice ground the land to bedrock.

And what about the vast, lost ~~continent—not~~ hypothetical Mu or Atlantis, but Gondwanaland, a continent that reached from western South America across the sweep of the Earth to include Australia? Could any intelligence-built thing endure when continents themselves pass away, break up, and are lost? No tool-marked blocks of stone? No continents, even, from those elder days survive!

No bones of intelligent animals, either. Huge thunder-lizards left bones, as did the more nearly modern mastodon. But intelligent creatures are too wary to fall frequently into mud pits, or be trapped in tar bogs. The stupid saber-tooth left tons of bones in the La Brea tar-pits. Manlike intelligences have more sense.

Intelligent animals are small, agile—or they don't develop intelligence. They leave no huge, time-defying bones behind. They leave their dead, of course—but the bones are weak, and wash away. Only rarest chance leads to the preservation of small-animal bones, and rarer chance reveals them in an eroded hillside. Eroded enough to show—but not so much they are weathered away. It requires the finest, hairline balance of time, happenstance, and weathering.

And, where rabbits leave their dead over all the fields, Man concentrates his in selected spots—but not in spots selected for archæologists of some dim, unborn race of the unthought-of future.

The chance we might stumble on the bones of some pre-human race is vanishing small. The chance their material works should remain despite a half-hundred freezing winters, and a half-hundred spauling, blistering summers—

There are signs that suggest things other than the blank we have to show for two billion years of time. A fossilized and so-preserved footprint of a Man-sized, Manlike foot treading Earth fifty million years before Man could have been—and no known animal of the time that could have made that print. The fact that gigantic saurians, the Tyrannosaurus, the Brontosaurus—all their tribe—vanished from Earth in a surprisingly abrupt manner, just when the saurians seemed to have evolved toward their height.

They vanished as abruptly as the huge animals of modern times have vanished before intelligence—the whales, the mammoth, the vanishing rhinoceros.

Was there, fifty thousand millennia ago, a civilization before us? Our records are blank for the first billion years that life existed. So, because ours is the only writing seen on the record now, we say there never was another before us.

Psychologists show we cannot appreciate a number beyond four. To the scientist, the man on the street, and the backwoods savage, five and fifty million are, actually, the same—many. We have no real conception.

We have no real conception of that immense stretch of time and space that lies behind us. So we count back one, two, three, four—many years, and say—for our minds have no real conception of the time—

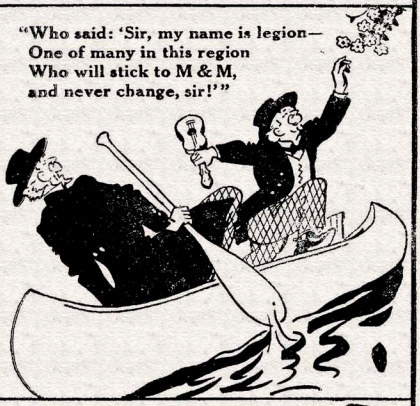
There never was a civilization before us.

THE EDITOR.

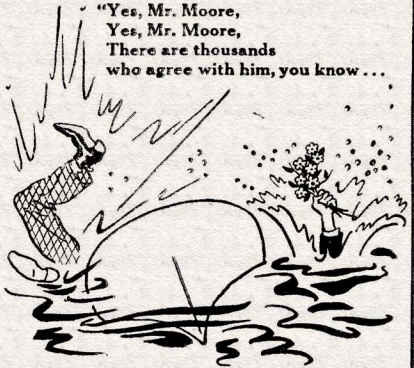
Mr. Mattingly & Mr. Moore find folks appreciate good whiskey!

"Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
I was stopped upon the highway
by a stranger

"Who said: 'Sir, my name is legion—
One of many in this region
Who will stick to M & M,
and never change, sir!'"



"Yes, Mr. Moore,
Yes, Mr. Moore,
There are thousands
who agree with him, you know . . .



"They like the way we slow-distill . . .
(We always have, and always will!)
And they like its mellow flavor . . .
and its price so really low!"

THE fame and popularity of Mattingly & Moore are due to its grand, old-fashioned flavor!

You see, M & M is ALL whiskey . . . every drop *slow*-distilled. More, M & M is *a blend of straight whiskies* . . . the kind of whiskey we think is best of all.

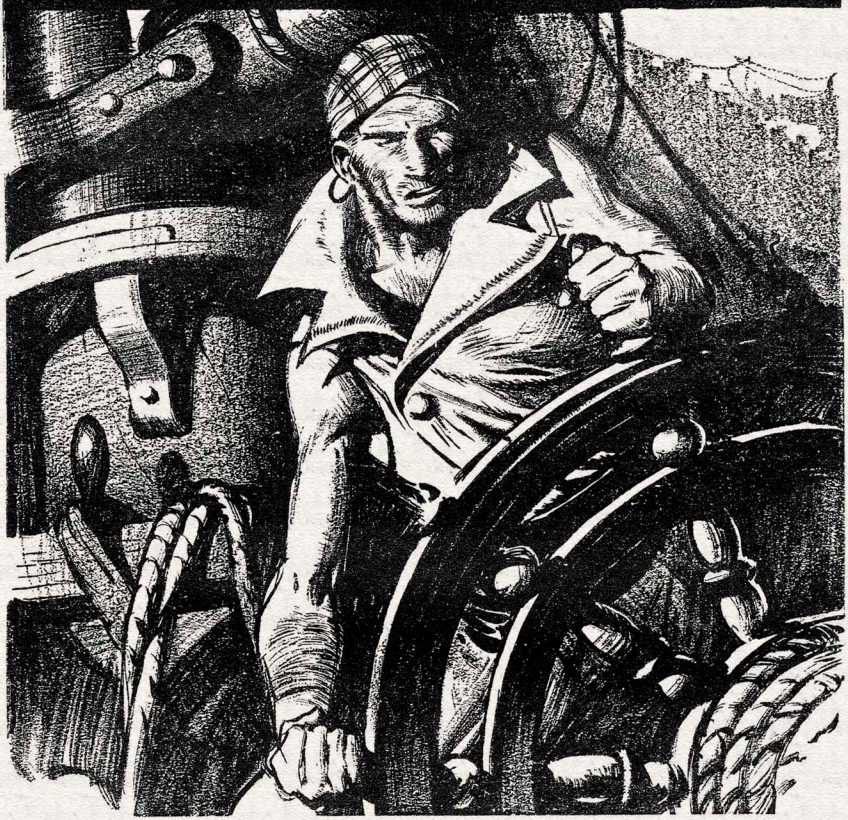
Ask for M & M, *today* . . . at your favorite bar or package store. Your first taste will show you why M & M has been famous down in Kentucky for more than 60 years . . . why it is even *more famous today!* And remember . . . the price is amazingly *low!*

Mattingly & Moore

Long on Quality—Short on Price!

A blend of straight whiskies—90 proof. Every drop is whiskey. Frankfort Distilleries, Incorporated, Louisville & Baltimore.

SLAVES OF SLEEP



By L. RON HUBBARD

Author's Note: "A word—to the curious reader. There are many persons in these skeptical times who affect to deride everything connected with the occult sciences, or black art; who have no faith in the efficacy of conjurations, incantations, or divinations; and who stoutly contend that such things never had existence. To such determined unbelievers the testimony of the past ages is as nothing; they require the evidence of their own senses, and deny that such arts and practices have prevailed in days of yore simply because they meet with no instances of them in

the present day. They cannot perceive that, as the world became versed in the natural sciences, the supernatural became superfluous and fell into disuse; and that the hardy inventions of art superseded the mysteries of man. Still, say the enlightened few, those mystic powers exist, though in a latent state, and untasked by the ingenuity of man. A talisman is still a talisman, possessing all its indwelling and awful properties; though it may have lain dormant for ages at the bottom of the sea, or in the dusty cabinet of the antiquary. The signet of Solomon the Wise, for instance, is well known to have held potent control over genii, demons and enchantments; now who will positively assert that the same mystic signet, wherever it may exist, does not at the present moment possess the same marvelous virtues which distinguished it in olden times? Let those who doubt repair to Salamanca, delve into the cave of San Cyprian, explore its hidden secrets and decide. As to those who will not be at pains to make such investigation, let them substitute faith for incredulity and receive with honest credence the foregoing legend."

So pleaded Washington Irving for a tale of an enchanted soldier. And in no better words could the case for the following story be presented. As for the Seal of Sulayman, look to Kirker's "Cabala Sarracenica." Sulayman—less properly, Solomon—who ruled in Jerusalem about 960 B. C., has left his impression on almost every land, but especially Persia, Arabia and, in general Africa, where dark tales may be found in moldy books which do not at all agree with the prosaic histories written in modern times. Lord of more than mere men, the treasures he amassed are still rumored to be hidden. His seal is still known in all lands where the black arts flourish and might be said to be the most universal of all magic symbols, probably because of the power Sulayman gained through the use of the original. It consists, properly, of two triangles upon one another to form a six-pointed star which in turn is surrounded by a circle representing fire.

As for *genii*—or, more properly, jinns, jinn, or jan—it is the root for our word "genius," so widely are these spirits recognized. A very imperfect idea of the jinn is born of the insipid children's translations of "The Arabian Nights Entertainment," but in the original work—which is actually an Arabian history interspersed with legends—the subject is more competently treated. For the ardent researcher, Burton's edition is recommended, though due to its being a forbidden work in these United States, it is very difficult to find. There is, however, a full set in the New York Public Library where the wise librarians have devoted an entire division to works dealing with the black arts.

Man is a stubborn creature. He would rather confound himself with "laws" of his own invention than to fatalistically accept perhaps truer but infinitely simpler explanations as offered by the supernatural—though it is a travesty to so group the omnipresent jinn!

And so I commend you to your future nightmares.

L. Ron Hubbard

I.

IT was with a weary frown that Jan Palmer beheld Thompson standing there on the dock. Thompson, like some evil raven, never made his appearance unless to inform Jan in a somehow accusative way that business, after all, should supersede such silly trivialities as sailing. Jan was half minded to put the flattie about and scud back across the wind-patterned Puget Sound; but he had already luffed up into the wind to carry in to the dock, and Thompson had unbent enough to reach for the painter—more as an effort to detain Jan than to help him land.

Jan let go his jib and main halyards and guided the sail down into a restive bundle. He pretended not to notice Thompson, using nearsightedness as his usual excuse—for although nothing was actually wrong with his eyes, he found that glasses helped him in his uneasy maneuvers with mankind.

"The gentleman from the university is here to see you again, Mr. Palmer." Thompson scowled his reproof for such treatment of a man of learning. Everybody but Jan Palmer impressed Thompson. "He has been waiting for more than two hours."

"I wish," said Jan, "you'd tell such people you don't know when I'll be

back." He was taking slides from their track, though it was not really necessary for him to unbend his sail in such weather. "I haven't anything to say to him."

"He seems to think differently. It is a shame that you can't realize the honor such people do you. If your father—"

"Do we have to go into that?" said Jan, fretfully. "I don't like to have to talk to such people. They . . . they make me nervous."

"Your father never had any such difficulties. I told him before he died that it was a mistake—"

"I know," sighed Jan. "It was a mistake. But I didn't ask to be his heir."

"A healthy man rarely leaves a will when he is still young. And you, as his son, should at least have the courtesy to see people when they search you out. It has been a week since you were even near the offices—"

"I've been busy," defended Jan.

"Busy!" said Thompson, pulling his long nose as though to keep from laughing. He had found long, long ago, when Jan was hardly big enough to feed himself, that it was no difficult matter to bully the boy, since there would never be any redress. "Busy with a sailboat when fifteen Alaska liners are under your control. But you are still keeping the gentleman waiting."

"I'm not going to see him," said Jan in a tone of defiance which already admitted his defeat. "He has no real business with me. It is that model of the Arab dhow. He wants it and I can't part with it, and he'll wheedle and fuss and—" He sat down on the coaming and put his face in his palms. "Oh, why," he wept, "can't people leave me alone?"

"Your father would turn over in his grave if he heard that," said the remorseless Thompson. "There isn't any use of your sitting there like a spoiled child and wailing about people. This gentleman is a professor at the university and he has already looked for you for two hours. As long as you are a Palmer, people will continue to call on you. Now come along."

Resentfully, well knowing he should slam this ancient bird of a secretary into his proper position, Jan followed up the path from the beach to the huge, garden-intrenched mansion.

Theoretically the place was his, all his. But that was only theoretically. Actually it was overlorded by a whiskered grandaunt whose already sharp temper had been whetted by the recent injustice of the probate court.

She was waiting now, inside the door, her dark dress stiff with disapproval, her needle-point eyes sighted down her nose, ready to pick up the faint dampness of Jan's footprints.

"Jan! Don't you dare soak that rug with salt water! Indeed! One would think you had been raised on a tide flat for all the regard you have for my efforts to give you a decent home. *Jan!* Don't throw your cap on that table! What would a visitor think?"

"Yes, Aunt Ethel," he replied with resignation. He wished he had nerve enough to say that the house was evidently run for no one but visitors. However, he supposed that he never would. He picked up his cap and gave the rug a wide berth and somehow navigated to the hall which led darkly to his study. At the end, at least, was a sanctuary. Whatever might be said to him in the rest of the house, his own apartment was his castle. The place, in the eyes of all but himself, was such a hideous mess that it dismayed the beholder.

IN ALL truth the place was not really disorderly. It contained a very assorted lot of furniture which Jan, with his father's indulgent permission, had salvaged from the turbulent and dusty seas of the attic. The Palmers, until now, had voyaged the world, and the flotsam

culled from many a strange beach had at last been cast up in these rooms. One donor in particular, a cousin who now rested in the deep off Madagascar, had had an eye for oddity, contributing the greater part of the assembled spears and headdresses as well as the truly beautiful blackwood desk all inlaid with pearl and ivory.

This was sanctuary and it irritated Jan to find that he had yet to rid himself of a human being before he could again find any peace.

Professor Frobish raised himself from his chair and bowed deferentially. From his following stretch, it might have been supposed that he had been two whole hours on that cushion. Jan surveyed him without enthusiasm. Indeed, there was only one human being in the world whom Jan granted enthusiastic regard, and she—well—that was wholly impossible. The professor was a vital sort of man, the very sort Jan distrusted the most. It would be impossible to talk such a man down.

"Mr. Palmer, I believe?"

Jan winced at the pressure of the hand and quickly recovered his own. Nervously he wandered around the table and began to pack a pipe.

"Mr. Palmer, I am Professor Frobish, the Arabianologist at the university. I hope you will forgive my intrusion. Indeed, it shows doubtlessly great temerity on my part to so take up the time of one of Seattle's most influential men."

He wants something, Jan told himself. They all want something. He lighted the pipe so as to avoid looking straight at the fellow.

"It has come to our ears that you were fortunate enough to have delivered to you a model—if you'll forgive me for coming to the point, but I know how valuable your time is. This model, I understand, was recovered from a Tunisian ruin and sent to your father—"

He went on and on but Jan was not very attentive. Jan paced restively over to the wide windows and stood contemplating the azure waters backed by the rising green of hills and, finally, by the glory of the shining, snow-capped Olympics. He wished he had been sensible enough to stay out there. Next time he would take his cabin sloop and enough food to last a day or two—but at the same time, realizing the wrath this would bring down upon him, he knew that he would never do so. He turned, puffing hopelessly at his pipe, to watch the Arabianologist. Suddenly he was struck by the fact that, though the man kept talking about and pointing to the model of the ancient dhow which stood upon the great blackwood desk, his interest did not lie there. On entering the room it might have, but now Frobish's eye kept straying to the darkest corner. What, Jan wondered, in all these trophies had excited this fervid man's greed? Certainly the professor was having a difficult time staying on his subject and wasn't making a very strong case of why the university should be presented with this valuable model.

Jan's schooling, while not flattering to humanity, was nevertheless thorough. His father, too engrossed in shipping to give much time to raising a son, had failed wholly to notice that the household used the boy to bolster up their respective prides which they perforce must humble before the elder Palmer. And, as a Palmer, it would not be fitting to give the boy a common education, he had even been spared the solace of youthful companionship. And now, at twenty-seven, he was perfectly aware of the fact that men never did anything without thought of personal gain and that when men reacted strangely they would bear much watching. This professor wanted something besides this innocent dhow.

Jan strolled around the room with seeming aimlessness. Finally, by devious routes, he arrived beside the corner which often caught Frobish's eye. But

there was no enlightenment here. The only thing present was a rack of Malay swords and a very old copper jar tightly sealed with lead. The krisses were too ordinary; therefore, it must be the jar. But what, pray tell, could an Arabianologist discover in such a thing? Jan had to think hard—all the while with placid, even timid countenance, to recall the history of the jar.

"AND SO," Frobish concluded, "you would be doing science a great favor by at least lending us this model. There is none other like it in existence and it would greatly further our knowledge of the seafaring of the ancient Arab."

It had been in Jan's mind to say no. But the fellow would stay and argue, he knew. Personally he had rather liked the little dhow with its strangely indestructible rigging.

"I guess you can have it," he said.

Frobish had not expected such an easy victory. But even so he was not much elated. He told Jan he was a benefactor of science and put the model in its teak box and then, hesitantly, reached for his hat.

"Thank you so much," he said again. "We'll not be likely to forget this service."

"That's all right," said Jan, wondering why he had given up so easily.

And still the professor lingered on small-talk excuses. At last he ran out of conversation and stood merely fumbling with his hat. Jan scented trouble. He did not know just how or why, but he did.

"This is a very interesting room," said the professor, at last. "Your people must have traveled the Seven Seas a great deal. But then they would have, of course." He gave his hat a hard twist. "Take . . . er . . . take that copper jar, for instance. A very interesting piece of work. Ancient Arab, also, I presume."

Jan nodded.

"Might I be out of order to ask you where it came from?"

Jan had been remembering and he had the answer ready. And though he suddenly didn't want to talk about that copper jar he heard himself doing so.

"My father's cousin, Greg Palmer, brought it back from the Mediterranean a long time before I was born. He was always bringing things home."

"Interesting," said Frobish. "Must have been quite a fellow."

"Everybody said he wasn't much good," said Jan. He added ruefully: "I am supposed to be like him, they say. He never held any job for long, but they say he could have been a millionaire a lot of times if he had tried. But he claimed money made a man put his roots down. That's one thing he never did. That's his picture on the wall there."

Frobish inspected it out of policy. "Ah, so? Well, well, I must say that he does look a great deal like you—that is, without your glasses, of course."

"He—" Jan almost said, "He's the only friend I ever had," but he swiftly changed it. "He was very good to me."

"Did . . . ah . . . did he ever say anything about that copper jar?" Frobish could hardly restrain his eagerness.

"Yes," said Jan flatly. "He did. He said it was given to him by a French seiner on the Tunisian coast."

"Is that all?"

"And when he left it here Aunt Ethel told him it was a heathen thing and that he had to put it in the attic. I used to go up and look at it sometimes and I was pretty curious about it."

"How is that?"

"He made me promise never to open it."

"What? I mean—is that so?" Frobish paced over to it and bent down as though examining it for the first time. "I see that you never did. The seal is still firmly in place."

"I might have if Greg hadn't been killed, but—"

"Ah, yes, I understand. Sentiment." He stood up and sighed. "Well, I must be going. That's a very fine piece of work and I compliment you on your possession of it. Well, good day." But still he didn't leave. He stood with one hand on the doorknob, looking back at the jar as a bird will return the stare of a snake. "Ah . . . er . . . have you ever had any curiosity about what it might contain?"

"Of course," said Jan, "but until now I had almost forgotten about it. Ten years ago it was all I could do to keep from looking in it."

"Perhaps you thought about jewels?"

"No . . . not exactly."

Suddenly they both knew what the other was thinking about. But before they could put it into words there came a sharp rap on the door.

WITHOUT waiting for answer, a very officious little man bustled in. He stared hard at Jan and paid no attention whatever to the professor.

"I called three times," he complained.

"I was out on the Sound," said Jan, uneasily.

"There are some papers which have to have your signature," snapped the fellow, throwing a brief case up on the blackwood desk and pulling the documents out. It was very plain that he resented having to seek Jan out at all.

Jan moved to the desk and picked up a pen. As general manager of the Bering Steamship Corporation, Nathaniel Green had his troubles. And perhaps he had a perfect right to be resentful, having spent all his life in the service of the late Palmer and then having not one share of stock left to him.

"If I could have your power of attorney I wouldn't have to come all the way out here ten and twenty times a day!" said Green. "I have ten thousand things to do and not half enough time to do them in, and yet I have to play messenger boy."

"I'm sorry," said Jan.

"You might at least come down to the office."

Jan shuddered. He had tried that only to have Green browbeat him before clerks and to have dozens and dozens of people foisted off on him for interview.

Green swept the papers back into the brief case and bustled off without another word, as though the entire world of shipping was waiting on his return.

Frobish's face was flushed. He had hardly noticed the character of the interrupter. Now he came to the jar and stood with one hand on it.

"Mr. Palmer, for many years I have been keenly interested in things which —well, which are not exactly open to scientific speculation. It is barely possible that here, under my hand, I have a clue to a problem I have long examined—perhaps I have the answer itself. You do not censure my excitement?"

"You have researched demonology?"

"As connected with the ancient Egyptians and Arabs. I see that we understand each other perfectly. If this was found in waters off Tunisia, then it is barely possible that it is one of *the* copper jars. You know about them?"

"A little."

"Very few people know much about the jinn. They seem to have vanished from the face of the earth several centuries ago, though there is every reason to suppose that they existed in historical times. Sulayman is said to have converted most of the jinn tribes to the faith of Mohammed after a considerable war. Sulayman was an actual king, and those battles are a part of his court record. This, Mr. Palmer, is not mere decoration on the stopper but the Seal of Sulayman!" Frobish was growing very excited. "When several tribes refused to acknowledge Mohammed as the prophet, Sulayman had them thrown

into copper jars such as this, stoppered with his seal, and thrown into the sea *off the coast of Tunis!*"

"I know," said Jan, quietly.

"You knew? And yet . . . yet you did not investigate?"

"I gave my word that I would not open that jar."

"Your word. But think, man, what a revelation this would be! Who knows but what this actually contains one of those luckless Ifrits?"

Jan wandered back to his humidor and repacked his pipe. As far as he was concerned the interview was over. He might be bullied into anything, but when it came to breaking his word—Carefully he lighted his pipe.

FROBISH'S face was feverish. He was straining forward toward Jan, waiting for the acquiescence he felt certain must come. And when at last he found that his own enthusiasm had failed to kindle a return blaze, he threw out his hands in a despairing gesture and marched ahead, forcing Jan back against a chair into which he slumped. Frobish towered over him.

"You can't be human!" cried Frobish. "Don't you understand the importance of this? Have you no personal curiosity whatever? Are you made of wax that you can live for years in the company of a jar which might very well contain the final answer to the age-old question of demonology? For centuries men have maundered on the subject of witches and devils. Recently it became fashionable to deny their existence entirely and to answer all strange phenomena with 'scientific facts' actually no more than bad excuses for learning. Men even deny telepathy in face of all evidence. Once whole civilizations were willing to burn their citizens for witchcraft, but now the reference to devils and goblins brings forth only laughter. But down deep in our hearts, we *know* there is more than a fair possibility that such things exist. And here, man, you have a possible answer!

"If all historical records are correct, then that jar contains an Ifrit. And if it does, think, man, what the jinn could tell us! According to history, they were versed in all the black arts. Today we know nothing of those things. All records died with their last possessors. Most of that knowledge was from hand to hand, father to son. What of the magic of ancient Egypt? What of the mysteries of the India of yesterday? What race in particular was schooled in their usages? The jinn! And here we have one of the jinn, perhaps, entombed in this very room, waiting to express his gratitude upon being released. Do you think for a moment he would fail to give us anything we wanted in the knowledge of the black arts?"

The fragrant fog from his pipe drifted about Jan's head and through it his glasses momentarily flashed. Then he sank back. "If I had not already thought this out, I would have no answer for you. There is no doubt but what the Ifrit—if he is there—has died. Hundreds or thousands of years—"

"Toads have lived in stone longer than that!" cried Frobish. "And toads possess none of the secrets for which science is even now groping. A small matter of suspended animation should create no difficulty for such a being as an Ifrit. You quibble. The point is this: You have here a thing for which I would sell my soul to see, and you put me off. Since the first days in college when I first understood that there were more things in this universe than could be answered by a slide rule and a badly conceived physical principle, I have dreamed of such a chance. I tell you, sir, I won't be balked!"

Jan looked questioningly at Frobish. The fellow had suddenly assumed very terrifying proportions. And it was not that Jan distrusted his physical ability

Frobish reeled back as the lead seal broke. Black smoke coiled out of the ancient copper jar, twisting, growing impossibly. An unholy, inhuman countenance began to form—

so much as his habitual retreat before the face of bullying which made him swallow now.

"I have given my word," he said doggedly. "I know as well as you that that jar may well contain a demon from other ages. But for ten years I slaved to forget it and put it out of my mind forever. And I do not intend to do otherwise now. The only friend I ever had gave me that jar. And now, with Greg Palmer dead in the deep of nine south and fifty-one east, I have no recourse but to keep the promise I gave him. He was at pains to make me understand that I would do myself great harm by breaking that seal, and so I have a double reason to refuse. I could let nothing happen to you in this—"

"My safety is my own responsibility," interrupted Frobish. "If you are afraid to—"

Jan, carried on by the dogged persistence of which he was occasionally capable—though nearly always against other things than man—looked at the floor between his feet and said: "I can say with truth that I am not afraid. I am not master of my own house nor of my slightest possessions; I may be a feather in the hands of others. But there is one thing which I cannot do. I do not want to speak about it any further."

FROBISH, finding resistance where he had not thought it possible, backed off, studying the thin, not unhandsome face of his host as though he could find a break in the defenses. But although Jan Palmer wore an expression very close to apology, there was still a set to his jaw which forbade attack. Frobish gave a despairing look at the jar.

"All my life," he said, "I have searched for such a thing. And now I find it here. Here, under the touch of my hands, ready to be opened with the most indifferent methods! And in that jar there lies the answer to all my speculations. But you balk me. You barricade the road to truth with a promise given to a dead man. You barricade all my endeavors. From here on I shall never be able to think of anything else but that jar." His voice dropped to a pleading tone. "In all the records of old there are constant references to Ifrits, to Marids and ghouls. We have closed our eyes to such things. It is possible that they still exist, and it would only be necessary to discover how to find them. And there is the way to discover them, there in that corner. Can't you see, Jan Palmer, that I am pleading with you out of the bottom of my heart? Can't you understand what this means to me? You . . . you are rich. You have everything you require—"

"I have nothing. In all things I am a pauper. But in one thing I can hold my own. I cannot and will not break my word. I am sorry. Had you argued so eloquently for this very house you might have had it, because this house is a yoke to me. But you have asked for a thing which it is beyond my power to give. I can say nothing more. Please do not come back."

It was a great deal for Jan Palmer to say. Green and Thompson and Aunt Ethel would have been rocked to their very insteps at such a firm stand, had they witnessed it. But Jan Palmer had not been under the thumb of Frobish from the days of his childhood. This concerned nothing but the most private possession a man can have—his honor. And so it was that Frobish ultimately backed out of the door, too agitated even to remember to take the Arab dhow.

Before Jan closed off the entrance, Frobish had one last glimpse of the copper jar, dull green in the light of the sinking sun. He clamped his mouth shut with a click which sounded like a bear trap springing. He jerked his hat down over his brow. Swiftly he walked

away, looking not at all like a fellow who has become reconciled to defeat.

Jan had not missed the attitude. Jan had lived too long in the wrong not to know the reactions of men. He had seen his mother hounded to death by relatives. He had felt the resentment toward wealth really meant for his father. He had been through a torturous school and had come out far from unscathed. He knew very definitely that he would see Frobish again. Wearily he closed his door and slumped down in a chair to think.

II.

EACH EVENING, when the household was assembled at the dining table, Jan Palmer had the feeling that the entire table's attention was devoted to seeing whether or not he would choke on his next mouthful. As long as his father had been alive, this had been the one period of the day when he had been certain of himself. His father had occupied the big chair at the head, filling it amply, and treating one and all to a rough jocosity which was very acceptable—until his father had retired to his study for the night. Then it seemed that his rough jests were not at all lightly received. Quite obvious it had been that fawning was a wearying business at best and that those so engaged were apt to revert at the slightest excuse.

Jan didn't come close to filling the big chair. His slight body could have gone three times between the arms of it. And Aunt Ethel and Thompson and, occasionally as tonight, Nathaniel Green, found no reason whatever to do any fawning.

Having very early deserted the bosom of his family for the flinty chest of Socrates, Jan knew quite well that if he had had the dispensing of funds comparable to those of his father in his entire control, smiles and not scowls would now be his lot. But the Bering Steamship Corporation was not showing much of a profit. Just why he did not know. He had never peeped into the books, but he supposed that these continual strikes had something to do with it. The company paid Thompson, and most of Jan's lot went directly to Aunt Ethel for household expenses. He had, therefore, no spare dollars to spread around.

The deep, dank silence was marred only by the scraping of silver on china. It was as if they all had secrets which they were fearful of giving away to each other, or as if they could say nothing but things so awful that they wouldn't even let Jan hear them. The old house, with its ship models on the mantel and the great timbers across the ceilings and the hurricane lanterns hung along the walls would have been much louder had it had no occupants at all.

Jan was glad when the gloomy footman put indifferent coffee before them. If he was careful, he could gulp it down and get away without a thing being said to him.

But his luck didn't hold. "Jan," said Nathaniel heavily, "I trust you will be home this evening." The question implied that Jan was never to be found at home, but always in some dive somewhere, roistering.

"Yes," said Jan.

"You saw fit to leave today when I needed your signature. When I finally connected with you, I had only time to get the most urgent matters attended to. You are too careless of these serious matters. There are at least twenty letters which only you can write, unfortunately. I am forced to demand that you finish them tonight. If I but had your complete power of attorney, you would save me much needless labor. I have so many things to do already that if I were six men with six hands I couldn't get them done in time."

Strangely enough, it came as welcome news to Jan. He almost smiled. "I am sorry I can't be of more help, but

I'll be glad to do the letters tonight."

Nathaniel grunted as much as to say that Jan better had if he knew what was good for him. And Jan took the grunt as a cue for his departure. Swiftly he made his way to his apartments, fearful that this wouldn't come out the way he hoped it would.

THE FIRST thing he did was strip off his clothes and duck under a shower. He came forth in an agony of haste, losing everything and finding it and losing it again as he swiftly assembled himself. His wardrobe was able to offer very little, as Aunt Ethel purchased most of his clothing and did little purchasing. But the dark-blue suit was neatly pressed and his cravat was nicely tied and he had no more than finished slicking back his blond hair when a knock sounded.

Hurriedly he flung himself into his chair by the desk and scooped up a book. Then he called, "Come in," as indifferently as he could.

Alice Hall stepped into the room. As Nathaniel's secretary it was her duty, two or three times a week, to call in the evening to let Jan catch up on company correspondence. She was the last of six stenographers, and ever since she had first taken the job, four months before, Jan had lain awake nights trying to figure out a way to make certain that she would hold her job. It was not so much that she was beautiful —though she was that—and it wasn't entirely because she was the only one who did not seem to look down upon him. Jan had tried in vain to turn up the answer. She was a lady, there was no denying it, and she was far better educated than most stenographers, evidently having done P. G. work. She did not make him feel at ease at all, but neither did she make him feel uneasy. When he had first beheld her he had had a hard time breathing.

Her large blue eyes were as impersonal as the turquoise orbs of the idol by the wall. She was interested, it seemed, in nothing but doing her immediate job. Still, there was something about her; something unseen but felt, as the traveler can sense the violence of a slumbering volcano under his feet. Her age was near Jan's own, and she had arrived at that estate without leaving anything unlearned behind her. There was almost something resentful about her; but that, too, was never displayed.

Now she put down her brief case and took off her small hat and swagger coat and seated herself at a distance from him, placing her materials on a small table before her. She arranged several letters in order and then stepped over to the blackwood desk and laid them before Jan, who, to all signs, was deeply immersed in a treatise on aërodynamics.

Truth told, he was afraid to notice her, not knowing anything to say besides that which had brought her there and not wanting to talk about such matters to her.

She twitched the papers and still he did not look up. Finally she said, "You're holding that book upside down."

"What? Oh . . . oh, yes, of course. These diagrams, you see—"

"Shall we begin on the letters? This one on top is from the Steamship Owners Alliance, asking your attendance at a conference in San Francisco. I have noted the reply on the bottom."

"Oh, yes. Thank you." He looked studiously at the letter, his ears very red. "Yes, that is right. I won't be able to attend."

"I didn't think you would," she said unexpectedly.

"Uh?"

"I said I was sure you wouldn't. They asked you, but Mr. Green will go instead."

"He wouldn't want me to go," said

Jan. "He . . . he knows much more about it than I."

"You're right."

Jan detected, to his intense dismay, something like pity in her voice. Pity or contempt; they were brothers, anyway.

"But he really does," said Jan. "He wouldn't like it if I said I would go."

"He'll be the only nonowner there."

"But he has full authority—"

"Does he?" She was barely interested now. Jan thought she looked disappointed about something. "Shall we get on with these letters?"

"Yes, of course."

For the following two hours he stumbled through the correspondence, taking most of his text from Alice Hall's suggestions. She wrote busily and efficiently and, at last, closed her notebook and put on her hat and coat.

"Do you have to go?" said Jan, surprising himself. "I mean, couldn't I send for some tea and things? It's late."

"I'll be up half the night now, transcribing."

"Oh . . . will you? But don't you finish these at the office in the morning?"

"Along with my regular work? A company can buy a lot for fifteen dollars a week these days."

"Fifteen . . . but I thought our stenographers got twenty-five."

"Oh, do you know that much about it?"

"Why . . . yes." He was suddenly brightened by an idea. "If you have to work tonight, perhaps I had better drive you home. It's quite a walk up to the car line—"

"I have my own car outside. It's a fine car when it runs. Good night."

HE WAS still searching for a reply when she closed the door behind her. He got up, suddenly furious with himself. He went over to the fireplace and kicked at the logs, making sparks jump frighteningly up the flue. In the next fifteen minutes he thought of fifteen hundred things to say to her, statements which would swerve her away from believing him a weak mouse, holed up in a cluttered room. And that thought stopped him and sent him into a deep chair to morosely consider the truth of his simile. Time and again he had vowed to tell them all. Time and again something had curled up inside of him to forbid the utterance.

Sunk in morbid reverie, he failed to hear Aunt Ethel enter and indignantly turn out the lights without seeing him in the chair. He failed to see that the fire burned lower and lower until just one log smoldered on the grate. He failed to hear the clock strike two bells and so the night advanced upon him.

With a start he awoke without knowing that he had been asleep. He was cold and aching and aware of a wrong somewhere near him. Once again sounded the creepy scratch and Jan stood up, shaking and staring intently into the dark depths of the room. Some one or something was there. He did not want to turn on the light but he knew that he must. He found the lamp beside the chair and pulled its cord. The blinding glare whipped across the room to throw his caller into full relief.

The curtains were blowing inward from the open window, and the papers were stirring on the blackwood desk. And in the corner by the copper jar stood Frobish, nervous with haste, a knife peeling back ribbons of lead from the seal. For an instant, so intent was the interloper, he did not become aware of the light. And then he whirled about, facing Jan.

Frobish's eyes were hot and his face drawn. There was danger in his voice. "I had to do this. I've been half crazy for hours thinking about it. I am going to open this copper jar, and if you try

to stop me—" The knife glittered in his fingers.

It was very clear to Jan that he confronted a being whose entire life was concentrated upon one object and who was now driven to a deed which, had conditions been otherwise, would have horrified no one more than Professor Frobish. But, with his goal at hand, it would take more than the strength of one man to stop him.

"You said you promised," cried Frobish. "I have nothing to do with that. You are not opening the jar, and you were not commissioned to see that it was never opened by anyone. Your cousin was protecting only you and him. He cared nothing about anyone else. If any harm comes from this, it is not on your head. Stay were you are and be silent." He again attacked the stopper.

Jan, his surprise leaving him, looked anxiously along the wall. But there were no weapons on this side of the room beyond an old pistol which was not loaded and, indeed, was too rusty to even offer a threat.

A sudden spasm of outrage shook him. That this fellow should presume to break in here and meddle with what was his was swelled with years of resentment against all the countless invasions of his privacy and the confiscations of his possessions.

Shaking and white, Jan advanced across the room.

Frobish whirled around to face him. "Stand back! I warn you this is no ordinary case. I won't be balked! This research is bigger than either you or me." His voice was mounting toward hysteria.

Jan did not stop. Watchful of the knife, unable to understand how the professor could go to such lengths as using it, he came within a pace. Frobish backed up against the wall, breathing hard, swinging the weapon up to the level of his shoulder.

"I've dreamed for years of making such a discovery. You cannot stop me now!"

"Be quiet or people will hear you," said Jan, cooled a little by the sight of that knife. "You can leave now and nothing will have happened."

Frobish was quick to sense the change. He reached out and shoved Jan away from him to whirl and again pry at the stopper.

Jan seized hold of his shoulder and whirled him about. "You're insane! This is my house and that jar is mine. You have no right, I tell you."

Savagely Frobish struck at him, and Jan, catching the blow on the point of his chin, dropped to the floor, turned halfway about. Groggily he shook his head, still unwilling to believe that Frobish could fail to listen to reason, unable to understand that he was dealing with forces and desires greater than he could ever hope to control.

Once more Frobish flung him away and would have followed up, but behind him there sounded a thing like escaping steam. He forgot Jan and faced the jar to instantly stumble back from it. Jan remained frozen to the floor a dozen feet away.

BLACK SMOKE was coiling into the dark shadows of the ceiling, mushrooming slowly outward, rolling into itself with ominous speed. Frobish backed against a chair and stopped, hands flung up before his face, while over him, like a shroud, the acrid vapors began to drop down.

Jan coughed from the fumes and blinked the tears which were stung from his eyes. The stopper was not wholly off the jar and stayed on the edge, teetering until the last of the smoke was past, when it dropped with a dull sound to the floor.

The smoke eddied more swiftly against the beams. It became blacker and blacker, more and more solid, drawing in and in again and finally begin-

ning to pulsate as though it breathed.

Something hard flashed at the top of it and then became two spiked horns, swiftly accompanied by two gleaming eyes the size of meat platters. Two long tusks, polished and sharp, squared the awful cavern of a mouth. Swiftly then the smoke became a body girt with a blazing belt, two arms tipped by clawed fingers, two legs like trees ending in hoofs, split-toed and as large across as an elephant's foot. The thing was covered with shaggy hair except for the face and the tail which lashed back and forth now in agitation.

The thing knelt and flung up its hands and cried: "There is no God but Allah, the all-merciful and compassionate. Spare me!"

Jan was frozen. The fumes were still heavy about him, but now there penetrated a wild-animal smell which made his man's soul lurch within him in memory of days an æon gone.

Frobish, recovered now, and seeing that the thing was wholly on the defensive, straightened up.

"There is no God but Allah. And Sulayman is the lord of the earth!"

"Get up," said Frobish. "We care less than nothing about Allah, and Sulayman has been dead these many centuries. I have loosed you from your prison and in return there are things I desire."

The Ifrit's luminous, yellow eyes played up and down the puny mortal before him. Slowly an evil twist came upon the giant lips. A laugh rumbled deep in him like summer thunder—a laugh wholly of contempt.

"So, it is as I thought it might be. You are a man, and you have loosed me. And now you speak of a reward." The Ifrit laughed again. "Sulayman, you say, is dead?"

"Naturally. Sulayman was as mortal as I."

"Yes, yes. As mortal as you. Man who freed me, you behold before you Zongri, king of the Ifrits of the Barbossi Isles. For thousands of years have I been in that jar. Would you like to know what I thought about?"

"Of course," said Frobish.

"Mortal man, the first five hundred years I vowed that the man who let me free would have all the riches in the world. But no man freed me. The next five hundred years I vowed that the man who let me out would have life everlasting, even as I. But no man let me out. I waited then for a long, long time and then, at long last, I fell into a fury at my captivity and I vowed — You are sure you wish to know, mortal man?"

"Yes!"

"Then know that I vowed that the one who let me free would meet with instant death!"

Frobish paled. "You are a fool, as I have heard that all Ifrits are fools. But for me you would have stayed there the rest of eternity. Tonight I had to break into that man's house to loose you. It is he who has held you captive, who would not let you go."

"A vow is never broken. You have freed me and therefore you shall die!" A thunderous scowl settled upon his face and he edged forward on his knees, unable to stand against the fourteen-foot ceiling.

Frobish backed up hastily.

The Ifrit glanced about him. Near at hand were the Malay krisses and upon the largest he fastened, wrenching it from the wall and bringing the rest of the board down with a clatter. The great executioner's blade looked like a toothpick in his fist.

Frobish strove to dash out of the room but the Ifrit raked out with his claws and snatched him back, holding him a foot from the floor.

"A vow," uttered Zongri, "is a vow." And so saying he released Frobish, who again tried to run.

The blade flashed and there was a

crunching sound as of a cleaver going through ham. Split from crown to waist, Frobish's corpse dropped to the floor, staining the carpet for a yard about.

JAN winced as something moist splashed against his hand and swiftly he scuttled back. The movement attracted the Ifrit's attention and again the claws raked out and clutched. Jan, assailed by fuming breath and sick with the sight of death, shook like a rag in a hurricane.

The Ifrit regarded him solemnly.

"Let me go," said Jan.

"Why?"

"I did not free you."

"You kept me captive for years. That one said so."

"You cannot," chattered Jan, "kill a man for letting you free and then kill another for . . . for not letting you free."

"Why not?"

"It . . . it is not logical!"

Zongri regarded him for a long time, shaking him now and then to start him shivering anew. Finally he said: "No, that is so. It is not logical. You did not let me free, and I said no vow about you. You are Mohammedan?"

"N-n-no!"

"Hm-m-m." Again Zongri shook him. "You are no friend of Sulayman's?"

"I . . . n-n-no!"

"Then," said the Ifrit, "it would not be right for me to kill you." He dropped him to the floor and looked around. "But," he added, "you held me captive for years. He said you did. That cannot go unpunished."

Jan hugged the moist floor, waiting for doom to blanket him.

"I cannot kill you," said Zongri. "I made no vow. Instead . . . instead, I shall lay upon you a sentence. Yes, that is it. A sentence. You, mortal one, I sentence"—and laughter shook him for a moment—"to eternal wakefulness. And now I am off to Mount Kaaf!"

There was a howling sound as of wings. Jan did not dare open his eyes for several seconds, but when he did he found that the room was empty.

Unsteadily he got to his feet, stepping gingerly around the dead man, and then discovered to his dismay that he himself was now smeared with blood.

The executioner's knife had been dropped across the body and, with some wild thought of trying to bring the man back to life, Jan laid it aside, shaking the already cooling shoulder.

Realizing that that was a fruitless gesture, he again got to his feet. For the first time in his life he did not want to be alone. He wanted lights and people about him. Yes, even Green or Thompson.

HE laid his hand upon the door, but before he could pull, it crashed into his chest—and he found himself staring into a crowd in the hall.

Two prowler-car men, guns in hand, were in front. A servant stood behind them and after that he could see the strained faces of Aunt Ethel and Thompson and Green.

A flood of gladness went through him, but he was too shocked to speak. Mutely he pointed toward Frobish's body and tried to tell them that the Ifrit had gone through the window. But other voices swirled about him.

"Nab him, Mike; it's open and shut," said the sergeant.

Mike nabbed Jan.

"Deader'n a door nail," said Mike, looking at the bisected corpse. "Open and shut." He took out a book and flipped it open. "How long ago did you do it?"

"About five minutes!" said Thompson. "When I first heard the voices in here and sent for you, I didn't expect anything like this to happen. But I

heard the sound of the knife and then silence."

"Five minutes, eh?" said the sergeant, wetting the end of his pencil and writing. "And what was this all about, you?"

Jan recovered his voice. "You . . . you think I did this thing?"

"Well?" said Mike. "Didn'tcha?"

"No!" shouted Jan. "You don't understand. That jar—"

"Fell on him, I suppose."

"No, no! That jar—"

Intelligence flashed in Aunt Ethel's needle-point eyes. She flung herself upon Jan, weeping. "Oh, my poor boy. How could you do such an awful thing?"

Jan, startled, tried to shake her off, urgently protesting to the sergeant all the while. "I told him not to, but he broke through the window and pried at the stopper—"

"Who?" said Mike.

"I'll handle this," said the sergeant in reproof.

"He means Professor Frobish, his guest," said Thompson. "The professor came to see him about an Arabian ship model this afternoon."

"Huh, murdered his guest, did he? Mike, you hold down here while I send for the homicide squad."

"Don't!" shouted Jan. "You've got it all wrong. Frobish broke in here to let—"

"Save it for the sergeant and the boys," said Mike, shaking him to quiet him down.

Jan glared at those around him. Thompson was looking at him in deep sorrow. Aunt Ethel was wiping her eyes with the hem of her dressing gown. And all the while Nathaniel Green was pacing up and down the room, squashing fist into palm and muttering: "A murder. A Palmer a murderer. Oh, how can such things keep happening to me! The publicity—and just when the government was offering a subsidy. I knew it, I knew it. He was always strange, and now see what he's done. I should have watched him more closely. It's my fault, all my fault."

"No, it's mine," wept Aunt Ethel. "I've tried to be a mother to him and he repays us by killing his guest in our house. Oh, think of the papers!"

It went on and on. It went on for the benefit of the newspapermen who came swarming in on the heels of such a name as Palmer. It went on for the benefit of the homicide squad. Over and over until Jan was sick and wabbly.

The fingerprint men were swift in their work. The photographers took various views of the corpse.

And then a patrol wagon backed up beside the Black Maria, and while Frobish was basketed into the latter, Jan, under heavy guard, was herded into the former.

And as they drove away, the last thing he heard was Aunt Ethel's wail to a late-coming newsman that here was gratitude after all that she had done for him and wasn't it awful, awful, awful? Wasn't it? Wasn't it? Wasn't it?

III.

JAN was too stunned by the predicament to protest any further; he went so willingly—or nervelessly—wherever he was shoved that the officers concluded there was no more harm left in him for the moment. Besides, a gang of counterfeiters was occupying the best cells and so a little doubling was in order. Jan found himself thrust into a cubicle, past a pale, snake-eyed fellow, and then the door clanged authoritatively and the guard marched away.

Seeing the cell and the cellmate, and believing it was a cell and a cellmate were two entirely different things. Jan sat down on a bunk and looked woodenly straight ahead. He was in that frame of mind where men behold disaster at every side but are so thoroughly drenched with it that they begin to

The jinn captain glared at him in thundering anger. "Are ye mad, ye scum! Tiger . . . Tiger putting us on the rocks! Tiger sleeping at the wheel!"

discount it. It was even a somewhat solacing frame of mind. Nothing worse than this could possibly happen. Unlucky fate had opened the bag and pulled out everything at once and so, by lucid reason, it was impossible for said unlucky fate to have any further stock still hidden.

"That's my bunk," snarled the cellmate.

Jan obediently moved to the other berth to discover that it was partly unhinged so that a man had to sleep with his head below his feet. Further, the cellmate had robbed it of blankets to benefit his own couch and so had exposed a questionable mattress.

Jan's deep sigh sucked the smell of disinfectant so deeply into his lungs that he went into a spasm of coughing.

"Lunger?" said the cellmate indifferently.

"Beg pardon?"

"I said, have y'got it inna pipes?"

"What?"

"Skiput."

"Really," said Jan, "I don't understand you."

"Oh, a swell, huh? What'd they baste you wit'?"

"Er—"

"How's it read? What's the yarn? What'd they book you for?" said the fellow with great impatience. "Murder? Arson? Bigamy—"

"Oh," said Jan with relief. "Oh, yes, certainly." And then the enormity of the error came back to him, and he grew agitated. "I'm supposed to have murdered a man—but I didn't do it!"

"Sure not. Hammer, lead or steel?" Hastily, to clarify himself: "How'd you do it?"

"But I didn't!" said Jan. "It's all a horrible mistake."

"Sure. Was it a big shot?"

"There wasn't any shooting. It was an executioner's sword."

"Exe— Say! You do things with a flare, doncha?"

"But I didn't do it!"

"Well, hell, who said you did? What was the stiff's name?"

"Stiff? Oh . . . Professor Frobish of the university."

"Brain wizard, huh? Never liked 'em myself. How come the slash party in the first place? I mean, how'd it happen?"

"That's what's so terrible about it," said Jan, so deep in misery that he did not fully comprehend what he was saying. "I had a copper jar in my room and Frobish insisted upon opening it, and when I refused him he returned in the night and pried the stopper out of it because he knew it might contain an Ifrit." Mistaking the popeyes for sympathy, Jan went on:: "And it *did* contain an Ifrit that Sulayman had bottled up, and when the thing came out it took down a sword and killed Frobish, and when the police got there they didn't give me a chance to explain. They thought I did it, and so here I am!"

"WHAT," said the cellmate, "is an Ifrit? Do you eat it or spend it?"

"An Ifrit? Oh. Why, an Ifrit is a demon of the tribes of the jinn. Some people call them jinnis or geniis. They seem to have vanished from the earth, although there is evidence that they were once very numerous."

"What . . . what do they look like?"

