

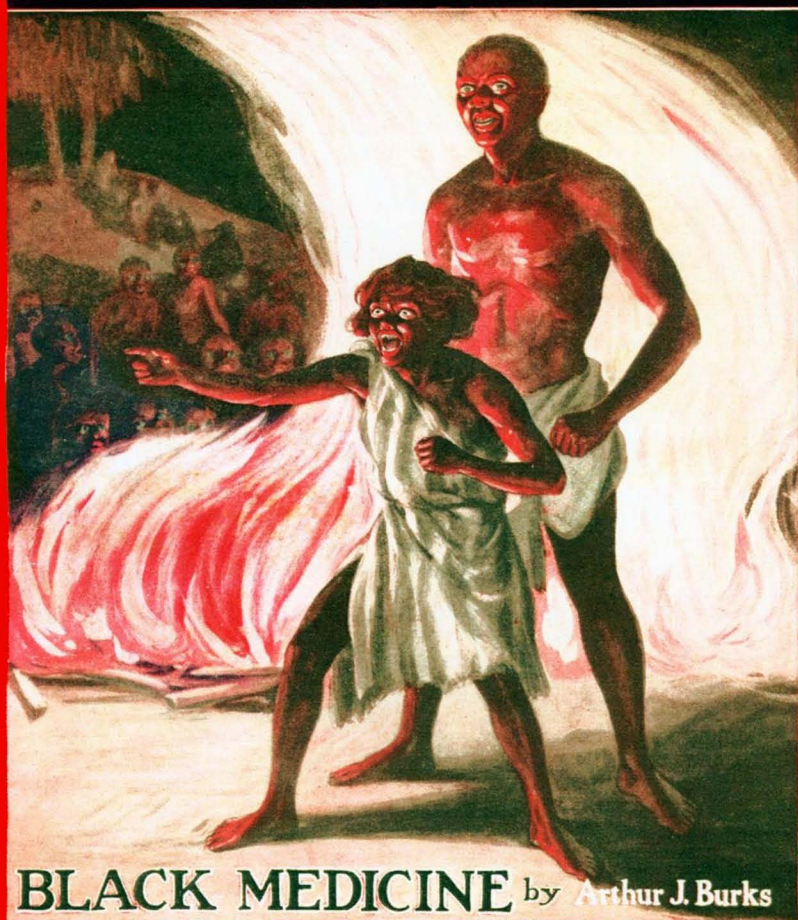
Weird Tales

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BLACK MEDICINE by Arthur J. Burks

Stories by MURRAY LEINSTER, SEABURY QUINN and OTHERS

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Contents for August, 1925

Cover Design	Andrew Brosnatch	
Black Medicine	Arthur J. Burks	149
<i>Complete Novelette of Haitian Voodoo</i>		
The Oldest Story in the World	Murray Leinster	167
<i>Blood-red Rubies—an Oriental Raja—and a Torture Chamber</i>		
The Bearded Men	Adam Hull Shirk	177
<i>A Whiskered Hypnotist Ruled Over a Club of Outcasts from Society</i>		
In the Forest of Villefere	Robert E. Howard	185
<i>If the Werewolf is Slain as a Man, His Ghost Haunts the Slayer</i>		
Stallions of the Moon	Frank Belknap Long, Jr.	187
<i>Verse</i>		
The Man Who Laughed	B. W. Sliney	188
<i>Terrible Was the Laughter that Resounded Throughout the Prison</i>		

(Continued on Next Page)



Author of "Strange Tales From Santo Domingo," "Luisma's Return," etc.

THE late night air which hung over Port au Prince, weird capital of the Black Republic, seemed laden with the still breath from a smoldering furnace. Lloyd Chandler's white duck trousers clung to his perspiring body in a way that made him think of the gentle massaging of clammy hands. Quite without purpose at the moment, bored to death with the silly round of gayety which seemed the sole aim of the American colony, Chandler had sallied unobtrusively forth from the American Hotel for a jaunt across shadow-bordered Champs de Mars. A fat stogie between his teeth, the smoke rising lazily to blend with the darkness overhead, Chandler would have felt quite content had he been almost anywhere in the world except in Port au Prince.

Perhaps it was the three rounds of coffee cocktails which had caused his present feeling of irritation. An old man whose yellowing cheeks spoke of many years in the tropics had given the recipe for the cocktail to the ebony automaton behind the counter at the hotel, and Chandler had been persuaded to drink one of the concoctions. They were excellent and had seemed to have little or none of

the "kick" with which *rhum d'Haiti* is usually invested. Chandler had taken three of them before he stopped to realize that the effect might be a trifle late in coming. The black boy behind the counter had done weird things to those drinks—not that he hadn't copied the recipe with meticulous care, for his precarious position behind the counter was dependent upon the whims of the hotel's patrons; but something had gone into those drinks that had filled Chandler's brain with all sorts of strange imaginings. He had gone forth to cool his perspiring body and to scatter the cobwebs in his brain.