"Why, they're about fifteen feet tall, and they've got horns and a spiked tail—"

"A sniffer."

"What?"

"I said I didn't think you looked like a sniffer when I first seen you."

"I don't understand."

"Sure. Well, go on, don't let me stop you," he said indulgently. "Fifteen feet tall with horns and a spiked tail—"

Jan frowned. "You don't believe me."

"Sure, I believe you. Hell, who wouldn't believe you? Why, I seen worse than that before I finally yanked myself up on the wagon. Once I lamped a whole string of such things. They was hangin' to each other's tails with one hand and carrying purple sedans in the other. And—"

"You doubt my word?"

"Hell, no, buddy. Just sit down and be calm. No use frettin' about a little thing like that, see? Sure. I know all about these here—what did you say you called 'em?"

"Ifrits!"

"Sure, that's right. You've been done dirt, that's sure. But all you gotta do is tell the truth to the judge and he'll do the rest."

"You think I've got a chance?"

"Listen, pal, I'm in here for shaking down a gent for eight hundred bucks. That's what they say I did. I didn't, of course. But if I think I've got a story lined up—geez, you must be a genius."

The other's volunteered information brought Jan slightly out of himself, enough to realize that his cellmate was also answering to the law. With this in common, Jan took interest in him.

"They arrested you, too?"

"Hell, no, buddy, I use this for a hotel. Look, I don't know where they dug you up or who you are—"

"My name is Jan Palmer."

"O. K., your name is Jan Palmer. Fine. But would you please tell me how a gent can live all his life in these United States without finding out a thing or two? Palmer, I hate to say it, but unless you smarten up you ain't got an onion's chance in Spain. Me, I know the ropes. There ain't nobody in the racket that knows more about what's what than Diver Mullins. Now listen to me. You give this cockeyed yarn of yours the bounce and think of somethin' logical. Otherwise, my innercent pal, they'll swing you by the neck until you're most awful dead."

Jan was jolted. He peered nearsightedly at his cellmate, seeing him truly for the first time. There was no mistaking the evil in that face. It was narrow as a ferret's and of an unhealthy pallor. The eyes flicked up and down and around and about in incessant sentinel duty. Shabby and wasted though he was, there was still a certain vitality in the fellow.

"But . . . but," said Jan, "I told you the truth. An Ifrit came out of the jar—"

"Look, pal," said Diver Mullins, "I ain't doubtin' your word. I believe every syllable. But I ain't the judge, and when you spin that cockeyed story before a jury they'll laugh at you. Now, take me. I ain't in here for the first time. No, sir! I know my business. I was located in possession of eight hundred smacks that a sap lost. That's an insult. If I'd have taken it offn him in a crowd, do you suppose he ever would have knowed about it?"

"You mean you had another fellow's money," decoded Jan.

"Go to the head of the class. Now another gent would say he found it on the sidewalk or some place and get himself laughed at. But not me. Another fellow would say he didn't know how it got in his pocket. But not me! Then dodges has mildew on 'em. Now, I figger—"

But Jan had relapsed into his own woes and scarcely heard Diver Mullins' plot to put the entire blame upon another pickpocket and place himself in a savior light. Jan, accountably weary, lay back on the tipsy bunk and gave himself over to dreary speculation.

He retraced the activities of the night and found them to be anything but reassuring. And, to dodge away from their damning possibilities, he dwelt upon the inconsequentialities. He was, for instance, almost certain that Zongri had spoken in Arabic. He, Jan,

spoke no Arabic so far as he knew. Of course, Frobish would understand the language, but how could it be that Jan had come into the sudden possession of such knowledge? Perhaps it wasn't really Arabic. Jan didn't know enough to be certain on that score, just as he was too hazy to analyze the Ifrit's "eternal wakefulness."

The puzzle was far too much for him and his tired, event-shocked brain gave it up. In a few moments he was falling steeply into exhausted slumber.

The thing which happened immediately thereafter was the turning point in the life of Jan Palmer for one—even beyond the effect of the murder.

HE went to sleep but he didn't go to sleep. He had a sensation of dropping straight down. Heretofore he had been aware, in common with all men, of a delicious period of semiwakefulness preceding and succeeding slumber. But from that period he had always gone into a deep sleep—so far as he knew—or had come fully awake. Now he felt as though the world had been obscured by a veil which no more than dropped than it was ripped startlingly aside.

A hail rang hysterically in his ears: "Breakers two points off the sta'b'd b-o-o-o-o-w! *B-r-r-reakers* two points off the sta'b'd bow! Captain, for the love of God, we're on the rocks!"

Jan had scarcely lifted his hand and felt the spokes of a helm under his fingers when he was jarred fully awake and almost into sleep again by the most tremendous blow which rocketed him all the way across the quarterdeck, from binnacle to scupper. He brought up against the rail and lifted himself cautiously.

The quiet vessel was suddenly bedlam. The captain's roars seconding the still-braying lookout, the crew spilled helter-skelter from the fo'c's'le, rubbing their eyes, scarcely knowing what they were doing but automatically taking their stations.

The masts swooped back and forth across the stars as the captain's savage hands spun the helm. The thunder of breakers could be plainly heard now and, lifting himself a little more, Jan beheld their phosphorescent line which swiftly swung parallel with them.

"Let go the port sheets!" bellowed the captain. "Take in on the sta'b'd main sheet!"

Canvas cannonaded in the fresh wind and then the deck leaped under them as the billowing white cliff tautened in the gloom. On a close port tack the big vessel picked up a bone and scudded back into the safety of the sea.

"Make fast!" roared the captain.

"Lively now," cried a mate somewhere in the waist.

The ship surged ahead anew as the sails were more precisely trimmed and then, one by one, the crew made their ways back to the fo'c's'le and more sleep.

When all was in order, the captain turned the wheel over to another man and gave him a course and then, with both hands on his hips, he planted his feet solidly on the deck and glared about him.

"Now! Where's that helmsman?"

Jan shivered, and he had every right. The captain loomed into the stars, and the gleam of the binnacle which fell upon his face displayed two glittering fangs. From the flame of his eye and the posture Jan knew that once again, in less than four hours, he had run afoul of an Ifrit.

He had no slightest inkling of what he was doing there or why, and he had no time to consider it.

Shaking, he came upright, holding hard to the rail.

"So you're still here," said the captain, advancing. Suddenly his hand shot out and he gripped Jan by the shirt front and shook him clear of the deck, slamming him back to the planking.

"Asleep! Asleep at the wheel! Why, you ugly pup, I ought to knock every tooth out of your ugly face! I ought to smash your skull like an egg! Do you realize what you did? Has it leaked through your thick skull that you put us miles and miles off our course and almost killed us to a man on the Faybran shoals? Sleep, will you—" And again he lifted Jan up and threw him down. With the biggest boot Jan had ever seen, the captain kicked him down the ladder and into the waist.

"Go get the cat, d'ya hear me? Get it and bring it to me!"

JAN got up and stumbled along the rail. He was stunned by the treatment no less than his strange position. He knew rightly enough what a cat was, but where he could find one aboard this packet he certainly could not tell. He looked fearfully back at the captain, who stood like a tree on the quarter-deck, watching him with piercing eyes.

The mate, likewise an Ifrit, started to pass him on his way aft and then recognized him. He flung him back against the rail.

"So!" roared the mate. "It's Tiger, is it?" And he spun Jan about with a blow. "By the Seven Sisters of Circe, if I don't drown you, the crew will! First it's fight, fight, fight. It's rum and women and battle and now, by God, it's shipwreck you're asking for! Run us on a reef, will you!"

Jan spun around the other way and went down with the salty taste of his own blood in his mouth.

"Sleep at the helm, will you!"

And again Jan went down.

"I sent him for the cat!" roared the captain.

"Get it, then," snarled the mate, his upper and lower fangs coming together with a vicious click. "Get it and be damned to you!"

Jan despairingly watched him go. A sailor was nearby and Jan started to appeal to him, but the fellow stalked away. Staggering forward, his head roaring and spinning, Jan almost collided with a bos'n.

"Wh-where's the cat?" said Jan through cracked lips.

"Get it yourself, you jinx," said the bos'n.

"Please, I don't know where it's kept."

Something in Jan's tone made the bos'n look more closely. He could not see very well through the darkness, and he swung a lanthorn out of its niche and held it to peer into Jan's face. He was evidently perplexed.

"What's the matter with you? You sick or something?"

"I . . . I got to find the cat."

"Never seen a man so anxious to get a flogging. It's in the gunroom where it's supposed to be." He frowned. "Maybe you oughtn't to get it, Tiger. You look awful."

Jan stumbled up the deck toward an indicated passageway. He fumbled through the darkness and found a door which he opened. A guttering lamp showed him bracketed muskets, hung in orderly racks and glittering cutlasses held fanwise in cleats. The cat had a dozen tails, and it was so heavy with the brass on its ends that Jan could scarcely lift it.

Bearing his cross, he made his blind way back to the quarter-deck. The captain was still waiting, a tower of smoldering rage. Jan gave up the whip.

"Peel off your shirt."

Jan fumbled with the unaccustomed buttons and finally removed the garment.

"Lay yourself over the house."

Jan sprawled against the handrail of the sterncastle house.

THERE was no further ceremony to it. The whip sang with all its twelve hungry tails and then bit so savagely that Jan screamed with agony. He

whirled around and dropped to his knees.

"Please God! I don't know why I'm here or even where I am! I didn't go to sleep at the helm. I only woke up there with no knowledge of how I came to be aboard here."

"What?" The captain was plainly perplexed. He, too, lifted a lanthorn from its niche and looked closely at Jan's features.

"If I didn't hear it, I wouldn't believe it," said the captain. "Tiger, of all men, beggin' for mercy and lying in the bargain."

"I don't know that name!" wailed Jan. "I don't know anything about it!"

The captain picked off his cap and scratched his pointed head thoughtfully. Then he turned and called, "Mr. Malek!"

The mate came out of a companionway. "Yessir."

"Did you or did you not put Tiger on the helm?"

"Why . . . ah—"

"Answer me!"

"Yes. I did. But he's never done anything like that before, sir. I didn't have any idea—"

"I'm not blaming you; I'm asking you. Mr. Malek, there's something very wrong here. Either that or Tiger is making a fool of us. He says he doesn't know anything about it. Was he fully awake when he went on watch?"

"Yessir. That is, he seemed so."

The captain again raised the lanthorn and saw that Jan's head was bleeding. "Maybe it's that crack against the rail that did it. Listen here, Tiger, if this is one of your tricks, I'll make a flogging feel like a picnic in comparison."

"I'm not lying!" wailed Jan. "I don't know anything about any of this, honest to God. I've never seen any of you before in my life."

"Must have been the crack on the head," said the captain. "Go below and I'll look you over."

Jan hastily scooped up his shirt and ducked down the companionway. A room, obviously the captain's, stood open on his right and he stumbled into it. The height of the ceiling was not as extreme as it really should have been, he thought, and the bed wasn't so much larger than ordinary beds, looking to be only about eight feet long.

The captain was checking up on the ship before he came below and Jan had a moment or two to catch his breath. For the first time he realized the strangeness of his situation. Certainly it was impossible to board a ship in the open sea and he could not otherwise have arrived there. That he had no recollection whatever of arriving had him half convinced that he wasn't there at all.

He saw a mirror across the room from him and, with sudden suspicion, approached it. He was jolted so that he took two steps backward. He recovered himself and peered more closely at his image.

Yes, now that he made a closer examination, it was himself. But what a difference there was! He, Jan Palmer, was a thin-faced, anæmic fellow, but this brute who was staring back at him was bold of visage, brawny of arm, tall and—yes, he had to admit it—not bad at all to look upon. But the knife scar which ran from the lobe of his ear diagonally to his jawbone—where had that come from? He felt of it and peered more closely at it. He didn't really object to it at all because it didn't mar his looks but, in truth, rather gave him an air.

Puzzled, he looked down at himself. His blue pants incased very muscular and shapely legs. His bare chest was matted with blond hair. He looked back at his image as though it might solve the riddle for him.

"Tiger!" cried a voice in the passageway.

JAN started and saw that the captain was just then entering. The captain looked shocked.

"In here? Well, of all the gall! By God, I do believe there's something gone wrong with you. Don't you know enough to wait outside? Come here!"

Jan obeyed. Roughly the captain forced him down to the bed and inspected his skull with great perplexity. It gave Jan a chance to realize that this Ifrit was, seemingly, a lot smaller than Zongri. Either that or . . . or he himself was now bigger than he had been.

"Hell," said the captain, "there isn't even a dent there. Tiger, if you're pulling another one of your tricks—"

Jan was frightened at the proximity of that awful, fanged face and he drew back.

The captain once again removed his cap and scratched one of his pointed ears. "And scared, too. I never thought I'd live to see that. Tiger, scared. By God, if this is a game, you won't enjoy it."

"It's no trick," said Jan. "I don't know anything about it."

"Hm-m-m. It's just barely possible— See here, give me the straight of this and no lying! What are you up to?"

Jan spread his hands hopelessly. "I'm not up to anything! One minute I am sleeping in a jail and the next I am leaning on the helm of this ship. How I can tell you when I don't know myself—"

"Jail? For God's sake, where?"

"Why, in Seattle, of course."

"Where?"

"Seattle, Washington."

"That's one port I never heard of, anyway. Go ahead and talk, Tiger, and make it good. I know you've seen plenty of jails but that particular one has escaped me. Go on. What did you do to get in jail?"

"I didn't do anything! They thought I'd killed a Professor Frobish that came to see me but I didn't do it. He wanted to open a copper jar and I wouldn't let him so he came back at night and did it anyway. I was asleep in a chair but I woke up too late to stop him. And when the Ifrit came out—"

"Copper jar? Ifrit? Go on!"

"Well, the Ifrit almost cut him in half with an executioner's sword and then flew away."

"You're talking about Earth!"

"Of course."

"Earth, by all that's— See here, what was the name of this Ifrit?"

"Z. . . let's see . . . Zon . . . Zongri. Yes, that was it, Zongri."

"Zongri! Good God, Tiger, if you're making this up—"

"I'm not!"

"But Zongri was captured and entombed by Sulayman thousands of years ago! I remember hearing about it. He was king of the Barbossi Isles and he refused to change faith with the others." Suddenly he grew very agitated and stalked about the room. Abruptly he again confronted Jan. "See here, did this Zongri say anything to you? Did he do anything?"

"Yes. He said he was going to sentence me to eternal wakefulness—"

"Hush!" said the captain, going swiftly to the port and slamming it shut. He closed the door and then came back to the bed with the air of a conspirator. "Zongri said that?"

"Yes. And then I was arrested and taken to jail because they thought—"

"To Shatan with that! Oh, the fool, the fool! Eternal wakefulness!" The captain slammed a fist into his palm with the wish that Zongri was in between. "It's like him. He almost runs my ship on the rocks! He was at the bottom of the war with Sulayman and all our woes since. And now—" He eyed Jan. "Tiger, if you are telling me lies—"

"It's true! I swear it's true."

"Hm-m-m. Perhaps. If it weren't

for the change in you, I wouldn't credit any of it. But you speak so well. . . . Hm-m-m. You swear to this, you say?"

"Certainly."

"All right. So be it. Mr. Malek!"

The mate clattered down the ladder and thrust his head in the door.

"Mr. Malek, you will take Tiger down to the brig and post a reliable Marid over him. Understand that Tiger is not to talk to anyone, you hear? Absolutely no one! When we get into port we'll find out what to do with him."

Malek took hold of Jan's collar and jerked him to his feet.

"Count on me," said Malek. "He won't see a soul."

"Your head will answer for it if he does."

"That's all right with me," said Malek, jerking Jan down the passageway and into the bowels of the ship.

IV.

JAN went round and round his small cell like a white rat spinning about a pole. And his head went faster than he. He shook the bars and yelled at the departing mate, but Malek had no further heed for him. Growing terror caused him to shout at the guard, but the Marid, too, was most indifferent. And so it was that Jan dizzied himself by pacing the walls. He could stand a berating, perhaps, and even face a flogging without really cracking, but this situation was of the stuff of which madness was made. He had long ceased to doubt that he was here because, after all, he *was* here. And what in the name of God did they mean to do with him?

Again he besought information from the Marid. The guard was small, with a solitary eye in the middle of his head and a twist to his back, garbed in a single cloak. His lack of shoes was backed by ample reason. He had hoofs.

"Be quiet," said the Marid at last. "Better you sleep." And with that he faced the other way and was wholly deaf.

At long, long last Jan wearied himself to exhaustion. He sank down on the pile of blankets and buried his face in his arms, striving to gather and tie the loose ends of his nerves.

His strange position was bad enough, but not even to be himself! Who and what was this Tiger? True, he had some slight resemblance to Jan Palmer, but that was not enough. Tiger was known here, known for a bad character, it seemed. *But* if Jan Palmer was now Tiger, where was Tiger?

He could not answer that and the weight of it was the proverbial straw. His mind went wholly blank and he lay in apathy. Once or twice he reasoned that this was still the jail. But each time he lifted his head to prove it, there was the Marid in all his evil dignity. Yea, and in the damp air was the hissing sound of the clean hull carving through the waves, that and the sing of wing through rigging, far, far above.

This was a sea, an unknown sea. This was a brig of a ship, the like of which had not sailed the seas for a hundred years and more.

It was too much. And at last Jan dozed, drifting more deeply into slumber.

To no avail.

He had no more than shut his eyes when he was startled by the slam of iron-barred doors and the rattle of dishes which immediately followed. Voices were hollow in the concrete hall and Jan sat up. He looked carefully all around him.

But it was no Marid at the door but a blue-coated policeman engaged in shoving a tray of food under the door.

"You gonna sleep forever?" said Diver Mullins, scraping half-heartedly at his lathered face. "Y'rolled and tossed all night long. I hardly got a chance to close m'eyes."

"I . . . I'm sorry," said Jan, blink-

ing at the cell around him and experiencing an uplift of heart. Thankfully he took a deep breath, only to choke on the disinfectant in the air. But that hardly lessened his thankfulness.

IT WAS quite plain to him now that the ship and the Ifrits had been of the substance of nightmares. And, more than that, when he looked in the glass and found that Jan Palmer's sickly visage gazed back at him, he wanted to shout for joy.

"Geez, for a gent that's about to be stretched," said Diver Mullins, "you sure can put on the happy act."

"Beg pardon?" said Jan.

"It ain't right," said Diver petulantly. "You commit a moider after supper and you wake up singin' like a canary bird."

"Murder?"

"Don't tell me," said Diver "that you went and forgot about it."

Jan groaned and sank back on his bunk. He held his face in his hands to steady himself as the black ink of memory drowned him. Murder. He was in here for murder. An Ifrit named Zongri had killed a man named Frobish and now they were going to hang a hopelessly innocent Palmer for the deed.

"Now I done it," said Diver. "I'd ruther you'd chirp than beller, my fine-fettered friend. Cheer up. They only hang a man once." So saying he hauled the tray close to him and speared the soggy hotcakes with every evidence of appetite. "C'mon and eat."

Jan, mechanically ready to obey almost anybody, accordingly hitched a stool up to the table and took the offered plate. He even went so far as to butter the dough blankets and convey a forkful to his mouth. And then he found out what he was doing and gagged. He crawled to his bed and sprawled upon it, face down.

"They ain't as bad as that," said Diver. "Course, in lotsa jails they serve lots better belly paddin', but my motto is to take what y'can get your hooks into and don't ask too many questions. Nobody never measured me for a noose or even said they was going to, so I ain't had a lot of experience. But, hell, you hadn't ought to let it get you down like that. You get borned and then you live awhile and then somebody knocks you off or you get pneumonia or something and there you are. Now, take me, I don't have the faintest notion of how I'll meet m' Maker. The information ain't to be had. But you, now, that's different. It's all cut and dried and you ain't got to worry about it any more. So that's that. C'mon and have some hotcakes before they get cold."

As Jan made no move to answer the invitation, Diver philosophically conveyed the second portion to his own plate and, with the usual appetite of the very thin, put them easily down and finally, having cleared the tray, looked mournfully under the napkins to locate more. His search unavailing, he slid it back into the corridor and fell into a conversation with a counterfeiter across the block. With great leisure, as men do when they know they have lots of time to pass, they discussed the latest inmate with great thoroughness, and Diver, after fishing for coaxing, finally laid aside an air of mystery and divulged Jan's story.

"Hophead, huh?" said the counterfeiter.

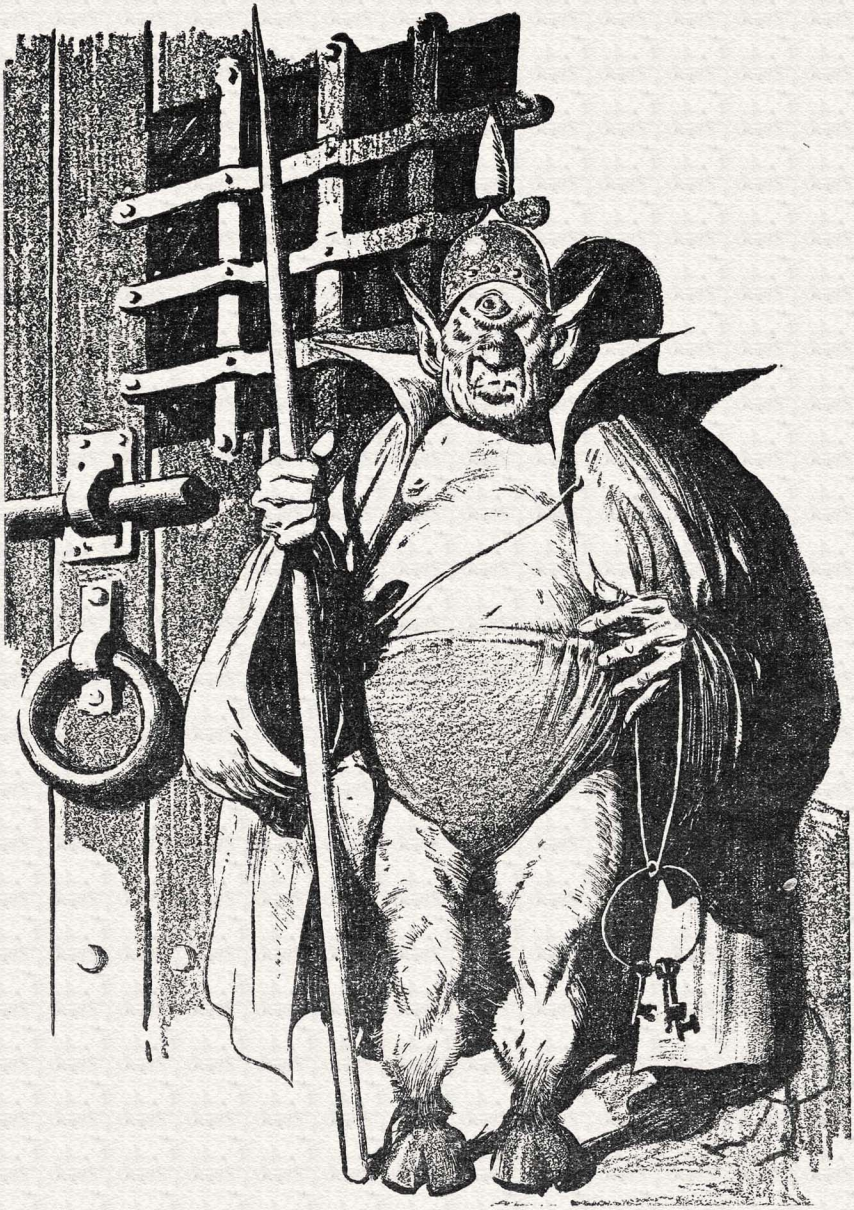
"Yeah, guess so. He don't eat nothin' and that's another reason. He evidently is feelin' the mornin' after, no doubt."

"I know where I can get him some," said the counterfeiter confidentially.

"Yeah? When he gets over his fit I'll ask him if he wants it. He had nightmares last night fit to shake the place down."

"Yeah, I heard him."

"Snow's pretty awful stuff."



The Marid jailer snorted, and turned his back obstinately. "You'll get no help from me, Tiger," he growled.

"Ain't it!" said the counterfeiter. "Why, oncet I had a sniffer in my outfit—Goo-goo, the boys called'm—and this here Goo-goo—"

Jan tried not to listen, even stuffing his ears with the edge of the blanket, but one story led to another and finally they got on the object of being hanged.

"So they sprung the trap three times on this gent," said the counterfeiter, "and it wouldn't sag with him. They'd take him off and put him back and try her again and still she wouldn't work. Well, the guy fainted finally, but they brought him around and put him on the trap once more. Well, sir, this time she sure worked. He dropped like a rock and the rope snapped his spine like you'd crack walnuts. But how do you like that, huh? Three times and it don't work."

"Leave it to the law," said Diver. "They can't even hang a man straight."

"Somebody coming," said the counterfeiter.

THE block fell silent, watching the approach of the visitors. All but Jan clung to the bars, for he was in a state of coma induced by the late conversations.

"Hiyah, babe," said a jailbird down the row.

"Gee, some looker," said Diver, now that he could see the party.

A series of such comments and calls ran the length of the place and then the party stopped before Jan's door while a jailer, with much important key rattling, got the lock open.

Diver backed up and gave the prostrate Jan a wicked kick to wake him. Resentfully, Jan sat up, about to protest, but all such thought left him when he found that Alice Hall stood before him.

She had carried herself like a sentry through the block just as though the jailbirds did not exist, and now, with a tinge of pity upon her lovely face, she stood taking off her gloves and studying Jan, just as though she were about to begin an operation to change his luck.

"Well, well, well, my boy," said a very, very hearty voice—one which the owner fondly thought capable of carrying him, some day, to the Senate. "What are they doing to you?"

Jan dragged his eyes away from Alice and woke up to the presence of two others in his cell—Shannon, the Bering Steamship's legal-department head, and Nathaniel Green. Shannon was very plump and so fitted his manner to the recognized one for all plump men. He was very hearty, very well met and very reassuring, though there were those—who had, no doubt, lost cases to him—who said it was all sham. The fellow's mouth, in its absence of a sufficient chin and nose, looked like nothing if not a shark's. One supposed he had to turn over on his back to eat, so tightly and immobilely did his fat neck sit in his collar.

Jan looked nervous and was not at all sure that he wanted to talk to these two gentlemen. He resented their presence all the more because Alice Hall was there. He wanted to have her sit on that small stool and hear his flood of grief and then give him very sound advice in return. Didn't her brave face have a tinge of pity in it?

"Have you out in no time," said Shannon, sitting down on Diver's bunk so that Diver had to hastily get out of his way.

"Don't mind me," said Diver resentfully.

Shannon twirled his hat and paid no attention to anything save the crown of the bowler. He was getting serious now, evidently opening up a whole weighty library of immense legal tomes in his head. "Yes, my boy, serious as this is, we should have no difficulty in getting you freed, eh, Mr. Green?"

"Of course," said Green swiftly. He

hadn't seated himself at all, and looked as though he was about to hurry off on some important errand or other. "Must be done. The company, you understand, is in no such position that it can bear this publicity. Look," and he jerked a sheaf of papers out of his pocket and tossed them to the bunk beside Jan, where they fanned out into blazing headlines, "Millionaire Shipowner Slays Professor" and the like.

Jan shuddered when he saw them and drew back.

"Ha-ha, I don't blame you," said Shannon. "But people forget. Never mind that sort of thing. The point is, we want your version of this . . . er . . . crime. Then, we'll demand a bail to be set and take you home." He got serious once more. "Now, to begin, just how did this thing happen?"

IT WAS Alice Hall's cue. She sat down at the rickety table and spread her notebooks to take down the discourse. Jan looked hopelessly at her, hating to have her take his words so cold-bloodedly.

"We haven't much time," said Nathaniel impatiently, glancing at his watch.

"I . . . I don't know how to begin," said Jan.

"Why, at the beginning, of course," said Shannon. "Nothing simpler. When was the first time that you saw this Frobish fellow?"

Jan told them and then, with much prompting, managed to get the story out in its entirety. Very wisely he refrained from following it up with the events of the night just passed. And all the while he spoke Alice Hall inscribed his words as emotionlessly as though she listened to a dictaphone record. Not so the other two. With increasing frequency Shannon glanced knowingly at Green and Green stared impatiently at Jan as though about to accuse him of lying.

Then, when Jan was through, Shannon's tone was very different from his first. Shannon patted Jan on the knee consolingly as one will a sick animal or perhaps an angry child. "There, there, my boy, we'll do what we can. But . . . er . . . don't you think you might . . . ah . . . modify these statements somewhat? After all, if I wish to have bail set for you, I have to have something I can tell the judge. It's not that we don't believe you . . . but . . . well, courts are strange things and you'll have to trust to my advice and experience in the matter. I shall enter a plea at my discretion. Perhaps," he added to Nathaniel, "I can think of something logical."

Green glanced at his watch. "I've got to be getting back to the office. I've a million things to do before noon."

"Could I speak with you a moment?" said Shannon.

Green irritably acquiesced and they stepped out into the hall where they spoke in low whispers, looking toward the cell now and then. Alice Hall kept her eyes on her notes.

"They don't believe me," said Jan.

The girl looked searchingly at him. "You wonder about it?"

"Why . . . but what happened, happened. I wouldn't lie!"

The shadow of a smile went across her features. "Of course not."

"But it *did* happen that way!" wailed Jan. "And I'll tell you something else. Last night—" But there he stopped and nothing could persuade him to finish.

"You shouldn't keep any of it back," said Alice. "Those gentlemen, presumably, mean to get you out of here, and if you know anything else you should tell them."

"I don't know anything else."

She shrugged. "All right, have it your own way."

"Don't be angry."

"I'm not. Why should I be?"

"But you were."

"Maybe I was. What of it?"

"But why should you be angry?"

"No reason at all," she said with sudden bitterness. "You have a story and you'll stick to it. If you're going to act that way I can tell you truthfully, though it's none of my business, that you'll hang. I don't know—and I don't care, I'm sure!—whether you committed this murder or not. But I do know that you'll have to get yourself out of it the best you can."

"What do you mean?"

"I suppose Green hasn't been waiting—" She suddenly cooled her heat and gave her attention to her notes.

"You mean you think they won't help me?"

"I have nothing to say."

"But you were saying something," pleaded Jan. "If you know anything that might help me—"

"Help you! Nobody can help you! Nobody will ever be able to solve your problems but yourself. I've worked with your company long enough to know that you know nothing about it and care less. You keep yourself locked up in your room, scared to death by an aunt, a secretary and the head of your father's firm. You let Nathaniel Green do what he pleases with accounts—but why am I talking this way? It can do you no good now. I should have spoken months ago. Maybe I was hoping you'd wake up by yourself and find out that you were a man instead of an infant. But you haven't, and now, unless a miracle happens, you'll never have the chance. There! I've said it."

Jan was stunned and scarcely heard Green and Shannon come back until Shannon cleared his throat noisily.

"My boy," said Shannon, "Green and I have talked this thing over. It is quite apparent that you mean to stick to your story."

"It's the truth!"

"Of course it's the truth!" cried Shannon. "But the law is a strange thing. Now, my advice is for you to plead self-defense."

"That would be lying," said Jan.

"Yes, perhaps," said Shannon. And then he gave Green a look which plainly said that he had done what he could. "Very well, young fellow, I shall tell the court your story and ask that you be released on bail. Is that according to your wishes?"

"Certainly!" said Jan.

Green almost smiled but checked himself in time. He glanced at his watch. "I must be getting back. Come along, Miss Hall. Jan, if anything can be done, Mr. Shannon will do it. Don't despair. We're with you to the end."

So saying, Green walked out, followed by the lawyer and Alice Hall, and the door was locked once more.

DIVER came out of the corner and looked at the departing backs and then at Jan. "Geez, fellah, how do you do it?"

"Do what?" said Jan dully.

"The dame," said Diver. "Boy, is she a looker! How do you do it, huh?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, boy, are you a deep one! Why, man, if I had a gal like that in love with me—"

"She's not in love with me!"

"No?" and then Diver laughed. "No, sure not. Innocent, that's you. No, sure she ain't in love with you. Why, she was near cryin' when she came in that door, and she almost bawled while she was writin' at the table there and you was spielin' that awful lie of yours."

"She despises me, I know she does."

"Sure. Sure she does, or she thinks she does. But all you'd have to do, feller, is to square up your spine and act like a man and she'd fall in your lap. I'm telling you."

"I'm sure," said Jan with abrupt heat,

"that I'm not interested in what you think of Miss Hall!"

Diver was taken aback, more with surprise than anything else. But presently he began to chuckle. "What a pack of wolves," he said.

"Who?"

"Why, that short feller and that lawyer."

"I don't know what you mean."

"If you don't you're blind as a bat, buddy. Friends of yours?"

"Mr. Green is the head of my—that is, the Bering Steamship Corporation."

"Oh boy, I know why those longshoremen go on strike now! Pal, you got three strikes on you and don't know it."

"I fail—"

"You're fanned, feller, fanned. How come you ever got yourself into such a spot seein' the way that Green wants to do you in?"

"I am sure—"

"So am I. I watched him lickin' his chops all the time he was here. What'd you ever do to him?"

"He was my father's best friend."

"And your dearest enemy," said Diver. "Oh, well, what's done is done. But I sure wish I'd had your chance."

"*My* chance!"

"The gal," said Diver with a deep sigh, lying back on his bunk. "Man, I'd almost enjoy bein' accused of murder if I had her feelin' that way about me." And he closed his eyes so languorously that Jan, contrary to all his regular emotions, wanted very badly to kick the guts out of him.

Lunch came and Jan ate a few mouthfuls without any relish. The hours began their slow march down the afternoon and still no word came from Shannon. Dinner time found Diver at the tail end of a long discussion with the counterfeiter over the looks of Alice Hall.

AT ABOUT seven the cell block was brought to the bars again by an opening door. Ignoring all of them, Alice marched down the concrete to Jan's cell but the jailer did not offer to open the door for her.

Jan stood up, blinking and suddenly tongue-tied.

She was very cool and efficient. "Mr. Green asked me to stop by on my way home and tell you that Shannon was unable to have bail set for you."

"You mean," said the jolted Jan, "that I've got to stay here?"

Slowly she nodded and then found sudden interest in a package she had under her arm. She thrust it through the bars. "It's all right," she told the officer. "They inspected it at the desk. Your Aunt Ethel . . . er . . . sent this to you."

Jan took it mechanically, trying to think of something to say which might detain her a moment. But he thought of nothing and they stood in an awkward silence for a moment.

"I hope you aren't too uncomfortable," she said at last.

"I . . . I'm all right."

"Well . . . I had better be going."

"Th-thank you for the package from Aunt Ethel and th-thank you for coming."

"I have to pass the jail to get home anyway," said Alice. "Good night."

She was gone and Jan stood staring at the place where she had been.

"Well!" said Diver. "Open it, you dummy."

"What?"

"The package!"

"It's probably flannel pajamas," said Jan dolefully.

"You don't know, do you? Open it."

Jan opened it and, wonder of wonders, it appeared that Aunt Ethel had broken down for the first time in her life. Here was a box of tea biscuits, a box of candy, three of the latest books, a toothbrush and paste and razor and shaving cream, a new shirt, tobacco, and, at the very bottom, Houdini's textbook.

"Geez, cookies," said Diver.

"Aunt Ethel?" said Jan. "But she would have sent one of my own shirts and some of my own books if she sent anything at all."

"The dame!" cried Diver. "She done it but wouldn't admit it. Your Aunt Ethel be damned, buddy. Boy, are these cookies good!"

Jan nibbled on one and looked at the books. For a while he thumbed through Houdini but, at last, gave it up as a bad job.

"If she's just a steno, buddy, she must've spent a week's pay on them things," said Diver, looking at the price marks in the books. "Gosh, you can never tell about dames. A looker like her takin' up for a scared rabbit like you . . . huh!" And so saying he began to read.

The night grew through its childhood and, suddenly, Jan remembered that there was a chance—the barest, barest chance—that he might be elsewhere the instant he closed his eyes. He might be deep, down in the brig of a sailing ship plowing through an unknown sea, waiting with terror for what the port might bring. He shuddered as the thought became very real. He was revolted by the thought of becoming Tiger once again.

And yet he was tired. He had had no sleep for an age, it seemed. He was weary until he ached.

But, if the Ifrit had spoken the truth, then—

Then—

And by midnight he lost the fight.

He went down into the abyss of sleep, awakened instantly by the howl of winches and the cannonading of sails and then the grinding roar of chain racing through a hawse pipe. He opened his eyes.

V.

JAN PALMER was afraid to open his eyes. When Diver had said that he had rolled and tossed the whole night through, he had been perfectly willing to believe that it had all been a nightmare brought about by his excessive mental perturbation. But right now it didn't at all appear that he was rolling and tossing upon the sagging bunk in the jail. In fact it was quite plain that he was lying on blankets and that he had no bunk but floor under him.

Cautiously he pried open one eyelid and found that he looked through a grilled window upon the back of a Marid. It was not the same Marid at all, but another one who was much uglier —if such could be possible—than the first. This fellow had a ferocious cast to his single eye. He was girt about with a sword which must have weighed thirty pounds, and he leaned upon a pike pole so sharp that it tapered to nothingness rather than a point.

"Now I'm in for it," moaned Jan.

And he startled himself.

"Now I'll get the galleys."

He blinked and said it over again. "Now I'll get the galleys."

Well, what galleys? And how did he know that there would be any galleys in the neighborhood? Further, what reason did he have to think that galleys would be in use?

But, just the same he was convinced and he sat up, already experiencing an ache in his back and sinewy arms.

"This is a hell of a note," he uttered. "I'm damned if I'll take it, so help me. Let'm flog. Let'm string me up by the thumbs. But I'll see 'em all in hell before I'll haul an oar."

Plainly, he thought, such a speech showed that he was delirious. But no, his head wasn't hot.

He stood up. "Hey, you one-eyed farmer, where are we?" Certainly, he shouldn't take such a tone with this vicious-looking Marid. He frightened himself.

The Marid's hoofs knocked sharply as he came around and playfully poked the

pike straight at Jan's eyes. Jan dodged back from the grille.

"So, what I hear is a lie," said the Marid. "You plenty smart, you Tiger. Lie, lie, lie. All the time lie. You get yours this time."

"I . . . I haven't lied about anything," said Jan.

"We hear. Nobody talks but we hear just the same. Last night you put us on beach, or almost, which is as bad. You take too much rum, I think. This time you get the galleys, I think. Now sit down before I shove this through your guts. They'll come for you quick enough,"

Jan very tamely seated himself and the pike was withdrawn from the grille. Twice in the next half an hour sailors came by and were fain to linger about the grille but the Marid poked them on their way.

"I do you a favor," said the Marid after a while. "Them men want to cut you up very bad. If you wasn't too drunk last night, I think, you would not have ever tried to put us up on that shoal."

"I wasn't drunk," said Jan.

"Tiger not drunk! I think that's a good one. I tell that one. You know what shoal that was?"

"No."

"See, you drunk. Everybody know that shoal. The Isle of Fire just behind those shoals and you say you not know! Haw!"

"The Isle of Fire? Never heard of it."

"Oh, no, you never heard of it. You never stood off and on in the ship here listening to Admiral Tyronin's flagship people burn up every one. You never on boat that go in to pull off what men left. Haw! You fool, Tiger. Me, I was with you and you still got burns on your leg. Lie to me, I think, and I take pike to you."

Jan thoughtfully lifted up his wide-bottomed pants and stared at his brawny leg. He was startled both by the strength which was obviously in it and by the white burn marks which were there. Then, too, there was a purple scar which ran from knee to ankle and which plainly bespoke a broadax. He examined it carefully as though it might vanish under his touch and the Marid, glancing through the grille, laughed at what he thought was a joke in pantomime.

"Tiger's memory come back fast enough in galleys," said the Marid. "Good you leave or the crew—"

HE WAS interrupted by the clang of a door which opened and closed, admitting a party of men. They came briskly up to the brig and stopped, grounding their muskets with a large gesture. The captain opened the door of the brig and Jan came carefully out to instantly be thrust between two files of the most evil looking Marids imaginable.

They faced smartly about, their cloaks swirling, shouldered their arms and marched Jan up a ladder to the deck. The captain made a motion toward the port gangway and the file halted there, tightly ringing Jan.

At some distance a knot of seamen stood, growling among themselves and looking toward the prisoner. But the Marids stood very complacently, hairy hands wrapped about their gun barrels.

Jan blinked in the blazing sunlight which glanced hurtfully back from polished bits and scoured deck and from the wide harbor. Wonderingly he looked about at the ship itself to find that it was not unlike a cromster of the Middle Ages though considerably larger. The sterncastle deck, however, was cut into by the after house and the helm was a large wheel. A conglomerate rig it was, with a lateen on the mizzen, fore and aft on the main, the peaks held up with sprits, with a large square topsail and a t'gl'nt above that and with three huge

staysails forward. A sprits'l was furled under the bowsprit, and long abandoned had such "water sails" been in modern usage. A dozen brass cannon, glittering and ferocious, thrust their snouts out from the quarterdeck rail. Two bowchasers loomed on the fo'c's'le head. And all along each side, evidently manned from the deck below, were the muzzles of thirty demi-cannon. Aloft there floated from the now naked peak the strangest flag Jan had ever seen. It was a brilliant orange and upon it was emblazoned in gold a wheeling bird of prey. Other streamers there were in plenty but he could not make them out, so bright was the greenish sky.

In the harbor about them lay hundreds of other vessels, both large and small, ranging in style from a Greek corbita to a seventy-four. Small shore-boats, not unlike sampans, scudded back and forth on a brisk breeze, carrying all sorts of passengers. Among these, by far, Ifrits predominated, and it was strange indeed to see peaked caps between their pointed ears and massive rings upon their claw-tipped fingers. It was as though the animal kingdom had blended with the human race and that these men-beasts were mocking the ancient history of their human ancestors.

Such, however, could not be the case as Jan well knew. Ifrits were Ifrits. And if the jinn wished to conquer the sea with ships for war and cargo, eschewing other means of transportation —as far as he could see at the moment —then it was certainly being done.

But about the deck of the vessel on which he stood Jan saw far more human beings than he did Ifrits. In fact only the captain and the mate were of the jinn. The guard about him was made up of ugly little Marids and there were two or three other one-eyed demons astroll. But the sailors who worked aloft to put harbor furls on the restive canvas were all human beings, seemingly not much different from any other men Jan had ever seen beyond their devil-may-care aspect.

"I suppose," muttered Jan to himself, staring intently across the blinding way at a long, gilded vessel, obviously a galley, "that I'll get the *Pinchoti*, damn her. She's the worst puller of the lot." And again he startled himself by finding that he knew the names of most of these vessels and, indeed, the names of most of the men about the deck. How he came to know them he was not at all sure.

A WEREWOLF, in his human identity, must often feel the beast stirring uneasily within him, threatening to spring forth uncalled. More and more, as time went along, did Jan experience just that sensation, except that, in his case, it was more like that Malay demon, the weretiger. Scholar that he was, he knew considerable about lycanthropy but never in his life had he thought to experience such a thing, even in a reasonable way, but now, certainly, things were happening to him which he could not begin to discount. Weretiger was certainly the only name for it. He was vaguely conscious of latent wells of knowledge within him, of information which he could almost—but not quite—bring to the surface of his brain. It was as though he had always known these things but was suffering, at the moment, a slight lapse of memory.

He gazed critically at the work of a man working on the huge lateen sail, whom he knew as Lacy. Lacy was bungling the job as usual and it crossed Jan's mind that he bet they needed Tiger's help about the ship just then. Still, he had not the least idea of what he should have been doing.

Further, he found himself in the grip of a very alien impulse. Now nobody in all his life on Earth had ever dreamed that there was an ounce of facetiousness in one Jan Palmer. All jokes he had received with funereal mien, startled

when others laughed at them. He had always read of pranks with wondering askance, puzzled that anyone could get pleasure of out of such things. It must be confessed that Jan Palmer had missed much in the way of education due to the thorough isolation of his youth. Never had he felt the slightest desire to commit, much less understand, what might be called a practical joke.

It was with horror, then, that he found himself contemplating the most foolhardy adventure imaginable. Here he was, packed tight by ten well-armed and doubtless zealous Marids, all of them wholly humorless. Here he was charged with God knew what crime and faced with the devil knew what sentence. And the Tiger in him stirred and laughed silently to see that one of the Marids was carrying his musket on his shoulder, hand well away from the trigger which was, providentially or otherwise, within six inches of Jan's face. And the barrel of that musket was pointed up in the general direction of the cantankerous Lacy balanced precariously upon the whippy lateen yard.

"Marvelous," chortled Tiger.

"No! My God, no!" gasped the appalled Jan.

There was the trigger and there was Lacy. The shot would go several feet below the seaman, certainly, but it would crack when it passed through the sail.

"Wonderful!" yearned the laughing Tiger.

Jan covered his face with his hands so that he couldn't see the trigger or Lacy. In a moment the Marid would move temptation far away from Tiger. In a moment Lacy would finish his clumsy furl and come scampering thankfully down from the dizzy heights. In a moment all would be well and Jan would have triumphed.

But the joke was too good. Nobody liked Lacy and Lacy was an avowed coward. Jan's finger slipped and his eye fell upon the burnished trigger. It was too much for him.

Out went his finger quick as a blink. The trigger came back softly. Back came Jan's hand to his innocent side. The match fell, the pan flared, the musket roared and leaped upwards to bang the Marid in the head and knock him sprawling.

FROM aloft, close on the heels of the shot, came the returning crack of the bullet through canvas, and instantly after the terrified scream of Lacy who stared at the round hole not two feet under his hand. Lacy clung tight to the yard. The yard vibrated enough already in the wind without that; it began to sway and tip and the more it did the more Lacy screamed bloody mayhem.

Malek came streaking down the waist bellowing, "Get him down before the fool shakes out that sail! Get him down, I say, before that canvas catches air and puts weigh on us! *Get him down!*"

A dozen sailors were standing about the deck. Lacy was in no trouble at all, though swaying back and forth fifty feet from the quarterdeck straight down must have been very uncomfortable. The sailors began to laugh happily. Lacy screamed curses, almost fell off to the right and clutched so hard that he overdid his adjustment and almost went off to port. The yard wove great circles against the greenish sky. Lacy screamed in terror. The sailors doubled up on the deck, holding their sides with glee.

"Get him down, damn you!" screamed Malek as canvas began to shake loose and fill. Uneasily, the ship pushed ahead against her anchor cables, pointing toward another vessel not a hundred yards dead ahead. And now the unstayed lateen billowed with a crack which almost boosted Lacy all the way off.

Malek despaired of getting anything done for him. He seized the halyards and, braking them on the pins, swiftly

slacked them off. Lateen yard, Lacy and a mass of disorderly canvas came billowing down to the quarterdeck. Lacy climbed off and weakly sought the rail where his shoulders hitched convulsively. Malek blew sourly upon his rope-scorched hands. The sailors, to the best of their ability, stilled their mirth.

Malek hitched at his belt to get his crossed pistols around into reach. With grim visage and glittering fangs, he stalked down toward Tiger. But Tiger was gone again and Jan cowered in his soul.

"So, you are a different man, are you?" scowled Malek most awfully. "So, you know nothing, do you?" His fingers wrapped around the butt of a gun and he brought it forth, tossing it up so that it came down with the muzzle in his fist. With this for a club Malek stepped so close to Jan that Jan could count the crumbs in his beard. The guards, especially the victimized Marid, pressed close about and seized Jan's arms from behind.

"Let him alone," said the bos'n, coming over from the starboard rail. His thick, rolling body was belligerent and his heavy face was dark. He was a very tough human being. "I seen it with me own peepers, Mr. Malek. This here Marid, like the dummy he is, was monkeying with his trigger. I seen it, I tell you."

Malek looked doubtfully at the bos'n. "You expect me to believe you?"

"We seen it too!" chimed some of the other sailors, coming up. "This here Marid was the one. It wasn't Tiger, No sir!"

"Captain Tombo!" shouted Malek as the captain appeared in a hatch. "Tiger is at it again. I—"

"He isn't either!" yelped the crew. "This here Marid—"

"Stow it," said Captain Tombo. "What's the odds? Leave him alone, Mr. Malek. He's out of our hands now. The port captain is taking charge."

Behind Tombo came a portly and foppish Ifrit who fanned the air before him with a perfumed handkerchief to fend off the odor of sailors. He handed a signed release to Tombo.

"Thank you, Boli," said the captain. "There's your man. I wouldn't be too extreme if I were you. After all, Tiger's got some little reputation."

"For brawling, theft and rapine," sniffed Boli, gazing with disgust at Jan. "But the matter isn't in my hands either. This is a case for the crown. Yes, indeed, the crown. Hail my boat," he added to Malek.

MALEK shouted to a barge which had been drifting under the quarter and now it was pulled forward to the gangway. It was crammed from gunwale to gunwale with armed men, but they were port sailors and rather given to fat and softness.

"Down with you," said Boli, punching Jan in the back with his sword scabbard as though appalled at the thought of touching him with hand and so soiling it.

Jan started down the ladder. Along the rail stood the ship's fickle company, wholly won again by the incident of Lacy.

"S'long, Tiger."

"Give'm hell, Tiger."

"Mess 'em up, Tiger."

"Give her majesty m'love, will yuh?"