This was why he soon found himself on the eastern edge of Champs de Mars, standing in the shadow of the bronze statue of Dessalines, and looking across at the lights which illuminated Haiti's executive building, Borno's presidential palace. As he stood in this shadow the statue was between him and the eery glow of the single street lamp on the corner he had just passed. And, looking toward the palace, his eye fell upon the shadow of Dessalines' upflung arm. The shadow was just a black, silent smear, with the thinner shadow of the sword upthrust through it like a

gruesome horn of some evil beast. How true to character was it when one knew some of the history of the monster whom this statue, its natural dusky color camouflaging the real color of this black brute, had been erected to commemorate! As Chandler stood there and the smoke from his cigar spiraled upward, something of the awesome and menacing spirit of the Black Republic seemed to enter into him. He visualized back country jungles which had never known the touch of a white man's boot, and in which ebony people, blacker even than the "raven tresses of midnight", stalked silently on bare splay feet, red-rimmed eyes searching the jungle, broad nostrils twitching like those of a questing feline—searching forever for answers to strange questions which no white man has ever asked and no white man may ever answer.

CHANDLER shuddered as though the edge of a cold machete had touched his back between the shoulder blades.

"Just across there," he mused, pointing with the end of his cigar, "is Haiti's White House. What manner of beasts have not walked up those steps since its erection? What maniacal dreams have not had their birth beneath yonder dome, passed on down the black blood-stream by other black presidents who never even dreamed that their successors would be invested with such grandeur? What monsters, fashioned in the Creator's image, have not held this fertile country within the hollows of their bloody hands, knowing no law except that dictated by their own brute intelligence, administered by their black butchers whose hands were always red? Monsters who, believing in their hearts that they followed the way of the Cross, caused paintings of the Christ and the Virgin Mary to be placed in the churches

throughout the land—paintings which showed the divine Madonna as a negress and the Son as an ebon pickaninny, yet who, down in their tiny souls, followed in secret the ghastly cult of the Great Green Serpent! Ugh-h-h-h!"

The shudder was real and came from Chandler's innermost being. As one with many another normal American, just to think of Haiti's short and bloody past was to be filled with horror and a nameless dread. The deadly weight of that past seemed to sag down upon him, pressing him into the dust with its sheer brutish power.

With a glance over his shoulder at the statue as he faced about for the return journey, he hurled his cigar aside and saw it fall on the driveway in a shower of tiny sparks, coming to a stop in the gutter and glowing like a spent firefly that had crept aside to die. Chandler quickened his steps and knew not why.

Where he should have turned to the left to return to the hotel he came to a halt in sudden indecision. Up the short half block to where he stood came the tones from the hotel proprietor's radio, recently installed and equipped with a loud speaker, as it ground out a bit of latest jazz as interpreted by East Pittsburgh. The loud laugh of a female who had had one cocktail too many—the scraping of feet on wooden boards as several couples struggled through the mazes of a fox trot.

Muttering an imprecation indicative of disgust, Chandler continued on up the street past his turning-off place. He had never before gone in this direction and hadn't the slightest idea what might lie ahead of him. Nor did he much care. He could walk around a bit, he thought, and perhaps the merry-makers in the hotel would get tired of it all and retire by the time he had walked off his fit of unreasoning depression. Chandler

was not one much given to depressing thoughts, and his musing words, as he had gazed across at the palace from the shadow of Dessalines immortalized, had been merely by way of cynical comment. The feeling of dread which had been upon him for a moment back there had gone of its own accord by the time he had arrived at the street corner and heard that laugh which had come out to him from the hotel. Chandler feared neither Haiti's past nor her present, and held her dusky inhabitants in the contempt which he felt they merited. Niggers, all of them! Nothing but niggers, and blacker than any others he had ever seen, that was all.

Chandler paused abruptly. He had come to the outskirts of the city without realizing that he had done so. He had passed the last lone street light some minutes ago and, wrapped up in his thoughts, had failed to notice. The concrete sidewalk ended here and the dirt walk began—a twisting black serpent, created by bare splay feet, which slithered away ahead until it vanished into the darkness at the edge of the jungle.

"If I should decide to follow that trail," mused Chandler, "clear through to the final stopping place, what would I find at Journey's End? And what would I learn about Haiti along the way? Enough to give my friends a thrill when I came back to tell about it, I'll wager. Bah! My friends! I haven't any friends, or I wouldn't be in Haiti now!"

HE stood irresolutely there in the blackness revolving in his mind certain pictures of weird imagery which that ribbon of trail had caused to be born. Without knowing that he did so, so powerful is habit, he felt around in his pockets for the mate to the stogie he had discarded beneath the bronze effigy of Dessalines, found it and thoughtfully lighted it, cupping the flame of his match with his

hands. Even the flame seemed to suggest odd pictures to Chandler. For, looking through it and a little above, he seemed to see a brutish black face against the night shadows—a black face set in an expression of dumb stolidity, topped by white-irised eyes that were round and staring. Thick black lips, loose and sensual—always hungry for food such as a white man hesitates to name.

Chandler blinked his eyes, but the face persisted in staying there—and staring, stolidly staring, in dumb, animal-like curiosity. Thinking it a figment of the imagination drawn from the depths of those unusual cocktails, Chandler turned his eyes away and flipped the match straight ahead of him.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught a darker shadow against the gloom and, as the flaming match described a parabola to the ground, he saw the dirty, leather-sandaled shapes of two huge splay feet—the largest feet he had ever seen. He faced farther away, unwilling to admit that a strange feeling of unreality had fallen upon him with the view of that black face through the match-flame.

Then his eyes swung upward in the direction of Petionville and came to pause—not on Petionville itself, but on the blacker hills which lay beyond it, farther inland, a huge cone of blackness, dotted here and there without pattern or design, with spots of flame. Far away he knew them to be, many miles inland; yet he knew them to be wood fires kindled by the dusky children of the deeper jungle. Phantom fireflies at rest, gigantic fireflies, winking at him across the miles of mystery, jungle and darkness. Had Chandler believed in witches he would have half fancied that aged harridans, black of visage and of raiment, were squatting out there beside those distant fires, stirring brews of hellish potency against their master's need.

Chandler came to himself with a jerk.

"Bah!" he snorted to himself, "I'm letting this Haitian midnight steal my angora! I act like a wee sma' babe who fears the shadows in the corner of the bedroom."

He whirled as though he had been struck when an odd chuckle came to his ears from the edge of the shadow across the narrow street. He unbuttoned his coat swiftly in order that his little automatic might lie the easier to his hand, and fairly leapt in the direction of the unexpected sound—and came up with a shock as his body struck forcibly against another body in the darkness, a black shadow that was just as dense as the eery shadows of the night itself.

An indefinable thrill shot through him as he realized, in that instant of contact, that the person he had struck was a negro. A native, by the musty odor which enveloped him like a filthy garment.

"So the face I thought I saw was a real face after all," he muttered, and then, raising his voice a trifle and speaking in the gibberish of Haiti—that language which is supposed to be French, but which smacks more of the Congo and the Dark Continent: "Who are you, and why have you been watching me?"

The man did not answer, but kept his place in the shadow. Chandler struck another match and held it up before him. The negro fairly towered above the stalwart American—ragged, hatless, hair matted to prove that it had never felt the caress of a comb. Bony kneecaps showed through holes in what had once been blue denim trousers. The black's arms were partially akimbo, with the right forearm pointing upward and the horny hand curved about the oddly shaped bowl of a native clay pipe. The air was redolent of the biting fumes of that native tobacco, than

which there is no viler weed in all the earth.

ANGERED by the fellow's impassivity, Chandler thrust forth a hand and seized the black's shoulders, intending to shake the man into speaking. He might as well have attempted to shake the statue of Dessalines. The black chuckled again. Chandler subsided, reading in that chuckle no menace toward himself. He stepped back a pace, however, and waited.

Finally the negro spoke.

"It is not well for the *blancs* to be abroad when the people of the hills are brewing black medicine," he said softly, "for those people do not like to be watched."

Chandler jerked his head around once more, and stared again at those distant fires which blinked and wavered against the conelike hillside. He lifted his right arm and pointed. He could not see the arm himself, but he fancied that the negro could—that the black could see in the dark because it was his natural element.

"Is that what they are doing out there?" he demanded. "And what is 'black medicine', anyway?"

The black did not answer. Chandler sensed that he had drawn slightly away as he asked that question. He repeated it.

"What is 'black medicine'? And why do they brew it at night?"

The chuckle came again, having in it a certain note, now of sinister malevolence. And it was farther away. The black was leaving. Chandler raised his voice in a shout. No answer came to him out of the night. The black had indeed gone and Chandler was alone on the edge of the Black Republic's capital, wondering why he had so suddenly become afraid. Afraid of what? Of the darkness? Of the weird fires on the hillside? Or just of the menacing

black spirit of Haiti itself after night-fall?

He walked back to the curb he had just quitted, and paused a moment, facing back the way he had come, wanting with all his heart to retrace his steps without delay. And he knew in that instant that, if he really followed his inclinations, he would, ere he had gone fifty yards, have broken into a run, plunging at last into the foyer of the hotel, spent and panting, drawing the startled eyes of the merry-makers who frequented the place. And he hated himself for even allowing such a picture to possess him.

He looked back at the fires again. Black medicine! What was it?

After all, why should he return to the hotel at all? He would not be missed if he never went back. Had he not just said that he hadn't a friend in the world?

With an oath of exasperation, Chandler dropped his cigar, ground it flat beneath his heel, and strode rapidly away—straight out toward the black jungle, following the ribbon of trail, moving with rapid strides as though the lights of the people who brewed 'black medicine' were beckoning him onward!

2

IN A very few minutes Chandler had left the capital behind him. The roar of the city died gradually away as the path led upward into the foothills, circling Petionville, heading into the jungle toward the east. Chandler kept to the trail by a sixth sense which he did not know he possessed—he couldn't see his hand before his face after the lights had dropped away behind him. And he was ready to repent of his hasty decision, knowing it for a foolish whim. Who really cared whether he sought the jungle and tried to fathom the reason for those fires which dotted the distant hillside? Was he going just be-

cause he did not wish to be known, even to himself, as a chap who feared the shadows? Perhaps. For he could think of no other reason—except that those lights seemed beckoning him—promising strange tales such as he had never heard before. Fascinating fingers of red mystery!

Chandler looked back after a time at the city he had left. He was high above it, the faint sounds of passing motor cars coming to his ears but faintly. Down there was the habitat of ordinary men—semi-civilized, it is true—here was the jungle which seemed to hint of faintly whispering secrets of dread, seemed to rustle with the passing of unseen feet—the splay feet of black brutes. Chandler paused for a moment and wiped his steaming brow with his handkerchief.