Jan suddenly found that he was grinning up at the faces above him and swaggering down the steps. The boat was bobbing in the slight swell and, loaded as it was, the gunwale was none too far above the water. The guard sailors were ready with their weapons as though expecting anything to happen and rather surprised that Tiger took it so mildly. Evidently he knew some of them, thought Jan.

Suddenly he remembered his manners and stepped back so that Boli, fat and awkward, could enter the boat first. And, seeing that the guard was quite on the alert and that the boat was, after all,

Down into sleep the student slipped in a jail in one world, and out of sleep he rocketed as Tiger in a jail in a different world!

bobbing rather badly even in this glassy sea, Boili was nothing loath to have a hand all of a sudden even from a criminal.

Jan felt things stirring inside him and was too frightened to think the matter through, afraid lest he discover another awful plot within him. He took hold of the bowman's boat pike and helped him hold the barge in to the landing stage.

Boli, striving to see over his chest ruffles, watched the barge drop four feet below the stage and then bounce four feet above it. In truth, the condition was very ordinary, seeing that there had to be some manner of swell about a vessel anchored in the roads, but Boli had had one or two in the captain's cabin and he well knew that his reputation only wanted a ridiculous incident to throw down much of his carefully built authority.

"Here, you," said Jan—or rather Tiger—to the gunwale guards. "Give m'lord the port captain a hand before I knock you about. Look alive, swabs!"

The two moved hastily, getting up on thwarts to reach for Boli's hands and steady him. They were going through a usual routine but the presence of Tiger had rather shattered their composure. Boli wished ardently that the vessel weren't so far to sea.

"Easy, now, m'lord," said Tiger, looming above Boli as a church steeple rears above its almshouse. "When she starts down step aboard and lively. And you, y'landlubbers, don't muss'm up or I'll break your skulls like they was eggs. Now!"

He eased Boli ahead. The barge swooped down from the height of the port captain's head. Boli, aided by Tiger's left hand, stepped to the gunwale as it flew downward. His men eased him quickly aboard while the barge kept on going down to four feet below the stage.

Tiger, still holding the bowman's pike in his right hand to help the bowman hold the barge in, suddenly yelped, "Don't pull her in, you fools!" And pulled her in with a jerk which almost hauled the bowman out of the boat.

The next instant an awful thing happened. The barge, four feet under the stage, started instantly on its upward surge. But this time it didn't miss the under side of the protruding stage. With a rending jar, the gunwale caught under the stage itself and the wave did the rest.

With a swoop, the barge capsized! One instant it was a normal enough boat, full of sleek and flawlessly uniformed sailors and the next the only thing which could be seen was the keel, all dripping and bobbing on the waves. From tumblehome to tumblehome, the boat displayed its bottom.

"Help!" bellowed Tiger, safe and dry on the landing stage.

But before help could even start, sailors out of the barge were rocketing into sight all about it, having ducked out of the terrifying but perfectly safe air pocket under the boat.

Tiger waited to see no more. He went overboard in a long dive. The green water fled past him. The dark barge was over him. And just ahead was a pair of very fat legs kicking desperately. Tiger encircled them deftly and hauled hard. Down into the sea went Boli!

Tiger came up by the stage an instant later to let a wave boost him to a hold. Boli was floundering like a grounded whale but still Tiger did not let him be. Up he came and up went Boli to his brawny back. Swiftly Tiger made the deck, surging past the ship sailors who were fishing up the boat guard, man by man.

Laying the port captain out on a hatch cover, Tiger pumped him thoroughly dry, taking the weak but strengthening protests as unworthy of notice. Respiration seemed to work wonderfully upon

Boli and in no time at all the man Tiger had rescued from the watery grave was sitting up turning the air scarlet and azure all about him.

The barge men were hauled up, every man of them, to be dumped in all postures by the ship sailors. There was no great love lost between seamen and their spying patrol which policed the port.

ALL THE WHILE Jan was shuddering in horror. If he was in trouble now, what would he be in in a few moments? But he was utterly powerless to do anything about it and he was aghast to hear himself say, upon Boli's running out of breath, "By God, m'lord, it's lucky I was there. If you'll take a sailor's advice, m'lord, I'd jail that bowman for a month, so I would. Why, by God, sir, even when I yelled at him to desist he insisted upon hooking his pike into the stage itself and pulling you under it! Beggin' m'lord's pardon, but you'd better get some sailors in that crew of yours that know their business. Damned if not."

Boli glowered and had dark suspicions. Tombo and Malek tried to keep scowling and be severe. The sailors attempted to stifle their merriment until a more appropriate moment.

"Is your breath all right now, m'lord?" said Tiger with earnest interest. "Captain, perhaps he'd better be let to rest in a cabin, if I might suggest it. That was a very trying thing and though he came out of it like a hero—"

"Tiger!" said Tombo.

"Sir?" said Tiger.

Captain Tombo tried to scowl more ferociously. But it happened that he had, on many occasions, suffered great delay because of the effeminate whims of this gross port captain and, for the life of him, he couldn't carry that much sail at the moment.

"Tiger," said the captain with a glance at Boli. And he was about to go on when he saw the bedraggled silk which hung in bags all about the lord. He changed his mind.

"Sir?"

"Give them a hand in righting that boat."

"Yes, sir."

Tiger sped down the gangway once more, where the ship's mirth-convulsed seamen were working. They said nothing. They couldn't and still keep their laughter inside where it would not offend Boli's ears above. But their eyes were full of great affection.

They righted the boat and, shortly, Boli's guard came down, leaving a river of water to run behind them on the steps. Gingerly they got into the barge. Nervously they prodded Tiger into the stern sheets. Fearfully they aided the port captain to his seat of state amidships.

They shoved off and all along the rail above, sailors waved farewell. Even Captain Tombo smiled and Mr. Malek put a rope-scorched hand to his cap and raised it slightly to call, "So long, Tiger. We'll be in to see you."

Boli rolled around and glared at his prisoner. Now that the port captain was on his own deck, so to speak, he was quite recovered—save that his ribs ached from the respiration treatment.

"You are very clever, my fine bucko. Everywhere you set your foot, things happen. I have heard it. Well! Do not think for one moment that your saving of Admiral Tyronin from the Isle of Fire, that your timely bombs at the Battle of Barankeet, that all you other mad deeds will stand a bit in your favor. You have flown too high. Whatever these charges are," and he fished a sealed packet from his soggy shirt, "and I don't doubt that they are severe enough, you will be tried for the crime at hand, not for deeds of questionable character long past. You have been recommended for trial by the queen herself and if she doesn't sentence you to swing, it'll not be fault of mine."

There was so much hatred in Boli's voice that Jan shivered. Out of him, like a dying fire, went the reckless madness which had brought him to that deed just done. He could not reason that Boli's hatred was not only born of that deed but of another, more delicate thing. Boli was badly built, ugly beyond description. And above him sat a tall, handsome fellow of a rare kind calculated to stir the most frigid of feminine hearts. But Jan could not see himself. Jan was just Jan now. He recognized no ships, he recalled nothing. He even fumbled for his glasses to wipe them in his confusion and was mighty startled to find that he wore none—indeed, did not seem to need any.

"The queen?" he gulped.

"The queen," said Boli, satisfied now that he could feel the uneasiness in his prisoner. "Not four days past she put five heads on pikes outside her palace and that for mere thievery on the highroad. I am given to understand that you have some dread stigma attached to you. Ah, yes, my fine prankster, it seems that your light-hearted days are done. Before you there is nothing but doom and death."

Boli enjoyed himself for the moment and almost forgot how wet he was. For the remainder of the voyage across the harbor, he piled up torture and watched his victim squirm. But when he reached the quay, a number of loafers, beholding m'lord the port captain as soggy as a drowned rat, burst into braying mirth.

Boli swept an imperious eye across the rank on the dock and roared, "Sergeant, arrest them! Up, I say! I'll show you the price of laughter, that I will!"

And though his guard tumbled swiftly up the gangway, when they got to the dock, not a man was left. Only laughter's echoes were there.

Snorting, Boli stamped to the wharf while four men carried Jan along at the point of their swords.

JAN, bewildered, stared up at the buildings of the town. They stretched back across the plain for miles. They reached around the harbor for leagues. What an immense town it was! Commerce jammed the wharves. Men sweated and swore, hauling cargoes about. Horses stamped and neighed as they strained at rumbling trucks. A bewildering array of signs spread out in every direction and the odd part of it was that one moment they were so many chicken scratches to Jan and the next their meaning was quite plain. Taverns and brokers' offices, sailors' hotels and shipping firms, trucking barns and chandler shops. Immediately beside them reared the customs, a building some four stories in height and of a queer achitecture which was prominent in its immense scrolls and swoops and towers. All the buildings were like that, presenting a baffling line of distorted curves and garish, mismatched colors.

Along the docks bobbed fishing boats, small beside the towering castles of the ocean-going ships. From the scaly decks of the little craft a variety of weird seafood was being hoisted so that Jan knew it was still very early in the day.

Boli stamped away up the stairs to his quarters where he could get a consoling nip and a change of clothes. His guard, forgotten, stood about, damply keeping an eye on their prisoner and very careful not to get within arm's length of him. Jan found quite accidently that when he wandered along he carried the whole company with him and so, benighted as he was with woe, he strolled restlessly back and forth, the men moving with him but well away from him and all about him.

Jan stared down at a pile of flapping fish just tossed from a tubby little vessel's hold. He had never before seen any such denizens of the sea as these. Their eyes were lidded and winked and winked. They were as wide as they were long and their heads were as big

as their bodies. For all the world they resembled sheep and Jan wondered distractedly if they tasted like mutton. Some of this catch was being laid on a miserable peddler's cart the wheels of which spread out very wide at the top and very narrow at the bottom, giving it a bow-legged appearance. Presently the two who had been loading it were accosted by the master of the fishing vessel who held out his palm for his pay.

One of the pair was a woman. Her hair was snarled beyond belief and a filthy, scaly neckerchief was swathed about her scrawny neck. Her dress glittered with dried scales which showed up very brightly against the black dirt which smeared the whole, shapeless garment. Her pipestem legs shot up out of hopelessly warped shoes and got no thicker when they became a body. She could have passed through a knothole with ease and, doubtless, such an operation would have taken a lot of the dirt from her. She chose to be niggardly about the price.

"You soul-stealing lobster!" she shrieked in a cracked ruin of a voice. "You—" Jan wanted to stop his ears. "Last time you charge two damins the feesh! This time you charge t'ree damins. We don't have to buy! We don't have to deal with the slimy likes of you! We'll take our trade elsewhere!" Her companion, an incredibly diseased fellow, tried to calm her. The fisherman tried to break in with the explanation—quite obvious—that these fish were especially fine, big ones. She would have nothing of it. Her rage mounted higher and higher, in direct ratio to the humoring it got from the two men. Finally this virago seized one of the fish by the tail and began to lay about her with all her might, screaming the foulest of language the while. Her rage made her blind and she lambasted several of the guards who could not get out of the way fast enough.

Jan was successful in ducking a swing but he tripped over a bitt and fell to stare up and get a full view of this termagant's ugly face. He recoiled, frozen with revulsion.

This shrew, this harridan, this screaming unholy catamaran resembled no one if not his aunt Ethel!

He recovered and scrambled back. At a safe distance he peered wonderingly at the woman. The voice-tone, now that he listened for it, had a certain timbre, the eyes, the nose, the very ears carried the resemblance. Her build, the way she stood now that was calming down in the wreckage of her victory, was also similar. And finally, though he could not understand how it could be, he was forced to grant this revolting creature the identity of his aunt. Aunt Ethel, wife to a diseased fish peddler! Aunt Ethel, bawling like a harlot upon the common dock!

But how on earth did she get there?

Now that hostilities had ceased and a lower price had been paid, the woman signaled to the man to be off and the two pushed the cart along toward the shoreward end.

"My darling Daphne," said the fish peddler, "the price we saved won't cover the cost of bandages for my head. By swith, how it rings!"

"Be quiet, you wretched apology of a man. I'll deal with you later when we get home."

But Jan had to know. He stepped forward beside the cart. "Aunt Ethel," he said, "how—"

She stared at him angrily and brushed on by, just as his guards leaped up to take him again and keep him from communicating with others. She glanced back in high disdain and snorted.

"Y'see? Y'see, you worn-eaten miscreant? I'm sunk so low that convicts talk to me! Ohhh, you wretch, if you think your head rings now—" And so they passed out of sight just as Boli, much fortified, hove like a barge into view.

BOLI had a fresh company of Marids with him who swiftly and efficiently took Jan in hand.

"Take care," said Boli. "Your heads answer for it if he gets away."

A sedan chair was borne to them by four Marids and into its cushioned depths sank Boli. He raised his handkerchief and flourished it and the party moved off.

Dread began to settle heavily over Jan. What had possessed him to first frighten the wits out of a sailor and then upset a whole boatload of guard sailors, to say nothing of almost drowning the port captain, m'lord Boli? What unplumbed possibilities did this swaggering, brawny body of his contain that he had never before felt? And would he do something the very next minute to make his doom absolutely certain—if it weren't already so?

He was almost treading on the heels of the last two chair bearers. And suddenly it occurred to him that all he had to do was take a slightly longer step and into the street m'lord Boli would go, perfumed handkerchief and all. Ah, yes, and just ahead there was a lovely, wide mud puddle where horses had been tethered not long before. What a bed for m'lord Boli that hoof-churned muck would be. Just a slightly longer step and—

"I won't!" yelled Jan.

M'lord turned around in astonishment. "What was that?"

"Nothing," said the miserable Jan.

On they marched and finally negotiated the mud puddle. Jan sighed with relief when they got to the far side and on dry pavement once more. He took courage at that. It seemed that a sharp exertion of will power would cause this Tiger to fade away. And God knew that one more misstep would put m'lord Boli into an even higher howl for his gore.

He took an interest in the town and found that the mixed lot of the population was very, very unbalanced where wealth and position was concerned. Ifrits were to be seen at rare intervals and each time they were being borne in splendid carriages which were, invariably, driven by humans in livery.

Too, the silken robed proprietors of these great stores, when seen standing outside, were all jinn. Although human beings were not without some small finery here and there, not one actually wealthy one was to be found. The police were all Marids, resplendent in green cloaks and towering, conical white hats. Marids did not seem to be servants but monopolized all the minor positions of responsibility.

Here and there men turned to gaze after the marching guard with curiosity. Sometimes men saluted the port captain and he daintily waved his handkerchief back. Sometimes Marids held up traffic to let the procession through and then glowered ferociously upon the prisoner as he slogged past.

Once or twice people yelped, "It's Tiger!" And gaped helplessly until the company was out of sight. Jan recognized them but didn't recognize them. One he knew for sure was a tavern keeper on the water front. The other, a buxom female, he knew not at all. He was afraid there were tears in her eyes.

Far ahead, shimmering in the heat, Jan could see a large square opening out. It was easily a mile on the side and parked trees inclosed a great lake. Too, there were barracks and a parade ground, and, set far back, was a low, domed edifice which was receptive. It appeared to be a normal building at first, done with the usual swoops and curves. But the closer one got, the bigger it got until, from across the huge square, it had the proportions of a mountain. The dome was seemingly solid gold and the sun on it made a man's eyes sting. The balconies were evidently masses of precious stones—or else they were all on fire. The fountains, which geysered so brightly before it, went a full hundred

feet into the air and even then did not reach a height as great as the top of the steps in front—steps down which a cavalry division could have charged with ease.

HUMANS began to be less and less in evidence. This park was evidently the haunt of military men, all of them Marids, except the officers who were Ifrits. Their gaudy uniforms fitted them loosely, held close only by sword belts. The men were in scarlet and the officers too, except that the Ifrits had a great, golden bird of prey awing across their breasts and three golden spikes upon their shining helmets.

Coming away from the palace was a small party of men in azure. They, too, had golden birds upon their tunics, but from the roll of their walk and the curve of the swords at their sides it was plain that here was a party of naval officers on its way back to the harbor.

Coming abreast of the group, Jan glanced wonderingly at them. He had not yet gotten used to seeing fangs glittering in each jinni's face and these fellows looked especially ferocious. It almost startled him out of his wits when one, more fearsome than the rest, cried out in a voice which bespoke a mortal wound.

"Tiger!" cried this Ifrit. And then, tearing his luminous orbs away from the man, he held up an imperious hand. "Stop, I'd speak to your prisoner."

"Come along!" m'lord roared at his guard. "Commander, you speak to a royal prisoner. Have a care!"

But the guard couldn't very well walk straight over a commander in the navy, and as the commander had stepped in close to Jan, they had to stop. Boli raged.

"What's this?" said the naval officer. "By the Seven Swirls of the Seven Saffron Devils, Tiger, what are you into now?"

"Come along!" roared Boli. And to the officer: "Sir, I'll have your sword for this! I tell you he's a royal prisoner and not to be spoken with by anyone. Answer him, prisoner, and I'll rip out your tongue with my bare hands!"

"Shut your foul face, lover of slime," said the officer. And to Jan: "Tiger, I told you that if you got into trouble to come to see me. This confounded law which makes it impossible for you to have rank of any kind has got to be changed! You wouldn't revolt if you had any status. What's up?"

"Damn it, sir!" cried Boli, leaping out of his sedan chair and waving the handkerchief like a battle flag, "get back before I'm forced to order a stronger means!"

The officer, knowing well he was out of bounds, fell back slowly, looking the while at Jan. "Don't forget, Tiger. If they don't let you go, send the word and I'll be up here for you with my bullies if necessary. We haven't forgotten what you did for us on the Isle of Fire."

But the guard was moving off and Jan was pushed along with them. He was dazed by being known by men he did not know. And suddenly it came to him that now was the time to trip those bearers. Out went his foot, but in the nick of time he tripped himself instead of sending Boli hurtling down these steep steps.

"Come along," snarled m'lord, all unwitting of his close squeak.

Jan, breathing hard and thankfully, made haste to pick himself up and follow after.

They went through two immense doors, guarded on either side by silver beasts which towered fifty feet above them. Like ants they crawled along the polished floor of a hall which could have berthed a frigate with ease.

Ahead, two doors so tall that the neck cracked before eyes could see the top of them barred the way with their

black bulk, and before them stood a crimson line of Marids, larger than most and leaning now upon silver pikes.

The chair bearers stopped. The guard stopped. Boli raised himself importantly. "M'lord Boli, captain of the port, with a prisoner to be thrown upon royal clemency!"

"M'lord Boli," said the major of the guard, "enter."

THE GREAT doors swung back without, it seemed, any hand touching them, and between them stalked the company.

Ahead Jan saw a white throne rearing up thirty feet from the floor, hung with tassels of gold and set with diamonds. Behind it, full fifty feet across, hung the great scarlet flag with its golden bird spread upon it.

The hall, which would have housed the biggest building in the town, was peopled scatteringly by brightly clothed courtiers and officers.

The blaze of the throne was such, under the onslaught of the sun which poured through the wall-sized, stained-glass windows, that Jan could not see the person in it. But as the procession drew near he was startled to find two lions chained with silver at its base, lions as large as camels, who eyed the approaching Boli with wet chops and licked their lips over the prisoner as an afterthought.

Above them reared the throne itself, and Jan, blinking in the blaze, beheld the queen.

She was taller than these other Ifrits. Taller and uglier. Her arms were matted with black hair which set strangely against the soft silk of her white robe. Her hairy face was a horror, her lips spread apart by upper and lower fangs like tusks. On either side of her jeweled crown were black, pointed ears like funnels. Her nose was mostly nostril. Her eyes were as big as stewpans and in them held a flickering, leaping flame which scorched Jan to his very soul.

He looked down, unable to stand the blaze. He looked down as he marched nearer behind m'lord Boli. He looked down as the last two sedan bearers topped the double step which surrounded the throne. He looked down and saw their *heels*.

Suddenly there was nothing he could do about it. As he mounted, himself, he lurched a trifle. With horror he found that he deliberately caught at the scabbard of the guard on his right and —oh, quite accidentally—lifted it between the legs of the carrier.

The bearer lurched. His comrade, thrown out of step and balance, lurched. The two men forward, feeling the chair go back, surged ahead just as the two in the rear also strove to stop the sudden motion.

Crash! And down went m'lord Boli in a heap of howling guards. Shot, he was, like a catapulted rock straight out of his chair and directly between the huge lions!

There sounded a concerted scream in the hall. The guards, falling this way and that, had no time to see the horrible death which was even now bending dually to scoop up their fat morsel of a master.

But Tiger!

He leaped over the sprawling men. He charged up the second double step which put anyone in reach of the giant beasts. And the very instant the mouth of the first opened to gulp Boli's trunk down raw, the mouth of the second was gaping to finish the other half.

But Tiger!

He leaped astraddle the port captain and let out a mighty roar. With his left he smacked the left-hand lion resoundingly upon the nose. With his right he almost pulled the long tongue out of the mouth of the right-hand lion. And when they jerked back in astonishment at such audacity, back leaped

Tiger, hauling Boli swiftly by the baggy seat of his lordship's pants.

Tiger lifted Boli to his jellied legs and made a great show of dusting him off, though the crack of the dusting was unseemingly loud.

"Your royal majesty!" cried Tiger. "You'll please forgive this man's clumsy antics. He feeds his bearers on very bad rum to make them trot the faster, and it's the quality, not the quantity, of the fare which made them stumble. I swear, your royal highness, if the smugglers in your royal realm don't stop paying off your lordship, the port captain, in such filthy bellywash, they'll be the death of him, as you can very well see! Are you all right, sir?" he said solicitously to Boli. "Ah, yes, not a drop of grease on the outside and so no fang struck home. By the way, your royal highness, I happen to be a prisoner of the port captain here, and I think he is very anxious to get on with his business of having my head and so, pray, give him leave to speak. There, m'lord, talk up, talk up and don't keep the noble jinni waiting!"

BOLI had up enough pressure in him to splatter himself all over the hall. But such was his terror of the queen that he suddenly lost his rage, vowing that Tiger's death would be none too quick to suit him. He took a grip on his vocal cords and though, when he tried them out they squeaked alarmingly, he strove to hold forth.

"Your royal highness, I know not the crime of . . . of . . . this . . . this—"

"It's the lions," said Tiger helpfully. "They breathed too much gas into him. Go ahead, m'lord, pray cough up the letter my captain gave you."

A slaying scowl swept over m'lord's fat face, but forthwith he dug out the sea-worn message and, via a courtier whom the lions considered indigestible, gave it to the queen.

Her black-haired hands wrapped about it so that their curved talons clicked against one another. She looked for some time at Tiger and then broke the seals. She read with great attention, and then with growing alarm. She had been, when Tiger tripped Boli, on the point of uproarious laughter, but now thunderclouds settled over her visage and her great round eyes flashed lightning.

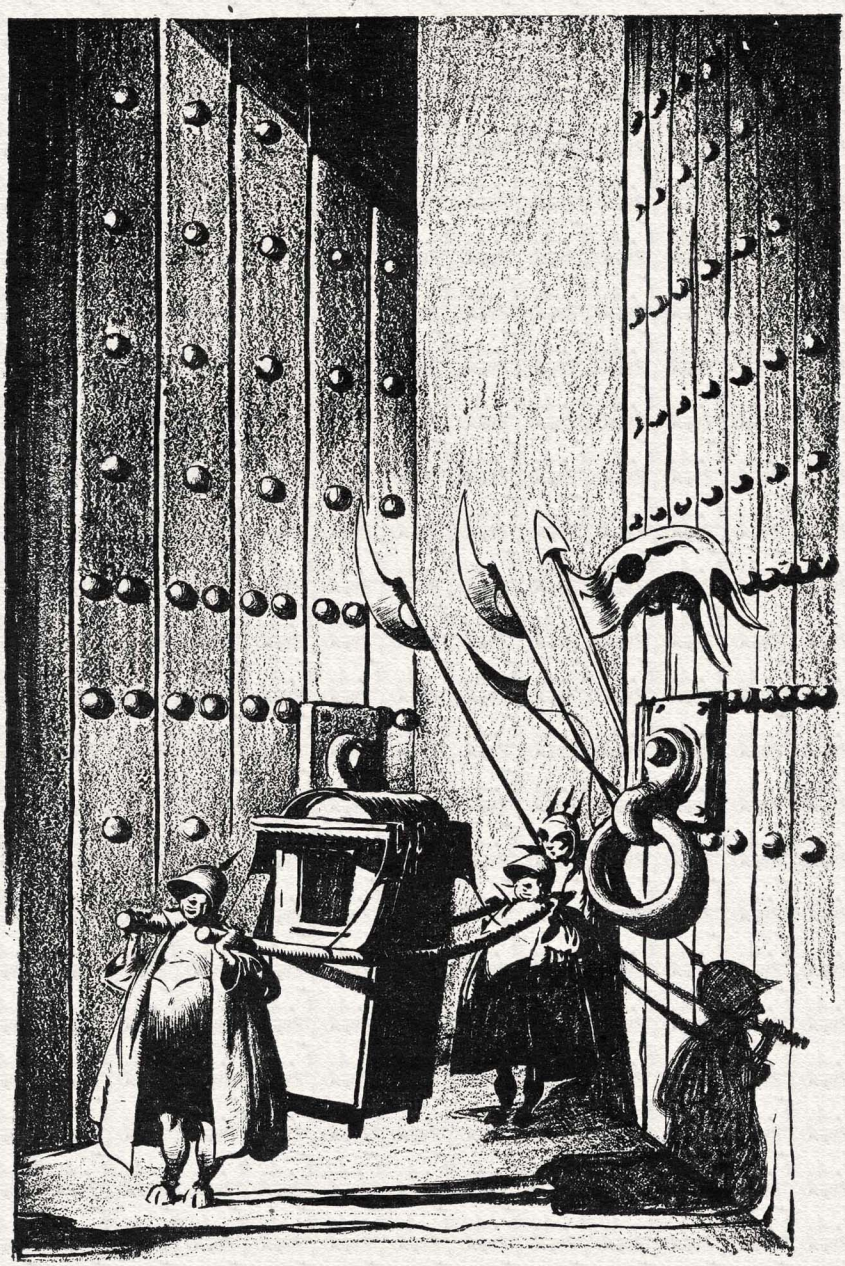
"Has he spoken to anyone, you bungling clown?"

Boli shivered so that waves went through him like a shaken pudding. "N-n-no, your royal highness. Only . . . only a fish peddler's wife."

"What's this? What's this? Find her. Find her at once and throw her into the dungeons for observation. Oh, woe take you, miserable milksop! A goat could run my port the better! Did not his captain charge you with the seriousness of his detention? Had you no idea of the enormity of the trust given into your hands? Doddering imbecile! Go wave your stinking perfume in the faces of the water-front harlots and take the stain of your filthy boots from my polished halls! Begone!"

At the voice which made the whole gigantic room shake, Boli shook as a tree in a gale. He backed hastily, tripping over the double step, falling against some of his men and then, more swiftly, backed at express speed with his guard clear across the hall until the great black doors clanged shut in his face to blank him from view.

"I ought to have his head," snarled the queen. "I, Ramus the Magnificent, to be served in such a chuckleheaded fashion!" She fixed her eyes then upon Jan, who, quite empty of any Tiger now and only aware that he was asking for death if he so much as blinked, stood with bowed head before her. She grunted like a pig and then made a motion toward her guard with her heavy gold scepter.



The vast doors swung open, and the sedan-chair moved into the throne room to the plunk-plunk *of the Marid bearers' cloven hoofs.*

"Take him away! Put him in the strong room in the left wing and let no man speak to him, human or jinni. And you, general, as fast as horses can travel, as fast as ships can sail, bring me that vile trouble maker Zongri!"

"Zongri?" ejaculated the general. "You mean Zongri of the Barbossi Isles? But how is this? Thousands of years ago—"

"Silence!" roared Ramus the Magnificent. "Bring him to *me!*"

"Your royal highness," said an espionage agent, stepping slyly forward, "this Zongri but yesterday arrived here in Tarbuton. I know where he is to be found."

"You serve me well. Go with the general and show him the way. I must have that fool!"

"Your wish is our law, your royal highness," said the general, backing out.

"Commander, you know the ship of Captain Tombo?"

"Yes, your royal highness," said the officer.

"Take him a suitable present for service so discreet. A fine present. See the treasurer."

"Yes, your royal highness."

She sank back on her throne with a worried scowl and then, glancing after the guard which escorted Tiger away, growled something to herself and burned the message in the incense cup at her elbow.

Jan, backing perforce, did not miss the gesture. God, he groaned, it's as bad as that. Damn the day I first set eyes upon that copper jar!

VI.

THE strong room depended, mainly, for its strength upon its extreme height from the ground. It was no more or less than the topmost room in a turret so lofty that it was not unusual for clouds to obscure the earth of a morning. But Jan had seen too much of late to be so very amazed with the furnishings of the place or at the fact that it was very strange to be imprisoned in such splendor.

Money was no fitting measure for the furnishings. On the floor, to soften the alabaster, lay great white rugs of wool, thick as soup tureens. The walls were covered with shimmering cloth of gold into which amazing battles had been deftly worked. A sergeant could have drilled a squad on the bed, and a bos'n could have bent a mains'l on the posts. This last occupied the center of the room and a circular series of steps surrounded it, making into a sort of fort of its own. All around the walls ran a ledge so softly cushioned that a man could quite easily have drowned in it and, instead of chairs, chaise longues of a graceful pattern stood face to face and yet side by side so as to offer easy means of conversation.

The scarlet-cloaked Marids posted themselves on the landing outside and bolted the door with twelve bars of iron, flattering even the strength of Tiger's brawny body. Disconsolately Jan wandered through the room. At one side a silver staircase spiraled steeply up through the roof and, thinking he might find a way out, Jan mounted it and thrust back the trap at the top. A gale almost blew his hair off, but he went on through to find that he stood upon the highest level of the palace except for the golden dome itself and he was almost even with that. The platform itself was hardly like an ordinary turret top. The floor was mosaic and the parapet was all green tile. Seats were handy at every side but Jan was interested more in escape than scenery.

Going to the edge, he leaned hopefully over. He recoiled at the height. Below, a squad of men were red ink dots on the pavement. But he did not give up. Around he went, examining all sides of the hexagonal structure, but nowhere did he find the slightest sem-

blance of a ladder, nor did he think he could have navigated it if he had. He sighed and walked back toward the trap; but, now that he knew escape to be impossible, he was willing to give some small attention to his prison roof and he was somewhat startled to find, all about him, mounted astrological instruments of a pattern extinct these thousands of years. They were all in gold and silver and pivoted on glittering diamonds and so delicately balanced that the slightest touch on the mother-of-pearl handles swung them swiftly, and yet a slight turn of the same handle fixed them instantly.

Jan was instantly taken with the beauty of an astrolabe on which were engraved fanciful representations of the zodiac. The *rete* he noticed with a start, gave a very creditable star map, not at all antiquated, for it showed Polaris as the North Star. Until that instant he had supposed himself dropped back a few hundred years, but no! Polaris was its modern one and one fourth degrees from true north! From a very pretty object this astrolabe became a vital part of his life. He thought hard for a moment, recalling the sun's position for the date, and as he paced about he beheld a large chronometer under glass. He had all the data he needed. He swung eagerly back to the astrolabe and measured the altitude of the sun. He then observed the sun's place in the zodiac and turned the *rete* until the position matched the circle on the plate's observed altitude. Quickly he made a line from that point to the circle of hours on the outer edge, holding his breath lest the answer be wrong.

WHAT madness was this? It was his own Today, the Today of the Earth! There was the sun and here was the time. He was bewildered and wandered to the parapet again to gaze out across the square miles of roofs to the bay where corbitas rubbed fenders with seventy-four. He looked down at the patrol walks where soldiers marched with ornate, inaccurate old muskets. It seemed that all the bric-a-brac of antiquity had come home to Tarbuton like driftwood in the tide or like the mysterious tale of the Sargossa Sea. This place was heir to the glories of yesterday and yet was astoundingly very much in today!

Again he eyed the astronomical instruments as though they might have lied to him. Their glitter had originally been such that he had overlooked a perfectly good eight-inch telescope which stood regally in their midst. Before it was a small platform, cushioned with weatherproofed goods wherein the observer could take his ease and his science simultaneously.

Jan got into the seat, determined to inspect the town and possibly ferret out any modern touches. Evidently the instrument was used for this at times, as it had no fixed focus. He wheeled it down at an angle and trained it on the streets to wander the thoroughfares in comfort. Frenchman, Irishman, Jew and Hindu. Englishman, Russian, Chinaman and Greek. Nubian, Indian, Carib and Spaniard. White man, brown man, yellow man, black man. Every nationality was there, strangely clothed but unmistakable of face. Pulling carts, sorting bales, buying food and running errands. Loafing and sweating and gossiping and weeping. Laughing and drinking and swearing and dancing. Millions of them! Women sun-bathing upon flat roofs. Thieves dividing their loot in dark alleyways. An Ifrit beating his insolent slave. A money lender wailing outside his shop while a robber scurried unhalted down the amused avenue.

What a wild panorama it was! All the vices and pleasures and bigoted zeal, all the love and hate and sophistry and hunger. All the hundred-odd emotions could be seen ranging up and down those

broad thoroughfares or upon those wide roofs, in the shanties and the ships and the tavern yards, in the stores and courts and funeral parlors, and there was but one constant in it all. Emotion! Things were happening and life was fast and violent.

Strange were the mosques with their crescents rising up between a crossed steeple to the right and a pagoda tower to the left. Strange to see an idol with a dozen hands serenely surveying a court while just over the wall lay the dome of a synagogue.

Jan swung the telescope slowly across the garish scene and found himself gazing upon a towering hill, all alone in the plain. A temple, massive and plain, was sturdily square against the sky, and the broad, steep steps were blazing with the robes of the worshipers, going and coming. Jan discovered that they were all Ifrits, served by Marids, and that not one human being accompanied them farther than the lowest step. But wait, there were humans atop that hill. He focused the telescope better.

A long procession was just then starting out from the great entrance. A huge gold coffin all draped in white was being borne by human slaves, each one clothed in the livery of mourning. Before went a priest of the jinn bearing a golden bird awing at the top of a tall pole. Behind came a naval ensign and a personal flag. This was the funeral of some officer, it seemed, for here came the uniformed sailors with weapons all reversed. And following them were men in blue with golden birds upon their breasts and shining swords at their sides, the hilts turned away from their hands.

Then, from the balustrade Jan saw a hundred human girls step forth, each one with a basket of petals to strew them under the marching feet as though the dead came as a conqueror and not a corpse. Humans, then, were servants of the temple, for all these girls were clothed in white robes, the hoods of which were thrown back to display a dozen different shades of hair.

Jan ran the telescope along the line of them idly. Suddenly he stopped and swiftly adjusted it again. His eyes grew large and his face paled. For there in the midst of those beauties was Alice Hall!

He could not mistake her, though she was more lovely than ever and without any care at all about her. Her robe, like the others, was slit from hem to knee, and her graceful feet arched as she walked down with the procession.

"Alice!" shouted Jan, leaving the telescope. But, instantly, the temple drew back three miles across the plain and not even the glittering coffin could be made out with the eye. When he looked again he had lost her.

"You called?" said a voice behind him.

JAN WHIRLED as though to defend himself, but he relaxed on sight of the very old jinn who stood there in the trap. The fellow had gentle, mystified eyes, and his fangs were long departed. His claws were cracked and yellow and his hair was silver-gray. Upon his head he wore a very castle of a hat which was wound round and round with cloth that bore astronomical symbols.

"You have taken an observation, I see," he sighed. "I trust that the fate you found was not too unkind."

"The fate?" said Jan, climbing swiftly and guiltily down. "Oh . . . yes . . . no. I was checking your time." And he motioned toward the chronometer.

"It loses a second every day," sighed the ancient astrologer. "But tomorrow is a great event. It returns exactly to its accuracy and my computations will be the easier therefore." He looked and sounded too tired to live, as perhaps he was. "So many, many com-

putations. Every morning for the queen. Every evening for the lord chamberlain. And fifty times a day when questions come up. If"—he hesitated—"if you've already cast up your fate, you know, you might save me some calculations. I dislike prying into a man's birthday. It's so very personal, you see."

"I must confess," said Jan, "that I didn't, really. I only checked the time."

The ancient one sighed dolefully. Finally he got out a pad and began to request the data he needed. Jan gave it to him, and the modern dates and hours did not at all startle the old fellow. At length he shuffled over to his instruments and bent his watery gaze upon the star tables which were engraved on silver. For a long time he leaned on the tablet, scribbling now and then but sighing more than he scribbled. He advanced to the astrolabe to check his zodiac from force of habit and then, sinking down upon a bench beside a desk, pulled forth a volume half as big as he was. Jan helped him open it and for a long time the old fellow pored over magic writing.

Until then he had been weary unto death, but now, of a sudden, he started to take an interest in life. He read faster and faster, turning pages as leaves dash about in a hurricane. He leaped to his feet and sped to the star charts anew. He faced Jan and fired a very musketry of questions. Yes, the dates were right, but what on earth was wrong? But the ancient one, bobbing about now like a heron after fish, threw himself down upon the book and ate it up all over again.

Finally, sweating and almost crying, he leaned back, dabbing his forehead with a handkerchief all embroidered with suns and moons. He looked wonderingly at Jan, and Jan grew very uncomfortable. The astrologer's glance became more and more accusing and slowly the weariness seeped into him once more.

"What is wrong?"

"She'll laugh at me," he mourned. "More and more they laugh at me ever since the day I said Zongri would make trouble within a year. They said he was dead these long centuries. But no. He is not. An hour ago he was hauled into the audience chamber by the battered guard which took him in the town. They laugh at me just the same. It was a terrible error for me to guess that Lord Shelfri would be kind to the princess. It is that which makes them laugh. Yes, it is that. He killed her, you know, and then hanged himself just last month, and so now they laugh. And they'll not believe me now. It is not possible. No human being could do such awful things in a land of the jinn. It is impossible and yet I must tell them."

"What must you tell them?" cried Jan.

"It is for her ears alone. And if she laughs and refuses to execute you while she has the chance, then it is Ramus who must suffer the consequences. It is all the same to me. I am old. I have seen the universe turning, turning, turning for a hundred thousand years. I weary of it, human. I weary of it. You, lucky child, will probably never live to see the sun roll across the heavens more than a dozen times more."

"You mean . . . you've read my death there?"

"No," he sighed. "No, not that. There is no certainty. I shall not alarm you. You may die. You might not die. But what does it matter? If you do, it is you who will lose. If you do not, the lives of many jinn will pay the toll. But I am old. Why should I care about these things? Ah-h-h, dear," he sighed, rising. "And now I must go down all those stairs again and give my report to the queen."

The old jinn mumbled uneasily and twisted at his lips. "I shall have to tell the queen . . . I shall have to— The stars promise trouble—"

JAN followed him down to the room below, helping him on the steep stairs. But before the old man departed he looked all around and shrugged as if seeing all the folly of the universe at once.

"It is not often this happens, you they call Tiger. While you yet breathe, rejoice. This you may or may not know is the strong room, and it is strong not to detain the visitor but to protect the queen."

"You mean . . . it's her room?"

"At times, when the nights are hot, she comes here to have read to her the fortunes of her people and her reign. That, you they call Tiger, is the bed on which Tadmus was murdered, on which Loru the Clown was stabbed to death by his chamberlain, in which lovely Dulon died in giving birth to Laccari, Scourge of Two Worlds. Ah, yes, you they call Tiger, the whim of a queen has placed you upon an historic bed. Why, I have read in the stars. God save us all!"

And so he was let out and wandered down the steps sadly shaking his grotesquely hatted head, his mutters lingering long after he was gone.

Jan looked with horror at the great bed. And then, despite everything he could do to hold himself back, he leaped up the steps and landed squarely in the middle. He bounced up and down.

"Not bad," said Tiger.

"Stop!" cried Jan.

"Oh, boy! All we need is some dancing girls and a keg and what a time we'd have!"

"How can I think of such a thing at a time like this?"

"Hell's bells, why not? A short life and a hot one and let the devil have a break. It's not every day he gets such a recruit as Tiger."

"Blasphemy from *me?*"

"And why not? Why not, I say? Where's the idol tall and mighty enough to be revered? Where's the god or ruler strong enough and good enough and clever enough to get more than a passing glance from such a fellow as I? Not that I am worth a hiss in hell but that all these other pedestaled fools rate but little any more. Show me a good god, a true king, a mighty man and all my faith is his for the asking—nay, not even for the asking. Who am I to be bowed by anything? Not Tiger!"

"But the queen and the God that made you—"

"The queen is a filthy harridan, and I have yet to meet the God that made me. I am Tiger! I am Tiger, son of the sea, brother to the trade winds, lover of strength and worshiper of mirth! I am Tiger and I know all the vices of every land! I am Tiger and with my eyes I have seen such sights as few men so much as dream about. Dancing girls, honey-sweet wine, music, enough to tear the soul from a man. Aye, women to blind you with their golden eyes and flowing bodies. Aye, rum which mellows the throat and roars in the guts. Aye! Violins and drums, trombones and harps and feet so swift and so sure that the head whirls to follow them. Dancing girls!

"Aye! Such a one as graced the last steps of Captain Bayro with fresh roses this very day. Ah, for her I would crush this kingdom with my fingers and give it to her upon a diamond dish. Where has she been that I have not seen her. Where has she kept that sweet ankle and those silken curls? Where has she hidden that mouth made for kisses and laughter and songs? Ah, yes, the Temple of Rali. The Temple! Where no human dare tread save as a temple slave; where all Tarbuton's mighty go to babble their sins and kiss golden feet and win support for their hellish endeavors. The temple! Where the great horns bellow like bulls and

the flying feet of the dancing girls sweep the worshipers into drunken stupor. The finest beauties of the realm to beguile the jinn with dancing. And that one, ah, the finest of them all! S'death to enter that temple. Death! But for the likes of that sweet mouth, but for the slimness of that ankle—"

"Stop!" cried Jan. "She is sacred!"

"SACRED? Why not? All things of the temple are sacred. But though death might wait upon such a venture, if ever I get out of this mad palace, sure as the west wind blows I shall kiss that mouth—"

"She is sacred to me! To me! Her name is Alice Hall, the only woman I ever looked at. She is Alice Hall, the only woman who ever looked upon me with other than contempt. Seal your mouth and speak of her no more!"

"Sacred, you say? And why should a woman be so sacred as to never be touched? Surely now there's no reason in that at all! Love? For love I would lay down my split second of life. Love? Certainly I could love her, perhaps already I do love her. Yea, there's no use to deny it. Of all I've ever seen she is the *only* one. And what could be more sacred than to worship at that shrine? What could be more sacred than to burn the joss of desire before that cupid's bow of a mouth? Yea, that's given only to the strong. That's given only to the man-devil with courage enough to take it. Yea, she's sacred. Sacred to me! And as she is a temple girl, a dancing girl, raised out of sight of all humans, *I* shall be the first to plead with her. *I* shall be the last, for she will be mine! Now, puny and halting weakling, try and stop me!"

Jan leaped up from the bed, whirling as though to face an adversary. But no one was to be seen. And deep inside him he felt the Tiger stirring, heard the Tiger laughing. More and more as the hours passed he had experienced it. He had given it some slight leash on the ship and the musket had been fired. It had taken more, and the boat had overturned. And more and more to send Boli hurtling between two lions. And now, like the camel that stuck his head in the tent, slow degree by slow degree, presaging an end which might well be whole weeks away, he who contained the Tiger would be contained *by* the Tiger. And at such a prospect of being ruled by the lawless, pleasure-mad irreverent sailor Jan recoiled with his own part of his soul. And even when he did it he heard the Tiger, far off, deep down, veiled and showing himself like the sharp fangs of a reef in the restless, heaving sea, laughing at him.

The body first and then—then the heart? Who had the Tiger been? How had he become submerged at all?

And Jan in a spasm of terror would have thrown himself down on the bed anew if the door had not been flung back by a captain of the guard.

"Her royal highness, Ramus the Magnificent, now demands your presence in the audience chamber for trial!"

Jan stared dully at the pompous fellow and then obediently crawled off the bed and placed himself between the waiting files. They marched down the winding steps and through half a mile of halls and, with the greater part of him shaking at the prospect of the judgment, he could not help thinking that it would be a priceless joke if the Marid on his right should accidentally knock against the one in front. He was sure they would all go down like dominoes, so stiff were they in their glaring capes.

But the joke never came off, for the instant they entered the chamber Jan came up with a paralyzed gasp to behold Zongri, all in chains, standing on the steps which led to the throne. And Zongri was looking at him with eyes which were shot through and through with flashing fires of rage.

VII.

THE AUDIENCE chamber was clear of all except three companies of guards. The queen sat tensely regarding Zongri's back. Up before the throne the files marched Jan and then fell back to leave him isolated between two poker-stiff Marids.

The lions yawned hopefully, the sound of it gruesome in the echoing hall. As though that were a signal to begin, Ramus, the jinni queen, pointed her scepter at Jan.

"Speak, renegade Ifrit!" she ordered Zongri. "Is this the man upon whom you pronounced so untimely a sentence?"

Zongri shifted his weight. He was a tower of scorn and anger and his chains clinked viciously. "That one?" And he stared hard at Jan, a little of the resentement fading out of him. Jan held his breath, suddenly realizing that, in Tiger's form, he was not likely to be recognized by a jinni who had seen him but fleetingly and in bad light at that.

"That one?" said Zongri. "You mock!"

"Look well, jackal filth," roared the queen. "If he is not the one, you shall me detained until that one is found. And this one came to his captain with a strange tale indeed."

Zongri came down the steps a pace. He was above the reach of the great lions just as Jan was below them. And, framed between those tawny heads, Zongri looked more terrifying than ever, even though he did not seem quite so large as he had upon the first night. Even so, he was bigger than any one of the guards, bigger even than Ramus and certainly half again the size of Tiger.

Zongri's fangs clicked together as he worked his jaw in thought. Then he again faced Ramus. "You bait me! You try to trick me into lies! A trap worthy of you. The one I sentenced was a puny fellow, one these lions would have scorned to eat. A weakling with panes of glass over his eyes to protect them. A very owl of a scarecrow with his head stuffed with books and his heart so much sawdust. Try again, ruler of apes, for Zongri will not this time be led into untruth."

Jan's spirits began to pick up, and he even straightened his spine, and Tiger almost let out a merry whistle.

"Look again!" roared Ramus. "I tell you that this one brought such a tale to his captain and, though he is known as Tiger and though he is not unknown for certain brawling deeds, it is possiblt that he is not wholly the one you describe in form. Witless one, have you no eyes at all?"

"I," said Zongri in a voice like a file through brass, "happen to be wearing your chains, Ramus. But my patience is great. For thousands of years I waited for my release. It taught me how to bide my time—"

"It taught you little else!" roared Ramus.

"But it *did* teach me that," said Zongri, looking as though he wanted to fly at her throat. "And I can wait until you visit me in my own realm, the Barbossi Isles, where I would have been even now if your cursed ships were not so glutted with cargoes for the weaklings I find here. How am I to know what has transpired in the ages since I left? How was I to know that the jest of eternal wakefulness, once so marvelous, would bring any danger here? How was I to know that soft living and slaves had reduced my race to the point of putty? My magic beyond my power? And if I have done this thing, what of that?"

"What of that?" bellowed Ramus in a fury. "You witless son of chattering monkeys, can you not see the desolation which would spread if all humans in our world would come to know the *truth?* Quick now, stop blabbing your

ignorance and closely look upon the prisoner. We must *know!*"

AGAIN Zongri fixed his raging eyes upon Jan until Jan could feel them lifting off his scalp and tearing his clothes to ribbons. Suddenly Zongri tensed and took an involuntary step downward. Then, so swiftly that all his chains clanked as one, he faced the queen.

"If I can truthfully identify this man, you free me?"

"Of course."

"And allow me to depart?"

"With our most heartfelt relief!"

"Then, Ramus the Maggoty, know that the human before you is Jan Palmer, victim of the eternal wakefulness and long may he roast in hell!"

Jan almost fell forward on his face but staggered upright again.

"Ah," said Ramus, "I see that the prisoner admits it, too. Very well, Zongri, we bear you no great malice—"

"I would that I could also say it," growled the giant Ifrit.

"—and will suitably see you away to your home."

"And no thanks earned," snarled Zongri.

"*If* you take away the sentence from this man!" snapped Ramus.

"Bah, why bother with that? Kill him and have it over!"

"Aye, that *would* be your solution, witless one. How like your sons you are, to choose the last resort first. This may be Jan Palmer, but it is also one they call Tiger, a man who earned a better fate by feats of daring in a dozen battles and who once saved the life of Admiral Tyronin, one of my finest officers. Certainly if it must be done, 'twill be done, but stay awhile. How, pray tell, were you able to put such a sentence upon him?"

"You said you would release me."

"I said I would, to be sure, but I had not stated all my conditions."

"You harpy!" screamed Zongri, leaping straight at the queen. Only the swift action of the officers on the steps kept him from reaching her. She had not so much as blinked and only smiled when Zongri was thrown back to his original position.

"We might forget to send you home at all, Zongri," she reminded him. "We have deep graves here for those who do not please us. Now, to business. We ask you to spare us the necessity of murdering this man, for, while your line has never done us anything but wrong, he at least has done us some slight good. To be very truthful, Zongri, we would much rather destroy you than this common sailor here."

Zongri was so angry he could not even speak. He cast the guards away from him and stood there, his ripped shirt showing a vast expanse of heaving, hairy chest. The other Ifrits averted their eyes from him but not inexorable Ramus. She was almost laughing to see such a powerful man so completely entangled at her whim.

"Come, speak up," said Ramus. "By what magic power did you bring this down upon Tiger? Speak! I would as soon execute you as not—in fact, I have no compunction whatever in the matter."

"I speak not from terror of your threats," growled Zongri, "but to avoid having to longer stay in such a treacherous place, gazing upon such ugly faces. Very well. You seem in this age to know nothing of the yesterdays. You know nothing or have completely forgotten the day when Sulayman brought us all to account by the magic which was his by virtue of his Seal." He seemed to doubt the wisdom of going on, but Ramus motioned for the executioner to step nearer and Zongri swept on like a rolling storm, his temper rising to white heat but telling his tale just the same. "Know that the Seal was lost to him some years after—"

"Come to the point. We have heard

all that," said Ramus.

"It was lost to him and so was his power lost. You have heard of that Seal?"

"If you speak of the triangles laid so as to form a six-pointed star surrounded by a circle, we know the Seal of Sulayman." She chuckled to herself to see her guards wince at the mention of the potent thing.

"AYE," said Zongri, "such was the Seal. Such was the Seal of Sulayman and even a replica of it upon a leaden stopper carried sufficient force to entomb me all those bitter years, worn though it had become." He stopped again and stubbornly decided he would not continue. But once more the executioner stepped forward and once more Zongri blazed with the fury of impotence. "You have no right!"

"And you'll have no life," said Ramus. "It's all one to me whether we cheer you on your way or bury you."

"To Shatan with your threats. I speak to save myself further defilement."

"Then speak."

"When I was released I touched the stopper as I said those words and, because the Seal was made by Sulayman himself and with that ring, there was enough power there to do it."

"You are not telling us the whole truth," said Ramus.

"Robbers, thieves!" shrieked Zongri.

"And what is that upon your hand?" said Ramus.

"Very well!" he screamed at her. "You'll have it all! I have shown great patience. I have tried to leave you as I found you. I have tried not to destroy this city until I myself could occupy it with my own men, for conquest is my lot. But, abortively, my hand is called. Look!" And he thrust it forward.

She leaped back.

He jerked the ring from his finger. "Look! I searched but a day to find it. Sulayman got it back and I knew how to find his tomb. It lay in the miserable dust which remained to him, and I took it up and put it on and all the secrets of the two worlds will be mine! All the land will yield to me. Earth will disgorge her buried treasures, walls will fall at my bidding! Look well and be as stone!"

But nothing happened. Baffled, Zongri whirled around to face his guards. Again he howled the decree and still nothing happened, though he held the ring high over his head.

Ramus was the first to laugh aloud. "Oh, vain fool, in its life that ring gave all wisdom to Sulayman the Wise. But because it was worn by human, it lost its power over humans. And now, think not that I know little of magic. *You,* an Ifrit, have worn that ring and so have destroyed its power there. Between you and Sulayman," she chortled, "you'll have it as powerful as a doorknob!"

"Beware!" howled Zongri. "Stand back. If it lacks that power, it still has many more. Stand back, I say!" And it seemed that only the lions would fail to obey as they strained toward him.

The Marids were so hypnotized by the strength of the man that they did as he ordered and, for the moment, Jan was standing quite alone, close beside the plate and iron which fastened the leash of the right-hand lion. Jan was sweating and then, suddenly, felt lightheaded. Tiger grinned a wicked grin.

Down dropped Tiger to the floor and out of Zongri's wrath-blinded sight. It was the work of an instant to jerk out the confining pin. The chain had all the slack out. The lions were maddened by Zongri's loud roars, completely intent upon his dervishlike movements.

"See! I strike off my own chains!" shouted Zongri. And with a clank the enormous fetters dropped into a rusty coil about his feet. "And now, treacherous clowns—"

But the chain gave way in that instant and two thousand pounds of lion sprang straight at Zongri's hairy throat!

Zongri flung up his arms to meet the shock and staggered back. But Tiger was not at all idle. He went up over the beast's back, like it was a ratline, and before two roars had gone shatteringly down the hall he was astride the brute's head and twisting his tender ears until they creaked like cabbage leaves.

It was a mad tumble of Ifrit, human and jungle king. So ferocious were the bellows coming out of the mêlée that the other lion, seeing them all hurtle down toward him, did not attack at all but leaped back in terror.

A dozen stout-hearted jinn officers flung themselves upon the chain and yanked the slack on it. Two more sent the pin clanging home where it belonged. A stout-hearted major dived into the mess and flung Zongri out of it and across the pavement. He grabbed again but the sailor had already leaped free, the lion lunging after. The chain pulled the brute back on his haunches and Tiger, seeing instantly that the devil was again chained, gave him a resounding cuff across his tender nose and snapped his fingers so hard that the beast started.

Complacently, Tiger stepped back between the two Marids who were still frozen in place.

Other guards picked up Zongri and lugged him forward to again stand him up before the throne, this time well clear of the lions.

"Ho-ho!" said Ramus. "Were you going to leave us so soon, Zongri? Stay yet awhile. Don't you enjoy the company? Major, take the ring away from him!"

THAT officer leaped up to do her bidding and yanked Zongi's hands toward him to remove the Seal. But, in a moment, the major gave a yelp.

"What have you done with it?" he cried.

But Zongri was obviously jarred by the discovery, for he jerked loose from the officers and scurried about the floor on all fours, searching. In an instant all the guards followed suit. Ramus watched them with a worried frown as though half minded to do some looking herself. But soon every inch of even that huge hall had been thorough searched without any result.

Zongri was the first to give up. "Your thieving guards have stolen it!"

"Sir, they are my personal, household troops. Not one man of them would stop at laying down his life for me. Besides," she added, "my officers here have been watching them like hawks and I have been watching the officers. There were not so many."

"I demand that you search them all!" screamed Zongri.

"It shall be done," said Ramus. "Major, tell off three officers to do the searching. The Seal is too big to hide."

The searching was quickly done by the process of patting the capes of all Marids without result.

"And now the officers!" yelled Zongri.

"Even that insult I shall permit," said Ramus, "though I beg their forgiveness at such an affront: Major, search them."

The major, by the same process, did so and when he had finished, still without result, the voracious Zongri bellowed, "And now search the major!"

That officer disdainfully stepped up to Zongri and let himself be mauled, though his face had an expression as though he smelled something very bad.

"Are you satisfied?" said Ramus, troubled into mildness.

Zongri stared all about him, bewildered and growing angry to the point of insanity. Everyone in the room had been searched and the floor had practically been torn up and yet— With a sudden growl, Zongri leaped at Jan.

Some inner sense seemed to warn Tiger that this girl was somehow—wrong, unhuman.

"You, you sniveling wretch!" cried Zongri. "You, the cause of all this! What have you done with that ring?"

Two officers started to intervene, but Tiger swept them back by throwing out his arms. "Search!"

Zongri would have ripped the clothes from him shred by shred, but the executioner was thoughtfully swinging his blade back and forth from the hilt and the glint of it slowed Zongri down. The patting process employed before was used now with such force that it almost broke Jan's ribs.

"This," said Tiger, "in payment for saving the ingrate from being lion beef. Search and be damned!"

Zongri ran out of pockets and patience at the same time and dealt Jan such a blow that he sent him skidding a full thirty feet across the glittering floor.

"Boor!" cried Ramus. "Haven't you done enough already?"

"It's a pretty show!" cried Tiger as Jan scrambled up. "I never saw a man work so hard to cover up a thing."

"What?" said Ramus on high.

"Why, 'tis plain as your horns, your royal highness. The fellow dropped it into that well he calls a month and gulped it down like pastry. Wasn't I within an inch of him when he did it?"

"What's this?" cried Ramus. "What's this? What's this?"

"You lying fiend!" yelled Zongri, making ready to leap at Jan anew. "You filthy-tongued—"

"Stop him!" ordered Ramus. "Ah, so that's the way it is, putting my most trusted troops to shame to pull a shabby trick. You'll learn my might yet, you snake-tailed donkey! Guards, put those irons on him, I say, and throw him into the darkest dungeon we have to offer until he sees fit to give us back that ring."

Zongri was swiftly overpowered despite his struggles and the irons rasped back into place.

"What about me?" said Tiger truculently.

"You!" roared Zongri. "Plenty about you! I'll hunt you down and rip out your throat if it takes me a thousand years to find you! You, you're doomed! Break your sentence, bah! It can't be done. Who, including God, can destroy knowledge once given or separate personalities once fused? You, root of all my misery, will meet me in the realm of Shatan if not upon this land. Take me away!" he cried. "Take me away where I won't have to *look* at him!"

THE GUARD was most obliging and Tiger laughed gleefully to see him go. And when Zongri had vanished, Tiger faced the throne once more. "But that, your royal highness, still solves nothing. I, begging your pardon, am a man of action. Do I live or do I die? It's all the same so long as it's definite!"

Ramus leaned forward and spoke in a troubled voice. "Slave, your problem is not to be solved in a day. For the safety of my people I cannot let you free. For your service unto us I cannot have you killed unless you make it necessary. For the present, until your fate can be decided, I must hold you in the tower. Guards, escort the gentleman to his quarters."

A few minutes later the great metal door swung shut behind him and once more he was alone in the great room. But whereas before Tiger had always died out instantly after action and Jan had shivered and shrunk from the next event, there was now a difference.

It had grown dark long ago and someone had lighted an array of tapers in the diamond-pendant candelabra. By their flickering lights Jan made a quick but thorough examination of the whole room, scouting all places where observers might be posted. Finally he yawned very elaborately, somewhat amazed at his histrionic powers. He pulled off his

merchant-sailor shirt and stepped out of his pants and then, clad only in his floppy-topped sea boots, he stepped over to the candles and snuffed them one by one, yawning the while.

At last the room was dark except for the subdued light which rose up from the starry-lighted port. Jan crawled in between the silken sheets of the great bed, boots and all.

And then, secure, he reached into the floppy top of the right one and pulled forth a thing which weighed at least a pound. Even in the darkness the Seal of Sulayman blazed and crackled.

VIII.

WHEN the doze of an instant faded him from one scene to another, Jan, not yet used to the thing, failed to realize what had happened to him. Strangely enough he had the sleepy sensation of one who has spent a night of snoring. And so, without opening his eyes, he contentedly fumbled under his pillow for the blazing Seal.

It wasn't there.

In an instant he was on the floor turning his bed covers seven ways at once, making dust, oddments of clothes, books and cockroaches fly as from a bomb explosion. He got down on his knees and frantically fumbled with no more result than losing some skin from his knuckles. Up he leaped and plunged into the bed anew, ripping and rending it until it flapped like a flag on its hinges.

"What the hell's goin' on?" complained Diver. "You nuts or something?"

That brought Jan into a realization of his whereabouts. He stopped stock-still and then, like a cloud, the odor of disinfectant, unwashed feet and halitosis settled over him. Like a hum of bees the sounds of restless men came into his ears. Like a judgment he heard a bell tolling somewhere over the city, calling people to church.

It was jail, and it was Sunday.

And the mighty Seal of Sulayman was somewhere far away, in another bed, clutched in quite another hand.

Hopelessly Jan sank down upon the bunk.

"Geez, I thought you was goin' nuts for a minute," said Diver. "Not that you ain't already," he added with a sniff. "Now pick up that junk and make the place look decent, or I'll give you something to think about."

Jan glowered at his cellmate.

"Gwan, snap into it," said Diver.

For a moment more Jan stayed where he was and then a queer thing happened. With sudden alacrity he got up and made a great show of putting the cell in order. He had thrown things so far and so fast that they were now carpeting the place, scant though their number was. And Jan went at it with such a will that Diver was forced to stand up against the bars to get out of the way.

It was done in an instant and Jan stood back. "How's that?"

"Huh," said Diver, ambling back to his bunk and sitting down upon it.

Crash!

The astounded pickpocket was jolted through and through as his bunk gave completely away and slammed him down on the floor. He bounced up and gave the iron a resounding kick which instantly brought a yelp of pain out of him. Holding his toe he went hopping around like a heron and swearing like a pirate. Presently he subsided and frowning terribly picked up his few belongings and then, kicking everything out of the one remaining bunk, placed his own upon Jan's and took his seat there. He gave a growl as though daring Jan to do something about the theft, but Jan quite cheerfully picked up his own goods from the floor and put them on the wrecked bed and then, to Diver's suspicious amazement, reconnected the chain hooks, making the "wreck" quite as good as new.

"You done that on purpose," snarled Diver.

"Me?" said Jan innocently. "Why, you took my bunk and that leaves yours, so now yours is mine."

"Yeah, but this thing here isn't fit for a hog to sleep in!"

"Then why should you object?" said Jan complacently.

DIVER eyed him doubtfully and seemed about to make a fight for it when breakfast appeared. Diver was too much interested in his stomach to put fighting before eating, and so he snatched the tray from under the door and put it on the table and, placing his arms about it, appeared on the verge of devouring it all himself.

Jan sat watching him for several seconds and Diver began to relax, throwing a scornful grunt in Jan's direction. Diver got his muscles in working order, snapped his teeth a couple times experimentally and fell to.

Jan still watched him. Two eggs vanished and the remaining two were about to follow the example of the first pair when Jan let out a startled exclamation.

"Look out!"

"What's wrong?" snarled Diver.

"Why, good golly, you wouldn't want to eat *that*, would you?" And he advanced, placing his hand close to the plate to indicate something.

Diver took his eyes off Jan and looked at the plate and there, squarely between the two eggs was the biggest cockroach he had ever seen! And not only that but only *half* of him was present.

Diver clapped one hand over his mouth and the other over his stomach, and his snaky eyes got big as dollars.

"Quick!" said Jan. "I've heard they're poison as arsenic. Guard! Guard!"

The officer, having distributed the last tray came speeding back. "What's the matter with you two guys now?"

"It's Diver!" said Jan urgently. "He's poisoned! Hurry, he may die even before you get him to the infirmary! Don't stand there gawping like an idiot! *Do* something!"

Jan swiftly aided Diver to the now open door, and the guard led away the staggering pickpocket, who still had his hands where he had first put them but now looked as green as a shark's belly.

"What's up?" said the counterfeiter urgently.

Jan yawned and watched Diver out of sight. Then he grinned. "It's something he thought he ate." And so saying he calmly sat down at the tray, chose clean tools and ate the ham and the toast and drank the coffee with very great relish. Tiger purred with contentment and the luxurious feeling which always follows a job well done.

The feeling of well-being, however, did not last very long. Jan, recalling Alice's present, stripped down and prepared for a shave. All went well until he confronted himself in the glass. With a shock he saw no one but Jan Palmer, thin and pale of countenance, narrow of chest, timid-eyed and, generally, about as unlike the handsome, swashbuckling Tiger as anyone could imagine. His physiognomy took the heart out of him. What chance did a miserable chip of a human being like himself have against the inexorable forces of the law, against the antagonism of his relatives, against a manager who would be only too glad to see him hanged? Weapons he had none. Friends he had none. Plans were as impracticable as they were nebulous.

He felt as though some one had drained the life blood from him, and he sank down upon the chair with a groan, blanking out the mirror with hands over his eyes.

"Oh God!" he whimpered.

"Why, oh why, did I ever even hear of that copper jar?"

He was silent then for a long, long time, and the patch of lather upon his

face grew dry as cotton. At last he spiritlessly scraped the blond fuzz from his face and sponged himself in a vain attempt to dispel the penetrating odor of the jail. It was only when he began to don the clean white shirt that he experienced a degree of relief.

Today was Sunday. Would she come to see him? Or did she, too, think he was wholly mad and only favored him as a soft-hearted woman feeds a mangy stray?

The day would tell that, might even answer all of it. And so he vainly attempted to speed the hours by reading Houdini. But as he found that absolutely none of the conditions for escaping set forth in the book were to be fulfilled in this jail and as the thought of getting out almost drove him wild, he at length gave it over and merely sat, listening to a tower clock strike the hours. Would she come to him today?

It was eleven, and then it was noon. It was one and the Sunday dinner was served with the information that Diver Mullins had been put to bed in the hospital after the exertions of a doctor and a stomach pump. It was two, and then two-thirty. And still no footstep like hers sounded in the hard cell block.

HE GAVE her up and gloomily regarded a cockroach's attempt to climb the slippery side of the wash bowl. She wouldn't spoil her day with a visit to the jail. It was thoughtless of him to expect it. Besides, what was he to her?

"Well! What happened to your friend?"

Jan leaped a foot and came down standing. "Alice! I mean . . . Miss Hall! Gee, I . . . gosh."

The officer let her into the cell and locked it behind her. "I'll have to wait here, miss. I ain't really supposed—"

She beamed upon him, and he melted. With a heartfelt sigh he leaned against the bars and swung his keys round and round, beginning after a while to hum softly.

Alice put a package down on a chair and Jan seated her with such a flurry of activity that he almost knocked it off.

"You're alone today."

"Yes," said Jan. "Yes, I'm alone. Gee!"

She smiled at him. It was the first time she had done that and for an instant he was afraid that she might be amused by the way he acted. He sat down and became dignified on the instant.

"I . . . I didn't think you'd come. I almost gave you up. But you did, didn't you?"

"I thought they might not be feeding you well," and she lifted the wrapper off the box to show him a chicken and some swell rolls and a thermos of coffee and numerous other things which he couldn't take in all at once.

"Gosh, I mean you shouldn't do that." He floundered. "It . . . it costs . . . that is—"

"Oh, your uncle gave me the money."

Jan's face fell and then he brightened. "You're lying! Green wouldn't give a penny to his mother if she was dying of starvation!"

She squirmed, out of countenance for the first time since they had met. "It isn't much, really. I . . . I never have so very many places to put my pay. But please, let's not talk about that."

"Gosh I'm glad he didn't," said Jan illogically. "But you shouldn't just the same, though it makes me feel swell to think that you would . . . unless . . . unless you do it just out . . . out of pity, that is."

She started. "How so?"

"Well . . . gee . . . I can't understand how a girl like you could . . . well . . . see anything in me."

"Don't, please."

"I've offended you I know," said Jan. "I guess . . . I guess I'm not very good company. I'm sort of rattled, you see

and . . . and, well— Have you heard anything more about the bail?" he said abruptly to change the subject.

"I was at Mr. Green's home this morning to take some letters," said Alice. "And . . . well, none of them were about you. But I shouldn't talk like this because . . . well, it's sort of disloyal. After all . . . but wait, I forgot. I always have to think hard to remember that you own the line."

"That's not much of a compliment," said Jan mournfully, "but I know it's well deserved."

"Well, then. Shannon came to see him and they talked for a long time."

"What about?"

"Mostly about Shannon's fee. He wants ten thousand dollars."

"To do what?"

"To keep you from being hanged."

"Then there's a chance I won't be?" cried Jan.

"Yes, of course there is."

"Wait. Look here. Do you believe me now? I mean, you don't think I did it, do you?"

"I don't know what I think. As for your story about the jinn—"

"But it's true!"

"Don't look at me like that," she said uneasily.

"All right. I'm crazy. Everybody thinks so and so I must be so. I'm crazy. I have strength enough in this toothpick of an arm to split a man from crown to waist. I have always acted crazy. I have hit people and shouted at everyone around the house—"

"MAYBE it would have been better if you had. Look, Jan. Listen to me. Stop dodging behind that story and come right out and say it was self-defense. You've been reading too much, that's all. Come right out and tell the truth. After all it's a clear case of self-defense. Frobish came to steal that copper jar, thinking it might be full of ancient treasure. In his own field I understand the man was almost a maniac. Then, the odds are all with you. You had to kill him in self-defense, and I know that you had bruises on you—still have one there on your head, for that matter. He invaded your home and you were forced to threaten him and then he attacked you and you had to use that sword to save your life. A court will believe that. They'll let you go free unless—" She stopped.

"Unless what?"

"Unless what your aunt told the reporters will be used against you. And unless Thompson's statements, backed by Green, will influence justice. And if you have money enough to hire another lawyer besides Shannon."

"Their *statements?*" said Jan.

"That you were always violent at home and that, very often, they had to keep you out of sight so that the public would not know that the head of the Bering Steamship Corporation was . . . well . . . crazy."

"They said that?" cried Jan, springing up.

"Jan, if you have money you can get, I'll find the best lawyer in the country for you."

He sank down on the bed. "Money," he said dully. "I have none. What Green did with what I should have gotten I don't know. I thought he knew best and he said times were bad. I have no money."

"But at least you can use that plea of self-defense."

He gazed sadly at her. "A liar is always caught. I can tell nothing but the truth. An Ifrit named Zongri killed Professor Frobish and that is the only story I can tell because it is the only true one."

She spread her hands in a gesture of helplessness. "Then it is all over."

"Why?"

"Because if you tell that story to the judge tomorrow—"

"My trial is tomorrow? But how—"

"It is not a trial. On the recommendation of your aunt and Nathaniel Green and Shannon and on the findings of a psychiatrist who has already been paid five thousand dollars to do it, you are to be declared insane and sent to a private sanitarium from which no one can hope to escape."

"To a madhouse? Me? But they'll see there that I'm sane—"

"It is not their business to find anyone sane. It is a private home, far worse than any jail. I have heard of such places. They drug their patients continually, unbeknownst to them, until at last they really are insane. No pardon board, nothing. Unless you change your story as I have told you, you'll be buried alive and Nathaniel Green will enjoy all the funds which he has looted from under your very nose."

"A madhouse," said Jan.

"No one will ever be able to see you and you know how they've visited you here. If you are declared insane—and it is as good as done except for the formalities involved—Green will automatically possess the power of attorney which you wisely refused to give him. The Bering Steamship Corporation and all that you own will belong to Green and your aunt. And at that sanitarium they'll kill you just as certainly as the sun will shine."

Horror crept into Jan's eyes. Nervously he began to pace up and down the cell and then, suddenly he gripped the bars and shook them, shook them until the echoes bit into every corner of the building.

Alice started back from him in terror. The officer quickly opened the door and pulled her out. And Jan, even then, did not calm himself.

"Thieves!" he shouted. "I'll show them! I'll show them!" And he beat his fists against the wall until the blood flowed from them.

In exhaustion he sank down upon the bunk and one hand fell across the box. Dully he looked for Alice and saw that she was gone.

"A living death in this world and who knows how long the other will last. And now I've lost the one thing in all this cursed universe that I ever cared about."

And under his hand the edge of that stout box crumpled like dust.

To wait would be his lot.

But, at least, in another place, though God only knew where it was, he might manage to battle for some happiness there.

In a black mood he impatiently waited for night.

IX.

HE PASSED through the veil as one who pushes cobwebs from his face in an old deserted corridor, sleeping hardly at all, so great was his anxiety to discover if his treasure was still there. Though he knew he could never bring it into his land of waking, there were still many things to be done in his other world. And if he understood imperfectly how it was that he found himself a man within a man, he could nevertheless make the best of it.

He stirred restively upon the great white silk expanse, strangely conscious of having been there all the night and of resting very poorly. But he was not greatly concerned and his strong body was not one to demand more than the scantest rest.

His fingers shot under the pillow and he gripped a weighty circle of metal so hard that, if his hands had not been those of a sailor, he could have cut himself severely upon the worn edge of the rough-cut stones.

Anxiously he stared all about him, making certain that the room was untenanted save for himself. And then, to make sure because he was half afraid it wasn't true, he lifted the cover and eagerly inspected the ring anew.

The Seal of Sulayman! The crossed triangles and the magic circle about them

The monster lion's very size made him seem slow-moving. Tiger darted in, leaped to his back, and twisted at his tender ears.

seemed to vibrate with a mighty power. Solomon the Wise, ruler of his world, mightiest monarch of all time! And he had worn that ring upon his hand and had thereby been wise and great and omnipotent. And what if he had destroyed its power for evil over humans? What if Zongri had made it powerless to turn against Ifrits? Was it not enough that it still brought all wisdom, that it struck away all locks and that among other things would reveal the hiding places of all the treasures of Earth?

And as he gloated over it a rattling at the door struck terror to his heart. The face of Tiger hardened and grew grim and his quick, clear eyes swept about him for a hiding place. But he had no time for that. He could only throw himself out of the bed and drop a white silk robe over him, concealing the seal in his sash.

It took several seconds to remove the bolts from without, and he had dropped back upon the bed and was just in the act of stretching when the door swung inward. Three Marid sentries stepped back and stared fixedly into space, and then there came into view a woman who made Jan's every muscle grow taut with wonder.

She paused on the threshold, looking up at him as he sat on the lofty bed. And, in turn, he looked down, unable to tear his gaze away from her.

She was robed in the sheerest of golden silk which showed every curve of her voluptuous body. Her only jewels were a girdle, and a cap of pearls which lay like a moon against the midnight of her hair. Her eyes were fathomless seas of jet, making the pallor of her lovely, somehow bold face all the more exquisite. She appeared as one carved in alabaster and given, by some enchantment, the breath of life.

It seemed to please her that he stared. With a small, amused smile she broke the spell by walking slowly forward with an ease not unlike flowing milk.

Jan stood up as she mounted the steps and mechanically gave her a hand to help her over the last. She nodded her thanks and gracefully sat upon the edge of the bed, signifying that he, too, could be seated.

HE WONDERED wildly who she was, and what she had to do with him. And he was not at all insensible to the hypnotic power of her eyes which jangled with the hotness of the Seal of Sulayman which lay like a coal in his sash.

"You wonder who I am," she said.

He nodded.

"And why I have come here?"

Again he nodded.

She laughed and indicated the Marids who were now closing and bolting the door again. "Those fools. I wonder that as little happens as there does in this palace. It is so very simple to order them about and pass them by—"

"But they have orders that I am to speak to no one."

She laughed musically. "Do they? How funny. And yet I, who have no earthly business here, can walk airily through their ranks and into your presence as if they were so many dolls." The chamber awakened at her renewed mirth and the small glasses on the shelf above the bed hummed in gay sympathy. "Ah, now, but I am not mocking you. One would hardly mock Tiger, would they? You wish to know why I came?"

"Indeed I would, m'lady."

"How gruff! And, I might add, handsomely gruff. Mark it all to curiosity, my Tiger. All to that and nothing more except perhaps a fear that you were very lonely shut up here in this awful place and everyone ordered not to speak to you at all. You *were* lonely, weren't you?"

"Why . . . yes. Why shouldn't I be?"

She reached out her hand and took down two crystal goblets and a tall-

necked bottle of amber wine. She poured them full and then held them up to the light to give him the one which contained the most.

"To the cheer of company," she toasted.

He was very acutely aware of the danger here for she was the first human being he had seen about the palace, and he well knew that a woman would not be permitted to come here so easily, no matter her beauty. But when he saw that she drank, he politely sipped his answer to her toast. His caution was prompted more by Jan than Tiger, for the wine was innocent compared to suddenly remembered beverages which went down with great authority.

"I am here," she said finally, "with a good reason. Now am I more welcome?"

"Welcome!" said Tiger abruptly. "If you've ever studied your lovely self in the most indifferent mirror, I wonder that you can still see. And you talk about being welcome." He clinked his glass against hers and drank it down.

With great difficulty Jan fought for the upper hand and again the Seal burned horribly against his side.

"I am here," she said, "to counsel you for I am sure that in all the time you've found yourself in such a strange predicament not one of these thoughtless, witless jinn have thought to ease your mind about it. Ifrits," she added, "are really very stupid people."

"I have not found them so," said Jan.

"No? But you have not talked to them so very much, then. For they truly are stupid. You have no idea!"

"And what, may I ask, is your counsel?"

"Anxious to be rid of me? How can that be? But I had heard on great authority that Tiger was a gallant fellow, not to be denied. But, then, I forget, you may be mixed now with some strange personality from outside our crude world and perhaps you have an icicle or two on your ears. She looked and only found the ring holes in the lobes.

"Ah, a sailor indeed," she cried joyfully. "And what have you done with your gold hoops?"

"I pawned them," said Tiger suddenly. "Pawned them to buy a dancing girl a veil. I didn't want it but she did. And how was I to know that she belonged by rights to a captain of infantry and that he would enter the hall just as I was presenting it? You have no idea," he laughed, mimicking her.

"Gold hoops for a dancing girl!" she said, prettily shocked. "How horribly wicked. And now you have neither dancing girl nor rings."

AT THE mention of rings, Jan fought to the surface. But the lady had jumped up and was detaching two hoops of gold from her girdle which she instantly spread and fixed in his ears.

"Now!" she cried. "Now you look like a true sailor."

"I feel like a very stupid one," said Jan, discovering cunning in his being. "How is it that I am here, shut up in an observatory tower when reason dictates that I should be in the deepest dungeon or else hanging on the highest gibbet in Tarbuton?"

"Must we have to do with reason?"

"Yes."

"Ah, you sound like the Tiger I have heard about. Never satisfied with anything. Here you are shut up in the queen's very own room, waited on by the finest of her servants, feasting upon the most palatable of food and with nothing to do but enjoy yourself. And you wonder about it!"

"Rather!"

"After all," she said, "I hear you once saved the life of Admiral Tyronin, among other things. And though your numerous escapades may make it impossible for you to be kept always on silk, the State owes you something."

"The State saw fit to put me on a stinking merchant tub."

"So?"

"With a stupid, flogging fool for a captain."

"Ah, that is sad. Perhaps the State feels you have been punished enough and wishes now to make amends."

"I am here," said Jan, "because of some strange information I might communicate to others. Information of which I confess myself wholly ignorant. If I am dangerous why doesn't the royal might do away with me and have done with it? I know very little about anything. I am a raw mass of questions. I know not even where this land is, though more and more I know my own deeds and misdeeds in it—as even now I recall certain other things I have done which might or might not have endeared me to the State. But I, who was one, am now two and I heartily dislike it."

"Two indeed. Brawling, laughing, drunken Tiger could never have taken a sight with an astrolabe."

"You know about that?"

"I am a very dear friend of old Zeno. Ah, yes, you are a strange blend now. I detect a scholar and philosopher in you, Tiger, things which go strangely with your clear brow and handsome strength."

"A scholar, perhaps. And little good it's ever done me," quoth Jan. "To do cube root in the head avails a man little against prison bars."

"Scholars are scholars because they must fall back upon books to supply their lack in the strife of living. Scholaring, I am told, is a very dread disease. The more one knows the more one knows he knows nothing. And the more he knows that he knows nothing, the more ardently he desires to really know something and so, more study. And more study, the more he knows he knows nothing, the more—"

"M'lady, I beg of you, desist!"

"I was growing dizzy, too. But tell me, which of you has the upper hand. Scholar or warrior?"

Jan suddenly wanted to answer both at once and was strangely aware of some alchemy within him, by which he was losing none of the knowledge and memory of Jan but gaining the heart and courage as well as the knowledge and memory of Tiger. The nearness of this heart-quickening woman was completing the weld. He felt drunk.

"The question's a hard one," he said. "And perhaps I'd be able to answer it better if I knew what I was talking about. To begin, where am I?"

"Why, in the Kingdom of Tarbuton, of course."

"Oh, I know that well enough and I seem to know every alley and wall crack in the land as well. But I speak of geography. Am I fifty south and forty west? Is that sea the Mediterranean? And where is the United States of America in regard to this place?"

"SUCH weird names, my sailor. But certainly one who has sailed the world would know more about it than I. Not one of those places or numbers do I know." She brightened. "Why, can't you tell with old Zeno's instruments up there?"

"The astrolabe tells only of time and latitude. Zeno's time gives me no longitude and, though I suppose my reading of fifteen south might be correct, I doubt it very much because, you see that places us in the Amazon jungle, or the Belgian Congo, or among the head-hunters of New Guinea, or—"

"How many places there are that I have never heard the least bit about. Tell me of these places—especially about the head-hunters. Are they like ghouls, pray tell?"

"You've avoided my question."

"What an inexorable fellow! But how can I answer if I do not know?"

"You mean . . . you mean you've never heard of the United States or . . .

or Africa or . . . or Arabia—"

"Ah, yes, I know that one from ancient history. Arabia! But that is far away and the route to it is wholly forgotten. Why, I dare say even one of our elders would find it difficult to discover Mount Kaaf in that world, much less the names you spiel so glibly."

"You're mocking me. Tell me the truth. Where am I?"

"Sweet sailor, in terms of your land I can speak nothing. I know them not. But lest I displease you I shall leave off this teasing and give you truth . . . truth as I have heard Zeno tell it. Here we call your world—your *other* world—the Land of Sleep. And perhaps your world calls this world the same—"

"Calls nothing. They do not even know about it. The Land of Sleep, you say?"

"Why, yes, that should be fairly plain. At least that is how Zeno tells it. There are two worlds of sleep or two worlds of wakefulness, whichever you will have. That is, so far as human beings are concerned. Human beings are weird people. Long ago we found that they had souls."

Every hair on Jan's neck was standing up straight. What was she doing, speaking of humans as *other than herself?* But, outside of knowing the pitfall which gaped to trap him, he made no further recognition, so badly did he wish to know more of his condition.

"I think I know something of this," said Jan. "The American Indian had some such in sight. In sleep his soul walked from his body and visited another land."

"Yes, that is true. Long, long ago we found the Indian had to be very closely watched because of just that consciousness. Here and there others, or so says Zeno, have been vaguely aware of leaving their bodies when they slept, but it has become apparent—or was until you came here—that, so far as actual realization was concerned, these humans here know nothing of their other world—that other world of yours which contains all the strange names. And in their other world they know nothing of this world so that when they rest and sleep in either, they resume their second life in the other. Zeno says this leads to all sorts of silly dissemblances among the brighter humans here. They go about talking of 'double personalities' and 'split egos' and such."

"But . . . but how is it that the same man is so different in the two worlds?"

"That is pulling me in rather deep, my sailor, and you really should talk it over with Zeno. He could tell you all sorts of odd things about it and, truly, he is somewhat obsessed with his theories of it—perhaps because he never dares talk about them. Yes, you should talk to Zeno." She poured more wine and sipped at hers and then artfully changed glasses and drank of his.

"Don't you really know?"

"I hate to appear so stupid, and you are a scholar and might pick a flaw in what I say. I do not know that I speak aright. I can give you Zeno's theories but even those I know imperfectly. You see, your question is wrong. There really isn't just one man, or one soul, or one human. People, even the jinn—who are considerably less nebulously built and far less destructible, I assure you—consist mainly of a certain kind of energy. Some philosophers say that all energy is the same energy, but that argument is pricked by asking the question, 'Even if all energy is convertible into other kinds of energy does it follow therefore that life is convertible into other kinds of life?' And, of course, it isn't in the same way that a tree stores heat and then, when burned, gives off the heat again.

"We had a fakir here—quite a mad fellow by the way—who had somehow reached an ecstatic state whereby he merged both his souls into one—"

"Yoga! The Veda! The goal of the

greatest cult in India! The attainment of complete Unity! And they say their souls go elsewhere and—"

"WELL! Dear me, if you're going to become so excited and so disgustingly philosophic about it I shan't allow another word to be pried out of me I assure you!"

"I did't mean to offend," said Jan contritely. "But you see, all this explains the great mysteries of psychology and philosophy. And after all—"

"Oh. I suppose a man would be quite excited rightly enough. It is, after all, rather personal to him."

"You see, there is such a thing as dual personality, you know," said Jan more calmly. "A man may be a perfect saint and a perfect beast all in one body at different times."

"That's not so strange from what I've seen of men!" She drank and made him drink with her, and then, setting down her glass did not seem to find any further interest in the subject of dualism. Rather, the sailor himself had her eye.

"But don't leave me there," begged Jan. "You say a man's soul wanders between these two worlds—"

She sighed. "You have answered my question. The scholar has the upper hand. Oh well," and she shrugged. "If I quiet the scholar, perhaps the sailor will come back. A man doesn't have just one soul—or so Zeno says. He has two souls and these work interconnectedly somehow. His life force—different from plain energy—is capable of only one focusing. He is either here or there and the world in which he lives forms the body which he has, and so, when one is awake the other is asleep. Brothers, you might say, across the Universe. It's a thing very difficult to achieve, this uniting of both in one body at the same time. And I dare say old Zeno might be interested in knowing whether you carry Tiger back with you to your other world."

"Tell me," said Jan. "How is it that you are so frightened here that humans might learn of this double world?"

"Sailor—please be a sailor, will you and not a graybeard?—there was once this fakir and there have been others. They were quite enough. Here all humans are slaves. This world is ruled by the jinn, it belongs to the jinn and always did and always will. Once human souls did not effect this change from world to world but merely wandered. There may be other worlds, too. How am I to know that? But, I say, human sleep souls wandered . . . where was I?"

The sailor was telling in him now. He pressed another drink upon her, himself not in the least blurry.

"Human souls wandered," prompted Jan.

"Oh, yes. And we were torn apart by the cursed wars of Sulayman against us. The jinn may live forever if they are not accidentally killed—though very few have ever escaped that, and Zeno is the only one I can call to mind who can remember things of a hundred thousand years ago—before humans were more than apes, it seems, or so he says. The jinn, I say were torn by wars. There were not many and this land was large and bountiful and the jinn were unable to even maintain themselves upon it. Besides, neither jinn nor Marid enjoys manual work. And so, to ease the burden, several wise ones decided to carefully nurture a plan. It was easy, quite easy, to make bodies. But souls were quite another thing. . . . Where was I?"

He poured her still another drink and drank one with her. "The jinn made bodies—"

"Well . . . not exactly made them. To be frank, they stole them out of cemeteries in that world of yours. By enchantment they strove to bring them to life but it could not be done. And then some very bright fellows among us—I

assure you they were very, very great magicians—snared these wandering sleep souls and made them come here. And as the days are of disproportionate length, though all is on the same ratio, the sleep soul was sixteen hours here and sixteen hours in its own world. It was no great trick to breed the trait into the race or to breed these revived bodies, made whole again by clever jinn surgeons. And so, there you have it.

"The jinn needed slaves and they got slaves, and we've had some trouble because some fellows here get very important and try to incite others with their discoveries. Usually we kill them for when the sleep soul is trapped here, both bodies die and so we are spared. And so we have slaves. Lots of slaves. And we do them a great favor, too. Eh, sailor? Is this not a fine land? Is it not beauteous? And is it not a great, great pity that we cannot allow humans in their own world to know about it and, perchance, do something to stop it? What is so bad about slavery? We are generous. Right generous, I think. The soul here is the true soul. Just as yours is the soul of a sailor. How unhappy you must have been as a scholar in your other world? I . . . uh . . . where was I?"

He poured her yet another drink and drank another himself.

Languorously she stretched. "Ah, but you're a handsome devil, Tiger." She smiled and moved closer to him.

Tiger smiled and reached out to put his arm about her. But suddenly, there was a terrible clamor outside and footsteps raced up the stairs, and all the palace reverberated with terrified shouts.

THE WOMAN came up straight and the door burst inward. Old Zeno, his towering hat askew and his robe all tangled in his rickety legs, stumbled to a halt.

"Your royal highness!" he cried. "Zongri—"

"You fool!" shouted Ramus, leaping to her feet. "You thick-witted jackal! What do you mean by this?"

Jan recoiled from her, for out of that comely shape rose the terrifying body of the queen, glittering fangs, matted black hair, split hoofs and ugly, scowling visage.

"Your royal highness!" quavered Zeno, not to be stopped. "This morning it was found that the pigeons of the royal Barbossi post had been missing for a day! And we have just found the dungeon guards all dead even to Captain Lorco! It's Zongri! He is gone and a swift lugger is missing in the harbor! Your royal highness! Forgive me, but the pigeons have long arrived in the Barbossi Isles and those cutthroat pirates will even now have crossed half of the channel. When Zongri meets them they will come back and we have but four ships of war ready for battle while they must have forty! Your royal highness, we're doomed!"

Ramus shivered. She hurried down the steps, hoofs clicking, to step to the seaward window and look to the horizon.

"Since morning?"

"Or since night!" cried Zeno. "It is the end of everything! My charts told you! I read them to—"

"Quiet, wreck of a jinn!" She rushed out of the room and as she charged down the steps, Jan could hear her bellowing, "Get me Admiral Tyronin! Withdraw the cavalry from their outposts! Officers! Guards—"

Jan dabbed at a very moist brow and Zeno looked fixedly at him.

"Well?" said Tiger. "You ought to be happy to have been so very right. It will put you up a mile or two around here."

"Laugh," said Zeno sadly. "Laugh, light-headed sailor. You have caused this. And Zongri is not returning to

Continued on page 131

THE ELEMENTAL

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG, Jr.

THE ELEMENTAL

Both—the Elemental and the man—made mistakes—but the man wound up on a tiny rock in the sea, and the Elemental—

By Frank Belknap Long, Jr.

WHEELER thought it was a coincidence at first. Ebony Lady was losing steadily in the sunlight. She was falling back to fourth place, passing Radio Crooner in reverse and galloping steadily in the wrong direction over the nut-brown track.

Or so it seemed to the grandstand and the cheering crowds beyond the finish line. Actually Ebony Lady's retrogressive spurt was an optical illusion. With no mist in her nostrils, the fastest wet-weather colt in all the Blue Grass was emulating a telegraph pole glimpsed from an express train.

Then came the "coincidence." Ebony Lady stopped passing horses in reverse, and recaptured the lead again. She retook the lead in less than five seconds, spurting past three horses like a jet of liquid petrolatum.

Wheeler rubbed his eyes. Had he turned an also-ran into a winner with one little thought? For several hours now he had been aware of a strange, new power in himself. Just by concentrating he could push people aside when he walked. In a crowd, when he needed elbow room, he could clear a path for himself.

But Ebony Lady was thundering over the turf a quarter of a mile away! And in his mind there was no awareness of strain. He was merely thinking: "I want that horse to go faster. I want that horse to *win*."

Push, push. A little, purposeful thought, moving about in his mind!

Someone was tugging at his sleeve. "Well, for crying out loud! Look at that horse go!"

Wheeler did not like to be touched. He scowled resentfully, and withdrew his gaze from the track. Standing beside him was a bald-headed stout man in a checkered suit, his heavy-jowled face studded with sweat, his eyes jiggling in his head.

"Nothing can stop her now! Look at her go!"

Wheeler rasped: "It's barely possible that I can stop her, mister."

The fat man let go of Wheeler's arm and edged nervously away along the paddock rail.

"A screw loose," he muttered.

Wheeler brushed his sleeve as though a contamination had descended upon it, and returned his gaze to the track. Ebony Lady was bearing down on the finish line with flying hoofs, her long neck outthrust, her jockey bent double in an ecstasy of anticipation.

Wheeler did not want Ebony Lady to lose. He desperately needed the five dollars he had placed on Ebony Lady to win. But—well, he *had* to find out. It was vital to his peace of mind.

Could he slow up Ebony Lady with a thought? Was the new power as tremendous as he feared?

He thought: "I want that horse to go slower. I want that horse to fall back."

Like jets of liquid petrolatum three horses, including Radio Crooner, spurted past Ebony Lady.

The man in the checkered suit gasped. He swung about and stared at Wheeler with startled eyes.

Wheeler said tremulously: "I did it, you see."

Something about the fat man repelled Wheeler. But he was horribly shaken. He had to discuss it with someone.

The fat man said: "You did *what?* Slowed Ebony Lady? You expect me to swallow that?"

Wheeler's lips were white. "I'm not trying to convince you," he said. "I'm simply stating a fact."

"A fact, eh?" jeered the other. "Then suppose you put that wet horse back in the lead again. It ought to be easy—on a dry track!"

Wheeler sighed. "Very well," he said. "Watch Ebony Lady."

He allowed the thought to form. "I want that horse to win." Push, push. A little purposeful thought directed across the turf to where bright hoofs were thundering.

Ebony Lady seemed to leave the ground as she came abreast of Radio Crooner, and thundered into high again. Now she was third, now second, now a length off the leader. Now she was passing the leader two furlongs from the finish line.

The people in the grandstand were shouting themselves hoarse. Like some demoniac hippogriff Ebony Lady flashed past the judge's stand, wrenching a blare from the loudspeaker: "Ebony Lady it is, ladies and gentlemen. Ebony Lady wins the derby!"

The fat man was visibly stunned. "It's—it's uncanny," he muttered.

Wheeler nodded. "I don't understand it myself," he said.

The fat man thrust his face forward, a rapacious light gleaming behind his pupils.

"Could you do it again?" he ventured.

"What do you mean?"

"At another race? Anytime?"

Wheeler nodded. "I am sure that I could," he said.

The fat man edged closer: "Where you headed for, buddy?"

Wheeler said: "I've got to collect ten dollars from a bookie."

The fat man took out a mammoth roll of bills, and peeled off one.

"Chicken feed," he said. "Take this and come with me. I'm staking you to a drink."

Wheeler hesitated. He thought: "I don't want liquor. But I could order a glass of milk and get him to taste it."

The fat man was tugging at his sleeve. "Come on, buddy. One little drink won't hurt you."

FIVE MINUTES later they were seated at the circular counter of a track-side soft-drink concession. Outside in the sunlight the crowd was slowly dispersing, streaming north, south and west over the dappled turf.

Wheeler was holding a glass of milk, his thin fingers coiled tightly about whiteness. His companion was attached to a whisky and soda.

He was scowling at Wheeler. *"Milk,"* he said, contemptuously.

Wheeler said: "It's against the law to serve liquor at the track, Mr. Sheed. This concession is violating the law."

"Call me Ted," said the fat man. "Look, Harry, why can't you relax and be human? We could help each other. I have plenty of what it takes to cash in on a sure thing."

Wheeler said: "I'll admit it's a temptation. I've been out of work for two months. I've stood in breadlines, bunked in flop houses—"

Suddenly he shivered. He was forgetting about the milk. He raised the glass to his lips and sipped at it fear-

fully. A look of horror came into his face.

Sheed said: "Well, what do you say?"

Tremulously Wheeler set down the glass and pushed it toward his companion. "I wish you'd just taste that milk," he said.

Sheed grimaced. "Why in hell should I? I don't like milk. It strangles me."

"Just taste it, please," insisted Wheeler.

"Oh, all right."

Sheed raised the glass and took a reluctant sip. Instantly he set the beverage down with such violence that the counter shook.

"Sour!" he exclaimed. "Sour as a rancid herring."

All the color drained from Wheeler's face. "Then it's true," he groaned. "I haven't been imagining it."

"What are you talking about?"

"Every time I taste milk it turns sour," said Wheeler.

Sheed growled impatiently. "So what? You got acidosis or something. It happens all the time."

"No, it doesn't," insisted Wheeler. "You see, I know something about acid diathesis. I used to work in a pathological testing laboratory. You can't turn milk sour simply by tasting it. I mean, if you had a rheumatic or gouty diathesis, which is a very acid condition, you could gargle with milk, and it wouldn't turn sour.

Sheed was becoming exasperated. "You can speed up the horses," he growled, "and you're worrying about a little thing like that. Goaty die teasers. Bah!"

Suddenly Wheeler seized his companion's glass and drained it at a gulp.

"Hey, wait a minute," protested Sheed. "You didn't have to do that. I'll order you a man's drink."

"Make it a double Scotch and soda," said Wheeler.

The high brown beverage did things to Wheeler. His despair receded and a wave of moral indignation surged up in him. He began to see his companion in a less favorable light. He leaned forward across the table.

"You mean, it's a gold mine?" he inquired.

"A regular gold mine, sure. I'll pick the horses, and you'll speed 'em up. We'll be living off the fat, my lad."

Wheeler said: "You're distinctly slimy, Sheed. I don't like you."

"What's that?"

"I don't like your fat, smirking face!"

Sheed's face turned scarlet. He ceased to smirk. He leaped to his feet and stood glaring down at Wheeler. "I've a good mind to sock you," he said.

The thought formed quickly: "Push him fast and far."

Sheed screamed. Something lifted him up, twisted him around. He went sailing erratically across the little soft-drink concession, his body rotating about his knees.

There was a splintering of glass. Out through the window of the concession Sheed spun. He sailed over the paddock rail and crashed to the turf on his face.

Wheeler smiled, rose and laid four quarters beside his drained whiskey-soda. "Now that was distinctly worth while," he said.

Swiftly he slipped from the concession and mingled with the dispersing crowd.

PEOPLE brushed against him. He laughed and sent them lightly spinning. The human throng divided as he walked. Being a man of kindly instincts, he did not abuse his power. There was no animosity in his mind. It simply amused him to watch people spin away from him, and whirl about like leaves in a dry wind. He felt like an Israelite walking through the Red Sea.

He kept on walking, ignoring startled and resentful glances. He lifted a woman six feet into the air and sent her sailing like a feather across the track. She landed thirty feet away, screaming hysterically. A crowd converged about her. Wheeler pushed the entire congregation of appalled men, women and children fifty feet along the track.

Instantly he reproached himself: "That was shameful. I shouldn't have done that."

In contrition he took to levitating his own body. He rose into the air and sailed lightly over the turf. In little aerial spurts he progressed above the heads of the dispersing throng. Once he descended on the shoulders of a fat man who tottered and yelled.

"Sorry," he apologized and rose into the air again.

He was thinking. "I've always wanted to fly. Now I am truly flying."

He flapped his arms as though they were wings. "I should like to soar," he thought.

Instantly he rose high into the air. He rose two thousand feet and soared like a condor high above the grandstand. Far below him he saw little specks dispersing. Here and there the specks coalesced into wriggling, dark clumps with agitated peripheries.

People in terror. Dozens of tiny people flocking together under the stress of a shared horror.

He rose higher, flew more audaciously. Presently he was "winging" his way toward the east. Flap, flap, flap.