What was "black medicine"? The black man had not told him. Yet he had before heard it mentioned—smilingly, by white people who had sojourned for a time in the Black Republic. It had something to do with secret preparations to arise and cast the white invaders into the sea. When one spoke of "black medicine" one thought, not of potent drafts of liquid medicine, but of mystic spells woven of bestial lust and brute superstition. Woven in the darkness of the inland jungle in the dead of those nights when the face of the moon was darkened.

What was that catch sentence which the originator of the coffee cocktail had repeated to him?

"And the niggers say that when the point of the sword of Dessalines points straight out toward the water of the Gulf of Gonaives, there will begin the bloodiest uprising in the history of bloody Haiti; the whites will be slaughtered and their bodies hurled to the sharks which patrol the gulf!"

Chandler had stood within the black shadow of Dessalines but a short time since and had noted the

sword upheld by the bronze arm of the effigy. Had he only imagined it because of the passing of a cloud overhead, or had that sword-point, now pointing skyward at a forty-five degree angle as though the monster harangued a black multitude, settled almost perceptibly downward? As though the insensate soul of the metal monster were striving to give the signal mentioned in the prophecy which some unknown prophet had uttered! Did those black men of the jungle know? Was that the reason for the brewing of the "black medicine"? Or were those cocktails he had imbibed playing weird tricks upon him?

Stubbornly he faced eastward once more, resolving to see his strange adventure through, come what might. Might he not be an important cog in the invisible wheel of destiny? Urged forward by the hands of the Three Old Ladies who sit at their looms forever spinning the threads of Fate? Fantastic, it is true. But stop and consider, placing yourself, in imagination, on the corner of the street where Chandler had just stood. With those weird signal fires beckoning with silent fingers, would you have sought within your mind for sensible reasons for following the lure which calls always to the adventurous? Or would you, too, have started briskly forth on an uncharted voyage of discovery? By merely reading this tale you answer the questions! I, too, would have gone, as Chandler did.

And the fact remains that people have gone forth to learn the meaning of those fires. One of them lies at this moment in a distant cemetery, buried now for so long that time has wiped the look of horror from his face. Just what he saw before the end came no one may ever know. And one hopes that the end was more merciful than the evidence tended to show, for his nude body was found on the hillside which supports Petion-

ville, mutilated as though it had been torn by the remorseless fangs of wild beasts, and within a half hour's walk of Port au Prince and the soldiers of Uncle Sam. Perhaps he was trying to get back before the end came—for he had been one of those soldiers, and it was a hunting squad of his buddies that found him!

Chandler had forgotten this. It had been told him by one of the soldiers who had found the body, and Chandler had felt nauseated when he heard the gruesome details. The horror in the face of the soldier who would never forget what he had seen had been imprinted on Chandler's consciousness. He would remember it for always, he had thought at the time. Yet it had slipped from him as he had stayed on in Haiti and had, later, listened to other stories as bloody and gruesome. He had even become hardened, so that he was wont to listen to those stories with a cynical smile on his lips. Bogey tales to frighten the chicken-hearted!

FIFTEEN minutes later and a bend in the trail as it circled the hill hid the city from sight. Only a glare against the sky marked the site of the Black Republic's capital.

Chandler stopped once more for a breathing space—and silence, black and awesome, took possession of the jungle. Only at intervals did he catch the sound of vagrant and silky rustlings. Stooping low, in the hope of seeing silhouettes against the skyline, he strove to pierce the eery gloom with anxious eyes—without avail.

Then Chandler remembered. It was about here that the mutilated body of the American sergeant had been found! All at once it seemed to the startled man who was just remembering, that the jungle was peopled with living shadows of the night! The rustlings, caused by a gentle breeze perhaps, seemed to multiply,

sounding like the slithering of serpents' bellies through rotting mold!

And when, muffled with distance, there came to his straining ears the measured beatings of several tom-toms, he closed his lips against a cry of fear! Throbbing out into the night, sending forth their weird messages which were old when Thebes was young, they seemed to ripple against Chandler's eardrums like the beating of tiny wings. What did they mean, and where were the ears that listened?

Striving to throttle the dread which tugged at his throat, Chandler hesitated once more, half minded to go back to the city after all and to return on the morrow. Yet common sense told him that tomorrow the hillsides would be bare, the jungles silent and deserted. Uncle Sam, before now, had sent out searching parties to investigate, and his khaki-clad minions had always returned to report failure, and to tell of weary hours of beating the savage bush, seeking for creatures that had fled with the rising sun.

Chandler half turned as though to retrace his steps when, out of the jungle on the hillside below him, there came a repetition of that chuckle which had caused the ants to creep along his spine when he had heard it at the edge of the lights which illumine Port au Prince. Chandler had heard the ghastly laugh of a hyena, had listened to the cackling of maniacs in the *Manicomio de Padre Billini* at Santo Domingo City; yet neither of these had affected him as did this single chuckle from the darkness. There was in that chuckle a muted strain of mockery, blended with something which he had not sensed when he had heard the sound before—a note of beastly gloating!

Chandler wiped his brow anew. The chuckle was repeated. Then it was broken off as a stream of words—

the odd gibberish of Haiti—floated up to him:

"The *blanc* is brave! But he is a fool, too! He shouldn't forget that Chal David warned him! If you have the heart of a young fowl, turn and flee! If you are brave beyond the transient courage which comes from the flowing bowl, follow on in the trail you have chosen! It will lead you to—ah, *mon blanc*, but follow on and you will learn!"