Beneath him stretched fields of blue grass. He saw cows at pasture, winding country lanes, brooks glimmering in the sunlight. He saw a meadow starred with white-flowered asphodels.

He thought: "I must remain calm. I must not allow myself to become excited."

Kentucky was a beautiful State. Now he was flying high above an old Southern mansion. He saw people moving about in the vicinity of the great house, sleekly-groomed horses galloping on a private bridle path, plantation workers toiling in the bright noonday glare.

He passed swiftly eastward, soaring over the Black Mountains into Virginia, winging his way across the Blue Ridge and the Coastal Plain.

He thought: "This is more exhilarating than traveling in box cars," and swooped low to observe a yellow-crowned night heron which was rising from the sombre cypress-hung Dismal Swamp and winging its way toward the bright waters of Chesapeake Bay.

He followed the heron in a kind of trance. In the depths of his mind terror churned, but it did not flow into his consciousness—except occasionally in little eddies.

He had moments of sudden, terrible doubt, of perplexity and fright. But so entranced was he by his gift of flight that he shivered in rapture and ignored the dark misgivings which occasionally assailed him.

Flap, flap, flap. He was flying now above Pokomoke Sound, the coast of Virginia a glimmering blue line far to the west. The heron had vanished, and he was alone under the sun.

He had been flying steadily for hours but he was not fatigued. Or was he? It was barely possible that he was getting a little tired. He had to keep repeating to himself: "I am flying effortlessly now. I am as buoyant as a feather."

The sense of buoyancy receded a little when he ceased to concentrate and then he found himself descending toward the bright gleaming waters of the Sound.

THE waters were reddening when fatigue crept unmistakably upon him. Flying became an effort. But resolutely he kept flapping his arms and assuring himself that he was lighter than air.

He was flying low above big and little islands when his buoyancy ebbed disastrously. His legs became leaden, inert. Horror engulfed him as he stared downward. He had ceased to mount and the level expanse of water beneath him was ascending like a rising floor.

For a thousand feet he fell like a plummet, flailing the air with his arms. He was almost level with the waves when something seemed to burst in his chest. He spun about and zoomed erratically, spurting eastward over a little island, and whirling about high in the air.

The little island was barely forty feet in diameter, a pinnacle of jagged rock emerging precariously from the wine-dark sea.

Whirligigging like a May fly Wheeler descended toward it. He swirled over a menacing spire of granite and came jarringly to rest on a sloping ledge where barnacles clustered. For an instant he stood swaying above the sea, his eyes wide with terror.

Something like a cloud was settling down beside him. He felt for an instant like a jellyfish on stilts. Then his legs turned to water, and he sank down on the spray-lashed granite.

The cloud became denser, coalescing nto an upright cone that shimmered with a pale luminescence. Wheeler groaned and raised himself on his hands.

A voice said: "You are less intelligent than an idiot child."

All the blood seeped from Wheeler's face, leaving it ashen. Swirling beside him on the spray-drenched rock was a conical mass of spray, its summit rainbow hued, two iridescent orbs gleaming in its tenuous bulk.

The blood-red disk of the sun was slipping below the rim of the bay, but there was still sufficient illumination to mingle the shadows of Wheeler and the cone. The shadow of the cone was wolfishly devouring the shadow of Wheeler, consuming its human outlines with evident relish.

Wheeler's flesh congealed. He started to back away across the rock, but directly he moved the cone swirled closer.

"Be careful, you fool," it warned. "That rock is slippery."

The cone's voice was resonant but expressionless. It bumped against Wheeler and swiftly rebounded, its rainbow-hued bulk glistening in the spray.

Wheeler's teeth were chattering. "What . . . what are you?" he moaned.

The cone said: "An elemental. A force elemental. I have no intention of harming you. I am as much to blame as you are for this . . . this calamity."

"But how did you get here?"

"You brought me here," replied the cone. "When you exhausted my energies I couldn't sustain you any longer."

"You mean you came with me?"

"Of course. I've been inhabiting your body for several days. It was an experiment which I now regret."

"You've been inhabiting my—"

"I took possession of your body temporarily. You know what an elemental is, don't you?"

Wheeler hesitated for an instant. "I . . . I think I do," he said, finally. "A nature spirit. A spirit of earth, air, fire or water."

"That is substatnially correct," said the cone. "I am glad you did not say a *force* of nature. I am not a force in a scientific sense. I am a true spirit."

"A true *spirit?*"

"Yes. I am as real as an elf or goblin. Your scientists deny that spirits exist. Right under their noses we inhabit the bodies of idiot children. We raise tables into the air, break crockery, send objects spinning and they deny that we exist!"

"You mean you're a poltergeist," exclaimed Wheeler, his jaw gaping.

"You may call me that if you wish. Each age has a different name for us. The Greeks preferred to think of us

simply as nature spirits who could curdle milk, ride the night wind, set mysterious fire and wreck ships at sea."

Wheeler stammered. "But why . . . why did you pick on me?"

"IT WAS sheer madness," said the elemental, "but . . . well, you are a *new frontier*. No elemental has ever dared to inhabit an adult mortal before. Children, yes—idiot children. Their imbecile rages are of brief duration and do not exhaust us. But adult mortals have minds of their own."

"You mean you are subject to the whims of my mind?"

"In a sense, yes. When you think of something you want to do I am compelled to assist you. Helping you at the racetrack was tiring, but this flight has drained me completely."

"It was your presence within me that made me reckless," said Wheeler. "I wanted to fly because I was sure that I could."

"I know," said the elemental. "We are caught in a vicious circle. I give you ideas and a sense of power, and you exhaust me. So long as I am bound to you I am compelled to satisfy the demands of your will."

"But you could leave me, couldn't you?"

"No. I can pour out of you and move objects at a distance, or I can move about close to you as I am doing now. But I cannot leave you. Have you ever watched a caterpillar spin a cocoon? It draws the threads continuously tighter about itself until it is completely imprisoned."

"But you are outside your prison now," protested Wheeler.

"Merely as a penumbral projection," explained the elemental. "My matrix is still inhabiting your body. We elementals are beings of a complex structure. If you could see me as I really am you would understand."

The black shadows of night were closing in swiftly now. There were little, rubescent glints on the dark water, but the sun had vanished from view. Far out in the bay a gull wheeled and dipped. The elemental seemed to be shivering.

"I am exhausted . . . ill," it said. "I wish it were morning."

Wheeler stared at it in sudden apprehension. "You mean you can't levitate me in the darkness? We . . . we won't be able to fly back?"

The elemental said: "You fool! Did you have to fly out over the sea?"

"I intended to return," said Wheeler. "I didn't know your power would fail me."

"Well, it has failed," said the elemental. "I am close to death."

Wheeler paled. *"You mean you can die?"*

"Of course. Elementals are not immortal. When our energies expire we burst into flames. We die in bursts of glory."

"Good God!" exclaimed Wheeler.

The elemental drew close to him, bounced against him and ascended into the air. It flew in a swift circle about the little island and descended in a shower of sparks.

Wheeler cried out in horror. He recoiled backwards and nearly toppled into the sea.

The elemental swirled toward him across the rock. "Careful, you fool! I was just testing my strength."

Wheeler pulled himself to safety again, his shoes dripping brine. Sharp barnacles tore at his clothes as he dragged himself to the summit of the rock. He sat with his feet dangling a yard above the water, staring at the elemental with resentful eyes.

"Did you have to frighten me like that?"

"I'm sorry," apologized the elemental. "Would my death distress you so much?"

"If you die, I'll freeze to death," muttered Wheeler. "I'll starve. I'll die of thirst. We're on one of the little rock islands south of Cape Charles. No ships pass this way at all."

"I see," said the elemental coldly. "A purely selfish reaction."

Wheeler groaned and fumbled in his pocket for a cigarette. "Why did this have to happen to me?" he muttered.

. . .

HE WAS lighting the cigarette when the elemental swirled toward him like a devouring entity. It tore the match from his fingers and wirled it about in the air. The flame spurted in all directions. It rayed through the elemental from base to summit, bathing it in an unearthly refulgence.

"Ah, that is good," murmured the spirit as the glow subsided. "I feel better now."

Wheeler gasped. "You mean you can draw energy from a flame."

"From light, you fool. Tomorrow when the sun rises I shall suck in energy and be strong again. The sun is the source of all my strength."

A great wave of relief surged up in Wheeler. He fumbled for another match, lit it, held it up. Instantly it was snatched from his fingers. For fifteen minutes he fed the elemental matches.

He had one match left when he said: "Can I smoke now?"

"Go ahead," said the elemental.

Wheeler felt better as soon as the soothing smoke entered his lungs. He inhaled deeply, sighed and assumed a more comfortable position on the rock.

"I suppose we shall be here until morning," he said, with resignation.

He did not see the wave coming. It rose up behind him, crashed against the rock and drenched him with spray from head to foot. The spray was ice-cold and so was the little eel that plopped against his neck and slithered down under his collar in back.

Wheeler began cursing softly in the semidarkness, his fingers clutching in despair a charred cylinder that dripped.

The elemental said: "I must be fairly strong even now, if I can raise a wave."

The night passed wretchedly for Wheeler. The cold crept into his bones and filled his throat with phlegm. He dozed and woke in fitful starts.

Once he awoke suddenly and saw the elemental bobbing about in the sea. Once he saw it standing amidst shadows with its back to a cloud. The moon was veiled in a mist, but the luminosity which poured from the eternally vigilant cone bathed the little island in a spectral radiance.

Toward morning Wheeler fell into a heavy sleep. He slept dreamlessly at first, but when light touched his eyelids he began to stir and dream about the sun. He dreamt that he was flying about the solar disk, his body revolving like a planet, his arms flapping in the dawn. Beside him raced the little planet Mercury, its orbit coinciding with his own. Within him surged boundless power; a sense of kinship with the great orb of life. Now he was passing little Mercury in his flight above the sun.

He awoke with a start. The air about him was bright and cold. It was a grayish brightness. The island and the sea were enshrouded in a bright, grayish fog!

A fog! It swirled above the water and, rising in little eddies, flowed mistily about the rock upon which he lay. He was aware of a wailing, a hideous sobbing immediately beneath him.

"I am dying. Oh, I am dying. The sun has failed me."

THE silvery-gray passenger seaplane was winging its way over Chesapeake Bay. The pilot was gazing downward at the long, bright coast line of a mighty peninsula that reached outward with eager arms into the sea. He was passing directly over a group of little islands when he saw the light. A sudden, blind-

ing flare that lit up all the sea beneath him, and ascended to the sky, brightening the clouds. A terrific flare in daylight, amidst a dispersing fog.

His hands trembled on the controls. He turned to the assistant pilot beside him, issued swift commands.

"We must descend immediately. That was an emergency flare. A plane is down perhaps."

Beside him a grim boy nodded. "Yes, I understand. It came from one of those little islands, didn't it?"

The plane descended in a slow arc above Chesapeake Bay. It descended competently, for its pilots were Mineola-trained experts who knew how to approach the sea with foresight in a region where islands clustered thickly.

Swiftly downward the plane swooped, a great behemoth of the skyways that trembled not at all as its silvery bulk descended above the fog-wreathed water. The fog still clung tenuously to the still water in ghostlike filaments.

Nebulously the little rock island loomed out of the bay, seeming to increase in height as the plane swooped level with the waves and scudded to rest in a swirl of foam.

"You're sure that was the island," said the pilot who had first sighted the flare. He stared across the filmy water, squinting through filtering sunlight at a jagged pinnacle of rock.

"I'm positive," said the grim boy. "There's someone on it, too. Shall we hail him?"

"Wait a minute," said the other. "We're drifting closer."

The plane was within fifty feet of the little island when the castaway came distinctly into view. The two pilots stared incredulously. The grim body was wearing spectacles. Swiftly he took them off, wiped them and put them on again.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "How do you suppose *that* got there?"

Clinging tenaciously to the rock was a frail little man in shabby clothes, a crushed derby adhering to his skull, his shoes and trouser legs flaked with crystals of snow-white salt. Red sunlight was pouring revealingly on his upturned face, clotting at the corners of his mouth and filling his eye cavities with a lambent radiance.

His face in the thin, dispersing fog resembled a skull suspended above a lake of brimstone, with the lurid vapors of Hades swirling up above it.

Getting that frail, half-frozen little man off the rock and into the passenger cabin was a task as complicated as it was hazardous, but the Mineola-trained pilots were equal to the emergency. And once inside the cabin the little man was no longer a problem. The passengers took over.

They fussed over him, and graciously endeavored to make him as comfortable as possible. There was something about him that appealed to the maternal instincts of the women passengers. But the men were kind to him, too.

They screened him from view while they helped him into dry clothes, offering him underwear and outer garments which were warm and expensive. One stout man opened a suitcase and presenter him with a hand-tailored shirt. Another made him a gift of neatly pressed trousers. They helped him don a yellow Angora golf sweater and a tweed sport coat.

BUT despite everything they could do for him his face kept straining against the light. He stood shivering and gazing out the cabin window at the sea, as though he were looking at a picture under glass. A picture that terrified and appalled him.

He stood rigid in his expensive but ill-fitting clothes, beads of sweat on his thin face to which a two days' growth of beard gave something of an ascetic cast.

"You'd better sit down," said a tall, elderly woman in a tailor-made suit whose severity of manner was redeemed by kindly eyes. "Better sit down there by the window in the sun. You've been through a terrible ordeal, my poor man."

Wheeler passed a hand across his brow. He shuddered, convulsively. "Thank you," he murmured. "It was awful, *feeling* it die. It seemed to wrench at me."

The passengers were all staring at him in concern. One of the pilots shook his head sadly, and made a rotary motion with his forefinger close to his temple.

The little man said suddenly: "But the dazzle saved me, didn't it? The dazzle brought you down. It died in a burst of glory, didn't it?"

"Yes," said the stout man, to humor him. "I guess it did."

"Twelve hours in the thick fog, without sunlight, and toward the end I could feel it dying."

Suddenly he sat up straight in his chair. "Could I . . . could I have a glass of milk?" he asked.

"Why, of course," said the pilot.

The milk was cold, and there were little bubbles at the edge of the glass. It was just an ordinary glass of milk, but as Wheeler held it he was shaken the depths of his being. His first and most powerful feeling was that he was about to free himself of a hideous dread. He was about to prove to himself that he was no longer possessed.

But he had also a feeling of loss and desolation. He was about to sound the knell of something almost godlike. The gift of flight, the power to move and shake.

Slowly he raised the glass, slowly he drank.

"Well," said the pilot, smiling down at him. "Feel better now?"

Wheeler did not reply. He sat staring up at the pilot in consternation, his lips tremulous, his eyes wide with horror.

"I can't taste this milk at all," he gasped. "It . . . it has absolutely no taste. It doesn't even feel cool on my tongue!"

A tall man with a grizzled Vandyke arose from a seat near the aisle and crossed to Wheeler's chair.

"Shock anæsthesia," he explained patiently. "It lasts for hours sometimes."

Then he perceived how perturbed Wheeler was and smiled reassuringly. "Nothing to get alarmed about. By this time tomorrow you'll be fit as a fiddle. Able to move mountains, my lad. Able to move mountains."

There is such a thing as expecting too much of a man. Wheeler paled, groaned, dropped his glass, and slid from the chair in a dead faint.

NOTHING IN THE RULES

By L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

NOTHING IN THE RULES

—said the contestants had to be human, so, if Coach A produced a web-fingered freak, and Coach B rung in a mermaid, A has to—?

By L. Sprague de Camp

NOT many spectators turn out for a meet between two minor women's swimming clubs, and this one was no exception. Louis Connaught, looking up at the balcony, thought casually that the single row of seats around it was about half full, mostly with the usual bored-looking assortment of husbands and boy friends, and some of the Hotel Creston's guests who had wandered in for want of anything better to do. One of the bellboys was asking an evening-gowned female not to smoke, and she was showing irritation. Mr. Santalucia and the little Santalucias were there as usual to see mamma perform. They waved down at Connaught.

Connaught—a dark devilish-looking little man—glanced over to the other side of the pool. The girls were coming out of the shower rooms, and their shrill conversation was blurred by the acoustics of the pool room into a continuous buzz. The air was faintly steamy. The stout party in white duck pants was Laird, coach of the Knickerbockers and Connaught's arch rival. He saw Connaught and boomed: "Hi, Louie!" The words rattled from wall to wall with a sound like a stick being drawn swiftly along a picket fence. Wambach of the A. A. U. Committee, who was refereeing, came in with his overcoat still on and greeted Laird, but the booming reverberations drowned his words before they got over to Connaught.

Then somebody else came through the door; or rather, a knot of people crowded through it all at once, facing inward, some in bathing suits and some in street clothes. It was a few seconds before Coach Connaught saw what they were looking at. He blinked and looked more closely, standing with his mouth half open.

But not for long. *"Hey!"* he yelled in a voice that made the pool room sound like the inside of a snare drum in use. "Protest! PROTEST! *You can't do that!"*

IT had been the preceding evening when Herbert Laird opened his front door and shouted, "H'lo, Mark, come on in." The chill March wind was making a good deal of racket but not as much as all that. Laird was given to shouting on general principles. He was stocky and bald.

Mark Vining came in and deposited his brief case. He was younger than Laird—just thirty, in fact—with octagonal glasses and rather thin severe features that made him look more serious than he was, which was fairly serious.

"Glad you could come, Mark," said Laird. "Listen, can you make our meet with the Crestons tomorrow night?"

Vining pursed his lips thoughtfully. "I guess so. Loomis decided not to appeal, so I don't have to work nights for a few days anyhow. Is something special up?"

Laird looked sly. "Maybe. Listen, you know that Mrs. Santalucia that

Louie Connaught has been cleaning up with for the past couple of years? I think I've got that fixed. But I want you along to think up legal reasons why my scheme's O. K."

"Why," said Vining cautiously. "What's your scheme?"

"Can't tell you now. I promised not to. But if Louie can win by entering a freak—a woman with webbed fingers—"

"Oh, look here, Herb, you know those webs don't really help her—"

"Yes, yes, I know all the arguments. You've already got more water-resistance to your arms than you've got muscle to overcome it with, and so forth. But I know Mrs. Santalucia has webbed fingers, and I know she's the best damned woman swimmer in New York. And I don't like it. It's bad for my prestige as a coach." He turned and shouted into the gloom: "Iantha!"

"Yes?"

"Come here, will you please? I want you to meet my friend Mr. Vining. Here, we need some light."

The light showed the living room as usual buried under disorderly piles of boxes of bathing suits and other swimming equipment, the sale of which furnished Herbert Laird with most of his income. It also showed a young woman coming in in a wheel chair.

One look gave Vining a feeling that, he knew, boded no good for him. He was unfortunate in being a pushover for any reasonably attractive girl, and at the same time being cursed with an almost pathological shyness where women were concerned. The facts that both he and Laird were bachelors and took their swimming seriously were the main ties between them.

This girl was more than reasonably attractive. She was, thought the dazzled Vining, a wow, a ten-strike, a direct sixteen-inch hit. Her smooth, rather flat features and high cheekbones had a hint of Asian or American Indian, and went oddly with her light-gold hair, which, Vining could have sworn, had a faint greenish tinge. A blanket was wrapped around her legs.

He came out of his trance as Laird introduced the exquisite creature as "Miss Delfoiros."

Miss Delfoiros didn't seem exactly overcome. As she extended her hand, she said with a noticeable accent: "You are not from the newspapers, Mr. Vining?"

"No," said Vining. "Just a lawyer. I specialize in wills and probates and things. Not thinking of drawing up yours, are you?"

She relaxed visibly and laughed. "No. I 'ope I shall not need one for a long, long time."

"Still," said Vining seriously, "you never know—"

Laird bellowed: "Wonder what's keeping that sister of mine. Dinner ought to be ready. *Martha!*" He marched out, and Vining heard Miss Laird's voice, something about "—but Herb, I had to let those things cool down—"

*

VINING wondered with a great wonder what he should say to Miss Delfoiros. Finally he said, "Smoke?"

"Oh, no, thank you very much. I do not do it."

"Mind if I do?"

"No, not at all."

"Whereabouts do you hail from?" Vining thought the question sounded both brusque and silly. He never did get the hang of talking easily under these circumstances.

"Oh, I am from Kip—Cyprus, I mean. You know, the island."

"Really? That makes you a British subject, doesn't it?"

"Well . . . no, not exactly. Most Cypriots are, but I am not."

"Will you be at this swimming meet?"

"Yes, I think so."

"You don't"—he lowered his voice—"know what scheme Herb's got up his

sleeve to beat La Santalucia?"

"Yes . . . no . . . I do not . . . what I mean is, I must not tell."

More mystery, thought Vining. What he really wanted to know was why she was confined to a wheel chair; whether the cause was temporary or permanent. But you couldn't ask a person right out, and he was still trying to concoct a leading question when Laird's bellow wafted in: "All right, folks, soup's on!" Vining would have pushed the wheel chair in, but before he had a chance, the girl had spun the chair around and was halfway to the dining room.

Vining said: "Hello, Martha, how's the schoolteaching business?" But he wasn't really paying much attention to Laird's capable spinster sister. He was gauping at Miss Delfoiros, who was quite calmly emptying a teaspoonful of salt into her water glass and stirring.

"What . . . what?" he gulped.

"I 'ave to," she said. "Fresh water makes me—like what you call drunk."

"Listen, Mark!" roared his friend. "Are you sure you can be there on time tomorrow night? There are some questions of eligibility to be cleared up, and I'm likely to need you badly."

"Will Miss Delfoiros be there?" Vining grinned, feeling very foolish inside.

"Oh, sure. Iantha's our . . . say, listen, you know that little eighteen-year-old Clara Havranek? She did the hundred in one-oh-five yesterday. She's championship material. We'll clean the Creston Club yet—" He went on, loud and fast, about what he was going to do to Louie Connaught's girls. The while, Mark Vining tried to concentrate on his own food, which was good, and on Iantha Delfoiros, who was charming but evasive.

There seemed to be something special about Miss Delfoiros's food, to judge by the way Martha Laird had served it. Vining looked closely and saw that it had the peculiarly dead and clammy look that a dinner once hot but now cold has. He asked about it.

"Yes," she said, "I like it cold."

"You mean you don't eat *anything* hot?"

She made a face. " 'Ot food? No, I do not like it. To us it is—"

"Listen, Mark! I hear the W. S. A. is going to throw a post-season meet in April for novices only—"

Vining's dessert lay before him a full minute before he noticed it. He was too busy thinking how delightful Miss Delfoiros' accent was.

WHEN dinner was over, Laird said, "Listen, Mark, you know something about these laws against owning gold? Well, look here—" He led the way to a candy box on a table in the living room. The box contained, not candy, but gold and silver coins. Laird handed the lawyer several of them. The first one he examined was a silver crown, bearing the inscription "Carolus II Dei Gra" encircling the head of England's Merry Monarch with a wreath in his hair—or, more probably, in his wig. The second was an eighteenth-century Spanish dollar. The third was a Louis d'Or.

"I didn't know you went in for coin collecting, Herb," said Vining. "I suppose these are all genuine?"

"They're genuine all right. But I'm not collecting 'em. You might say I'm taking 'em in trade. I have a chance to sell ten thousand bathing caps, if I can take payment in those things."

"I shouldn't think the U. S. Rubber Company would like the idea much."

"That's just the point. What'll I do with 'em after I get 'em? Will the government put me in jail for having 'em?"

"You nedn't worry about that. I don't think the law covers old coins, though I'll look it up to make sure. Better call up the American Numismatic Society—they're in the 'phone book—and they can tell you how to dispose of them. But look here, what the devil is this? Ten

thousand bathing caps to be paid for in pieces-of-eight? I never heard of such a thing."

"That's it exactly. Just ask the little lady here." Laird turned to Iantha, who was nervously trying to signal him to keep quiet. "The deal's her doing."

"I did . . . did—" She looked as if she were going to cry. "'Erbert, you should not have said that. You see," she said to Vining, "we do not like to 'ave a lot to do with people. Always it causes us troubles."

"Who," asked Vining, "do you mean by 'we'?"

She shut her mouth obstinately. Vining almost melted. But his legal instincts came to the surface. If you don't get a grip on yourself, he thought, you'll be in love with her in another five minutes. And that might be a disaster. He said firmly: "Herb, the more I see of this business the crazier it looks. Whatever's going on, you seem to be trying to get me into it. But I'm damned if I'll let you unless I know what it's all about."

"Might as well tell him, Iantha," said Laird. "He'll know when he sees you swim tomorrow, anyhow."

She said: "You will not tell the newspaper men, Mr. Vining?"

"No, I won't say anything to anybody."

"You promise?"

"Of course. You can depend on a lawyer to keep things under his hat."

"Under his—I suppose you mean not to tell. So, look." She reached down and pulled up the lower end of the blanket.

Vining looked. Where he expected to see feet, there was a pair of horizontal flukes, like those of a porpoise.

LOUIS CONNAUGHT'S having kittens, when he saw what his rival coach had sprung on him, can thus be easily explained. First he doubted his own senses. Then he doubted whether there was any justice in the world.

Meanwhile Mark Vining proudly pushed Iantha's wheel chair in among the cluster of judges and timekeepers at the starting end of the pool. Iantha herself, in a bright green bathing cap, held her blanket around her shoulders, but the slate-gray tail with its flukes was plain for all to see. The skin of the tail was smooth and the flukes were horizontal; artists who show mermaids with scales and a vertical tail fin, like a fish's, simply don't know their zoölogy.

"All right, all right," bellowed Laird. "Don't crowd around. Everybody get back to where they belong. Everybody, please."

One of the spectators, leaning over the rail of the balcony to see, dropped a fountain pen into the pool. One of Connaught's girls, a Miss Black, dove in after it.

Ogden Wambach, the referee, poked a finger at the skin of the tail. He was a well-groomed, gray-haired man.

"Laird," he said, "is this a joke?"

"Not at all. She's entered in the back stroke and all the free styles, just like any other club member. She's even registered with the A. A. U."

"But . . . but . . . I mean, is it alive? Is it real?"

Iantha spoke up. "Why do you not ask me those questions, Mr. . . . Mr. . . . I do not know you—"

"Good grief," said Wambach. "It talks! I'm the referee, Miss—"

"Delfoiros. Iantha Delfoiros."

"My word. Upon my word. That means—let's see—Violet Porpoise-tail, doesn't it? *Delphis* plus *oura*—"

"You know Greek? Oh, 'ow nice!" She broke into a string of Romaic.

Wambach gulped a little. "Too fast for me, I'm afraid. And that's *modern* Greek, isn't it?"

"Why, yes. I am modern, am I not?"

"Dear me. I suppose so. But is that tail really real? I mean, it's not just a piece of costumery?"

"Oh, but yes." Iantha threw off the

blanket and waved her flukes. Everyone in the pool semed to have turned into a pair of eyeballs to which a body and a pair of legs was vaguely attached.

"Dear me," said Ogden Wambach. "Where are my glasses? You understand, I just want to make sure there's nothing spurious about this."

Mrs. Santalucia, a muscular-looking lady with a visible mustache and fingers webbed down to the first joint, said, "You mean I gotta swim against *her?*"

Louis Connaught had been sizzling like a dynamite fuse. "You can't do it!" he shrilled. "This is a woman's meet! I protest!"

"So what?" said Laird.

"But you can't enter a fish in a woman's swimming meet! Can you, Mr. Wambach?"

Mark Vining spoke up. He had just taken a bunch of papers clipped together out of his pocket, and was running through them.

"Miss Delfoiros," he asserted, "is not a fish. She's a mammal."

"How do you figure that?" yelled Connaught.

"*Look* at her."

"Um-m-m," said Ogden Wambach. "I see what you mean."

"But," howled Connaught, "she still ain't human!"

"There is a question about that, Mr. Vining," said Wambach.

"No question at all. There's nothing in the rules against entering a mermaid, and there's nothing that says the competitors have to be human."

CONNAUGHT was hopping about like an overwrought cricket. He was now waving a copy of the current A. A. U. swimming, diving, and water polo rules. "I still protest! Look here! All through here it only talks about two kinds of meets, men's and women's. She ain't a woman, and she certainly ain't a man. If the Union had wanted to have meets for mermaids they'd have said so."

"Not a woman?" asked Vining in a manner that juries learned meant a rapier thrust at an opponent. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Connaught. I looked the question up." He frowned at his sheaf of papers. "Webster's International Dictionary, Second Edition, defines a woman as 'any female person.' And it further defines 'person' as 'a being characterized by conscious apprehension, rationality, and a moral sense.'" He turned to Wambach. "Sir, I think you'll agree that Miss Delfoiros has exhibited conscious apprehension and rationality during her conversation with you, won't you?"

"My word . . . I really don't know what to say, Mr. Vining . . . I suppose she has, but I couldn't say—"

Horwitz, the scorekeeper, spoke up. "You might ask her to give the multiplication table." Nobody paid him any attention.

Connaught exhibited symptoms alarmingly suggestive of apoplexy. "But you can't— What the hell you talking about—conscious ap-ap—"

"Please, Mr. Connaught!" said Wambach. "When you shout that way I can't understand you because of the echoes."

Connaught mastered himself with a visible effort. Then he looked crafty. "How do I know she's got a moral sense?"

Vining turned to Iantha. "Have you ever been in jail, Iantha?"

Iantha laughed. "What a funny question, Mark! But of course, I have not."

"That's what *she* says," sneered Connaught. "How you gonna prove it?"

"We don't have to," said Vining loftily. "The burden of proof is on the accuser, and the accused is legally innocent until proved guilty. That principle was well established by the time of King Edward the First."

"Oh, damn King Edward the First," cried Connaught. "That wasn't the kind of moral sense I meant anyway. How about what they call moral turp-turp—

You know what I mean."

"Hey," growled Laird, "what's the idea? Are you trying to cast— What's the word, Mark?"

"Aspersions?"

"—cast aspersions on one of my swimmers? You watch out, Louie. If I hear you be— What's the word, Mark?"

"Besmirching her fair name?"

"—besmirching her fair name I'll drown you in your own tank."

"And after that," said Vining, "we'll slap a suit on you for slander."

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" said Wambach. "Let's not have any more personalities, please. This is a swimming meet, not a lawsuit. Let's get to the point."

"We've made ours," said Vining with dignity. "We've shown that Iantha Delfoiros is a woman, and Mr. Connaught has stated, himself, that this is a woman's meet. Therefore, Miss Delfoiros is eligible. Q. E. D."

"Ahem," said Wambach. "I don't quite know—I never had a case like this to decide before."

LOUIS CONNAUGHT almost had tears in his eyes; at least he sounded as if he did. "Mr. Wambach, you can't let Herb Laird do this to me. I'll be a laughingstock."

Laird snorted. "How about your beating me with your Mrs. Santalucia? I didn't get any sympathy from you when people laughed at me on account of that. And how much good did it do me to protest against her fingers?"

"But," wailed Connaught, "if he can enter this Miss Delfurrus, what's to stop somebody from entering a trained sea lion or something? Do you want to make competitive swimming into a circus?"

Laird grinned. "Go ahead, Louie. Nobody's stopping you from entering anything you like. How about it, Ogden? Is she a woman?"

"Well . . . really . . . oh dear—"

"Please!" Iantha Delfoiros rolled her violet-blue eyes at the bewildered referee. "I should so like to swim in this nice pool with all these nice people!"

Wambach sighed. "All right, my dear, you shall!"

"Whoopee!" cried Laird, the cry being taken up by Vining, the members of the Knickerbocker Swimming Club, the other officials, and lastly the spectators. The noise in the inclosed space made sensitive eardrums wince.

"Wait a minute," yelped Connaught when the echoes had died. "Look here, page 19 of the rules. 'Regulation Costume, Women: Suits must be of dark color, with skirt attached. Leg is to reach—' and so forth. Right here it says it. She can't swim the way she is, not in a sanctioned meet."

"That's true," said Wambach. "Let's see—"

Horwitz looked up from his little score-sheet littered table. "Maybe one of the girls has a halter she could borrow," he suggested. "That would be *something.*"

"Halter, phooey!" snapped Connaught. "This means a regular suit with legs and a skirt, and everybody knows it."

"But she hasn't got any legs!" cried Laird. "How could she get into—"

"That's just the pernt! If she can't wear a suit with legs, and the rules say you gotta have legs, she can't wear the regulation suit, and she can't compete! I gotcha that time! Ha-ha, I'm sneering!"

"I'm afraid not, Louie," said Vining, thumbing his own copy of the rule-book. He held it up to the light and read: "'Note.—These rules are approximate, the idea being to bar costumes which are immodest, or will attract undue attention and comment. The referee shall have the power'—et cetera, et cetera. If we cut the legs out of a regular suit, and she pulled the rest of it on over her head, that would be modest enough for all

practical purposes. Wouldn't it, Mr. Wambach?"

"Dear me—I don't know—I suppose it would."

Laird hissed to one of his pupils, "Hey, listen, Miss Havranek! You know where my suitcase is? Well, you get one of the extra suits out of it, and there's a pair of scissors in with the first-aid things. You fix that suit up so Iantha can wear it."

Connaught subsided. "I see now," he said bitterly, "why you guys wanted to finish with a 300-yard free style instead of a relay. If I'd'a' known what you were planning—and, you, Mark Vining, if I ever get in a jam, I'll go to jail before I hire you for a lawyer, so help me."

Mrs. Santalucia had been glowering at Iantha Delfoiros. Suddenly she turned to Connaught. "Thissa no fair. I swim against people. I no gotta swim against moimaids."

"Please, Maria, don't *you* desert me," wailed Connaught.

"I no swim tonight."

Connaught looked up appealingly to the balcony. Mr. Santalucia and the little Santalucias, guessing what was happening, burst into a chorus off: "Go on, mamma! You show them, mamma!"

"Aw right. I swim one, maybe two races. If I see I no got a chance, I no swim no more."

"That's better, Maria. It wouldn't really count if she beat you anyway." Connaught headed for the door, saying something about "telephone" on the way.

DESPITE the delays in starting the meet, nobody left the pool room through boredom; in fact the empty seats in the balcony were full by this time and people were standing up behind them. Word had gotten around the Hotel Creston that something was up.

By the time Louis Connaught returned, Laird and Vining were pulling the altered bathing suit on over Iantha's head. It didn't reach quite as far as they expected, having been designed for a slightly slimmer swimmer. Not that Iantha was fat. But her human part, if not exactly plump, was at least comfortably upholstered, so that no bones showed. Iantha squirmed around in the suit a good deal, and threw a laughing remark in Greek to Wambach, whose expression showed that he hoped it didn't mean what he suspected it did.

Laird said, "Now listen, Iantha, remember not to move till the gun goes off. And remember that you swim directly over the black line on the bottom, not between two lines."

"Are they going to shoot a gun? Oh, I am afraid of shooting!"

"It's nothing to be afraid of; just blank cartridges. They don't hurt anybody. And it won't be so loud inside that cap."

"Herb," said Vining, "won't she lose time getting off, not being able to make a flat dive like the others?"

"She will. But it won't matter. She can swim a mile in *four* minutes, without really trying."

Ritchey, the starter, announced the 50-yard free style. He called: "All right, everybody, line up." Iantha slithered off her chair and crawled over to the starting platform. The other girls were all standing with feet together, bodies bent forward at the hips, and arms pointing backward. Iantha got into a curious position of her own, with her tail bent under her and her weight resting on her hand and flukes.

"Hey! Protest!" shouted Connaught. "The rules says that all races, except back strokes, are started with dives. What kind of a dive do you call that?"

"Oh, dear," said Wambach. "What—"

"That," said Vining urbanely, "is a mermaid dive. You couldn't expect her to stand upright on her tail."

"But that's just it!" cried Connaught. "First you enter a non-regulation swim-

mer. Then you put a non-regulation suit on her. Then you start her off with a non-regulation dive. Ain't there anything you guys do like other people?"

"But," said Vining, looking through the rule book, "it doesn't say—here it is. 'The start in all races shall be made with a dive.' But there's nothing in the rules about what kind of dive shall be used. And the dictionary defines a dive simply as 'a plunge into water.' So if you jump in feet first holding your nose, that's a dive for the purpose of the discussion. And in my years of watching swimming meets I've seen some funnier starting-dives than Miss Delfoiros'."

"I suppose he's right," said Wambach.

"O. K., O. K.," snarled Connaught. "But the next time I have a meet with you and Herb, I bring a lawyer along too, see?"

RITCHEY'S gun went off. Vining noticed that Iantha flinched a little at the report, and perhaps was slowed down a trifle in getting off by it. The other girls' bodies shot out horizontally to smack the water loudly, but Iantha slipped in with the smooth, unhuried motion of a diving seal. Lacking the advantage of feet to push off with, she was several yards behind the other swimmers before she really got started. Mrs. Santalucia had taken her usual lead, foaming along with the slow strokes of her webbed hands.

Iantha didn't bother to come to the surface except at the turn, where she had been specifically ordered to come up so the judge of the turns wouldn't raise arguments as to whether she had touched the end, and at the finish. She hardly used her arms at all, except for an occasional flip of her trailing hands to steer her. The swift up-and-down flutter of the powerful tail-flukes sent her through the water like a torpedo, her wake appearing on the surface six or eight feet behind her. As she shot through the as yet unruffled waters at the far end of the pool on the first leg, Vining, who had gone around to the side to watch, noticed that she had the power of closing her nostrils tightly under water, like a seal or hippopotamus.

Mrs. Santalucia finished the race in the very creditable time of 29.8 seconds. But Iantha Delfoiros arrived, not merely first, but in the time of 8.0 seconds. At the finish she didn't reach up to touch the starting-platform, and then hoist herself out by her arms the way human swimmers do. She simply angled up sharply, left the water like a leaping trout, and came down with a moist smack on the concrete, almost bowling over a timekeeper. By the time the other contestants had completed the turn she was sitting on the platform with her tail curled under her. As the girls foamed laboriously down the final leg, she smiled dazzlingly at Vining, who had had to run to be in at the finish.

"That," she said, "was much fun, Mark. I am so glad you and 'Erbert put me in these races."

Mrs. Santalucia climbed out and walked over to Horwitz's table. That young man was staring in disbelief at the figures he had just written.

"Yes," he said, "that's what it says. Miss Iantha Delfoiros, 8.0; Mrs. Maria Santalucia, 29.8. Please don't drip on my score sheets, lady. Say, Wambach, isn't this a world's record or something?"

"My word!" said Wambach. "It's less than half the existing short-course record. Less than a third, maybe; I'd have to check it. Dear me. I'll have to take it up with the Committee. I don't know whether they'd allow it; I don't think they will, even though there isn't any specific rule against mermaids."

Vining spoke up. "I think we've compiled with all the requirements to have records recognized, Mr. Wambach. Miss Delfoiros was entered in advance like all the others."

"Yes, yes, Mr. Vining, but don't you

The vast Atlantic, gray under the clouds, seemed deadly to the small figure setting out to swim across it.

see, a record's a serious matter. No ordinary human being could ever come near a time like that."

"Unless he used an outboard motor," said Connaught. "If you allow contestants to use tail fins like Miss Delfurrus, you oughta let 'em use propellers. I don't see why these guys should be the only ones to be let bust rules all over the place, and then think up lawyer arguments why it's O. K. I'm gonna get me a lawyer, too."

"That's all right, Ogden," said Laird. "You take it up with the Committee, but we don't really care much about the records anyway, so long as we can lick Louie here." He smiled indulgently at Connaught, who sputtered with fury.

"I no swim," announced Mrs. Santalucia. "This is all crazy business. I no got a chance."

"Now, Maria," said Connaught, taking her aside, "just once more, won't you please? My reputation—" The rest of his words were drowned in the general reverberation of the pool room. But at the end of them the redoubtable female appeared to have given in to his entreaties.

THE 100-yard free style started in much the same manner as the 50-yard. Iantha didn't flinch at the gun this time, and got off to a good start. She skimmed along just below the surface, raising a wake like a tuna-clipper. These waves confused the swimmer in the adjacent lane, who happened to be Miss Breitenfeld of the Creston Club. As a result, on her first return leg, Iantha met Miss Breitenfeld swimming athwart her —Iantha's—lane, and rammed the unfortunate girl amidships. Miss Breitenfeld went down without even a gurgle, spewing bubbles.

Connaught shrieked: "Foul! Foul!" though in the general uproar it sounded like "Wow! Wow!" Several swimmers who weren't racing dove in to the rescue, and the race came to a stop in general confusion and pandemonium. When Miss Breitenfeld was hauled out it was found that she had merely had the wind knocked out of her and had swallowed considerable water.

Mark Vining, looking around for Iantha, found her holding onto the edge of the pool and shaking her head. Presently she crawled out, crying: "Is she 'urt? Is she 'urt? Oh, I am so sorree! I did not think there would be anybody in my lane, so I did not look ahead."

"See?" yelled Connaught. "See, Wambach? See what happens? They ain't satisfied to walk away with the races with their fish-woman. No, they gotta try to cripple my swimmers by butting their slats in. Herb," he went on nastily, "why dontcha get a pet swordfish? Then when you rammed one of my poor girls she'd be out of comtetition for good."

"Oh," said Iantha, "I did not mean —it was an accident!"

"Accident my foot!"

"But it was. Mr. Referee, I do not want to bump people. My 'ead 'urts, and my neck also. You think I try to break my neck on purpose?" Iantha's altered suit had crawled up under her armpits, but nobody noticed particularly.

"Sure it was an accident," bellowed Laird. "Anybody could see that. And listen, if anybody was fouled it was Miss Delfoiros."

"Certainly," chimed in Vining. "She was in her own lane, and the other girl wasn't."

"Oh dear me," said Wambach. "I suppose they're right again. This'll have to be re-swum anyway. Does Miss Breitenfeld want to compete?"

Miss Breitenfeld didn't, but the others lined up again. This time the race went off without untoward incident. Iantha again made a spectacular leaping finish, just as the other three swimmers were halfway down the second of their four legs.

When Mrs. Santalucia emerged this

time, she said to Connaught: "I no swim no more. That is final."

"Oh, but Maria—" It got him nowhere. Finally he said, "Will you swim in the races that she don't enter?"

"Is there any?"

"I think so. Hey, Horwitz, Miss Delfurrus ain't entered in the breast stroke, is she?"

Horwitz looked. "No, she isn't," he said.

"That's something. Say, Herb, how come you didn't put your fish-woman in the breast stroke?"

Vining answered for Laird. "Look at your rules, Louie. 'The feet shall be drawn up simultaneously, the knees bent and open,' et cetera. The rules for back stroke and free style don't say anything about how the legs shall be used, but those for breast stroke do. So no legs, no breast stroke. We aren't giving you a chance to make any legitimate protests."

"Legitimate protests!" Connaught turned away, sputtering.

WHILE the dives were being run off, Vining, watching, became aware of an ethereal melody. First he thought it was in his head. Then he was sure it was coming from one of the spectators. He finally located the source; it was Iantha Delfoiros, sitting in her wheel chair and singing softly. By leaning nearer he could make out the words:

"Die schoenste Jungfrau sitzet
Dort ober wunderbar;
Ihr goldnes Geschmeide blitzet;
Sie kaemmt ihr goldenes Haar."

Vining went over quietly. "Iantha," he said. "Pull your bathing suit down, and don't sing."

She compiled, looking up at him with a giggle. "But that is a nice song! I learn it from a wrecked German sailor. It is about one of my people."

"I know, but it'll distract the judges. They have to watch the dives closely, and the place is too noisy as it is."

"Such a nice man you are, Mark, but so serious!" She giggled again.

Vining wondered at the subtle change in the mermaid's manner. Then a horrible thought struck him.

"Herb!" he whispered. "Didn't she say something last night about getting drunk on fresh water?"

Laird looked up. "Yes. She— My Lord, the water in the pool's fresh! I never thought of that. Is she showing signs?"

"I think she is."

"Listen, Mark, what'll we do?"

"I don't know. She's entered in two more events, isn't she? Back stroke and 300-yard free style?"

"Yes."

"Well, why not withdraw her from the back stroke, and give her a chance to sober up before the final event?"

"Can't. Even with all her firsts we aren't going to win by any big margin. Louie has the edge on us in the dives, and Mrs. Santalucia'll win the breast stroke. In the events Iantha's in, if she takes first and Louie's girls take second and third, that means five points for us but four for him, so we have an advantage of only one point. And her world's record times don't give us any more points."

"Guess we'll have to keep her in and take a chance," said Vining glumly.

IANTHA'S demeanor was sober enough in lining up for the back stroke. Again she lost a fraction of a second in getting started by not having feet to push off with. But once she got started, the contest was even more one-sided than the free style races had been. The human part of her body was practically out of water, skimming the surface like the front half of a speedboat. She made paddling motions with her arms, but that was merely for technical reasons; the power was all furnished by the flukes.

She didn't jump out onto the starting-platform this time; for a flash Vining's heart almost stopped as the emerald-green bathing cap seemed about to crash into the tiles at the end of the pool. But Iantha had judged the distance to a fraction of an inch, and braked to a stop with her flukes just before striking.

The breast stroke was won easily by Mrs. Santalucia, though her slow plodding stroke was less spectacular than the butterfly of her competitors. The shrill cheers of the little Santalucias could be heard over the general hubbub. When the winner climbed out, she glowered at Iantha and said to Connaught: "Louie, if you ever put me in a meet wit' moi-maids again, I no swim for you again, never. Now I go home." With which she marched off to the shower room.

Ritchey was just about to announce the final event, the 300-yard free-style, when Connaught plucked his sleeve. "Jack," he said, "wait a second. One of my swimmers is gonna be delayed a coupla minutes." He went out a door.

Laird said to Vining: "Wonder what Louie's grinning about. He's got something nasty, I bet. He was 'phoning earlier, you remember."

"We'll soon see— What's that?" A hoarse bark wafted in from somewhere and rebounded from the walls.

Connaught reappeared carrying two buckets. Behind him was a little round man in three sweaters. Behind the little round man gallumped a glossy California sea lion. At the sight of the gently rippling jade-green pool the animal barked joyously and skidded into the water, swam swiftly about, and popped out onto the landing-platform, barking. The bark had a peculiarly nerve-racking effect in the echoing pool room.

Ogden Wambach seized two handfuls of his sleek gray hair and tugged. "Connaught!" he shouted. "What is that?"

"Oh, that's just one of my swimmers, Mr. Wambach."

"Hey, listen!" rumbled Laird. "We're going to protest this time. Miss Delfoiros is at least a woman, even if she's a kind of peculiar one. But you can't call *that* a woman."

Connaught grinned like Satan looking over a new shipment of sinners. "Didn't you just say to go ahead and enter a sea lion if I wanted to?"

"I don't remember saying—"

"Yes, Herbert," said Wambach, looking haggard. "You did say it. There didn't used to be any trouble in deciding whether a swimmer was a woman or not. But now that you've brought in Miss Delfoiros, there doesn't seem to any place we can draw a line."

"But look here, Ogden, there is such a thing as going too far—"

"That's just what I said about you!" shrilled Connaught.

Wambach took a deep breath. "Let's not shout, please. Herbert, technically you may have an argument. But after we allowed Miss Delfoiros to enter, I think it would be only sporting to let Louis have his seal. Especially after you told him to get one if he could."

Vining spoke up. "Oh, we're always glad to do the sporting thing. But I'm afraid the sea lion wasn't entered at the beginning of the meet as is required by the rules. We don't want to catch hell from the committee—"

"Oh, yes, she was," said Connaught. "See!" He pointed to one of Horwitz's sheets. "Her name's Alice Black, and there it is."

"But," protested Vining, "I thought *that* was Alice Black." He pointed to a slim dark girl in a bathing suit who was sitting on a window ledge.

"It is," grinned Connaught. "It's just a coincidence that they both got the same name."

"You don't expect us to believe *that?*"

"I don't care whether you believe or not. It's so. Ain't the sea lion's name Alice Black?" He turned to the little fat man, who nodded.

"Let it pass," moaned Wambach. "We can't take time off to get this animal's birth certificate."

"Well then," said Vining, "how about the regulation suit? Maybe you'd like to try to put a suit on your sea lion?"

"Don't have to. She's got one already. It grows on her. Yah, yah, yah, gotcha that time."

"I suppose," said Wambach, "that you *could* consider a natural sealskin pelt as equivalent to a bathing-suit."

"Sure you could. That's the pernt. Anyway the idea of suits is to be modest, and nobody gives a damn about a sea lion's modesty."

Vining made a final point. "You refer to the animal as 'her,' but how do we know it's a female? Even Mr. Wambach wouldn't let you enter a male sea lion in a women's meet."

Wambach spoke: "How do you tell on a sea lion?"

Connaught looked at the little fat man. "Well, maybe we had better not go into that here. How would it be if I put up a ten-dollar bond that Alice is a female, and you checked on her sex later?"

"That seems fair," said Wambach.

Vining and Laird looked at each other. "Shall we let 'em get away with that, Mark?" asked the latter.

Vining rocked on his heels for a few seconds. Then he said, "I think we might as well. Can I see you outside a minute, Herb? You people don't mind holding up the race a couple of minutes more, do you? We'll be right back."

Connaught started to protest about further delay, but thought better of it. Laird presently reappeared looking unwontedly cheerful.

"'Erbert!" said Iantha.

"Yes?" he put his head down.

"I'm afraid—"

"You're afraid Alice might bite you in the water? Well, I wouldn't want that—"

"Oh, no, not afraid that way. Alice, poof! If she gets nasty I give her one with the tail. But I am afraid she can swim faster than me."

"Listen, Iantha, you just go ahead and swim the best you can. Twelve legs, remember. And don't be surprised, no matter what happens."

"What you two saying?" asked Connaught suspiciously.

"None of your business, Louie. Whatcha got in that pail? *Fish?* I see how you're going to work this. Wanta give up and concede the meet now?"

Connaught merely snorted.

THE ONLY competitors in the 300-yard free style race were Iantha Delfoiros and the sea lion, allegedly named Alice. The normal members of both clubs declared that nothing would induce them to get into the pool with the animal. Not even the importance of collecting a third-place point would move them.

Iantha got into her usual starting position. Beside her the little round man maneuvered Alice, holding her by an improvised leash made of a length of rope. At the far end, Connaught had placed himself and one of the buckets.

Ritchey fired his gun; the little man slipped the leash and said: "Go get 'em, Alice!" Connaught took a fish out of his bucket and waved it. But Alice, frightened by the shot, set up a furious barking and stayed where she was. Not till Iantha had almost reached the far end of the pool did Alice sight the fish at the other end. Then she slid off and shot down the water like a streak. Those who have seen sea lions merely loafing about a pool in a zoo or aquarium have no conception of how fast they can go when they try. Fast as the mermaid was, the sea lion was faster. She made two bucking jumps out of water before she arrived and oozed out onto the concrete. One gulp and the fish had vanished.

Alice spotted the bucket and tried to

get her head into it. Connaught fended her off as best he could with his feet. At the starting end, the little round man had taken a fish out of the other bucket and was waving it, calling: "Here Alice!" Alice didn't get the idea until Iantha had finished her second leg. Then she went like the proverbial bat from hell.

The same trouble ocurred at the starting end of the pool; Alice didn't see why she should swim twenty-five yards for a fish when there were plenty of them a few feet away. The result was that at the halfway-mark Iantha was two legs ahead. But then Alice, who was no dope as sea lions go, caught on. She caught up with and passed Iantha in the middle of her eighth leg, droozling out of the water at each end long enough to gulp a fish and then speeding down to the other end. In the middle of the tenth leg she was ten yards ahead of the mermaid.

At that point Mark Vining appeared through the door, running. In each hand he held a bowl of goldfish by the edge. Behind him came Miss Havranek and Miss Tufts, also of the Knickerbockers, both similarly burdened. The guests of the Hotel Creston had been mildly curious when a dark, severe-looking young man and two girls in bathing suits had dashed into the lobby and made off with the six bowls. But they had been too well-bred to inquire directly about the rape of the goldfish.

Vining ran down the side of the pool to a point near the far end. There he extended his arms and inverted the bowls. Water and fish cascaded into the pool. Miss Havranek and Miss Tufts did likewise at other points along the edge of the pool.

Results were immediate. The bowls had been large, and each had contained about six or eight fair-sized goldfish. The forty-odd bright-colored fish, terrified by their rough handling, darted hither and thither about the pool, or at least went as fast as their inefficient build would permit them. Alice, in the middle of her ninth leg, angled off sharply. Nobody saw her snatch the fish; one second it was there, and the next it wasn't. Alice doubled with a swirl of flippers and shot diagonally across the pool. Another fish vanished. Forgotten were her master and Louis Connaught and their buckets. This was much more fun. Meanwhile, Iantha finished her race, narrowly avoiding a collision with the sea lion on her last leg.

Connaught hurled the fish he was holding as far as he could. Alice snapped it up and went on hunting. Connaught ran toward the starting-platform, yelling: "Foul! Foul! Protest! Protest! Foul! Foul!"

HE arrived to find the timekeepers comparing watches on Iantha's swim, Laird and Vining doing a kind of war dance, and Ogden Wambach looking like the March Hare on the twenty-eighth of February. "Stop!" cried the referee. "Stop, Louie! If you shout like that you'll drive me mad! I'm almost mad now! I know what you're going to say."

"Well . . . well . . . why don't you do something, then? Why don't you tell these crooks where to head in? Why don't you have 'em expelled from the Union? Why don't you—"

"Relax, Louie," said Vining. "We haven't done anything illegal."

"*What?* Why, you dirty—"

"Easy, easy." Vining looked speculatively at his fist. The little man followed his glance and quieted somewhat. "There's nothing in the rules about putting fish into a pool. Intelligent swimmers, like Miss Delfoiros, know enough to ignore them when they're swimming a race."

"But—what—why you—"

Vining walked off, leaving the two coaches and the referee to fight it out. He looked for Iantha. She was sitting

on the edge of the pool, paddling in the water with her flukes. Beside her were four feebly flopping goldfish laid out in a row on the tiles. As he approached, she picked one up and put the front end of it in her mouth. There was a flash of pearly teeth and a spasmodic flutter of the fish's tail, and the front half of the fish was gone. The other half followed immediately.

At that instant Alice spotted the three remaining fish. The sea lion had cleaned out the pool, and was now slithering around on the concrete, barking and looking for more prey. She gallumped past Vining toward the mermaid.

Iantha saw her coming. The mermaid hoisted her tail out of the water, pivoted where she sat, swung the tail up in a curve, and brought the flukes down on the sea lion's head with a loud *spat.* Vining, who was twenty feet off, could have sworn he felt the wind of the blow.

Alice gave a squawk of pain and astonishment and slithered away, shaking her head. She darted past Vining again, and for reasons best known to herself hobbled over to the center of argument and bit Ogden Wambach in the leg. The referee screeched and climbed up on Horwitz's table.

"Hey," said the scorekeeper. "You're scattering my papers!"

"I still say they're publicity-hunting crooks!" yelled Connaught, waving his copy of the rule book at Wambach.

"Bunk!" bellowed Laird. "He's just sore because we can think up more stunts than he can. He started it, with his web-fingered woman."

"Damn your complaints!" screamed Wambach. "Damn your sea lions! Damn your papers! Damn your mermaids! Damn your web-fingered women! Damn your swimming clubs! Damn all of you! I'm going mad! You hear? Mad, mad, mad! One more word out of either of you and I'll have you suspended from the Union!"

"Ow, ow, ow!" barked Alice.

IANTHA had finished her fish. She started to pull the bathing suit down again; changed her mind, pulled it off over her head, rolled it up, and threw it across the pool. Halfway across it unfolded and floated down onto the water. The mermaid then cleared her throat, took a deep breath, and, in a clear ringing soprano, launched into the heart-wrenching strains of:

"Rheingold!
Reines Gold,
Wie lauter und hell
Leuchtest hold du uns!
Um dich, du klares—"

"Iantha!"

"What is it, Markee?' she giggled.

"I said, it's getting time to go home!"

"Oh, but I do not want to go home. I am having much fun.

"Nun wir klagen!
Gebt uns das Gold—"

"No, really, Iantha, we've got to go." He laid a hand on her shoulder. The touch made his blood tingle. At the same time it was plain that the remains of Iantha's carefully husbanded sobriety had gone where the woodbine twineth. That last race in fresh water had been like three oversized Manhattans. Through Vining's head ran an absurd but apt paraphrase of an old song:

"What shall we do with a drunken mermaid
At three o'clock in the morning?"

"Oh, Markee, always you are so serious when people are 'aving fun. But if you say please I will come."

"Very well, please come. Here, put your arm around my neck, and I'll carry you to your chair."

Such, indeed was Mark Vining's intention. He got one hand around her waist and another under her tail. Then

he tried to straighten up. He had forgotten that Iantha's tail was a good deal heavier than it looked. In fact, that long and powerful structure of bone, muscle, and cartilage ran the mermaid's total weight up to the surprising figure of over two hundred and fifty pounds. The result of his attempt was to send himself and his burden headlong into the pool. To the spectators it looked as though he had picked Iantha up and then deliberately dived in with her.

He came up and shook the water out of his head. Iantha popped up in front of him.

"So!" she gurgled. "You are 'aving fun with Iantha! I think you are serious, but you want to play games! All right, I show you!" She brought her palm down smartly, filling Vining's mouth and nose with water. He struck out blindly for the edge of the pool. He was a powerful swimmer, but his street clothes hampered him. Another splash cascaded over his luckless head. He got his eyes clear in time to see Iantha's head go down and her flukes up.

"Markeeee!" The voice was behind him. He turned, and saw Iantha holding a large black block of soft rubber. This object was a plaything for users of the Hotel Creston's pool, and it had been left lying on the bottom during the meet.

"Catch!" cried Iantha gaily, and let drive. The block took Vining neatly between the eyes.

The next thing he knew he was lying on the wet concrete. He sat up and sneezed. His head seemed to be full of ammonia. Louis Connaught put away the smelling-salts bottle, and Laird shoved a glass containing a snort of whiskey at him. Beside him was Iantha, sitting on her curled-up tail. She was actually crying.

"Oh, Markee, you are not dead? You are all right? Oh, I am so sorry! I did not mean to 'it you."

"I'm all right, I guess," he said thickly. "Just an accident. Don't worry."

"Oh, I am so glad!" She grabbed his neck and gave it a hug that made its vertebrae creak alarmingly.

"Now," he said, "if I could dry out my clothes. Louie, could you—uh—"

"Sure," said Connaught, helping him up. "We'll put your clothes on the radiator in the men's shower room, and I can lend you a pair of pants and a sweatshirt while they're drying."

WHEN Vining came out in his borrowed garments, he had to push his way through the throng that crowded the starting end of the pool room. He was relieved to note that Alice had disappeared. In the crowd Iantha in her wheel chair was holding court. In front of her stood a large man in a dinner jacket and a black cloak, with his back to the pool.

"Permit me," he was saying. "I am Joseph Clement. Under my management nothing you wished in the way of a dramatic or musical career would be beyond you. I heard you sing, and I know that with but little training even the doors of the Metropolitan would fly open at your approach."

"No, Mr. Clement. It would be nice, but tomorrow I 'ave to leave for 'ome." She giggled.

"But my dear Miss Delfoiros—where is your home, if I may presume to ask?'

"Cyprus."

"Cyprus? Hm-m-m—let's see, where's that?"

"You do not know where Cyprus is? You are not a nice man. I do not like you. Go away."

"Oh, but my dear, dear Miss Del—"

"Go away, I said. Scram."

"But—"

Iantha's tail came up and lashed out, catching the cloaked man in the solar plexus.

Little Miss Havranek looked at her teammate Miss Tufts, as she prepared to make her third rescue of the evening.

"Poisonally," she said, "I am getting damn sick of pulling dopes out of this pool."

THE SKY was just turning gray the next morning when Laird drove his huge old town car out into the driveway of his house in the Bronx. Although he always drove himself, he couldn't resist the dirt-cheap prices at which second-hand town cars can be obtained. Now the car had the detachable top over the driver's seat in place, with good reason; the wind was driving a heavy rain almost horizontally.

He got out and helped Vining carry Iantha into the car. Vining got in the back with the mermaid. He spoke into the voice tube: "Jones Beach, Chauncey."

"Aye, aye, sir," came the reply. "Listen, Mark, you sure we remembered everything?"

"I made a list and checked it." He yawned. "I could have done with some more sleep last night. Are you sure you won't fall asleep at the wheel?"

"Listen, Mark, with all the coffee I got sloshing around in me, I won't get to sleep for a week."

"We certainly picked a nice time to leave."

"I know we did. In a coupla hours the place'll be covered six deep with reporters. If it weren't for the weather, they might be arriving now. When they do, they'll find the horse has stolen the stable door—that isn't what I mean, but you get the idea. Listen, you better pull down some of those curtains until we get out on Long Island."

"Righto, Herb."

Iantha spoke up in a small voice. "Was I very bad last night when I was drunk, Mark?"

"Not very. At least, not worse than I'd be if I went swimming in a tank of sherry."

"I am so sorry—always I try to be nice, but the fresh water gets me out of my head. And that poor Mr. Clement, that I pushed in the water—"

"Oh, he's used to temperamental people. That's his business. But I don't know that it was such a good idea on the way home to stick your tail out of the car and biff that cop under the chin with it."

She giggled. "But he looked so surprised!"

"I'll say he did! But a surprised cop is sometimes a tough customer."

"Will that make trouble for you?"

"I don't think so. If he's a wise cop, he won't report it at all. You know how the report would read: 'Attacked by mermaid at corner Broadway and Ninety-eighth Street, 11:45 p. m.' And *where* did you learn the unexpurgated version of 'Barnacle Bill the Sailor'?"

"A Greek sponge diver I met in Florida told me. 'E is a friend of us mer-folk, and he taught me my first English. 'E used to joke me about my Cypriot accent when we talked Greek. It is a pretty song, is it not?"

"I don't think 'pretty' is exactly the word I'd use."

"'Oo won the meet? I never did 'ear."

"Oh, Louie and Herb talked it over, and decided they'd both get so much publicity out of it that it didn't much matter. They're leaving it up to the A. A. U., who will get a first-class headache. For instance, we'll claim we didn't foul Alice, because Louie had already disqualified her by his calling and fish-waving. You see that's coaching, and coaching a competitor during an event is illegal.

"But look here, Iantha, why do you have to leave so abruptly?"

She shrugged. "My business with 'Erbert is over, and I promised to be back to Cyprus for my sister's baby being born."

"You don't lay eggs? But of course you don't. Didn't I just prove last night you were mammals?"

"MARKEE, what an idea! Anyway, I do not want to stay around. I like you and I like 'Erbert, but I do not like living on land. You just imagine living in water for yourself, and you get an idea. And if I stay, the newspapers come, and soon all New York knows about me. We mer-folk do not believe in letting the land men know about us."

"Why?"

"We used to be friends with them sometimes, and always it made trouble. And now they 'ave guns and go around shooting things a mile away, to collect them, my great-uncle was shot in the tail last year by some aviator man who thought he was a porpoise or something. We don't like being collected. So when we see a boat or an airplane coming, we duck down and swim away quick."

"I suppose," said Vining slowly, "that that's why there were plenty of reports of mer-folk up to a few centuries ago, and then they stopped, so that now people don't believe they exist."

"Yes. We are smart, and we can see as far as the land men can. So you do not catch us very often. That is why this busines with 'Erbert, to buy ten thousand bathing caps for the mer-folk, 'as to be secret. Not even his company will know about it. But they will not care if they get their money. And we shall not 'ave to sit on rocks drying our 'air so much. Maybe later we can arrange to buy some good knives and spears the same way. They would be better than the shell things we use now."

"I suppose you get all these old coins out of wrecks?"

"Yes. I know of one just off—no, I must not tell you. If the land men know about a wreck, they come with divers. Of course, the very deep ones we do not care about, because we cannot dive down that far. We 'ave to come up for air, like a whale."

"How did Herb happen to suck you in on that swimming meet?"

"Oh, I promised him when he asked—when I did not know 'ow much what-you-call-it fuss there would be. When I found out, he would not let me go back on my promise. I think he 'as a conscience about that, and that is why he gave me that nice fish spear."

"Do you ever expect to get back this way?"

"No, I do not think so. We 'ad a committee to see about the caps, and they chose me to represent them. But now that is arranged, and there is no more reason for me going out on land again."

He was silent for a while. Then he burst out: "Damn it all, Iantha, I just can't believe that you're starting off this morning to swim the Atlantic, and I'll never see you again."

She patted his hand. "Maybe you cannot, but that is so. Remember, friendships between my folk and yours always make people un'appy. I shall remember you a long time, but that is all there will ever be to it."

He growled something in his throat, looking straight in front of him.

She said: "Mark, you know I like you, and I think you like me. 'Erbert 'as a moving-picture machine in his house, and he showed me some pictures of 'ow the land folk live.

"These pictures showed a custom of the people in this country, when they like each other. It is called—kissing, I think. I should like to learn that custom."

"Huh? You mean *me?*" To a man of Vining's temperament, the shock was almost physically painful. But her arms were already sliding around his neck. Presently twenty firecrackers, six Roman candles, and a skyrocket seemed to go off inside him.

"HERE we are, folks," called Laird. Getting no response, he repeated the statement more loudly. A faint and unenthusiastic "Yeah" came through the voice tube.

Jones Beach was bleak under the lowering March clouds. The wind drove the rain against the car windows.

They drove down the beach road a way, till the tall tower was lost in the rain. Nobody was in sight.

The men carried Iantha down onto the beach and brought the things she was taking. These consisted of a boxful of cans of sardines, with a strap to go over the shoulders; a similar but smaller container with her personal belongings, and the fish spear, with which she might be able to pick up lunch on the way.

Iantha peeled off her land-woman's clothes and pulled on the emerald bathing cap. Vining, watching her with the skirt of his overcoat whipping about his legs, felt as if his heart was running out of his damp shoes onto the sand.

They shook hands, and Iantha kissed them both. She squirmed down the sand and into the water. Then she was gone. Vining thought he saw her wave back from the crest of a wave, but in that visibility he couldn't be sure.

They walked back to the car, squinting against the drops. Laird said: "Listen, Mark, you look as if you'd just taken a right to the button."

Vining merely grunted. He had gotten in front with Laird, and was drying his glasses with his handkerchief, as if that were an important and delicate operation.

"Don't tell me you're hooked?"

"So what?"

"Well, I suppose you know there's absolutely nothing you can do about it."

"Herb!" Vining snapped angrily. "Do you have to point out the obvious?"

Laird, sympathizing with his friend's feelings, did not take offense. After they had driven a while, Vining spoke on his own initiative. "That," he said, "is the only woman I've ever known that made me feel at ease. I could talk to her."

Later, he said, "I never felt so damn mixed up in my life. I doubt whether anybody else ever did, either. Maybe I ought to feel relieved it's over. But I don't."

Pause. Then: "You'll drop me in Manhattan on your way back, won't you?"

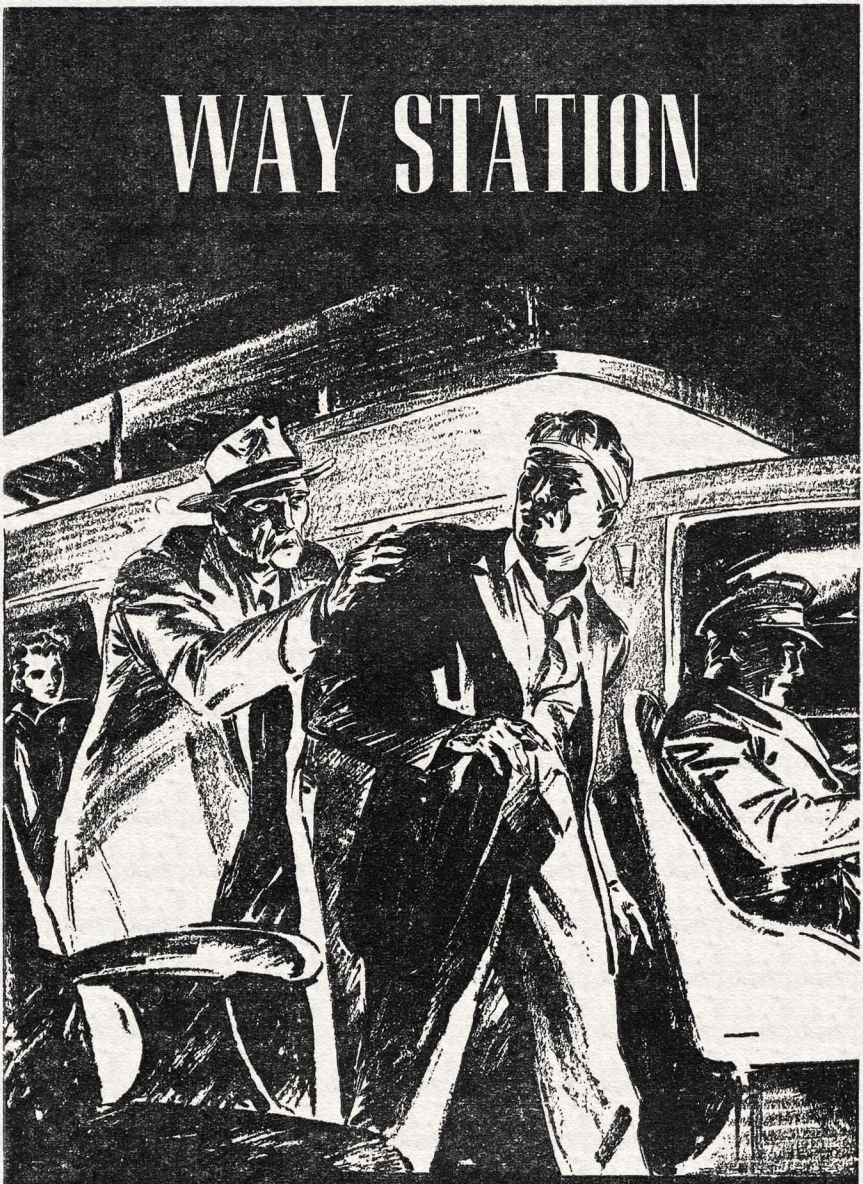
"Sure, anywhere you say. Your apartment?

"Anywhere near Times Square will do. There's a bar there I like."

So, thought Laird, at least the normal male's instincts were functioning correctly in the crisis.

When he let Vining out on Forty-sixth Street, the young lawyer walked off into the rain whistling. The whistle surprised Laird. Then he recognized the tune as one that was written for one of Kipling's poems. But he couldn't, at the moment, think which one.

WAY STATION



By HERB WEISS

WAY STATION

The old fellow found the bus service rather strange and slow, and found himself queerly forgetful of why he had come—

By Herb Weiss

THE bus station was warm and filled with many comfortable, unimportant noises. Old Fred Anstruther was tired, and the curve of the cushioned seat fitted the small of his back very well. He fell asleep.

At least, he must have fallen asleep, because all of a sudden someone was shaking his arm very gently and saying: "Your bus is here, Mr. Anstruther."

Old Fred opened his eyes very slowly. The man touching his arm must have been the driver, because he was wearing a blue uniform and gloves. There was an insignia on his collar, but Fred Anstruther's eyes were old and sleepy, and he could not quite make it out.

"Oh, yes," he said hesitantly, "my bus. I have my ticket here." He began to fumble at his pockets. "I know I have it here somewhere. If I could just remember—"

"It's all right," said the driver quietly. "I have your name here in the reservations."

But Old Fred couldn't quite understand. He was so tired. He went on pawing aimlessly at his pockets. "I know I had it here just a minute ago. I had it right in my hand—"

"It's all right," said the driver patiently. "It's all right."

And then he held out his arm; Old Fred put a trembling hand upon it and slowly they walked toward the bus.

Something troubled Old Fred. Somehow the station looked different. He had been through here so many times when he was younger, so many times. He said so.

"I don't know this door," he complained. "I've been through here so many times, and I don't know this door. We're not going to the right bus. I don't know this way to get to the bus." The driver was very patient. He held his arm a little stiffer. "It's all right," he said. "This is the right way. It's all right. You just haven't been this way before, Mr. Anstruther."

Old Fred shook his head. Hadn't been this way before. Why, he had come through this station a thousand times. It was right on the way to the main office of his firm, and his office was in—his office was in. Funny how a man can forget names when he is old. But he couldn't forget this station because it was— There was something special about this station—something special so that he couldn't forget it. Funny how a man can get old and forget things, like why this station was so special.

He shook his head again. They were outside now, and the air was cooler. There was mist in the air. Or maybe it was just his eyes. He rubbed them with his fingers, and things were a little clearer. The bus was standing over there. The lights were on inside, but there were no other passengers yet.

Old Fred was breathing heavily by the time he had climbed up into the bus. A man is getting pretty old, he thought,

when it takes the breath out of him to climb three steps into a bus—even when he's helped. He sat with his eyes closed for a little. Then he looked around.

IT WAS an old bus. The upholstery was shabby and worn. Two of the electric-light bulbs away at the back were burned out, and several of the others were very dim. The poor lights made the bus look much older than the battered seats and luggage racks.

Old Fred was suddenly alarmed. He must be on the wrong bus. He called the driver, who had taken out a small memorandum book and was checking something in it.

"I'm on the wrong bus," he quavered. "This isn't the bus I always take."

"It's all right, Mr. Anstruther," responded the driver reassuringly. "We use an old bus on this hop because so few people come this way."

There was something beginning to shape itself in the back of Old Fred's mind. Something that he had forgotten when he fell asleep. Something he didn't want to remember, and yet—

"I was in a hurry," he continued, "I had to get to . . . I had to get to—" He stopped in perplexity. "I had to get to somewhere, but I can't think just now—"

The driver tapped his pencil on the little book just a bit impatiently. "We'll be leaving in a few minutes," he said gently. "We're just waiting for two more passengers."

Old Fred sank back. Waiting for two more passengers! They didn't wait for two passengers when he was younger and he used to come through this station. There was the night they had come running and laughing, and just getting to the bus in time to pound on the doors and be let in before it drove off. Old Fred smiled contentedly, and then that little fear at the back of his mind grew a little bigger, and he was almost remembering—almost remembering who had been with him that night. Almost—

There were voices outside the bus, angry voices. The driver was stepping forward and helping people up the steps. There was a girl with her arm in a crude sling, and a boy with a heavy, blood-soaked bandage around his head.

"Clumsy, blundering fool!" the girl was saying. "You might have killed us both with your crazy driving—and all because I objected to finding you and that little gilt-edged babe in each other's arms!"

"It would have been a good thing," retorted the boy. "It would have been a good thing to shut that damned little mouth of yours for good." He laughed harshly. "And even then I'd have found you in hell ahead of me telling the devil lies!"

The girl dropped heavily into the seat ahead of Old Fred. She winced as her arm scraped on the arm rest. The boy dropped down beside her, still talking.

"And now old Moneybags Melton won't touch me with a ten-foot pole, let alone make me department head. And all because you had to drag him in instead of fighting your own battles—"

"Oh, shut up!" cried the girl. "You and your everlasting howling about what someone else has done to you. If you'd use your twopenny brain you might realize that if you hadn't played he-man to Gloria Melton's Impersonation of Temptation, I could have told Henry Melton anything in the world, and it wouldn't have made any difference—"

She broke off and began to laugh hysterically. "You looked so damn funny," she sobbed, "down on your knees kissing her tin-plated slippers."

"Oh, yeah?" said the boy. "Listen to—"

THE DRIVER came down the aisle. His voice was very clear. "Please be quiet," he said. "Way Station is the next stop."

Old Fred was disturbed again. "I wasn't going to Way Station," he protested, "I was going to—" Somehow he couldn't think where he was going. "But I wasn't going to Way Station!" He was almost angry, and that throb at the back of his mind was stronger. There was something wrong, so very wrong.

The driver smiled slightly. "We know about you, Mr. Anstruther," he said. "Everything is all right." He went back up to the front of the bus and started the engine. There was a noisy clash of gears. The bus began to move.

The girl turned her head and looked over the top of the seat at Old Fred. Her eyes were tear-streaked, but she smiled wanly. "I'm quite sure he knows," she said. "I'm quite sure you'll be all right. I'm quite sure we'll all be all right."

She turned to the boy, who was staring fixedly ahead. "Jack," she said gently.

The boy roused himself and looked at her. His eyes narrowed. "Don't 'Jack' me!" he responded angrily. "All your soft-soaping won't worm you back into my confidence this time. I'm sick of the sight of you and your clutching imitation of affection. I'm getting off the bus right here!" He lurched to his feet.

Almost without thinking, Old Fred held out a restraining hand and caught the boy by the arm. Something in the back of his mind was saying that the boy mustn't get off. It had something to do with the things he couldn't remember and the way the girl smiled.

"Wait a second, son," he urged. "Sit down and tell me about it." He was very much in earnest. The boy shook his arm irritatedly, but Old Fred's grip didn't relax, and the boy sat down.

"We were going to be married," he said shortly. "After a party for the staff at the boss' estate we were going to elope. But she ruined the whole thing and got me fired."

The girl broke in. "He hasn't told you where I found him, or why the boss fired him," she said resentfully. "Old Melton doesn't like his clerks fooling with his daughter. And then the hothead tried to kill me by smashing his car into a post—"

"As if I'd risk my own neck when it would have been such a pleasure to wring yours with my bare hands—"

"Please," interrupted Old Fred. "please don't fight."

"She's not worth fighting with," said the boy. "Anyhow, I'm getting off here." He got up and went forward to the driver. "I want to get off," he said. The driver looked up at him. Without slackening the speed of the bus he pulled out his memorandum book and glanced quickly at a page in it. He nodded.

"Yes," he said, "you can get off here." He hesitated a moment. "But I think I should tell you that it's a long, hard trip back alone."

The boy looked back at the girl. He laughed shortly. "I'll risk it," he said.

And then Old Fred had come forward and taken the boy's arm. There was something he had to say, if he could only think of it. "Please," he said, "I want to talk to you first."

The boy shook himself loose, but the driver looked up at him. "Yes," he said, "I think you'd better listen to him first."

OLD FRED led the boy back to his seat. The girl looked up, then dropped her eyes. There was something about her eyes—

"How did you two first meet?" Old Fred was asking.

The boy was resentful. "What difference does that make?"

Old Fred smiled. "I'm curious to learn how two young hellions like you ever came together."

"Well, as a matter of fact," said the boy, "she smashed a fender on my car."

"I did not!" interrupted the girl. "You cut across—" She bit her lip and left the accusation unfinished.

"What was your first date like?" continued Old Fred.

"We went to an amusement park, and she tried to pick up a sailor when I went off to buy hamburgers."

"If you hadn't done so much bragging about your R. O. T. C. training—" interjected the girl.

Old Fred's eyes twinkled. "And your first kiss?"

The boy didn't answer immediately. He was looking up ahead in the bus, but he was seeing farther than that, farther — "It was such a clear night," he said, "and there was just enough breeze from the lake so that you didn't mind the heat."

The girl looked up. Her eyes were very bright. And suddenly Old Fred knew why the station which they had just left was so special, and he began speaking rapidly:

"There was a girl once, back in that station. I met her when I was waiting for a bus. The station was new then, and they had old busses—oh, much older than this bus. The girl and I would meet very often, because I would be going to my firm's main office, and she was visiting an aunt just a few miles beyond. She had eyes just like this little girl's, and she was very lovely."

Old Fred stopped for breath. "She was always very lovely." The thought at the back of his mind—the thing that he should have remembered first of all when he awoke back there—was taking shape. He had a growing fear of the shape of it. "Her name was Mary, and she was very, very lovely. Ever after our honeymoon, that began in that station, we traveled together—every time except the last time. And that was the time I wouldn't have gone without her if she hadn't asked me to. That was the last time I traveled and then I had a telegram . . . a telegram—" So that was it—the thing he couldn't remember.

His voice drifted on into the distance, and he was miles away from it. The telegram. He reached into his pocket for it, still talking—senseless things—how odd that a voice should run on and on by itself until you told it to stop. He pulled out the crumpled piece of paper and thrust it blindly forward.

The boy coughed roughly. The girl drew in her breath with a slight catch. Neither made a move to take the telegram. The girl swayed toward the boy, and his hand fumbled for her wrist and held it.

Old Fred heard his voice again. "We used to fight all over the place, just like you two, and then it would be over and there would be only Mary in all the world. We would go off somewhere to celebrate, and it would start all over

again, but every time we understood each other better and there was something very dear—"

HE stopped because the brakes of the bus were shrieking and the driver was calling: "Way Station." Old Fred thrust the telegram into his pocket again and started toward the door. He had to hurry—the telegram said so. He had to hurry. And there was something more that he should know, something that still wasn't quite clear.

The bus driver helped him down and gave him an arm into the station. It was bright and pleasant inside. A man and a woman were standing there. The man was wearing a uniform like the driver's, but there was gold edging on the sleeves and collar. The woman was over in a corner, and Old Fred's eyes could not quite get her in focus. She stood there as if she were waiting for someone.

The man took Fred quickly by the hand. "Good old Fred," he said. "I've been looking forward to meeting you in person."

There were so many people that Old Fred couldn't remember, now that he was old. He said: "Yes, and it's good to see you, too." Just as he always did when he couldn't remember someone. The man nodded as if he understood.

"There's someone waiting here for you," he said. "We tried to send her on ahead to the city, but she insisted on meeting you here." He held out a hand, and the woman came forward.

Suddenly Old Fred's world was back around him, and someone was saying: "You're late, Fred, just as always. I'll bet you were flirting with that pretty little girl over there!"

Old Fred was looking incredulously at the yellow slip of telegram, and then at the woman. He crumpled the telegram in a small yellow wad, dropped it to the floor and reached out for her.

After a moment he heard an incredulous exclamation behind him. He released the woman and turned to see that the man was quietly explaining something to the boy and girl. After a little the boy slipped his arm around the girl, and she dropped her head to his shoulder.

But even though everything should have been very plain to Old Fred, he still turned to Mary in perplexity. Her eyes were very bright, just as they were that first time in the bus station. She held forth a newspaper, in which a small item on the front page had been marked.

So that even as the station keeper was saying: "The bus for the city is outside," and as the boy and girl were going out arm in arm, Old Fred was reading—slowly, because his eyes were so tired—

HEART ATTACK TAKES SHOE MANUFACTURER

DIES IN BUS STATION

CHICAGO, Jan. 9.—Frederick Anstruther, seventy-eight, racing against time to his wife's bedside—

THE JOKER

By MONA FARNSWORTH

THE JOKER

It had to be a practical joke—or madness!

By Mona Farnsworth

THE first time the man came into Peter's office he sat in the anteroom just like any other patient. He had to wait some time and he sat quietly, his long thin hands folded, one lank knee thrown over the other.

Finally the nurse showed him in and Peter, from behind his shining desk, gestured toward a chair. The man sat down. The chair creaked a little, and Peter thought once more that he'd have to get a new one. Then he stopped thinking about the chair. He moved his head and looked at the man sitting in it.

The gray north light fell full on his face so that Peter could see the trouble in his faded blue eyes, and the fine lines of distress that pulled his mouth.

So Peter began to talk, as any good psychiatrist must talk, gently, about this and that; small subjects leading here and there, trying to draw out his patient. But in a moment the man waved his hand.

"It isn't that," he said fretfully. "It isn't any of that at all. It's just—Well, you see, my name is Jonathan Doane. I'm a ghost—" And he vanished.

Peter sat still. He knew what this was. Bill Brady was pulling a new one. Bill had the damnedest ideas about what was funny. And his passion for practical joking amounted to fanaticism. That was the chief reason Peter had hesitated, in the first place, to share an office with him. It was too much like working with a Coney Island side show—you opened a drawer and a trick snake reared its rubber head; you reached for your appointment book and the thing snapped out of sight on a well-placed elastic band. That sort of thing, Peter felt, could get pretty tiresome.

Otherwise Bill was a good man. He was young, but he'd already proved his brilliance. He'd written a book on the eternal mystery—Man—that any older man would have been proud to claim. And Bill's pamphlet on "What Motivates Man's Subconsciousness?" was a masterly contribution. So Peter, after considering the thing from all angles, had agreed to share offices with him.

This was the result. Bill was putting over a ghost on him. Only—how in hell had he made the man vanish? He was—or had been—a perfectly good man; solid and substantial. And yet—The thought of ultra-violet rays snapped across Peter's mind. He tapped the desk top and considered it, his eyes on the apparently empty chair.

It could be done, of course. Bill might have rigged up some kind of contraption in his office—which would mean that Bill's eyes had been on him right along and were still, probably, observing him and the delicious effect of this latest trick with considerable relish.

Peter pulled himself out of his chair. With great nonchalance he walked behind the screen and went through the gesture of washing his hands. He came back and moved around the room idly, puttering. But he kept his eyes on the

chair occupied by the "ghost." Even behind the screen he hadn't once lost sight of it. And it hadn't moved. It hadn't creaked. There had been no sign that anyone still sat in it.

But somebody had to sit in it. Peter had seen the man with his own eyes; heard his voice; seen him move. He *had* to be there. And Peter would prove it. Ultra-violet rays could fool the eyes —but they couldn't produce an effect that would fool the sense of touch. Peter spun suddenly and sat in the chair. Instantly he bounced, whirled, stared.

The chair was undeniably empty.

Rage pumped a red haze across Peter's eyes. His fingers worked as if Bill's throat was gripped in them. He wished it was. He'd get a real kick out of throttling Bill. The darn jackass. Making a prize fool out of him like this. He'd fix— The rage ebbed. Curiosity came, scratching at him. The burning curiosity of the scientist. How in heck had Bill ever managed to make the guy *vanish?*

"Though I'll be damned if I'll ask him," Peter muttered sourly. "I'll be *damned* if I will!"

THE SECOND time Jonathan came he didn't wait in the reception room with the rest of the patients. He just walked in the door without even being announced. Peter didn't like that. He frowned.

"There are patients waiting," he said significantly.

"I'm sorry"—Jonathan looked very apologetic—"but you see I'm a ghost and, under the circumstances, it seems to me some exception might be made. I . . . er . . . I vanish so easily."

"I notice that," said Peter. He grinned. "But today Dr. Brady is at the hospital. You won't vanish this time."

"I'm glad of that." The man nodded his long head, but his mind seemed to be elsewhere. "If I could just have time to explain my difficulties," he fretted. "You see, I don't want to be a ghost. It's really—" He bent forward and Peter could see the trouble deep in his eyes. "It's really a miserable existence. People get so terrified. It's . . . it's a grave responsibility. Now you take, for instance, this place I'm haunting. There's a woman out there that I'm slowly scaring to death. You know her—she's a patient of yours—Mrs. Holstead Hamilton and— Oh, shoot!" said Jonathan. And vanished.

With a brief knock the door opened and Bill Brady stuck his red head inside.

"I'm back from the hospital," he said cheerily. "How are things going?"

"Dandy," said Peter, looking at him. "Just dandy."

That night the muffled ring of his bedside phone woke Peter at fifteen minutes after midnight. He saw the time on the illuminated dial of his watch as he groped for the receiver. He lifted it from its cradle and a voice cried.

"Doctor? Oh, doctor, please come! It's Mrs. Hamilton. She's fainted and we can't do a thing for her and—" The voice chopped off. Somewhere a muffled scream began. It didn't stop. Peter tapped at the phone connection. There was nothing to listen to but those distant muffled screams.

Peter cradled the telephone carefully. Mrs. Hamilton. The name rang a gong in his mind. He listened—and it came to him. That damn ghost of Bill's. Say, look. Was this a gag?

Peter sat on the edge of the bed and thought about it. That excited, hysterical voice on the phone, those artistically muffled screams—and Bill, this minute, leaning against a phone booth somewhere and laughing his fool head off.

"Huh," said Peter. He swung his legs back into bed. He snuggled his shoulders into the blankets. He closed his eyes.

He opened them again. He stared up at the shadowy ceiling. Suppose on

the other hand, it wasn't a gag? Suppose Bill wasn't in a phone booth chortling? Suppose—

"Oh, damn," said Peter. He sat up in bed, picked up the phone and dialed the number of Hamilton House. And the operator's metallic voice said:

"I'm sorry. There seems to be something wrong. The receiver is down, and I can hear something that sounds like screams. I'd better call—"

"Don't call anything," said Peter. "I'm a doctor—and I'm on my way."

Twenty-seven minutes later he swung his car into the drive of Hamilton House. As he slid down the brakes he looked at the huge brownstone monstrosity and wondered. It was a blaze of lights from the top of its mansard roof to the thick stones of its well-built basement. And somewhere somebody was still screaming.

PETER ran up the steps and pulled the old-fashioned bell. It jangled in the distance and before the echo died the door swung back.

"Oh, thank God! I mean— You are the doctor, sir?"

"Quite," said Peter. He followed the maid down the hall. She was small and she was neat, but he had never seen a face so white nor eyes so black with fright. She led him up the broad curving stairs. As they went up the screams came louder.

"She's been like this ever since I phoned you, sir," the maid whispered. "When I called you she was in a faint. But while I was talking to you she came out of it and began to scream. There's no stopping her, sir. It's . . . it's awful."

"I see," said Peter. He wouldn't have let the maid know it but he found himself agreeing with her one hundred percent. Those screams were awful. They slid up your spine and froze tight at the base of your brain. They knocked in your veins like splinters of ice. The maid opened the door and the screams exploded in Peter's face.

He went in. The room was a blaze of light. A great old chandelier was a dazzling pyramid of brilliance; wall lights gleamed, lamps glowed, and two shaded bulbs above the bed flooded down directly on the wrinkled parchment face, the eyes bulging with terror and the crimson cavern of the screaming mouth. Peter crossed the room. He stood beside the bed and looked down at her. He had never seen Mrs. Hamilton before denuded of the trappings of her aristocracy; the gold lorgnettes, the band of velvet concealing the wrinkles in her withered throat, the haughty air she wore like a suit of armor. And without them she looked pitifully thin and little and old.

"Mrs. Hamilton," said Peter gently, "Mrs. Hamilton." He bent down and picked up one of the transparent, heavily veined hands. "Mrs. Hamilton." The insistence of his voice reached her through her screams. They stopped—began—stopped—and died in a tremulous whimper. The maid moved a chair, and Peter sat down in it. He began to talk gently, probingly. But Mrs. Hamilton moved her head. Her voice was faint and hoarse from her screaming.

"It isn't that, doctor," she whispered. "Oh, I know. I realize you're being very professionally patient with what you consider the crazy whims of a silly old woman. Pooh! Don't waste your breath contradicting me—and don't sit there and blush like a schoolboy. It hasn't been your fault. It's been mine. I haven't been frank with you. I haven't dared be frank with you. I . . . I was afraid you'd think I was crazy. I was afraid perhaps you'd use your influence to have me put away somewhere. But now I . . . I can't stand it any longer. I can't . . . I *can't*—" Her voice broke, rose in a piercing scream.

"Mrs. Hamilton—" implored Peter.

"This place is haunted!" screamed

Mrs. Hamilton. "Haunted! Do you understand that? Haunted . . . haunted . . . *haunted!*"

Peter used the hypodermic to quiet her. Then he talked to the maid. But he found out very little.

"No, sir," she was twisting her fingers and her breath beat like the wings of a butterfly, "nobody seen it but Mrs. Hamilton. And she says nothing, sir. Sometimes she screams and sometimes she faints, but we can't get a word out of her. Oh, it's awful, sir!"

"Hm-m-m," said Peter. "Well, she'll be all right now. That hypodermic I gave her will give her a good night's rest. By morning she'll feel better."

"Yes, sir," said the maid, opening the door. "Good night, sir."

IN THE morning Peter reached his office early. The place was dim and quiet; the shades still drawn, his desk undusted. The maid hadn't come in yet, nor Miss Gribby his nurse-secretary. But someone was there. Peter saw his lean knees emerging from the depths of the overstuffed chair. He crossed the room angrily.

"Look here, you! I'm tired of this If Bill Brady's had the nerve to give you a key to my office—"

"Nobody gave me a key," said Jonathan. His eyes were pale; so pale they looked like holes, empty in his face. Pete avoided them.

"Then how the devil did you get in here?" he said.

"I told you," said Jonathan patiently, "I'm a ghost. I can get in anywhere. And I'll tell you something else, too." He rose up out of the shadowy depths of the chair. Peter stared. The man seemed to go up and up, long, attenuated, swaying a little. Peter blinked—and then he grinned. A crazy illusion. The man was hardly taller than Peter himself. But he was good and mad.

"I'm sick of this!" He leaned over and jabbed Peter with a lean finger. "I'm sick of it! I told you you'd have to do something about it. And you didn't do anything. Not a thing. And look what happened! She died. She died and it's your fault because you—"

"Who died?" said Peter. But he knew. He could feel the answer coming. He could see it behind the man's eyes. And Jonathan snapped:

"Who died! Who do you think died? Mrs. Hamilton, that's who. I scared her to death. I told you I would. And you wouldn't pay any attention. You didn't try. You wouldn't believe me. And now—" His voice cracked. "Oh, drat it," he said faintly—and disappeared.

Peter sat very still. After a minute he looked down. His fingers were yellow-white where they gripped his desk edge. He relaxed them, one after the other, using his will with deliberation. So. This thing was getting him.

He took a deep breath. He pulled his mind to slow, logical thinking. The doctor in him became detached and stood aside, viewing the whole thing quietly. There must, of course, be an explanation. Bill must, of course, be in back of it, somehow. But suppose he wasn't? The man in Peter shouted at the doctor. Suppose Bill didn't know beans about Jonathan. Suppose Bill had never heard of Mrs. Hamilton, or Mrs. Hamilton's hallucination that her house was haunted. Suppose this man Jonathan—Horror crawled in Peter's mind. Was he—could he be— A chill washed over him.

"I am sane," he said the words out loud. "I am perfectly sane. I've never seen a ghost in my life. That man was no ghost. He was real." All right. Real. Sure he was real. He'd sat in a chair. The chair had creaked under his weight. He'd talked. Peter had heard his voice. And he'd vanished.

"Damn it!" Peter jumped up. His

desk chair spun and banged. He strode across the room and flung open the door to Bill's office.

"Hi!" said Bill cheerily. "So you got down here early, too. Swell. I tell you it's always the early—"

"Look here!" yelled Peter. He had to yell. He had to hear the sound of his own voice. And he had to make Bill hear it. He reached Bill's desk. He pounded on it. "You think you're damn smart sending this man Jonathan down with his crazy song and dance. You think you're—"

"Say," Bill leaned back in his chair, "have you gone nuts? I don't know anybody named Jonathan, and I certainly—"

"All right! All right!" yelled Peter. "Deny it if you like—" Deny it. Of course he'd deny it. His denial didn't mean a thing. He'd have to keep up the pretense of innocence. If he didn't the whole fabric of this idiotic, practical joke of his would fall apart. But it was a practical joke just the same. It had to be. God! If it wasn't! A deranged mind—seeing ghosts—having hallucinations.

"Just tell me this." Peter leaned forward. His face felt like a plaster mask. His mouth was stiff, and he had to think to make it form words. But behind the stiffness a warm glow was rising. He was going to be pretty smart. He was going to find out just exactly how much Bill had known. And if Bill knew—well, wouldn't that prove that Bill—

"Listen," said Peter, "just tell me this. How did you know, when I didn't, that Hamilton House was supposed to be haunted—and how did you know that Mrs. Hamilton—"

"Oh, so *that's* it!" Bill grinned. "So that's got your goat, has it? I wouldn't wonder. But why shouldn't I know about it? It's in all the papers." He rummaged around in his wastebasket till he found the latest edition of the *Morning Star*. He held it out, still folded, Peter noticed, so that the headline couldn't be missed.

WELL-KNOWN SOCIETY WIDOW DIES OF SHOCK

Servants Insist House Is Haunted

"See?" Bill shoved the paper under Peter's nose. "There's the whole story, pal. And aren't you the hell of a doctor," he grinned, "losing your patient to a spook?"

Peter burst out laughing. He laughed uproariously, in great gusty relief.

FOR THREE weeks after that nothing happened. That is, nothing much. Bill found somewhere a special kind of ink that vanished completely after two hours. He managed to fill Peter's fountain pen with it so that, one afternoon, Peter opened his appointment book to a lot of blank pages. Then the druggist who filled his prescriptions called up and wanted to know what the hell he was to do with all the prescription blanks that had come in with nothing written on them.

Aside from this little activity Bill did nothing. He made no further mention of the Hamilton affair. Peter didn't mention it either. But every time he thought about it he got warm and happy. He'd been smart to pin it on Bill so neatly.

Then one Tuesday morning he opened his office door and there was Jonathan, his long knees tented in front of him, his lanky hands hanging from the chair arms.

Peter stood still, looking at him. He felt himself grow cold and hot and cold again. He felt his heart tight in his throat, like a balled fist. Then he saw Jonathan move. He heard the chair squeak under the man. Peter took a step forward.

"And this time you've got to do something," Jonathan said, as if he were continuing a conversation. "I didn't care while the house was empty. When Mrs. Hamilton died and they buried her, the servants all left. That was fine then. I didn't care. Butch could do anything he wanted to. But now this girl's moving in—"

"What girl?" said Peter. "And who is Butch?" His voice sounded tight. Like somebody else's voice. He hadn't meant to ask those questions. He didn't like the sound of them as they came out of his mouth. If Jonathan went back to Bill and reported this convensation—as, of course, he would—

Bill had sent the man here on purpose to ride Peter. Peter knew that. He was sure of it. Hadn't he figured it all out before? There wasn't a doubt in the world. Not a single doubt.

And Jonathan said:

"The girl I'm talking about is Mrs. Hamilton's niece. Her name's Lorna Hart. Mrs. Hamilton left the house to her, and she's moving in. And I tell you—" Jonathan got excited. His voice rose. He pulled himself out of his chair and towered above Peter. "I tell you you've got to do something about it! I won't scare that girl to death the way I scared Mrs. Hamilton! I won't. I—" His voice broke. Was he going to vanish again? Peter saw his own hands clench to white knuckles. But Jonathan didn't vanish. He sat down suddenly, and the movement seemed to help him.

"You've got to do something," he said stubbornly.

Peter looked at him. There might be a way to get to the bottom of this. There might be a way to face Bill with proof he couldn't deny.

"All right," he heard himself say, "I'll do my best. Now just what is your trouble? If you don't want to haunt this place, what is there to force you—"

"It's the law," said Jonathan. "I have to haunt it unless— But you're the psychologist," he broke off fretfully. "Why ask me?"