Angered at the effrontery of the unseen baiter, Chandler fairly shouted a curse upon him. The sounds of his own voice, with words in his own language, seemed partially to dispel the weird feeling that had possessed him. It seemed to indicate the vast gulf which separated him, a white man from the civilized country across the blue waters to the north, from the black who skulked like a wild animal in the brush below—like a cowardly beast of prey paralleling a spoor.

The man in the shadows below chuckled again, as though he had read the mind of Chandler. The latter turned back and started once more along the trail. He had a feeling that the unseen black man kept silent pace with him through the black jungle—moving along on huge splay feet. Yet no sound came up to him.

TEN minutes, fifteen minutes passed. Then a long-drawn scream, like the wind-driven wail of a banshee, split the night! It came from near the spot where the unknown trailer had paused to hurl a taunt at the white man who hesitated. Chandler stopped again. He listened, waiting for that signaling scream to be answered. No sound for a long minute except the rolling boom of the distant tom-toms. Then in the middle distance ahead the scream was repeated. Somewhere along the trail ahead another watcher waited in the darkness, standing like a black statue,

immovable in the gloom. The tom-toms ceased abruptly and, far away this time, he heard the scream once more. Then it was repeated behind him, then a pause, then a longer scream, barely broken thrice. The man who had called himself Chal David was sending some sort of message ahead of Chandler and, when the scream was passed on by the man in the middle distance and faithfully repeated by the voice away yonder by the tom-toms, Chandler knew that the message had been heard and understood.

Chandler, standing still for the moment, allowed his eyes to sweep the hillside where the medicine fires were. Two of them, halfway up the mountain, went out like wicks that have been snuffed, leaped into view again, vanished—flamed—vanished—flamed! Chandler knew that, whatever that signal had been, it would be known throughout southeastern Haiti within two hours. From Tumiseau to Bois Tombe—from Anses-à-Pitre to Jacmel, a weird telegraphy which no white man has ever decoded.

Angered and exasperated now beyond all thought of self, Chandler resolutely set his feet squarely in the outgoing trail once more, straight ahead toward the spot whence came the rolling of the tom-toms, with the fires of those who made black medicine waving at him from the hillside which now slumbered in the awesome darkness in the eastward, to Chandler's left. He resolved not to stop until he had come to the place of the tom-toms and had seen who played upon them. And, except for those eery screams, there was no other sound in the jungle—the screams had come no more. The tom-toms had begun again and every minute their rolling sound seemed to draw nearer.

Two hours passed and, far ahead, Chandler could make out a glow in the sky which told of great bonfires, hidden from view because of sur-

rounding hills. And from this spot the sound of the tom-toms seemed to come—still beating out their measured meaning. Nearer and nearer strode Chandler, all fear gone now, his lips set in a grim line indicating that a fighting white man had come to the end of his tolerance, and that whatever happened to him he would give a good account of himself.

Then he stopped aghast on the crest of the mountain's shoulder and gazed down into the pocket which sheltered the bonfires. Five score blacks he counted, naked every one of them as at the day of birth, ranged in a huge circle about the largest of the fires, the others kept alight solely because they forced the spirits of the night to keep their distances, tended by half-grown girls with white teeth and fearful eyes.

Inside the circle of black and stolid faces four other negroes sat, cross-legged, before four tom-toms. Mechanically, as though no commands went from their brains to their hands, the four men raised their knuckles and brought them down upon the tight-stretched skins which formed the heads of the rude drums—while the rolling booms went forth in unison to make the night hideous and cause the birds in their tree homes to crouch lower in their flimsy nests, little eyes searching the gloom, mother birds twittering with mock-courage to still the sleepy, frightened cheeping of the little ones. And the faces of the four players stared stolidly toward the wall of blackness, the black bodies motionless except for the beating hands.

The blacks who formed the larger circle glanced fearfully behind them at intervals, and Chandler wondered what was in their minds that caused their seeming restlessness. Or for whom they waited! The fires winked on the hillside and the tom-toms kept up a ceaseless, barbaric monotone.

CHANDLER stepped aside from the path and crouched at the base of a large tree—eyes focused on the dark circle below, trying to read its silent menace, every muscle tensed for what might be in store for him.

He started to turn his head as a sickening odor came suddenly to his nostrils. He whipped his swerving gaze back to the circle below. Not a negro in the circle, not a girl who tended the fires, was smoking—yet, so strongly as to be unmistakable, he caught the odor of native tobacco! Somewhere near him in the darkness another watcher, undoubtedly a negro, studied the scene in this hidden pocket in the hills!

Could it be Chal David, he of the huge splay feet and horrid chuckle? Chandler set his teeth grimly as he imagined that the black man, perhaps, knew of his presence, could even see him there, crouched at the base of the tree. Was the black man testing him again, waiting like a black buzzard of the night for a sign of breaking? Chandler resolved that one Chal David would have a long wait ere he, Chandler, would gratify his brute vanity by showing fear again. He chose to ignore what he knew to be near him, keeping his gaze steadfastly upon the blacks beside the bonfire below. Even so, he held himself tensely, his ears strained for the slightest sound, expecting momentarily a blinding rush of musty-smelling bodies or the biting slash of a war machete across his neck. The minutes wore on, each adding to the suspense which weighed Chandler down. He would, after a time, almost have welcomed a rush in the darkness, would have felt heartened by the feel of a human body beneath his hands. This would be far better than the utter silence with its weight of imminent menace—and that sickening odor which came from the oddly shaped clay pipe of the unseen smoker.

Then a gentle rustling sound off to his left told Chandler that the unseen one had shifted his weight. The rustling continued as though a heavy body moved downward over slipping leaves toward the circle about the bonfires.

Chal David broke into the circle of light like a great black giant out of a cavern. And the blacks arose to greet him with cries of pleasure.

What was that greeting?
 "Papa Lou! Papa Lou!"

CHAL DAVID stalked into their midst as though he were their overlord. A black man who sat in his pathway was kicked aside as of no account, and he arose after Chal David had passed, only to bend and press black lips to the ground upon which those huge splay feet had trodden! The black maidens who tended the lesser bonfires ceased from their labors and crept closer, timidly, to hear what the big man might say. Quaveringly, they blended their voices with those of the naked men:

"Papa Lou! Papa Lou!"

Chal David raised a massive hand for silence. His words, when they came, were weighted with an awesome dignity, as though he who gave them voice were the sole arbiter of black humanity's destiny.

"Where is he?" he demanded "I do not see him here! Yet I know that he came this way! For did not I, Chal David, chief *Papa Lou* of Bois Tombe, cunningly taunt him into daring the spirits of the night? He was a fool who thought to prove himself a brave man! Where is he? Belema Guigua, you were stationed in the jungle to pass on the signal agreed upon should a white man come to our net. Did you see him pass?"

Another black man, large almost as Chal David the high priest, arose from the circle about the fire, only to fall on his knees and press his curly head to the ground before Chal

David. In this awesome moment Chandler wondered, irrelevantly, if the smoking of native tobacco were a luxury which Chal David granted himself only when alone, in order that he might not lessen his dignity in the eyes of his followers. If this were so it seemed, somehow, to humanize this representative of the most ghastly cult in the world. The pipe was gone now and the once ragged Chal David was naked except for a strange girdle which covered his loins. His body was huge, yet made horrible from the fact that his skin seemed to hang on him in odd ridges, as though he had once been fat and had grown thin from fasting, causing his body to shrivel inward toward the bony framework. But the black known as Belema Guigua was speaking:

"Know, oh *Papa Lou*, that I did not see him of whom you speak. Yet I followed the trail that he must have followed. I ran because I was afraid, for all men know that you consort with the spirits of the jungle places and that the spirits hover near you! So, knowing that you, too, were coming, I fled after I heard and repeated your call—fled here to the great fires into the light of which the spirits may not follow!"

Slowly Chal David inclined his head toward the kneeling man. Deliberately he pursed his huge black lips and spat upon the cringing wretch at his feet.

"Coward!"

Just the one word, freighted with sinister meaning. The heads of the other blacks bent lower, while a low murmur, which caused the ants to creep anew along the spine of Chandler, swept around the circle. Chandler congratulated himself that fate had stepped in and caused him to hide. He was satisfied that there was no one else in the woods who might spy him out against the glare of the bonfires, and kept his eyes glued to the eery

scene below. Chal David had mentioned no other watcher except the cringing Belema Guigua.

Then, swift as the striking of a serpent, Chal David's right hand swept upward and down, and Belema's black head leaped from his body and rolled grotesquely toward the big fire, severed by that one blow from a machete which Chandler, though watching closely, had not detected upon the person of the high priest. He looked again after that blow, and raised his hand to rub his eyes. The machete had disappeared once more, and Chal David stood there with his arms akimbo, looking disdainfully around upon the black circle, as though looking for anyone who dared to question his act of jungle justice. The murmur about the circle grew louder, but no man moved from his place. Chandler caught a gleam as the firelight touched an ever-widening spot near the body of Belema Guigua. And the gleam was the color of blood!

Chal David partially turned his back. The men in the circle moved slightly, like beasts crouching for a spring. Chal David turned again and every man sank down. A travesty of a smile touched the broad lips of the high priest. Then he turned away and the circle closed in, hiding the headless body from sight. And from the beastly sounds which came up to where Chandler was hidden, he was glad that he could not see.

Then he noted that the black maidens had ceased from their labors. They were standing at the edge of the firelight, as though waiting. The leaping flames began to die down. One by one the black men moved back from where Belema's body had been, and Chandler shuddered as those who moved back wiped their mouths with dirty wrists!

Then that scream came once more from the lips of Chal David. The

blacks straightened in their places. Chal David spoke.

"Since that dog has allowed the white man to slip out to freedom, there is nothing for us to do but move ahead into the jungle. He knows by now that something is afoot out here in the darkness and may return tomorrow with a party of soldiers. But do not lose heart! For I stood tonight in the Champs de Mars, and I swear to you that the effigy of Dessalines is falling, leaning slowly forward in the direction of Gonaives! The time is coming, after the words of the prophecy! But not yet! The medicine is not yet ready. But the fires are burning and the signal has gone forth. I lead you tonight into the jungle toward Bois Tombe, where the women will complete the brewing. The medicine lacks but one ingredient, which only a white person may furnish! Bois Tombe is on the Dominican border, and beyond it live natives whose fair skins cry aloud because they are tainted with the color of the white oppressors!"