Peter's pencil drummed out a tune on the desk top. He shifted in his chair. He pulled his mind into shape and concentrated it carefully. He'd question this man and trap Bill. He'd get Bill somehow. He'd get him in a corner so that all Bill would be able to do would be to grin and say, "Sure, you idiot—sure I did it. Look, this is the way I made him vanish—smart, wasn't I?" And then Bill would tell him. Bill would have to tell him. Wasn't he Bill's friend? And when Bill played a joke—Of course Bill was playing a joke. Of course. Sure, he was. And Peter'd prove it. Peter'd play the game, too. He'd play right along with them. Sure. That was the way. Just make believe he was swallowing the whole thing. Fool this stooge of Bill's—fool Bill. Just play along—

Peter pulled a deep breath into his lungs. He set his teeth. He said, grimly: "Just what were you—when you were alive?"

"I was a restaurant owner," said Jonathan promptly. "I had a nice place down on Randolph near Peach."

"Then why don't you haunt your restaurant?" said Peter.

"Because," said Jonathan impatiently, "that isn't where Butch beat me to death. Can't you understand there's a law—"

"All right, all right," said Peter. "Now who is Butch?"

"He was the gangster Baby Joe put on me. Baby Joe was the boss, and when I wouldn't sell liquor—"

"In your restaurant?"

"During Prohibition," said Jonathan, "their game was to get me to sell liquor, and they'd play both ends against the middle. They'd bootleg the liquor for me and soak me with their prices, then

they'd soak me some more 'protecting' me from the police and other gangsters. It was a great racket."

"And you wouldn't play?"

"I told the cops about it." Jonathan was proud of that. "I told 'em everything," his faded eyes glowed.

"So Butch got you," said Peter.

"Yeah. They took me out to the Hamilton place. It was deserted then. Nobody lived in it but a caretaker. Mrs. Hamilton was in Europe or some place. Anyhow they tied up the caretaker and beat me till I died. And now—"

"How often do you have to haunt?" said Peter—and then snapped his pencil with suddenly furious fingers. Good gosh! Was he *believing* this yarn?

And Jonathan said: "In the beginning we only did it on anniversaries. Every year on the same day—you know. But now we do it often. Butch," he added in explanation, "gets a kick out of it."

"He gets a kick out of beating you?" The psychologist in Peter got an idea. He leaned forward. "Look here," he said, "I can stop the whole thing if you can get Butch down here. If I can talk to him—"

"You mean you can stop the necessity of haunting? You mean you can release me—" Jonathan long hands twisted. His eyes got darker.

"You get Butch down here," said Peter, and leaned back in his chair. He grinned happily. What would Bill do about producing the gangster Butch?

The nurse knocked on the door and stepped in.

"There's a girl out in the waiting room," she whispered. "She's— You'd better see her right away, as long as nobody else is in here—"

"Nobody—" said Peter. He looked around. Sure enough Jonathan had gone.

"The girl's name," whispered the nurse, "is Lorna Hart. She says she's Mrs. Hamilton's—"

"Show her in," said Peter.

THE GIRL came in, and immediately Peter knew he was going to have his hands full. She was that kind of girl. Little, and ash blond, with tissue-thin skin and shadows under her enormous blue eyes.

"Doctor, I'm so frightened," she plunged without any kind of preamble, "I'm so terribly frightened, doctor. If I'd known Aunt Kate's place was haunted, I'd have died before I'd come. Honestly I would. And now—"

"Why not go home again?" said Peter. He smiled at her. He put warm sympathy into his tone. But she twisted her fingers.

"I can't go home!" she wailed. "Don't you understand? I took all my money out of the savings bank to come out here and I— All I have now is this house and if that ghost comes, doctor, Ill—"

"Now, now," said Peter, "don't let's be absurd about this. There's no such thing as a ghost, you know that. All you've got to do is fix your mind firmly on the conviction—"

"Then what was it killed Aunt Kate? Listen, doctor. I've known my Aunt Kate ever since I was born. And she was the most sensible, unimaginative woman on the face of the earth. And if *she* saw ghosts—"

"I know," said Peter soothingly, "I know. But of recent months your aunt had been suffering considerably with her nerves. Perhaps you didn't know that. And without doubt it was this condition of her nerves that caused her to see—to have her hallucinations. Now you are young and—"

"And I'm scared to death, doctor! I tell you, if I should ever lay my eyes on a ghost I . . . I'd kill myself! I would. I know I would!"

"Oh, no you wouldn't," said Peter

glibly. "You're much too sensible a girl for that. Now you run along—nothing's going to happen—and if it does I'm right on the other end of the telephone, and I'll come running." He went to the door with her, opened it, watched her walk, little and light and frightened, down the hall.

"Now there's a cute little blond number," said Bill. Peter turned. Bill's office door was open and Bill was leaning against the jamb, grinning. Peter cracked. He gripped Bill's arm.

"Listen, you big practical joking bohunk," his voice was shaking, and he couldn't stop it. "If you pull any of your stunts with that girl, I'll skin you. If you so much as go within a mile of that Hamilton House—"

"Oh-oh," said Bill. "So that's the way it is! Pardon *me,* my dear sir. I didn't understand you had your eye —"

"I haven't," snapped Peter. "I'm not talking about my eye—I'm talking about this man Jonathan that has been appearing and disappearing in my office. If you pull any crazy stunt with this girl that frightens her, I'll . . . I'll have you up before the Medical Board. I swear I will. I'm so blamed sick of Jonathan materializing out of nothing and vanishing into the same place—"

"Hm-m-m," said Bill, looking at Peter closely, "I can see where it would get—sort of tiresome."

"Well, it is," said Peter. "And I wish you'd quit it." He turned and slammed into his own office. But as the door closed he realized that Bill hadn't moved. That he was still standing there looking at him.

THAT night the girl, Lorna, got him out to Hamilton House at half past twelve. She'd called up herself, her voice wild and cracked over the phone. By the time Peter got there she was out on the side porch having the finest attack of hysterics he'd ever come across. Just as her aunt had had before her. But now there was no maid to attend her. There was nobody.

"You're alone in this house?" said Peter, after he'd got her so she could talk.

"Of course I'm alone. Who would be here? Even if I could afford their wages—which I can't—none of Aunt Kate's servants would stay here on a bet."

"Good grief," said Peter. No wonder the kid had had hysterics. Alone in a house like that would give anybody the heebe-jeebes. Of course—that's what it was. "You could," said Peter, "imagine practically anything."

"No," said the girl. "No, doctor." Her big eyes fastened on his face. "It's not imagination. Honestly. You can't *imagine* a thing like that. Why, it was the most brutal beating you ever saw! It was—" her voice quivered. Hysteria showed through like light through gauze.

"A . . . *beating?*" said Peter. Ice fountained up his spine. "What kind of beating?"

"It was a big brute, I could see him plain as day. I saw him first when I was in the hall upstairs. He came out of one of the rooms. He was so *real!* I thought he was real. I . . . I was frozen stiff, I was so scared. I couldn't move. Then I realized he didn't see me at all. He seemed to look right through me. He seemed to be hunting for something. He kept going up and down the hall opening doors. Then he found him."

"Found who?" said Peter. The doctor in him was alert. His eyes searched her face, her eyes, the thoughts back of her eyes. He was satisfied. This thing was real enough to her, anyhow.

And she said: "The man the big brute was hunting for. He was a tall man, very thin, with light, sort of faded eyes. The big man got him and beat him— Uh!" Her breath caught. A

long shudder tore through her. And an idea rocketed through Peter.

His eyes narrowed. His mouth pulled tight. "Look here, young lady," he said, "have you ever talked to Dr. William Brady—Bill Brady?"

"Dr. Brady?" The hysteria fled, she smiled. "Oh, *yes!* Isn't he the best-looking thing? I met him this afternoon—quite by accident."

"You did, eh?" said Peter. He let several minutes go silently past. Then he said, "You know, hypnotism is a curious science. For instance, you could have been hypnotized into seeing that whole vision tonight. Have you, by the way, ever been hynotized?"

"No," said Lorna. "No, I haven't. But it's funny you should ask that—Dr. Brady asked me the same thing this afternoon."

It was ten o'clock the next morning when Peter, glancing up from his mail, found Jonathan's mournful eyes regarding him. Peter pulled in a deep breath and held it. He put a quiet smile carefully into his eyes.

"I brought him," said Jonathan. "He didn't want to come worth a cent—but I told him—"

"And it don't make a damn bit of difference, see?" Peter turned to the strange voice. He saw the strange man, standing against the door, his ox shoulders braced, his unshaven jaw thrust out, his little eyes glittering. "I'm gonna haunt, see?" he said. "I been doin' it, I like it, and I'm gonna keep on doin' it. Ain't nobody gonna stop me. Not you with your high-flown doctor's gab, nor neither this lousy, jelly-gutted sissy here, nor—"

"Stop him, doctor," wailed Jonathan. "You've got to stop him! He . . . we scared that girl nearly to leath last night. And—"

"And we're gonna scare her plumb to death tonight, see? We're gonna scare her, because I want to scare her. It's a lotta fun—"

"No!" screamed Jonathan. "No!" He leaped to his feet. He flayed his arms. The big man caromed from the door. He grabbed Jonathan around the knees, threw him down. Peter could see the cudgel in the huge fist. Then—the office was empty. They'd both vanished.

Peter swung around and flung open Bill Brady's door. Bill looked up from the charts he was studying. His eyes, watching Peter, had a queer light in them.

"Jonathan bothering you again?" he said.

Peter closed the door. He leaned against it, trembling. It was a long time before he could move. A very long time.

THAT night he couldn't sleep. He walked the floor chewing his pipestem. He told himself he was thinking of that kid out there in the Hamilton House all by herself. Frightened, lonely, the huge old house creaking all around her. And suppose Bill had hypnotized her to see that damn vision again? Suppose, even at this minute— Peter chewed his pipestem. He walked the floor.

If he went out there—what would *he* see? Suppose the girl saw the vision again—would Peter see anything? Of course he wouldn't see anything. Bill hadn't hypnotized him. And no sane person saw ghosts. No sane person—but Peter had seen Jonathan. But God! Jonathan wasn't a ghost! Jonathan wasn't— He was an ordinary man. Bill had sent him as a practical joke. Bill had sent him. Bill had to send him. Peter had seen Jonathan. And sane men didn't see ghosts. Sane men didn't — God! They *didn't*—not *sane* men!

Peter couldn't stand it any longer. He was shaking. The sweat on him shone in the soft amber light. He got dressed. He slid under the wheel of his car and drove out. For the third

time he found Hamilton House a blaze of light. For the third time he ran up the steps and rang the bell. For the first time nobody answered. Nobody came to open the door. Nobody made a sound.

Peter banged on the door. He ran around the house hunting for an unlocked window. He called Lorna. He yelled. He threw a rock in, breaking the glass of the front door. He reached in and turned the key. He found Lorna sprawled on the bottom steps of the broad curving staircase. She was dead.

Peter picked her up. She was little and light. He held her in his arms, the way he'd hold a baby—her head against his shoulder and her knees bent. He turned back toward the door, carrying her like that. And he stopped. Bill Brady stood in the doorway.

"Peter"—his voice was quiet, very gentle. "Can I help you, Peter?"

"Help me?" Something inside Peter snapped. "Help . . . *me!* You devil! You've killed her. You crazy, practical joking fool! You . . . you— Take your hands off me! Don't touch me! Don't—"

"I'm not," said Bill gently. "It's all right, Peter. I tell you, let's go in here. We ought to lay her on the couch. Here's one . . . here in the library. Come on—" He led the way. He passed by the big library table that had the telephone on it. "Lay her down here," said Bill. He took the girl's body out of Peter's arms. Peter flung around.

"I know why you've done this!" His fury held him stiff. He had to work his lips to make the words come. "I know. I just realized it. You think you'll fix me so you can get my practice! You're jealous. And you think —" His voice cut, strangled. He lurched. If he could get his hands on Bill's throat. If he could curl his fingers tight—tight.

Bill saw him coming. He saw his thoughts spitting from his eyes. Bill knotted his fist and let Peter have it. Just once. Peter dropped, cold. Then Bill picked up the phone and called the ambulance.

When he heard the bell jangling in the distance he stepped out on the front porch of Hamilton House to meet it.

"Two for you," he said to the driver. "One's dead, the other—" He chewed his lip. This hurt. "The other's . . . crazy. It's . . . it's Doctor Peter Gale. I'll go with you. I . . . I want him to get the best of everything." Bill saw Peter comfortable, then he climbed in and sat beside him.

All the way in to the hospital he never took his eyes from Peter's white unconscious face. How could a man like Peter have gone so completely insane? What portion of his mind had been weak enough to give way like this? How could he, knowing so much of mental illnesses, have failed to recognize the symptoms in himself? Peter. Strong, fine, grand Peter. Bill reached out and touched his hand. And when he saw the small splash, and felt the wetness in his eyes, he wasn't ashamed. Peter had been a swell guy.

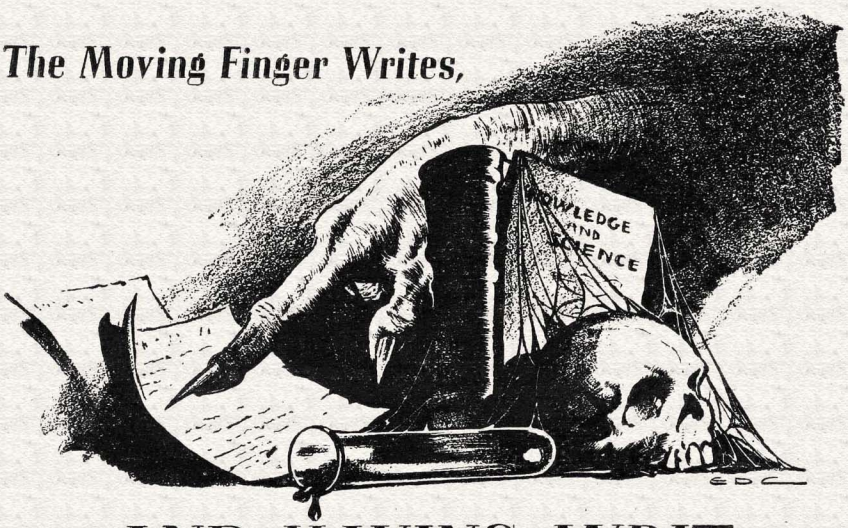
Bill stayed with Peter at the hospital all night. At dawn he regained consciousness. But it didn't make any difference. The minute he opened his eyes and saw Bill he started right in where he'd left off—talking about Jonathan; blaming him for the girl's death. Poor Peter. Crazy as a loon.

Bill put off going to the office as long as he could. He hated going back there. Hated unlocking the door; hated the thought of Peter's empty chair.

But he had to go finally. He went in slowly, heavily and closed the door. From the depths of an overstuffed chair a long, lanky man with faded blue eyes looked up at him.

"I wish you'd help me, doctor," he said pitifully. "You see, the trouble is . . . I'm a ghost." And he vanished.

The Moving Finger Writes,



---AND HAVING WRIT---

"—some like apples, some like inions—"

Dear Editor:

Having just finished the third issue of Unknown, I'd like to give you my impressions of it. Here goes:

Issue No. 1: Excellent, as a whole the best of the three. A good mixture of fear, humor and unknown. Cover was very good.

Issue No. 2: Good, the feature novel dropped a little, but the shorts were excellent. Cover, good workmanship but a poor scene chosen.

Issue No. 3: Excellent. Feature novel best of the three, but the short stories dropped far down with the exception of "The Cloak," which was very, very good. The cover admirably expressed the theme of the story. Of all the tales in the three issues the only one I really disliked was "Divide and Rule," which, in my opinion, was barely worth reading.

Unknown has passed my "three-issue trial" well, and is hereby advanced to my "regular list."

Thanks for a swell new magazine, Mr. Campbell, and good luck.—Lyman H. Martin, 185 Main Street, Marlboro, Massachusetts.

Price was accurate—try Page 123, 2nd paragraph, April issue.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

The Outsiders here in Washington are watching with interest your development of the definition of what Unknown is to be. The second issue is a distinct "up" over the first.

Hubbard's was a fine little piece—not so little, either—and quite enjoyable. The development of Stevie's character appeals to the mouse within us, and his romantic adventures in an Islam that never was, form an engrossing adventure in fantasy.

"You Thought Me Dead" was only fair—distinctly of the standard weird type, descended from the days of William Wilson.

"Strange Gateway" had a peculiar appeal for me in its impressionistic picture of a man falling asleep at the wheel. He was fortunate in that a tire didn't blow out on him in that half-awake state, like one did on me. The weird interlocking of pictures and scenes in the story, where you couldn't tell which was true, which was vision of the past, and which mere fantasy, never did come out quite straight in my mind. If the character who tells the story killed the murderers upon their

return from burying the body, and immediately told his story to the sheriff—why the fine coating of dust on everything in the cabin, and the blood long-dried?

"Divide and Rule" is the gem of the issue, and I definitely decided on L. Sprague de Camp as my favorite author. The policy of Unknown begins to shape up—adventure on a rather distant background of either science-fiction or fantasy.

Your brief article, I suppose, was of some interest to nonscientific readers.—Jack F. Speer, 1812 R N. W., Washington, D. C.

Hm-m-m—they would do well as the ghouls, at that!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As was to be expected, Unknown dropped somewhat from the level of the first issue, but not as much as I had thought it would. The main factor in keeping it on a level with issue No. 1—against the terrific competition of "Sinister Barrier"—was De Camp's swell two-part story, "Divide and Rule!"

I'm especially partial to tales of conquered humanity turning the tables against the conquerors, and this was an especially good one of that type. I suspect it would have been in *Astounding* eventually, had not Unknown been created. I think those that read *Astounding Science-Fiction* but not Unknown because they think it is just fantasy are going to miss a lot of good science-fiction.

"The Ultimate Adventure" was pretty good. Gad! A horrible thought just came to me. What if they had made Stevie read one of Lovecraft's stories! If "Ultimate Adventure" is ever made into a movie I can just picture the three Ritz brothers as the three ghouls.

"Death Time" was another which could easily have made the grade of *Astounding Science-Fiction.*

Watch it, ed. Too many of these guy-kicks-the-bucket-and-doesn't-know-it stories. "Strange Gateway" and "You Thought Me Dead" were a little too muddled for this already muddled intellect.

"Returned from Hell" would make a good movie thriller, but seems like a slight wavering of a line on the thus-far-bright escutcheon of Unknown. Not a blot, but just a trivial mistake. The rest of the May issue troops by in close order, with "Divide and Rule" leading the parade and "The Cloak" fluttering close behind.

Yes. By all means let us have fact articles on those things that are, but are unexplainable. Mathematically: March: 88.2 April: 82.8. May: 83.3. When you look at these figures, you can feel good, because most magazines rate consistently in the 60s with me

I would prefer, if possible, to have all the illustrations done by Cartier and Rogers, with Orban filling in on what the two former couldn't make.

Hope you get something about the *Elder Gods* for their own sake. Adios.—Arthur L. Widner, Jr., Box 122, Bryantville, Mass.

Articles: Pro. I've spoken to Eric Frank Russel about one.

Dear Editor:

I'm in favor of the articles of which at this moment are meaningless truths, which you mentioned in the editorial.—Ernest W. Gschwender, 7827 Senator Avenue, Detroit, Mich.

Mona Farnsworth said she knew the woman who was the model for "The Duchess."

Dear Mr. Campbell:

You have really turned the trick. The inception of Unknown is the most important event in this field in years. If you can keep up your present sizzling pace, you may rest content that your admiring readers have a magazine that supplies a new and unexpected entertainment.

In your first issue, "Sinister Barrier" was a valiant effort to interpret the unknown. Unfortunately, as Don Brazier pointed out in his letter, after the nature of the menace became known, the story became routine. Nevertheless, it was a very good job. I would like to see more stories based on Fort's discoveries, and also some articles on the unknown as you suggested in your editorial.

The April issue was a knockout. "The Ultimate Adventure" is the best fantasy I have read in years. It surpasses everything Hubbard has done. Let's have more like it from him. After such a masterpiece I didn't expect to find much else My mistake! "Divide and Rule" looked so intriguing that I began it even though it was a serial. Now that I have finished it, I can tell you that it was a great story, the kind of thing I hoped De Camp would write. This author has vast

originality and a sense of humor. When in this story he developed character and atmosphere, instead of penning a short, he really accomplished something. If he writes more long novels, I see no reason why he shouldn't become your best author and a worthy successor to Weinbaum. The other stories were fair, with the edge going to Price's short.

In the May issue, you gave us another masterpiece. Three in two issues is a record for any magazine. "Returned from Hell" was a horror story to the nth degree. Excellent writing raised it far above the level of the usual weird story. I could hardly put it down. "Divide and Rule!" I have already mentioned. "Danger in the Dark" was only fair, but the shorts were the best crop yet, especially "The Piping Death" and "Whatever." The latter story conveyed its atmosphere beautifully. Mona Farnsworth ought to write a novel.

Scott's cover was magnificent On the inside Kirchner was the best, but the others are O. K. Unknown has earned all the praise I or anyone else can give. Don't lower your standards!—Frederick Morgan, 39 West 11th St. New York, N. Y.

Virgil Finlay coming up!

Ye Ed.:

It's hard to find enough words of praise for the newest—and best, in my opinion—of the fantasy magazines. Yes, even *Astounding* will have to take second place—for the first time in more than four years—if Unknown maintains, or improves on, the standard of its first issue.

Seems, to this no-doubt nutty fantasy fan, that *Astounding's* newly-born brother is as near perfection as any product of the human mind can be. White, glossy paper would, of course, enhance the pleasure derived from browsing through Unknown's enchanted pages; but, so far as the stories are concerned, you're hitting the high spots.

You've got together a pretty decent mob of artists, too; with Scott's faultless cover and Cartier's "Sinister Barrier" illustrations leading the bunch. That peer of fantasy illustrators, Virgil Finlay, is about the only needed addition to Unknown's art staff.

All we want now is a S. & S. out-and-out weird story magazine, similar in size, format and price to Unknown. With these three magazines covering the entire field of fantasy, I guess we could afford to ignore the juvenile, "wild Western" and sexy types of so-called science-fiction magazines that have sprung up since the middle of 1936.

What is Ye Ed.'s reaction? Even if you, Mr. Campbell, hadn't time to edit three magazines, you might be able to assist in launching the new publication onto its maiden voyage—and you'd have only one rival worthy of the name with which to contend.

To close, here's my grading of Unknown's first issue—and a mighty tough job it was to decide, so nearly equal were the yarns in quality:

1. "SINISTER BARIER"—not one little complaint!
2. "DARK VISION"—Long's best in a *long* time—sorry!
3. "DEATH SENTENCE"—more like this.
4. "TROUBLE WITH WATER"—and this.
5. "WHERE ANGELS FEAR—"
6. "CLOSED DOORS."
7. "WHO WANTS POWER?"—last, but still darned good, and well worth reading.

Hubbard's "The Ultimate Adventure" sure sounds fascinating—and I've got to wait four or five weeks for it! Loud groans!!—T. Moulton, 11 Aylesbury Avenue, South Shore, Blackpool, England.

"The Moving Finger" slugs a typewriter key these days.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I have just awakened from a deep and pleasant dream to find it is reality. I dreamed three dreams, and in between, a nightmare. First of all I dreamed about a magazine that came out and immediately knocked me over one fine February morning by letting me read the finest fantasy ever published—"Sinister Barrier," with a bunch of other mighty fine yarns, too; then I had a nightmare in which I wondered if Unknown would go on being good, getting better, giving me socko reading, splendid illustrations, and my favorite authors. And then I had the other two dreams—first came "The Ultimate Adventure" and then "Returned from Hell"—and it banished my worries. I knew then, that Unknown was forging ahead from the start and would continue doing so to my delight. And suddenly I realized that all of this was no dream, that what many of us science-fiction-leaguers have wanted in the way of fantasy has come true. AND CAMPBELL DID IT FOR

US! It took a lot of hunting around and courage to start Unknown. It takes courage because:

1. You're giving us different stories.
2. You're giving us slick-mag" writing, and
3. "You're raising pulps out of the gutter into the celestial heights.

No more houses of dripping blood, grinning harridans with butcher knives, bodies dangling brokenly from razor-bladed rafters.

I have enjoyed every issue of Unknown. So far no story has grated me the wrong way very much.

Let me say a word here for "The Cloak," Robert Block's swell concoction. It's the best story of its type I've read in two years. More from him. "Divide and Rule" is finished and it was excellent. The illustrations were humorous. I got a kick out of that sentence printed on armor—"Give 'Em the Works."

"Danger in the Dark" and "Missing Ocean' both knocked the bull's-eye black and blue. "Whatever" was good. "The Piping Death"—well, O. K.

And next issue? Well, Norvell Page's story sounds swell. I enjoy history anyway! Bring it on, forty thousand words in one compact Unknown dish. It's just like eating a bowl of hash when I read Unknown—I'm always pleasantly surprised to find what's in it.

Keep it up, Mr. Campbell. Your reader's column "—and Having Writ—" is an original idea to say the least. We can all get together there, we avid fantaseers, every month. Thanks for good reading.

The moving finger writes, and having writ —takes the paper out of the typewriter and sends it to Campbell.—Ray Douglas Bradbury, 1841 So. Manhatten Place, Los Angeles, Calif.

We said Unknown was gonna be different—and we meant it!

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As the most consistent griper among your thousands of readers, I feel it my bounden duty to register my kicks anent your new magazine. In the first place, the thing that blew my cork was the fact that such swell stories as "Sinister Barrier," "Divide and Rule" and "The Missing Ocean" belonged to my favorite science-fiction magazine, *Astounding*. Doggone it, now I've got to buy *two* magazines instead of one, or I'm liable to miss the cream of the science-fiction crop. Me, that's helping keep a half dozen stf mags off the rocks every month, at anywhere up to two bits per rock! And in the second place—

To whom it may concern: I do not like weird fiction. Yarns about demons, zombies, incubi, succubi, vampires, werewolves and such give me an acute gripe. Now, take the May Unknown. Right off the bat, we have "Returned from Hell," a typical demon-zombie story. But the author, Steve Fisher, makes the start of the story so interesting, holds the interest throughout the story so consistently, and draws his characers so convincingly, that I am thoroughly disgusted with him. It wasn't a typical demon story at all. In fact, it wasn't a typical anything. It was just top-flight entertainment in any man's language. I liked it. And that's against my principles. The same goes for Hubbard's "Danger in the Dark," another demon tale. Before I finished the story, I found myself half believing in the island monster, and thoroughly enjoying the yarn. "This has got to stop," I told myself. "I don't like weird fiction!"

As I read on, my eye glommed avidly upon Block's "The Cloak." "Here," I solaced myself, "is a story I can wholeheartedly dislike. A vampire yarn." No soap. I devoured it with relish in spite of myself. Was I burned?

However disappointing the rest of the magazine may have been, Mona Farnsworth's "Whatever," an amorphous mess of dream-stuff, lived up to my fondest hopes. Hurray! It was really lousy. My joy was not unmixed, though. Only one juicy plum of mediocrity in the whole issue!

With a resigned sigh, I crossed Unknown off the list of "Magazines I do NOT buy."—Russell M. Wood, 1055 Bayview Avenue, Wilmington, Calif.

We're in a kind of tough position, you know. No one ever ran a magazine like Unknown before, and only by what you readers say of the stories we offer can we know what we should give you. Comments pro and con are equally wanted.

Dear Sir:

I seldom take the trouble to write to anyone and never, be assured, have I taken it to express appreciation or comment on any literature that may fall into my hands. However, I am forced to admit that your new publication, Unknown, has jarred me out of my cor-

respondence lethargy. As a busy radio announcer I seldom have the time to read, but when those rare moments do come I devote most of them to science-fiction.

Now, here was my first reaction to Unknown. Everyone knows that when a person indulges in any pleasure-giving stimulant he reaches a point where the substance in question no longer gives pleasure. I am forced to confess that I had begun to lean somewhat in this direction in regards to science-fiction. I had read so much of it that it began to make itself stereotyped in my mind if not on the paper. Then, along came Unknown. Here, indeed, was sublimated science-fiction for an imagination jaded with spaceships, suspended animations, transplanted brains and the more recent world-lines.

In short, gentlemen, as you've probably deduced, I'm merely endeavoring to tell you that I enjoy your new magazine and every story in it with as great if not greater intensity than the first science-fiction story I ever read—at the tender age of ten.

As I say, all the stories are fine; I can comment on but two. These, I feel, require comment of some nature.

First, and most naturally, is "Sinister Barrier." Here is a masterpiece of imaginative art built on a good solid foundation of fact. I hope we can all count on another composition by Eric Frank Russell in the near future. But, if you were to tell us that he died mysteriously—

And now to "Returned from Hell." This story is really rankling me. A marvelous theme for Unknown reduced to sensationalism and employing that archenemy of the truly enjoyable fantastic—sex! There are other magazines in which stories of this nature would be well received. I don't say I didn't enjoy it, but certain passages could and should have been eliminated for the general improvement of the content.

But I dislike to criticize. The axiom, "Judge not, lest ye be judged" is only too applicable. Keep them coming like the first three issues and you can be assured of the constancy of this reader.—Ned French, Myles Standish Hotel, Boston, Mass.

"Slaves of Sleep" isn't exactly a gentle fairy story, though.

Dear Mr. Campbell:

The second issue of Unknown rated as follows:

Cover—C.
"The Ultimate Adventure"—C.
"The Changeling"—B+.
"You Thought Me Dead"—C.
"Death Time"—B—.
"Strange Gateway"—C.
"Divide and Rule"—B+.
Inside Illustrations—C.
"Strange Worlds"—C.

The long novel was not as good as "Sinister Barrier," but the average of the short stories for this issue were better; De Camp being your best bet for a steady writer. I was very much interested in "The Changeling." I used to read a great deal of the old Greek and Roman mythology and this fell right into line. In fact I like the picturization of Mars far better than our popular cartoonists usually have of a gross, unshaved, brutal fellow—the Greeks and Romans had the spirit of youth and adventure in Ares and Mars. "The Ultimate Adventure" struck a too fairylike note. "Death Time" has been used before and is a good standard plot. I liked "Divide and Rule" for its interesting portrayal of changed conditions that could usher in feudalism again. The characters are real. I shall be glad to see the rest of it.

I must say this, that Unknown is a totally new brand of fantasy—a kind of fantasy that has been written in the past, but only in the classics. Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass" would have been published in Unknown if written today. —Thomas Gardner, 903 John Jay Hall, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.

And—L. Ron Hubbard's back next month with "The Ghoul"—who makes a pleasant companion for an evening's reading!

Continued from page 78

level this kingdom half so much as he is to find you and put you to the stake. God help you, blundering mortal, for that is all the help you'll ever get. I know."

And, so saying, he walked away and the Marids barred and bolted the door behind him.

"Zongri," said Jan, going to the place where the queen had stood, "coming here—for me!" And a cold chill of horror went up and down his spine. But suddenly he straightened and marched back to the bed where he tossed off two drinks neat.

He threw the empty bottle aside and ripped off the white silk robe. Placing the ring upon his wrist—so large it was—he addressed himself to the task of getting on boots and pants and shirt.

"Zongri will take care of me in time. But before that, by Allah and Bal and Confucius, I've still a dancing girl to see!" And who knew, he thought, hauling on a boot, but what this same dancing girl, who might be Alice Hall, would prove his salvation at least in the other world?

X.

HE STOOD squarely before the door and Jan took a deep breath as though for a plunge into cold water and Tiger fingered the great Seal upon his wrist and chuckled. The ring had struck Zongri's fetters from him and now, now he would investigate its efficacy on other types of locks.

"By the Seal of Sulayman! Open wide!"

Jan almost leaped out of his wits at the resulting crash, so certain was he that it would be heard by every jinni in the palace. On the instant of command every bar, inside and out, leaped upward from its bracket and fell down with a clang. The great lock was rended as though a bolt of lightning had struck it. The portal smashed back against the wall and Jan stood facing three astounded Marids.

But he was braced to go, and they were too startled to properly receive him until he was almost upon them. And then their swords sang from the scabbards and the first lunged with his pike.

Tiger took a step sideways and the pike passed him by. He ducked and a saber clanged into steel just over his head. He skipped back away from the slash of the third and instantly drove into him like a battering-ram.

They left the top step like an explosion, the Marid's scarlet cloak wrapping them all about and billowing as they fell down the flight.

Tiger, like his name, came up standing at the bottom—standing on the chest of a very battered Marid. Scooping up the guard's saber and pistols and hurling back jeers at the howling pair who charged down from the top, he raced to the next flight and took it in three jumps. He was in a corridor and for a moment he had to think out the palace's plan. Then, knowing that it was inevitable to avoid going through most of it, and with the yells of the Marids banging his eardrums, he again raced forward and down another flight.

Around the next landing he heard voices but so great was his speed that he could not check himself. Like a catapulted stone he shot toward five

officers who instantly faced about, recognized him and snatched at their swords.

Jan knocked them sprawling in five directions and though a little stunned himself, did not consider it necessary to pause and help any of them up. He soared like an eagle down the next flight, hope burning in him that he could find a way around the great audience chamber. But so great was his speed, with proportionately little time for scouting, that before he could check himself he was thirty feet into the enormous hall and charging straight at the throne.

Ramus had given irate instructions for the city's defense, and when she thought she beheld a rambunctious page she started to roar out at him.

The floor was so slippery that it was almost like skating. Jan curved away and though still two hundred feet from the throne, the queen cried, *"Tiger!"*

He was already diving toward the immense black doors, estimating the guard across it. So far they were faced the other way, and if they would only stay so, he had a chance of getting through them.

"Tiger!" roared Ramus and when again he disregarded her she shouted, "Take him! Captain of the guard, *stop that man!"*

As one the cordon before the doors whirled around, pikes up. It was like a picket fence leaning over and every point glittered hungrily to receive him. He could not stop because of his speed and the floor. And though—who knows?—Ramus might have had it otherwise, the order stood and the instinct of the pike soldier is to spear whatever he sees.

"Tiger, you fool! You'll be killed!"

BUT he was even then on the pikes—or rather, *almost* on them, there being quite a difference. For Tiger, with all a sailor's agility, slashed sideways with his saber, engaging two pikes at once and feinting them aside, to plunge instantly through the gap. The Marids saw steel flash before their faces and, astounded by the maneuver, ducked back. And by the time they had recovered to again level their weighty weapons for the kill, Tiger was fifty feet away from them and multiplying the distance with alacrity.

Ahead was yet another cordon, that which guarded the outside doors. And these, hearing the clash of steel on steel, were alert and waiting, soon astonished to find that a human being was racing out of the palace toward them. These men had ample warning and Tiger saw in the instant that they could not miss stopping him.

To his right and left were other great doors, leading into the depths of the palace again. He did not think twice. He roared: "By the Seal of Sulayman! Open wide!"

The right-hand door crashed open, its lock so much iron junk. Beyond a large room yawned. But already the guards were advancing from the front entrance and Tiger waited not at all but plunged in.

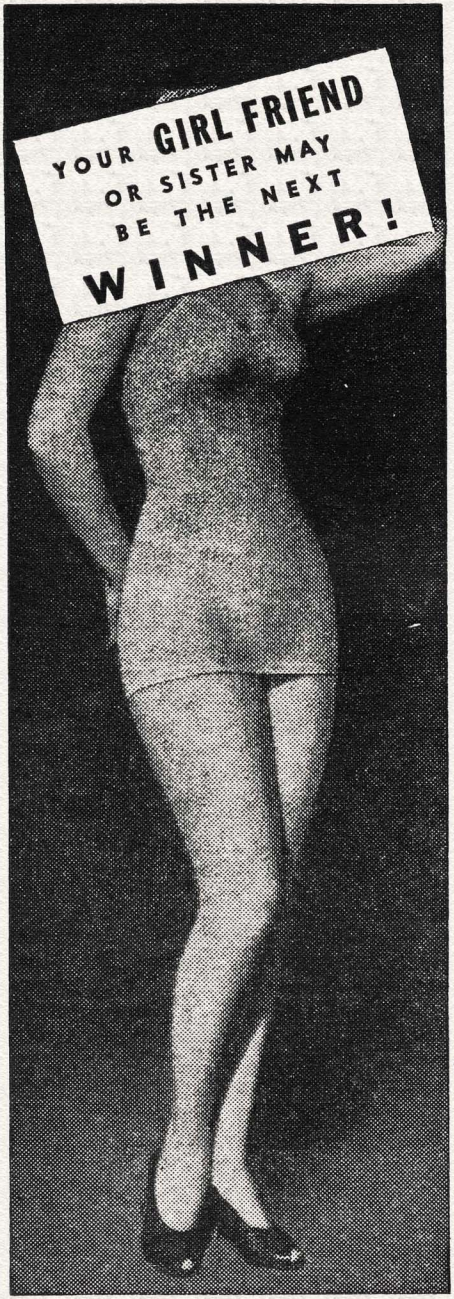
He was over the threshold before he saw that he had come to the last place in Tarbuton that he wanted to be—the office of Ramus' chief of staff!

The soldiers in the place stiffened in their chairs and along the wall to see a sailor dash in without any more ceremony than a bloodthirsty flourish of a saber. Instantly they perceived that an assassination was in order.

The general fired point-blank with the pistol he always kept on his desk. But the ball buried itself a good foot above Tiger's damp head. Steel flashed as men made for him.

Tiger had no time to think about it. Battle was battle to him. But Jan cried out: "By the Seal of Sulayman! Down with the wall!"

With a thunder of cracking stone, the front of the room fell outward, obscuring everything in a white cloud of mortar. The flash and roar which had fol-



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lowed the order and the sunlight which abruptly poured in upon them held the soldiers for a terrified instant.

Jan leaped through the fog in the opening and clutched at a vine which grew down the building's face. He let it through his hands so fast that it smoked. Earth smote the souls of his boots and he raced off on the rebound, diving into the protection of shrubbery and running bent over while branches sought to flog him.

The uproar he left behind him was spreading like the waves of a rock dropped into a pool. He saw an outpost dashing in toward the palace and ducked low, halting for an instant. The scarlet cloaks streamed by and an instant later he leaped into their dust and sped toward their unprotected section. The sentry boxes fled by on his right, and he dashed through the deep dust of a road to gain the less pretentious and more welcome rank of stores which faced the square.

Citizenry gauped at him. A Marid in green instantly suspected the worst and scudded in pursuit, his long green cape pouring after him and the whistle in his mouth trilling hysterically.

Jan sprang into an alleyway and pressed himself against the wall. The policeman rounded the turn an instant later. Tiger stuck out a foot and the officer went down with two hundred pounds of sailor to pin him to earth and still the whistle. Tiger trussed the Marid with the green cape and then, waiting not to see if the alarm had been answered, surveyed the scene about him and decided upon a drain pipe which led to a two-story building above.

Like the sailor he was, he dug in his toes and hand over hand rocketed up the sheer face. He flung himself over the parapet at the top and looked down. Two policemen had answered the call promptly, but they were just now arriving beside their squirming, swearing brother at law and their immediate attention was for him and not a possible quarry.

Jan drew back his head. Before him, side by side, stretched a long avenue of roofs, inviting him to try his broad-jumping proclivities. He took the dare but he traveled at a slightly slower pace, for he was feeling his exertions a little.

AN HOUR later, having startled three separate sun-bathing parties out of their respective wits but without having met with any further misadventure, he came to the base of the hill toward which he had stubbornly worked. He let himself to earth and sought a clump of trees and there, sprawled at length, he got his breath and gazed admiringly at the architecture of his goal. Before very long, however, his admiration turned to something very near dismay. The priests who had caused this place to be constructed had kept a watchful eye upon their own security.

The great, varicolored cube which, like the head of some monster, swallowed and disgorged thousands of jinn, was high and aloof upon its hill. And though grass grew upon those precipitous slopes it definitely ended the landscaping. This place was a fort! And the canny high lords of it gave no intruder a single tree for cover. It was the crowning insult to see priest sentries on a parapet which ran the circuit of the roof. Tiger fumed. One had to ascend those steps or wait for night, and he was not fatuous enough to suppose that he could pass his brawny humanity for an Ifrit.

Night, he decided disconsolently, it would have to be.

Though he well apprehended the danger of entering the town again, he was aware of thirst and hunger and suddenly bethought himself of a certain deep dive where the proprietor was indebted to him through said proprietor's undue faith in dice. Jan smiled as he very vividly remembered a night when

Tiger had won the place, tables, hostesses and kegs and had magnanimously loaned it all back forever. It was weird to recollect such a thing because Jan had never experienced it himself, just as Tiger couldn't have told one end of an astrolabe from another. But now Tiger could work an astrolabe and, no doubt, Jan could shoot dice with maddening precision.

By alleyways in which his feet were trained, he flitted through the dusky shadows and came, at last, to the rear entrance of the dive. Cautiously he edged in and peered at the occupants of the taproom.

Several human beings, persons who were very much in keeping with the dingy furtiveness of the place, sat at the scarred tables along the wall, drinking questionable beverages. As long as they were human, Tiger knew he had nothing to fear from them and so boldly entered, marching up to the bar and casually greeting the keeper.

He was a man of rotund build, placid and usually cheerful, and because of those attributes and his obvious docility, he was allowed to operate his tavern, though it was a favor rarely accorded humans.

His mild little eyes turned to Tiger, started to move away and then came back with a crack and pop. "Good God! *You!*"

"And what's the matter with that?" said Tiger.

"Listen," said the proprietor in an excited whisper, "you've got to get out of here. They know you come here! The alarm is out for you and not ten seconds ago there was a squad of Marids here looking for you!"

"Then they won't be back very soon. Lazy fellows, Marids. Would you mind digging into the larder and setting forth fare fit for a gentleman? I'm famished!"

The tavern keeper eyed him wonderingly. "You ain't scared. I know you wouldn't be scared. But you ought to have pity on me. Just think what'll they do if they find you here! Geez, Tiger, I don't know what you done, but the patrol was the queen's Desert Troopers and they looked upset as hell."

"The queen objects to my leaving her tea party. If they come back I'll swear you didn't recognize me. How is that?"

The man was very doubtful but he was not able to withstand Tiger. He stuck his head through a square hole and spoke to his wife in the kitchen. Then he looked at Tiger again and dabbed at his forehead with his apron.

"Hot, ain't it?" he said weakly.

"Can't say as I've noticed," said Tiger with a grin.

The proprietor puttered with glasses, and his hands shook so that he almost dropped three in a batch. He gave it up. "Look, Tiger. Like a good guy, would you go over to that table agin' the wall and make yourself as small as possible?"

Tiger shrugged. "It's all the same as long as the food is good and there's lots of it." He wandered to the designated spot and was about to seat himself. Suddenly he started.

AT THE table next to his were two men he was certain he knew and yet for the life of him he could not place them. One was hook-nosed and spidery-handed and possessed two liabilities in the form of evil, bloodshot eyes. The other was obese and as slick as though he had been freshly lubricated—though with somewhat rancid oil. They were quite obviously of a certain class of slaves whose masters specialized in the lower orders of crime and had a kicked-cur look about them which filled a beholder with disgust.

Tiger lowered himself slowly into his chair. He was very puzzled. He usually remembered faces very easily and the names as well. Though he told himself that he would not ordinarily

Hand-over-hand, Tiger went up the stairway as up a ratline, the cloven hoofs of the Marid guards six inches from his fingers.

notice such vermin and that he had seen them here on other occasions, he was not at all convinced. Who, he demanded of himself, were they?

Presently the proprietor came with a ham and a chicken and three bottles of different wines. His cargo sounded like castanets and he almost missed the table with it, so intent was he upon the door. Hurriedly he made a second trip for bread and then withdrew to morosely seat himself at the end of his bar and keep an eye upon the place from which he was certain doom would soon enter in the form of the queen's Desert Troopers.

Tiger ate slowly, pondering his problem and somewhat annoyed that he would bother to dwell upon two such scurvy beings. There was a certain familiarity about them which was incongruous, and then Jan's fund of knowledge took a hand.

"I'm changed," Jan whispered. "Why couldn't it be possible for these two to be known to me in the other world?"

And, with that as a starting point, he carefully surveyed their features until he was as exasperated as though he had a word on the end of his tongue and couldn't say it.

At last the two gentlemen in question, being two to Jan's one, took exception to his scrutiny. They muttered about it in low tones and evidently decided that it wasn't to be tolerated. The one with the bloodshot eyes came ominously to his feet and stalked over to Jan's table.

"If you got something to spill, out with it, pal."

The obese member of the duet waddled over to back his partner up. Jan looked from one to the other of them and they mistook his attitude for apology.

"All right," said the fat one. "But don't git so nosy, see?"

And they would have walked back had not a bolt of lightning struck in the center of Jan's brain. "Wait a minute. I know you fellows."

"Yeah, well, we don't know you and don't want to, neither. So if—"

"You," said Jan, seeing the almost indefinable line of features at last and pointing to the nervous one, "are Nathaniel Green!"

"Huh?" said the indicated one.

"And you," said Jan in sudden excitement, "are Shannon! That's it! That's it! I could feel it! Look, sit down. I've got a matter to talk over with you."

"He's cockroachy," said the indicated Green.

"Look, buddy," said the greasy caricature of Shannon, "we're minding our own business and if you want to pick daisies from the under side, you'll forget to mind your own."

But Jan was laughing, looking from one to the other of them. "Green! Poor old Nathaniel Green. Where's your watch? And you! Shannon! A tub of lard with a coating of dirt and as surly as a kicked pariah!" His laugh grew louder.

The pair were uneasy on more than one count. They were quite aware of the pistols in Tiger's belt and of the size of Tiger's shoulders and were somewhat intimidated by the correct language springing from a sailor's mouth. It looked like a magic spy trap to them and they weren't having any. They shuffled, growling, back to their table, got their hats, haggled over the reckoning and left.

"Who are those men?" asked Jan when the keeper came over to find out the cause of the argument.

"Them? Gutter pickin's. Dauda's jackals. They eat his leavin's. What's the idea gettin' me in trouble with a guy like Dauda? Ain't you got no sense, Tiger? You come back here with the troopers on your trail, talkin' like a swell and lookin'—well, lookin' different. I wouldn'a' knowed you at first. But listen, Tiger, will you finish up and

get out of here? You know you're welcome to anything I got, but they'll be comin' back pretty soon and it's as much as my life is worth. After all, the queen's Desert Troopers don't go pokin' around unless a man's assassinated a duke or something."

"All right. To save your nerves I'll finish and go," said Tiger. "Besides, I don't think much of your trade, anyway. They stink."

DUSK found him again at the foot of the temple hill. The enormous cube stood out against angry clouds and from every entrance there streamed the light of flaming braziers. Torches flanked the avenue of steps, and their fitful flare fell weirdly upon the throng of jinn. Evidently some great rite was to be held, for all the crowd marched upward and none marched down, and it was plain from the fanfare of flashing jewels that the worshipers were dressed for some state occasion. Perhaps, thought Jan, the word has gone about that Zongri comes with a fleet from the Barbossis. But whatever it was, his chances of entering that place undiscovered were very remote indeed.

He was almost on the verge of turning back when there again came to him the vision of the dancing girl upon the steps and, simultaneously, the memory of the girl who had shown him the only kindness he had ever received. She was there, a dancing slave to the jinn, and who knew but what the morrow would find him dead in this world and, consequently, the other as well. Certainly he owed it to her to try, if he could, to free her and give her into the keeping of one who would repay favor with favor—Admiral Tyronin, whose influence was great enough to protect her and who, even in the event of defeat, would very probably be suffered to retire to his island estate on parole. High officers, remembered Tiger, seldom suffered greatly in these wars.

No, he could not leave her there to be ultimately thieved by some persuasive jinn—as was the fate of these dancing girls. And besides, every atom of him demanded to confront her and speak to her, for it grew upon him that she alone might save him in his own world.

Tiger strode forward, skirting the mound until he came to the rear. As on a cliff the temple blazed above him, Marids in silhouette upon the walls. He loosened his saber in its sheath and looked to the priming of his pistols and then began the ascent.

Of all mortals, only dancing girls had come here in the history of the place, except those few who had dared it to end upon a pike at the foot of the steps, grinning at awed beholders. There was treasure in this place to tempt even honest men and in the town it was sometimes said of a thief that he was bold enough to "scale the heights of Rani."

Tiger, scaling the heights, was not thinking about being bold but only of discovering an entrance and making his way through the place to the quarters of the dancers. The long grass caught at his boots and strove to hold him back, but he made it pay by grasping handfuls of it and so hoisting himself upward. It was no great trick to ascend the slope, but Tiger had been giving his attenion to the ground and did not see the next barrier until he had almost fallen into it. The dark hole gapped and he held hard to the edge, one foot already into it. Hastily he drew back, eying the trap in the flare of the torches above. Here, dug so as to be unseen from the plain below, was a moat about thirty feet wide and as deep. But no water was here, only a hiss and rattle as things moved on the floor.

"Snakes!" said Tiger, feeling the hair rise on the back of his neck. He took a hitch on his nerve and felt with his foot over the edge. But the drop was sheer and the slimy things at the bottom rustled as they moved to the foot of

the drop, waiting.

He cursed impatiently at such jinn hellishness. But he wasted very little time mourning about it. He had only one recourse—to ascend by the stairs through the main entrance!

HE MADE the decision and put it into action at once, striding along the outer edge of the moat, watchful for other traps but well informed by the lights above.

Shortly he had come again to the front of the building and, dropping on his face, crept toward the great balustrades, toward stronger light and toward guards.