Leaving the fires to die away as they might, the whole party, led by Chal David and the women, headed eastward into the night, unconscious that a white ghost flitted from tree to tree, keeping the party always within sight or hearing, looking to the rear for possible spies, and praying to the God of the white people for a thunderbolt to descend upon the curly poll of the high priest.

3

PERHAPS you wonder why Chandler, having witnessed this murderous crime perpetrated by the black who called himself Chal David, did not draw his pistol and slay the high priest, rather than pray that an all-powerful Diety might see fit to take the matter into His own hands; but remember that, by now, Chandler was a long way from the usual haunt of white folks and that, did he even

expose himself to view, he would place himself at the mercy of jungle brutes who thought nothing of killing and who delighted in torturing the victim. For what horrible purpose had Chal David dared him into the wilderness in the first place? Chandler could not guess, but he was now remembering with little difficulty the tale of the American sergeant, whose mutilated body, scored by what had seemed to be the fangs of wild beasts, had been found on the hillside below Petionville. And, remembering, he had no trouble in deciding that something terrible had been in store for him.

When the group of blacks had vanished into the jungle, heading eastward, Chandler had waited long enough for them to get well away before he set out to follow, when he had hurried past the bonfires in the pocket, casting a shivering glance at the bundle of bones which was all that was earthly remaining of Belema Guigua. Then he, too, had stepped into the jungle on the trail of the high priest and his coterie of biped carnivores.

When he had first entered the jungle he had had little or no purpose mapped out. Now, however, since he had heard those significant words anent the leaning of the statue of Dessalines, and recalled the words of the old prophecy, he felt that here something was taking place that the whites in the capital city should know. It had been given him to see a bit of what was afoot and he knew that did he return without more exact information, although he was a civilian and not responsible to the uniformed authorities, he would be morally responsible did anything happen to the American colony.

Had the blacks power enough in truth to hurl the whites into the sea? Ask the descendants of those French colonists whose blood ran red in the gutters of Cap Haitien when the

blacks arose to cast off the yoke of slavery! Look into history and read of the pitiful remnant of French soldiers that finally returned to France to carry Le Clair's report of ghastly failure to Napoleon! But the blacks had had skilled leaders in those days. True enough! And who may say that, in a country which boasts a population of more than two million souls, another Christophe or a L'Ouverture may not be born? Haiti has had her great men. Look up the significant facts regarding the immortal Dumas.

Well out beyond the light from the bonfires in the pocket, the blacks who followed Chal David, keeping time with the monotonous droning of the tom-toms which the four mannikins were still pounding, suddenly broke out into that weird chant of the Haitian negro which, once heard, is never forgotten:

"AI! ai! AI! ai! AI! ai!"

Meaningless when seen on paper, yet alive and throbbing with meaning when heard in the heart of a trackless jungle after nightfall. A monotonous rising and falling of barbaric sound which, whatever may be its effect upon the sensibilities of a white man, seems to fill the negro with a sort of insane frenzy.

AS THE negroes, following in the wake of Chal David and the tom-tom players, chanted the weird melody, they ever and anon, as though suddenly stricken with some nameless urge, broke into odd capers beside the trail, rolling their heads from side to side, waving their arms, performing obscene gestures that seemed to fill the other negroes anew with a strange sort of madness. The girls, too, took their part in the ghastly pantomime. Thank God that no such women are born of white mothers!

Only Chal David, seemingly oblivious of the antics of his followers,

walked straight to the front with long and tireless strides. An hour passed and the fires were still on Chandler's left as he followed the blacks; but he knew that they were really circling the fires and that these were now to the north. And the fires were steadily drawing to the rear.

Then, between himself and the marching negroes, Chandler saw a shadow, just a bit denser than the blackness itself, detach itself from the jungle on the left and hurry forward to join the marchers. Another negro, whether man or woman Chandler could only guess, had left the signal fires to join the men with Chal David. Another shadow and another. Then in groups of two, three, four and five they came, each group being greeted with a rising inflection in the monotonous *"AI! ai!"* of the larger group. And the newcomers, upon joining, raised their voices with the others in the weird chant that must have come to Haiti from the Dark Continent:

"AI! ai! AI! ai! AI! ai!"

From the other side of the trail, too, shadowy groups separated themselves from the jungle gloom and joined this nucleus of marching blotches. Chandler dropped farther to the rear, knowing that at any moment some one might be a trifle late in joining and discover that a white man was spying upon the group which was fast growing into a small army. The ceaseless *"AI! ai!"* was now growing louder moment by moment, until Chandler wondered if even the dancers at the American Hotel did not at times lift their heads to listen and wonder. He wondered, too, if the blacks were really ignorant that he followed. Perhaps they knew and with diabolical cunning were merely enticing him farther into this Haitian wilderness!

He gritted his teeth and refused to think what such knowledge might mean.

So on through the night, until a rosy glow in the east signaled the approach of a new day and Chandler sensed that the little army was preparing to call a halt. When he felt absolutely sure of this he climbed a tree which was clothed with heavy foliage at the top, and hid himself against discovery, peering through the branches until the blacks had disappeared into another hollow between the endless hills. They were soon out of sight; but when their shouting came back to him and the weird chanting ceased, Chandler knew that they had halted. When he saw faint wisps of smoke against the dawn's gray haze, he was sure.