Marids were posted at the end of every wide step, their steel helmets as bright as their single eyes and their pikes bearing streamers which did not in the least impair their usefulness. But so stately was their bearing and so bright the torches in their eyes that Jan was able to come within touching distance of one's back without being seen. He lay in the protection of the balustrade's shadow and pondered his next move. More and more, as obstacles arose, he determined to put his plan into action, and now he was certain that his salvation, at least on earth, depended upon his reaching Alice Hall in this world.

He was very sorely tempted to steal the sentry's cloak, but he well knew the folly of trying to pass off his brawn for a Marid's stumpy ugliness. So he began to work himself up toward the temple by keeping in the shadow of the steps where the jinn thronged not ten feet away. He wondered a little just what method of killing they would use if they caught him, for now, regardless of how the queen might want him treated, the priests of Rani would do—as they rightfully did—whatever they pleased. As ex-captive of the throne, sought by troopers, perhaps a lash would be the most he merited. But he well knew that if he invaded Rani, the long arm of that goddess would find him in whatever state or adobe he sought refuge. But he wasn't caught yet.

Again he almost tripped into the moat and was angered to find that it butted against this pavement's edge. Had he gone to all this trouble only to be balked by the same barrier? He raised his head a little and stared at the crowd whose brilliant robes almost brushed his face. He again eyed the moat. And then, bethinking himself of the urgency of his mission, gripped the edge of the pavement and swung himself over the darkly tenanted space.

He swung himself along, holding to the slippery edge of the steps, trusting that his hands would escape being seen. The torches were bright and his luck was in at the moment so he came to safety on the other side. Again he examined the ground about him. The temple's foundation was about eight feet high and on it stood columns whose backs were against the stone walls. He sprang up to the ledge. Somewhere there must be a postern. Above him on the roof, guards paced mechanically back and forth like great black dolls. To his left spread the colorful panorama of the steps and behind him, far below, sparkled the lights of harbor and city.

His questing fingers examined the wall ahead of him and then, with relief, they touched the cold iron of a small door. It was locked, but that worried him not at all.

"By the Seal of Sulayman," he whispered, "open wide."

Softly the door swung inward as though pulled by an unseen hand. Jan slipped through the opening and silently closed the portal. He was in a long hall, momentarily deserted. Through the archways which flanked it he could see the limitless expanse of the temple's main room where torches flared smokily and sent gigantic shadows to chasing each other along the walls and ceiling.

At the far end was a gargantuan idol, gleaming with precious stones, all of gold and silver and ivory. The hands rested upon the hilt of a sword some fifty feet long and the feet were spread apart in an attitude of battle. This was Rani, Rani goddess of the jinn, terrible of eye, lovely of form, lustful and mystic, beauteous and murderous. Other humans—and few they had been—had paid for such a sight with their lives.

Jan tore his eyes away from the terrifying figure and cast about him for further ways. But he dared go neither up nor down this hall, for at each end he could see temple guards and passing crowds. And certainly he could not walk forward into the place of worship. Sailorlike he looked aloft and took heart. The wall was built in gradually narrowing stones and each one offered a ledge, four feet above the last. And the columns which supported the roof were interconnected by beams.

He heard someone close a door near at hand and the mutter of voices approaching. He lost no time swinging up and leaping from ledge to ledge. A moment later he looked down upon the horned heads of priests. They paused, talking together, before they entered the great chamber.

"Then it is settled," said the oldest of the lot, one dressed all in yellow silk. "He cannot injure us, for he is one of the believers and so also are his very warriors. What, then, say you to the prophecy of defeat for Ramus?"

They held up their clawed right hands in the Ifrit gesture of the affirmative.

"It is time," said another, "that we were accorded greater freedom here. A plague on Ramus. Let the prophecy ring loud enough to take the hearts out of the officers here. He will repay it handsomely with greater freedom."

"Very well," said the old one. "Let the rites begin."

They moved out of the shadows, and while some of them went furtively down through a trap in the floor, the others, including the ancient one, walked boldly out into the chamber itself.

Jan pondered their words. Certainly, by "he" could they mean Zongri? And Tiger, of a sudden, remembered vague rumors of dissatisfaction among the priesthood for Ramus' refusal to take part in their rites and her placing such great reliance upon the soothsayer Zeno and his stars. Zeno had broken the monopoly of Rani on prophecy when the queen had elevated him to his high place.

NOW that the hall below was deserted, Jan dropped swiftly down to it again with a new idea. He opened the trap in the floor, found a steep stairway leading through gloom. He closed the trap over him and made his way along a tunnel which seemed to lead for miles beneath the earth. Wiping cobwebs from his face and pausing constantly to listen and look for possible guards, he finally reached the end of it. Here was another stairway, going up.

Somewhere far off he heard a hundred mighty horns bellow hoarsely for silence. And as he mounted, the single voice of a speaker came to him with increasing distinctness. Then he came to a parting of the stairs. One continued up but the other led off on the level. Jan chose the ascent rather than run a chance of losing himself in a labyrinth.

By the number of steps he knew that he was well above the floor of the great chamber and that he must now be within one of the walls. Again the way became level and he found that he had entered upon an observation gallery.

He was not much amazed, being well versed in such obtuse subjects as ordinary necromancy, to find that sets of eyeholes were bored through the stone so as to match with the eyes of figures with which the chamber was decorated. He wondered that the jinn permitted

such an obvious trick, and his opinion of their wits fell accordingly.

The chamber was spread out before him in all its shadowy splendor. Full ten thousand jinn, resplendent in sparkling jewels and shimmering silk, stood upon the gradually raised floor. They faced Rani but between them and the idol intervened a semicircle where a mass of priests were now undergoing some sort of ritual. Their bowed heads were all inclined toward Rani and over them rolled the sepulchral tones of the temple master, he who had been in the hall near Jan.

What he was saying Jan neither knew nor cared. All his attention was concentrated upon the ringing rank of temple dancers who were intermingled with Marids in rite regalia. One by one he studied the girls, but in those hundreds and at this height above them, he found it very difficult to find Alice Hall. His spine tingled as he thought of her there, a part of that savage splendor, hypnotized by the intoning music which now began to flow from an unseen recess in the chamber. At this signal the girls stood up, throwing back their white capes and stepping ahead of the Marids, their diamond-decked bodies rose in the guttering torchlight.

Suddenly he found her. She was a pace or two ahead of all the rest and seemed to be a key to their movements. He hardly knew what the others did, though he was conscious of their forming geometric patterns in slow, easy grace to the increasing tempo of the horns and drums.

With difficulty he bethought himself of Rani and turned his attention to the idol. The enormous figure was supported by heavy chains so placed as to be invisible from the front. And so it was not with as great a shock as the others below that he saw the goddess begin to move slowly from side to side.

Puerile, he thought to himself. Probably the thing was hinged like a marionette and, without doubt, it had speaking tubes connected with it so that priests could simulate its voice.

The music became faster, louder, and he found that he had been unconsciously beating to it. The wild strains, guttural and hoarse, brought the hot blood pulsing to his face, and it was with difficulty that he tore his eyes away from the idol.

He knew quite well what he intended to do just as he completely understood the horrible consequences which might follow. But Tiger was bold and Jan was cunning, and in a moment he strode down the runway, searching for yet another passageway which might admit him to the chamber itself when the occasion came. But his only chance lay in the one branch he had found and now he paced down it, watching ahead of each turn, certain that he would run into priests.

Finally he found another branch, but this one led straight up, and that he did not need. Ahead he saw two spots of light and came up against a short ladder. By mounting it he again discovered that he could see out and that, also, get out when that occasion came.

IT DID NOT take him long to find that he was inside the idol's base, for, by looking straight up he could see the gigantic wings which sprouted stiffly from the goddess' shoulders and swooped earthward toward him.

He was slightly puzzled to see that the goddess had taken her hand from the sword and now held her arms out straight above the heads of the dancers. From this angle the goddess had a staring look which was awful to see.

The dancers swayed and dipped and the music quickened. Soon they were in a semicircle, spinning like tops, their hair flying out from their heads and their supple bodies weaving. With a crash the music stopped. In the deep stillness the dancers fled back until they

"By the Seal!" Tiger roared. "By the Seal of Solomon—down with the doors!" An instant later he was through the riven panels, and a pair of Marid guards were at him.

were again in their original places. Throwing themselves down in an attitude of supplication, they waited.

The priests spread away, leaving only their ancient blackguard of a master. The venerable one spread out his hands to the goddess. Somewhere a drum beat hysterically for an instant and then was still. From his cassock the master took a long, shining whip and let it curl like a snake along the pavement. Again the drums shattered the stillness and deepened it by their ceasing. The master's whip cracked like a musket.

"Rani!" cried the ancient one. "Rani! By the symbol of this whip with which we hold you, we demand that you answer!"

The goddess was not swinging now. The feet moved until they were together. The head, full a dozen yards in diameter, bent so that the glowing eyes stared down at the master.

"Rani! Behold! We have offered you music and dancing. We offer you worship! Answer and answer well!"

Again the whip cracked and Rani moved a trifle while a flutter of awe ran back through the crowd.

Jan thought to himself that the jinn were a witless lot to be fooled by a hundred-and-fifty-foot marionette.

"Who," cried the master, "shall be the victor in tomorrow's battle? Zongri, or Ramus the Magnificent?"

A deep, unintelligible rumble came from the goddess.

And then, from the sides of the hall, on two platforms near to Rani's head, the priests Jan had seen before took station. In their hands they held long poles which had glowing coals on their ends. With these they thrust at the goddess' shoulder.

A tremor shot through the idol which Jan thought very well done. Again the master cried out.

"Rani, who shall be the victor? *Answer!*"

A snarl of pain and rage followed. The stare in those glassy eyes changed

to a waking expression of wrath. Rani moved and the chains rattled savagely.

"*Answer!*" howled the master.

A flood of strange words poured from the moving lips, to hurl across the chamber and rebound like a cannonade.

"Be still!" cried the master. He whirled about. "Rani has spoken! Woe to Tarbuton. The fate of the battle will fall upon the banners of Zongri —and Ramus will be vanquished forever!"

A gasp ran through the chamber, a sound which expressed shock and growing terror.

Again the goddess spoke, unbidden, in those rolling accents. But the men on the platform beside her head stabbed out with the coals and Rani was still.

"Now," thought Jan, "while their wits are paralyzed, I'll show them how their goddess lies—in fragments at their feet!"

He raised the ring and cried: "By the Seal of Sulayman! Part the chains!"

Mortar flew from the walls in great, angry puffs. Iron clanked in falling and then crashed resoundingly to the floor. The ancient one whirled and stared with disbelief at the monstrous figure which teetered forward toward him.

Jan ducked, waiting for the concussion of the fall. It came before he expected it—so violently that the stone cracked wide before him and the whole temple rocked!

He heard a scream of terror from the jinn and then the rush of twenty thousand feet seeking exit through the dust-choked gloom.

TIGER sprang out of his observation post and raced across the floor. Because the dancing girls were farthest from the entrance, they huddled against the jam, staring with terrified eyes at the fallen goddess, half of them probably convinced of its former power.

Tiger waded through broken granite and chips of gold. Under his feet rolled the diamonds which had bedecked the headdress. He had eyes only for one jewel, the dancing girl nearest to him. So stunned was she that she remarked not at all that it was a human being who came racing out of that fog of dust. Her lovely eyes were round with horror and did not even turn to him when he scooped her up into his arms.

The priests were as mad as the rest to get away from there, failing to understand that nothing else could happen. The death of their master had unnerved them and two rushed by Tiger within a foot without paying the slightest attention to him. Tiger disliked being ignored. When the largest priest struck the jam, Tiger snatched him by the shoulder, tearing away the flowing yellow cloak which had covered him from crown to toe. The Ifrit scarcely noticed the loss.

Throwing the color of protection about them, Jan bore the girl through the packed masses, bullying a way out of the entrance and down the long stairs. Unnoticed, he reached the avenue at the bottom and dodged into a side street as soon as one presented itself. The weight of the dancing girl was slight and impeded him but little.

Already terror was beginning to spread through the city and, far off, bells were ringing and horns blowing. Jan cared nothing about them. By alley and dark thoroughfare he sped swiftly to the water front, hardly pausing at all to leap down off a dock into a small fishing smack.

The fishermen leaped up from his dozing on a pile of nets and his two sailors came up standing a moment later. They were still asleep so far as their wits went, for Tiger had only to let the dock lights glitter on the saber and cry, "To the *Morin*, flagship of Admiral Tyronin!"

The sailors mechanically cast off, seeing in Tiger an espionage officer or some other in whom they would not dare take any great interest. The lateen sail dropped from its yard and filled and in the fresh night wind they scudded between anchored vessels whose lights made yellow sea serpents upon the water.

The girl had been staring at Tiger for some time and, seeing him smile at her, she spoke. "Who . . . who are you?"

"Tiger."

"*You* are *Tiger?*"

"Does notoriety reach even to a jinn temple?"

"I have heard naval officers ask a blessing for you. But—how is it that you entered the temple? That is death to a human!"

"For once it wasn't. Not yet, anyway."

"But why—" she hesitated in sudden fear. "Why have you taken me away?"

"Did you like that place?"

"Oh! No, no! I am glad to be stolen. But—"

"You have no need to be afraid." It seemed so strange to see Alice Hall here and yet not to be known to her. "You have never seen me before?"

"Why . . . of course not. I have seen no human being other than my dancers since I was a child."

"Have you ever heard the name, Alice Hall?"

She repeated it slowly after him, a puzzled look upon her face. "Al . . . ice. Alice Hall. I seem to have heard it somewhere before."

"Of course you have. You *are* Alice Hall."

"I?" she shook her head. "But no, I have no name but Wanna. You are making fun of me."

"No indeed."

"You are a very strange fellow. Why did you come to the temple?"

"To get you."

"Me?"

"I saw you once before—here. In a telescope."

She looked unwinkingly at him and drew the yellow cloak more tightly about her against the cold wind. She ventured a smile and clutched at his hand as he turned to watch the side of the flagship come up to them.

THE FISHERMEN brailed their sail and the boat drifted in to the landing stage. Jan took a hoop out of his ear and handed it to the captain who stared at it in amazement, changing his opinion about espionage instantly.

Tiger took up the girl again and trotted up the ladder to the deck where a jinn officer stood with threatening mien.

"I wish to be taken to Admiral Tyronin immediately," said Tiger.

The officer scowled.

"My name is Tiger."

It was as though he had stuck a pin in the lieutenant. The Ifrit whirled to his lounging guard. "Take this man into custody immediately."

"I demand to see the admiral!" cried Jan.

A voice from the quarterdeck of the seventy-four smote them. "What is this?" And boots thumped on a ladder and over the planks and so into the light of the guard lantern.

With relief Jan recognized Commander Hakon who had stopped him before the palace.

"Tiger!" cried the commander. "Good God, man, what are you doing here? Get back ashore. Lieutenant, call that boat—"

"I'm here to see Admiral Tyronin," said Tiger. "And see him I shall."

"But what is this you have here?" Hakon saw the yellow robe. "The cloak of . . . of a priest!" Then he saw the girl's flashing jewels. "And . . . and a temple dancer! Tiger, have you gone mad? Was it you who caused that

commotion up at the temple which we have been hearing and watching for half an hour?"

"That's neither here nor there," said Tiger. "I asked a favor."

"On your head be it," said the commander. "His lordship is just about out of his head, what with expecting to meet forty ships with four and then all that uproar over on the beach. What was it about?"

"Rani fell over on her face," said Jan.

"What?"

"Because she lied," said the dancing girl swiftly. "She said that Zongri would win and a greater god smote her."

Hakon blanched.

"The admiral," reminded Tiger.

"Well, remember that you asked for it," said Hakon dispiritedly. He led the way aft and to the quarterdeck. They descended a short ladder and found themselves in the admiral's quarters. The door of the inner room was open and Tiger could see the ugly and now worried Tyronin bent over a chart, pencil poised. The light of the lanthorn increased the lines on his hairy face.

"Your lordship," said Hakon, bowing slightly.

"Yes? Yes, what is it now?"

"You perhaps recall a sailor called Tiger who once brought us the line which pulled us off the beach on the Isle of Fire when—"

"Tiger? Yes, what about him now?" Tyronin saw the man and stood up. The group moved into the room and his lordship started at both yellow cloak and dancing girl. "What's this?" he thundered.

"Sir," said Tiger, "tomorrow you are to meet Zongri in battle. I am the chief cause of his coming attack and for that reason I—"

"Bah! I only know that you are trying to play upon my generosity and make trouble for me with the queen. Did you know that the town is being combed for you? No, I suppose not! Did you know that you are to be arrested on

sight? Oh no, of course not! You thought I would blind myself to my duty to her majesty and take you in like some stray cur! You come with a Rani dancing girl with probably the blood of a priest upon your hands as well as his cloak and expect me— God! *Guard!*"

"Wait," pleaded Tiger. "I—"

"Silence! Guard, place this man under arrest. Put the dancing girl in Malin's cabin and make certain she does not escape. This man is Tiger. You may have heard of him. He is not to be trusted for an instant. You are to make certain that a sentry with a primed pistol stands outside his cell with the muzzle of that weapon trained upon him whether he is waking or sleeping. There!" He faced Tiger. "At midnight we weigh anchor to meet Zongri's fleet. It is too late to put you ashore now. But if fortune favors us you'll be surrendered to the queen on our return."

The sentry took Tiger's pistols and saber and at pistol point escorted him back to the deck. Tiger was conscious of the girl's despairing eyes upon his back —and conscious, too, of the short-lived gratitude of man.

XI.

JAN AWOKE to the uneasy realization that elsewhere he was asleep with a cocked pistol pointing at him and as the body, alive but without vital force, might roll and turn, he hoped that Tiger would offer no offense.

He swung his feet down to the concrete floor and found that Diver had been restored to him. But Diver was still snoring and Jan wondered where Diver was and what Diver was doing. Someday he would find out, perhaps, though he was not very interested. And the counterfeiters—where were they and what were they doing while their earth bodies snored so resoundingly? Not, of course, that it mattered much.

He sighed deeply and stuffed the pipe Alice had brought him and got it going. Thoughtfully he reviewed Tiger's deeds and misdeeds. He was almost dispassionate about it—for a little while. With the theft of the dancing girl, Tiger had stamped his death warrant. While Nobody could prove that he had had any connection with the destruction of Rani, merely the touching of a sacred member of that temple would doom him. And the queen? What would she say when she found how he had duped her about that Seal?

Soon he began to sweat. Certain he was that that night he would sleep himself into death. Tyronin's foolhardy resistance to Zongri's great fleet would probably doom the ship. If, somehow, it didn't, Zongri would find him. Whether Ramus or Zongri held forth for victory, Tiger's puckish pranks were over. As it was early he laid back upon his bunk and tried to dispose himself for further slumber. But he was too nervous for that and thought he interspersed visions of a pointed cocked pistol framed in a door with a pair of cockroaches climbing sturdily, being half in and half out of each world, he found no rest in either.

He was almost glad when the jail began to stir about, but he was far too worried to enjoy his food. He listened to Diver's gibes and heard them not at all. And as the morning progressed he found he could not sit still but must walk up and down by the bars.

Finally, at eleven, they came for him, Shannon and a guard. Shannon's false heartiness sought to cheer him up.

"Now you just do what I tell you, Jan, and this'll all be O. K. We'll let you tell your story just as it happened, and then I'll throw what weight I can behind it and pretty soon we'll have you out of here slick as grease."

Jan didn't answer and Shannon kept it up until they came to an antechamber to the judge's office where a thin, skeleton-faced fellow sat thumping the table with his pince-nez.

"This's Doc Harrington," said Shannon. "This's Jan Palmer, doc."

"Ah," said Harrington, looking professionally at Jan. "Let us get down to business." He put forth pencil and paper and invited Jan to sit and write the answers to certain questions and, when that was done, to put down the first word which came into his mind after another word was given. That too was over shortly.

The psychiatrist examined the result and his brows went up, up, up until they almost vanished in his sparse hair. He pursed his lips and pulled his beard. He adjusted his prince-nez and took them off. He scowled at Jan and then read the paper once more.

"O. K.?" said Shannon.

"Ah . . . yes. Splendid."

"Then, let's go."

THEY entered the judge's office where batteries of legal books stood ready to fire opinions on any sort of case imaginable and where nervous feet had worn out the rug by the desk.

The judge was a well-fed, rather dull person who carried his dignity of office very easily—never having been bothered with any original thoughts and so injure it.

"Sit down," said the judge.

Jan sat down and looked around him. Aunt Ethel was there, dabbing at her eyes—which were quite dry—and muttering, "Oh, the poor boy, the poor boy."

Thompson sat against the other wall, gnawing on a bowler. Nathaniel Green paced back and forth, looking at his watch and complaining about the delay.

For an instant Jan was frightened, and then became flooded with relief when he saw Alice Hall sitting at a small desk ready to take down the proceedings for Green's edification. She looked wonderingly at Jan but beyond that made no sign.

"Now, let's get down to it," said the judge. "In brief, young man, sketch your story of how Professor Frobish came to be murdered. We're all your friends here so you need have no fear."

Jan looked them over and experienced a desire to laugh in the judge's face. With the exception of Alice there wasn't a person in the room who had the least desire to find him innocent. Indeed, Aunt Ethel and Thompson, Shannon and, last but not least Green, stood to profit enormously by his bad luck.

"Just say I'm crazy and have done with it," said Jan truculently. "No matter what I say, that will be the verdict."

"Why, my poor boy," whimpered Aunt Ethel, "you're among your own—"

"I'd rather be in a hyena's den," said Jan. He noted how they all started at his tone. "Well, with nothing to gain or lose, I may as well give you the truth." And, so saying, he very briefly sketched the facts of the case.

When he had done with his terse tatements, the psychiatrist unobtrusively placed his penciled findings upon the judge's desk and the judge bent over it for some time. Then he sat back, making a steeple out of his fingers and nodding. Just when everyone thought he had gone to sleep, he rang for his clerk and sent out for a form. When it came, he filled in a few blanks and then turned to Green.

"You will have to sign this. You and the two others."

Shannon almost leaped for the pen when Green was done. And Thompson and Aunt Ethel had quite a lively race for it. But Aunt Ethel won and signed her name with vague murmurs about what a terrible shame it was and how insanity would have to run in the Palmer family that way. She didn't see how she could ever live it down.

The formalities over, the judge reached toward a buzzer.

"Wait a minute," said Jan, getting up.

The judge sat back and then again, more hurriedly this time, bent a finger toward the button.

"If this is justice," said Jan. "I'm going to work for the anarchists. You've heard nothing sufficient to convince you that my story is or is not true. These people," and he took them in with the wave of his hand, "are only too anxious to have me put away."

There were murmurs which showed that the company demurred heartily.

"You have not even called," said Jan, "for exhibit A."

"Ex-exhibit A?" said the judge. "But my dear fellow, calm yourself. This is all very regular—"

"There is the matter of looking at the copper jar," said Jan.

"But I see no necessity—" began Green impatiently.

"You mean there really is a copper jar?" said the judge.

"Indeed there is," said Jan. "How about it, Alice?"

"Why, certainly there is," she said swiftly, though to tell the truth she had never so much as noticed it in all her visits there.

"And an examination of that jar," said Jan, "will prove my story perfectly."

"How is this?" said the judge. "My dear fellow, this form is signed. And besides, it is almost time for lunch."

"I demand that you have that jar brought here," said Jan.

"Now, now," said Shannon soothingly. "He's a little violent at times, judge and—"

"I know," said the judge, nodding. Again he reached toward the button which would call a guard to take Jan away. It seemed that even then the sanitarium ambulance was outside and waiting.

THERE WAS the sound as of a chair being shoved determinedly back. Alice Hall eyed the judge with disapproval.

"Your honor, the papers would like to print a story to the effect that you might have received money to put a millionaire in jail."

It was a terrible chance she was taking, Jan knew. And while he feared for her, his heart warmed toward her more than ever before.

"What's this?" cried the judge at the wholly unjust charge. "Are you mad?"

"Not at all," said Alice. "And I wonder if he is, either. His mistake lies in having been meek to a crowd of wolves. The papers, I think, would enjoy such a story, true or not. If it is even whispered about that Jan Palmer, heir to the Palmer interests, was railroaded to an insane asylum to cover up the thefts of his manager, Nathaniel Green—"

"What's this?" shouted Green. "Young lady, you are fired! Leave this office instantly."

"I may be fired but I shall not leave. Your honor," said Alice, crisply, "if Jan Palmer wants a copper jar brought here, perhaps it would be wise to bring that copper jar."

"I . . . uh . . . see your point," said the judge. *"O'Hoolihan!"*

In an hour the morosely lunchless judge was sitting in sad contemplation of the copper jar while Green walked in circles and said, "Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense! I'm due at the office this minute!"

"And so," said the judge, "this is the jar out of which the Ifrit came."

"Yes," said Jan, stepping up to it and lifting the leaden stopper.

"And how tall is an Ifrit?" said the judge.

"Fifteen feet," said Jan promptly. "But in another world they do not seem so tall—either that or we are larger."

"Fifteen feet?" said the judge. "And the jar is but four feet. My dear young man, I fail to see—"

The psychiatrist tittered, and the judge was suddenly pleased with himself.

"Well," said the judge, "that is that. It proves nothing except the charges already brought. The justness of them is plain to see."

Alice's face fell. She had wagered her job and lost, but her sympathy and attention was all for Jan.

In a very quiet voice Jan said, "Your honor, if I were you I would think twice before I call proof disproof. I might go as far as to say that it is dangerous for you to do so."

"A threat?" said the judge.

"Now, now, Jan," said Aunt Ethel. 'He is *so* violent at times, your honor—"

"Aye, proof!" said Jan. "And a threat as well a threat which I am quite capable of carrying out. There is one phase of this story which I have yet to mention. It is the answer to the ancient problem of the wandering sleep soul. And so, one and all—" He took a firm grip upon the leaden stopper, his palm pressing hard against the imprinted Seal. "And so you are brought to this.

"By the Seal of Sulayman and by the token of all the deeds already done by its mighty power, I invoke upon all of you, the sentence of Eternal Wakefulness!"

The psychiatrist tittered in the quiet room, and the others gathered heart. As nothing had happened they were sure nothing would happen.

"The ambulance is waiting," said the judge. "O'Hoolihan, escort the young man out."

Jan stopped beside Alice. "Don't worry. Things may yet turn out well." He did not miss the moistness in her eyes, and he knew then that even though he might be mad, she loved him.

XII.

AT DAWN the sound of ten thousand kettledrums struck violently and shook the seventy-four from stem to taff!

Directly under the starboard gun deck, Jan leaped up, not yet awake but

already aching from the concussion.

"Sit down!" barked the third sentry of the night, gesturing with the pistol.

Jan stared at the muzzle and then at the seaman's pale face and obediently seated himself upon the edge of the berth.

There came the groan of shifting yards and the pop of fluttering canvas as the seventy-four came about to bring her port batteries to bear. She heeled under the buffeting wind and began to pitch as she picked up speed. Pipes shrilled and bare feet slapped over planking and then the whole vessel leaped as the demi-cannon blasted away.

"What time is it?" said Jan.

"About six-thirty. Now pipe down. I'm sorry but I'm not supposed to talk to you."

"That's fine by me," said Jan.

A shriek of hurtling round shot pierced the air and a series of muffled thuds reported that the seventy-four had been hulled. But again yards creaked and canvas thundered. Again she came about and heeled. The recharged starboard batteries brayed flame and shot.

The sentry glanced up at the deck and nervously wet his lips. Screaming grape-shot slapped like giant hailstones in the rigging and he flinched.

"You're lucky," said Jan. "If we're sunk you get a nice clean burial. All in one piece."

"Shut up!"

"Well, isn't that better than being drowned *and* lacking arms and maybe legs? Listen to that musketry. We must be closing in on Zongri's fleet."

A broadside of their own was instantly answered by the roar of another close by. The seventy-four reeled, hesitated and then picked up speed again.

"Is that water I hear?" said Jan.

"Water? *Where?*"

"Hulled, probably. Many more like that and we'll get it before the rest of them up there. Still, I don't mind it. If a man is going to die, he might as well have some privacy."

"Stop it!"

"Why, that doesn't bother you, does it? Maybe you'd rather be blown up than merely sunk. And the sharks won't be able to get at you in here."

There is nothing worse than a dark hold when a battle rages, listening to the broadsides thunder and feeling the seventy-four trip and wallow as round shot took its count, hearing wounded scream and weep, sensing the rising levels in the bilges and having no idea whatever of how the battle goes. Men prefer dying where they can see the sun.

FOR AN HOUR the din was incessant, and for an hour Jan remarked upon each expert broadside which was poured into them.

"The way she's listing now," said Jan. "We've probably lost a mast and they're too busy to cut it away. That cuts down the speed, you know, and makes it very easy for us to be boarded. Wasn't your relief supposed to be here by now?"

"Never mind my relief!"

"Ah, there's to be much weeping in Tarbuton this night for our brave lads. And weeping too in another world where men are nervous beyond account as they slumber. And how many will be the obituaries in the morning paper? Accidents, heart failure, murder. By the way, you haven't any people, I trust?"

"I have my mother!"

"And a girl too, I suppose. She's probably down at the wharves now, straining her eyes to sea in the hope of seeing the red banner returning. But, from the way that water rushes under us, I think she looks in vain. Personally, it's nothing to me. Returned I'd be executed. It matters very little how a man dies just as long as he is in one piece. This is a nice place now. The water is coming up under us at a very fast rate. We're hulled between wind and water and higher too, I'll wager.

And as she lowers herself in the sea, more water will pour in—"

Round shot splintered a timber over their heads and the guard ducked to rise an instant later and steady his pistol, looking ashamed.

"Stop it!" grated the sentry. "When water comes over this deck, there's time enough to worry about that."

"Ah, but I was just about to tell you that water is already seeping over it from under this bunk. See?" And he pointed to a trail of oozing slime, the scum of the bilges carried seven feet above their safe level. "We're sinking," he said quietly.

But the sentry stood firm. The fury of the fight was deafening and the sound of activity on their own decks gave him heart. He twitched as spars crashed down over them, one end protruding through the gun deck. It had dropped through the hatch.

"Do you smell smoke?" said Jan.

"How could there help but be smoke?" challenged the sentry.

"Wood smoke, I mean. And what is that crackle?"

"Muskets, you fool."

"But you're testing the air. We're on fire and that means we'll have to come to grips with another ship. And they're enough for yet another to grapple from the other side and sweep our decks as we have. . . . There! You heard that? Irons! There they go again! We're locked to another ship!"

The sentry heard hull grating against hull and the savage yells of sailors as they swept over the rails. Cutlasses crashed and pistols barked.

The sentry was uneasy. If they were swept from their own decks the ship would be deserted, abandoned to burn and sink. But he steadied the pistol in his hand and watched Tiger.

The tide of the hand fighting crashed back and forth over the heads, now in the stern, now in the waist. The smell of smoke thickened even in the double bottoms.

"Hear that rattle?" We're locked port and starboard to Barbossi vessels now. That's the end of us."

And indeed the yells did redouble and the decks sagged under the crushing weight of men. The violence of this finishing fight ate into the sentry's nerves. The water was almost to his knees now and the rush of it back and forth as they rolled in the trough made it hard for him to stand.

A blasting smash close at hand almost knocked the sentry down.

"Hulled!" cried Jan. "Hulled from a range of a foot!"

The water was roaring into the ship now and the sentry could not stand at all. Suddenly his nerves gave way. He wheeled, forgetting his prisoner, and vaulted up the ladder to the open air.

JAN shouted with relief. He slapped his hand over the Seal and cried, "Open wide!"

The brig door was shattered on its hinges. He rushed through it and dashed up the ladder which led to the gun deck. The planking was slippery with blood and he had to leap to clear piles of dead and dying behind the gun carriages. A square of blue showed over his head and he swarmed up the ladder to the quarterdeck.

Two sailors wearing the badge of the clenched talons were at the top. They faced him and their stained cutlasses swept back. Jan saw an officer stretched in death across the companionway mat. He ducked and snatched up the sword, flashing it erect to parry the downcoming slashes. He pressed back their steel and gained the deck.

All was carnage about him and the once trim vessel was but a sinking hull, held up now only by the grapnels of the two Barbossi vessels on either side. But Jan had no time to consider the situation. A third sailor had joined the

two and the three cut at him from as many sides. He skipped backward to put his shoulders against the taffrail. He caught a glimpse of the last of the seventy-four's sailors fighting against the house and thought he saw the glint of blue there, showing that one or two officers were yet alive.

The officer's sword, a rapier half again as long as a cutlass, flicked like the tongue of a snake and kept them at bay, no matter how hard they strove to smash it down and so, breaking it, close in to the kill.

A flag was caught by Jan's eye. The vessel on their starboard was a flagship! Zongri's vessel! And that towering Ifrit who waded forward to help finish off the last of the seventy-four's crew was Zongri!

Jan redoubled his efforts and, leaving off more guarding, began to attack on his own. The long steel flashed and laid open a sailor from shoulder to belt but the pain of it only brought the man on with fury.

Slowly, Jan was working himself along the rail, approaching the ratlines of the mizzen. His swift wrist worked tirelessly and finally, ripping under a cutlass, dashed in and came out dripping.

"Two!" exulted Tiger. "Come on! You can't live forever! Come on, I say! I want you!"

The rapier licked over one of the sailor's hilts.

"One!" cried Jan: "One! Come on!"

But the fellow had enough and rushed away. Jan flung himself up into the rigging, swarming to the crosstrees. So great was the vessel's list that he was out over the deck of the Babrossi flagship.

Before him spread the battle, covering half a dozen square miles of blue water. White smoke drifted like scud clouds everywhere but the cannonading was done. Somehow Tarbuton had gotten eight ships into commission and had reinforced these with merchant vessels. But now the superior number of the

Barbossi—pirates, they were, at best—had locked all but three Tarbuton men-o'-war in iron grips. The three were far off, already hull-down, fleeing for their lives with a score of Barbossis in pursuit.

Jan took a deep breath, not knowing whether he could meet with success or not.

He wrapped an arm about a halyard and gripped the ring. "By the Seal of Sulayman," he roared, "I command the sundering of every bolt and lock in these two Barbossi ships below!"

He reeled from the jerk he received. The grapnels which held so tight to the railings went abruptly limp, their splicing unwound. And then, slowly, the two Barbossi men-o'-war began to fall apart! Plank by plank they disintegrated, but all at once so that, within a minute or two, they were nothing but floating wood upon the water, all snarled in hemp and canvas through which struggled hundreds of men, screaming with terror as they fought toward the maimed seventy-four.

The knot of fighters on the quarter-deck below drew back, staring at the wreckage. For a moment friend and foe were side by side without offering a single blow.

Already four Barbossi men, two on each ratline and others waiting to step up, were intent upon Jan in the rigging.

JAN LOOKED down, seeing cutlasses flashing in their teeth as they paused to wonder and shudder at the wreckage of their own.

Zongri had leaped back from the fray, his massive torso red with blood, his face black than ever with the grime of smoke. And now he seemed to rise two feet in stature.

"The Seal!" he bellowed. "Who—"

He looked aloft. The Seal's flashing in the sunlight was not easy to miss. And Zongri saw something more. He sprang to the ratlines, knocking his own men aside, and raced up, roaring: "*You!* By *Rani*, today you die!"

"Rani is dead!" Tiger mocked him from above, tightening his hold on the rapier. "Last night she died in a heap of rubbish just as I shall kill you!"

Zongri was losing no time. His fangs were agleam and his eyes had lightning in them. His red hands shook the rigging and the very mizzenmast.

"By the Seal of Sulayman!" cried Jan. "I demand that every bolt in every Barbossi—"

Slash! Zongri's great saber passed within an inch of Jan's feet.

Jan's rapier licked out and stung the Ifrit, and then Jan raced up the mizzen-topmast.

"I command," he roared, "that every Barbossi vessel be treated as these two!"

He had no time to witness the caving in of the fleet. Zongri was reaching for his boots, but far off he heard the terrified screams of the Barbossi pirates and the splash of masts dropping into the sea.

"Are you satisfied?" cried Jan. "Down or I'll burst this very ship apart under us!"

"I'll have your heart!" roared Zongri. And the topmast quivered underneath their climbing weights.

Jan got to the topgallant and paused for an instant. "You fool! You're done! Your fleet is gone and you've lost!"

"I'll have your life!" screamed Zongri, mounting still.

The wind had drifted the Tarbuton seventy-four away from the floating wreckage. The list was so bad that no man could have climbed the down side of the shrouds.

Jan took one last look at Zongri and then at the sea. He had to dive. But a hundred feet down made him wince.

"By the Seal of Sulayman!" he shouted, kicking off Zongri's reaching grasp. And then, in a long dive, Jan left the mast. Even before he started

to go he had begun it and it was scarcely out of his mouth before he hit the water. "Out with the mast!"

Green raced by him and he struggled to stop his descent. He fought his way upward again, swimming hard all the while to get as far from the ship as possible. Concussion hit him before he reached the top again and when he came spluttering and blowing to the surface he saw that the seventy-four had no mizzen.

He tried to raise himself in the sea but a wave did that for him, and he saw the mast, all tangled, floating some distance away.

Zongri, naturally, had been unable to clear himself of the rigging and, with it looped all around him, he fought hard to stay up, stunned and bleeding from the concussion.

Jan struck out swiftly for the seventy-four. There were halyards trailing, now that the mizzen had dropped, and he snatched one and pulled himself up it.

Almost against his head a serpentine thundered. He ducked and then bobbed up again to leap over the rail.

A STRANGE sight met his eyes. Wounded and beaten into hiding, the seventy-four's crew, a full three quarters of which remained, were massed upon the quarterdeck and still they came out of the hatchways. In the waist of the ships Barbossis, weaponless now except for what they could pick up on the frigate, were trying to organize for a rush.

The three stern chasers and the serpentines were being loaded again in great haste and others were being lifted up through the after deck to reinforce the battery.

Flame and thunder and smoke rolled down like a blanket over the attackers in the waist, and when it cleared there were furrows plowed through them. But the Barbossi men had not given in. They were finding muskets and cutlasses and hurriedly forming, their front ranks already beating at the men on the raised quarterdeck.

"By the Seal of Sulayman," cried Jan, "I order that every weapon in Barbossi hands fall apart!"

Astounded, the seventy-four's gunners stopped at their loading to stare down into the waist where equally astounded sailors were hastily trying to fit blades to hilts and barrels to stocks. And even when they picked up whole ones from the deck, *they* came apart.

"Surrender," roared Jan, "or be shot down where you stand!"

It did not take them long, confronted with battery and small arms on the quarterdeck, to make up their minds. They threw down the useless segments of weapons and a deafening cheer resounded from the quarterdeck.

Jan turned to see two hairy, clawed hands wrapped about the rail. Zongri, bleeding and soggy, mounted. But he had no more than set his foot on the deck than twenty muskets were at his breast.

"Chain him," said Jan. "We'll take him as a trophy to Tarbuton!"

A growling voice beat upon Jan's ears. "What's this? What's this?" said Tyronin. "Who issues orders here? *Tiger!* Why, you—"

"Aye, Tiger!" said Jan. "And I'll be issuing orders for many a day to come. Get these decks cleared of prisoners. Put them under hatches and pick up those afloat on wreckage. Assemble your fleet and with all speed make way for Tarbuton!"

The audacity of it made Tyronin reel. He was about to bluster but Jan cut him impatiently short.

"I want no trouble from you. This is the last time I'll remind you, but I've no use for an ingrate. Get busy!"

The men, beginning to understand now what had happened, their eyes fixed upon the flashing Seal on Jan's wrist but also appreciating how he stood

there, battle-grimed and terrifying, raised another cheer.

Tyronin was stupefied by it. He looked slowly all about him and then, seeing light, nodded briskly and set to work.

Hakon, severely cut up, had energy enough to touch Jan's hand.

"I knew, Tiger. Some day this had to happen. God bless you, my friend."

Tiger smiled back at him and then strode toward the companionway in search of Alice.

LATE that afternoon, the huge black doors of the palace were thrown wide to admit the triumphal procession which now left the city hoarse with cheering behind them.

The officers of the shattered fleet were bunched together, sullen or hopeless or defiant, and many of their looks were reserved for Zongri, who marched quite alone, almost sinking under the weight of his irons—Zongri who had come back to again take up his rule and lead them swiftly to appalling defeat.

Behind the captives were borne several figureheads salvaged from the vanquished ships; gaudy things of frightful mien which glowered now all in vain.

The hall resounded to the echoes of the marching feet and the assembled army officers, half of them glad and the other half sad about the navy's victory,

sent up a great shout when roaring drums and screaming horns heralded the approach of the victors. No news as yet had reached the palace beyond the tidings that the fleet returned victorious and so it was that Ramus sat up like a giant poker in her throne and wiped her disk eyes and blinked very hard. And so did every courtier and secretary and officer blink.

For in the van was a great chair of gold—Tyronin's personal chair, reserved always for the lord high admiral—and in that chair sat two human beings! It was so great a shock that the queen was heard to gasp. A slave—no, two slaves, and one robed as a temple dancer!—riding in such state?

And what was this? Behind them trooped Tyronin and all his captains, perfectly willing, even anxious, to cheer their leader onward!

"By the blood of Bal!" croaked the queen. "What insanity is this? *Tiger!*"

The chair stopped before the throne with all the horde of high officials grouped about and Jan stepped down. He was grimed and tattered but the radiance of his handsome face made up for all the rest of it. He helped the dancing girl to the floor.

Alice, told time and again on the voyage in, that such was such and this was that, still could not realize it. Later the dancing girl would gradually take a part of her personality and so brighten it. But now she was dazzled by the jewels and silks and still unable to believe that this handsome devil who was

but yet was not Jan Palmer, had the upper hand amidst these frightful people.

"Tiger!" cried Ramus again. "By the death of the devil, man, what's this?"

"Your majesty," said Tiger, bowing perfunctorily, "I give you Zongri again, and I give you the prisoners of a shattered fleet. The pirate might of Barbossi is no more."

"Admiral Tyronin!" thundered Ramus. "However this miracle came about is less amazing than why you allow a human—albeit Tiger—to occupy your place—"

But Tyronin indicated Tiger and said no more.

"Your majesty, last night I thieved a dancing girl from the Temple of Rani" —there was a sharp gasp—"and, unfortunately, caused a goddess of granite to be destroyed. I see there on your right a high priest. He has business with me?"

The high priest stepped angrily forward, purple at the confession. "Chattering ape of a human, you have the face to confess that you—"

"Hush," said Jan. "Commander Hakon, have the fool removed."

The high priest was removed and half a dozen other priests took heed and made a great show of getting out of the hall. The army, knowing not which side to take, took none for the moment.

"Your rule has not been onerous to this land," said Jan. "Pray retain the throne. I care not for its worries."

"You . . . uh . . . what?" cried Ramus.

"Unless, of course," said Jan, "you want every human being in this world to awake this instant and so swarm over you and put you down! I dislike threats." But he touched the glittering Seal upon his hand and all saw it and recognized it. In that instant the army set up a great shout for Tiger and almost brought the roof down on their heads.

"Your majesty," said Tyronin, "have no fear of this man. Single-handed he routed the enemy and he has convinced me that he intends no ill."

Indeed, she could have done nothing about it. Alice felt the shock of her eyes and moved nearer to Jan, holding his arm tightly. He touched her hand reassuringly.

"You . . . you leave me the throne?" said Ramus.

"Aye," said Jan. "It is yours."

Ramus covered up by instantly getting busy. She roared out for the guards to take the Barbossi prisoners and strike off their heads. But Jan, marching up boldly between the two lions from which Alice dodged, shook his head.

"They'll cause no more trouble," he said. "In them you have the nucleus of your new fleet." He had come up to her right and leaned against the arm of her throne. "Zongri, now, that's a different matter."

"You said I was to rule."

"But not against my wishes," said Jan gently. "I advise that you sentence Zongri to ten thousand years of very hard labor and so have done with him."

Ramus sighed quiveringly and did as she was ordered.

ZONGRI was led beaten away, and he had no more than gone when a squad of men in naval uniform dashed in at the door, saw Jan up beside the throne and approached. In their midst they had two of Dauda's jackals and they were a very astonished pair. They quaked with terror as they gazed all about them at this unknown population.

They saw Alice and recognized her with a start. They looked closely at the tall man beside her and, after a moment, recognized a man who might have been Jan Palmer, but wasn't the Jan Palmer they had known.

An instant later another naval patrol came in from another way, dragging a fishmonger's wife who was all covered with dungeon straw. The young Ifrit lieutenant came to a smart stop and addressed Jan. "Sir, we found this one and yet another who was arrested but this morning by orders of the queen. They both profess to know nothing of this world and so we presume they are the people you require."

"Ah, yes," said Ramus, "I did have brought to me such another one. By Bal, Tiger, have you sentenced all these people? But what's to be done if they scatter about?"

"I myself can keep the secret. This lady with me has hers safe enough. And as for these others—" He paused and eyed their sorrowful lot. Shannon, Nathaniel Green and the judge of the court which had passed judgment upon him.

"Spare us!" wept Shannon. "We meant no harm to you! We are almost mad with finding ourselves where we are. What insanity—"

"Speak not of insanity," said Jan, wincing. "You will find yourselves in the land where your soul goes in sleep. Later you will remember that you have been fishmonger's wife and thieves. Just now you are brought before Ramus, who holds over you the power of death."

Ramus looked at Tiger and there was a certain shine in her eye which Alice did not at all like.

"Her majesty," said Tiger, "might be persuaded to spare your lives and merely imprison you if you undo a great wrong in another world."

Aunt Ethel wept and wrung her filthy hands. Green shivered like a tree in a hurricane. And the sweat rolled from Shannon like lard.

"Your honor the judge," said Tiger, "these men and this woman have lied to you and so, in that other world, have done away with me. You can expect execution here if restitution is not made there. Am I making myself clear?"

"Oh, indeed, indeed!" wailed the judge.

"Very well," said Tiger. "Then you will be imprisoned here and not killed. Clear them out, lieutenant, and post reliable Marids over them. I have done."

Ramus looked at him and sighed. "You . . . you vanquished them single-handed, Tiger? Ah, God, but I always knew you had it in you. Pity me for having to so abuse you for what I thought was the good of my realm." She touched his hand and then faced her chamberlain. "Have the entire apartments of the left wing furnished for his lordship, Baron Tiger!" She looked at Alice and smiled sweetly. "My dear, have no fear of us. So long as you hold your secret, no jinni will ever raise his hand against you. Lord Boli, you fat fool! Get into town and buy a hundred serving wenches for her ladyship. Swiftly now and get rid of some of your fat!"

Tiger marched his bride-to-be down the steps. There was no ill will anywhere about him now. It had been spread about what the high priests of Rani had meant to do and how Rani herself had gotten her just deserts. And but for Tiger the town would even now be sacked and raped and in flames at the hands of Zongri's pirates. And so two army majors instantly elected themselves as escort and pushed others courteously aside, and with the blue of the royal navy preceding them, the party marched toward the apartments in preparation.

Alice was beginning to lose some of her fear. She looked searchingly at Jan's face and then squeezed his arm.

"Then it's true," she whispered. "It's true, it's true, it's true!"

And Jan gave her Tiger's swaggering smile and, content, she walked proudly beside him, returning the bows of the multitude through which they passed.

BACK on earth, a few days later, an item ran in a Seattle paper.

EMBEZZLER COMMITS SUICIDE

Millionaire Heir Finds Losses

Nathaniel Green Leaves Confession Note on Deathbed

SEATTLE, WASH.———. Nathaniel Green, long known in local shipping circles as manager for Bering Steamship Corporation, committed suicide last night at his home on Queen Anne Hill.

Jan Palmer, recently absolved from the slaying of Professor Frobish, told police that even after he had noted the missing amounts he had not seen fit to bring charges, but, rather, had been on the point of discharging Green.

"It was not from any merciful intent," said Palmer at his home last night, "for the company was almost ruined. But I did not wish to mar my honeymoon or worry my bride."

This aftermath of the strange case of Professor Frobish climaxed the most publicized affair of the year. Green, who was mainly responsible for Palmer's false imprisonment in a local asylum, had evidently sought to cover up his embezzled funds by murdering Professor Frobish and thereby throwing the stigma of the crime upon the young millionaire. Though Judge Dougherty says this is probably the case, no post-mortem action is to be taken against Green and so the matter has been closed.

THE END.

Classified Advertising

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One of the primary problems of animal psychology is the determination of the intelligence of the animal with which the investigator is working. It being somewhat difficult to get a dog to fill out an intelligence-test blank in the manner of humans, the usual method is to test them with simple problem boxes. The dog wants food, the food is put in a box with a series of interlocking levers. Question: How many levers in series can a dog learn to manipulate?

Other tests include solving mazes, and a variety of other mechanical tasks for reward. The higher apes can be tested with such items as a banana suspended out of reach, while the chimpanzee, or gorilla, or whatever ape is being tested, is given two or three sections of a fishing rod—disassembled. Will the animal think enough to stick the parts together to reach the prize?

Much work has been done on this, and much argument has been conducted over the results. Dr. Rhine, who has been investigating telepathy, now makes a suggestion for the experimenters to worry over. Dr. Rhine's tests have shown that telepathy exists—inaccurate, undependable, but yet a factor to be reckoned with.

Now if an experimenter is testing an ape, and the experimenter knows the answer to the test, does the ape think it out—or, perhaps, get the answer telepathically, making the whole elaborate affair delightfully, frustratingly meaningless?

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