Ignoring the pangs of hunger which tortured him when the first odor of cooking meat came to him with the morning breeze, and attempting to counteract this torture by assuring himself that the meat was probably human flesh anyway, Chandler stretched out as well as he might on his uncertain perch and tried to sleep. He was very, very tired. And thirsty! But he conquered thoughts of his thirst with an iron will and presently fell asleep, lulled by the voices which came to him from the little hollow ahead.

As the day crept forward until the sun was high above his sleeping place, Chandler stirred restlessly in the heat which, even through the curtain of leaves, seemed intent upon seeking him out. A merciful breeze rustled the branches and Chandler slept on.

Then evening again and Chandler awoke to find himself weak from the lack of water and food. He knew that, were he to follow this weird adventure through, he must have water, and very soon. His danger had increased. For he must, if no water were encountered along the way, attempt to steal a water gourd from one of the blacks. That meant that he must kill the black, too. For the fellow would report his loss, and the

man with the cunning which Chandler believed Chal David possessed would not have to ponder long to put two and two together and get the right answer. He would know, if he did not already know, that the white man had not, after all, slipped through his fingers and fled back to Port au Prince. Upon which he would undoubtedly give the word which would scatter his black minions to the four winds with orders to bring in the thief. On the other hand, a dead negro might not be missed at all, unless Chandler were so unfortunate as to pick out some fellow whose near relatives or friends among the little army might miss him and begin to wonder. But there would be a chance, even then. Your true Haitian does not dwell long on puzzling happenings. He is too dull and stupid—which makes him all the more dangerous when directed by the smooth words of a master-roogue of his own race.

DARKNESS fell and, as though its falling had been a signal, the queer chant of the Haitians began once more, mingled at first with those screams which Chandler had likened to the wail of banshees, and which were answered from various points outside the camp. Chal David was calling in his stragglers. And in a few minutes, from the receding sound, Chandler knew that the black army was once more on the move.

Noiselessly he slid down from his cramping perch and followed. He reached the camp of the day and, even had there been no embers of dying fires, he would have recognized the camp by the strange effluvium which always cries aloud of the presence or recent presence of a Haitian.

Holding his breath in disgust Chandler hurried on, following the sound of the tom-toms and the barbaric chanting. And just beyond the camp he paused abruptly at a

certain welcome sound—the rippling of water over a pebbly bed. And, although he was not ignorant of how a Haitian pollutes the streams which he encounters, he knelt and drank deeply, feeling sure that he would be back in Port au Prince, among white doctors, ere he would feel any of those ghastly consequences of drinking unboiled water, which are visited upon white people, and concerning which any person who has ever been afoot in inland Haiti or Santo Domingo can tell you. Walking along, your tongue shriveling with unnatural thirst, you encounter a stream. You know that terrible diseases lurk within the clear, cool depths—and sometimes the depths are neither clear nor cool—but you would drink if you knew that you would be stricken down the next moment, as long as you knew that your terrible thirst would first be satisfied!

The march was not a long one this night. For, when Chandler judged that it was about midnight, the chanting army came to a halt. That they were far away from the abode of the nearest white people Chandler knew at once; for the stop was made at the crest of a hill, from which the bonfires which were soon alight could be seen for miles in all directions. Chandler, seeing that every person now in that army which had grown so large, was engrossed in the huge figure which stood alone among the fires—moved up until he could hear what was said. The blacks were eating and talking in low tones. They were scattered over the hillside in huddled groups, eating cooked flesh. A dead goat, apparently freshly killed, lay near one of the fires, and Chandler was racked with pangs of hunger when he realized that it was goat meat which these jungle children now enjoyed. If only he could bear up until they had gone to their sleep, when he could slip in and steal

enough meat to still those pangs in his stomach!

Then Chal David uttered that cry which Chandler had heard several times before. Curly heads were raised, white-irised eyes turned in the direction of the high priest. Silence fell upon the hill crest. Only the fires crackled and flamed, sending the knowledge of their presence far and wide across the forests.

CHAL DAVID raised his right arm and pointed into the east.

"Across there lies Bois Tombe," he said, "Bois Tombe, which was once a populous city—until the brother peoples in Santo Domingo, tainted with the blood of the oppressors, fell upon the city and slaughtered its people because these people had dared to torture and slay a hated *blanc*! Those dead cry out for vengeance! Not only against those who were our brethren, but against all who have the blood of *blancs* in their polluted veins! Bois Tombe lies at the edge of the border between the two countries. What could be easier than to slip across in the dead of night and return with a white child? Remember, my children, that the black medicine still lacks its most powerful ingredient! *The sword of Dessalines is falling! The time is coming when the whites must be cast into the sea!* Shall we fail to heed the divine signal, cowering instead like whipped curs because we have become accustomed to the white man's heel atop our necks? What Haiti has once done, Haiti can do again! There are more than two millions of us in this little republic, while you could almost count the white folks on the fingers and toes of one of the groups about those bonfires! *The time is coming swiftly!*"

A low murmur of assent, welling swiftly into a many-toned and many-tongued shout, greeted this bit of oratory, every word of which Chandler understood, and, understanding, he

shivered at the pictures which came and went across the retina of his mind.

Chal David continued:

"Remember that black Haitians were the instruments by which the vast army of France, 35,000 men headed by Le Clair, own brother-in-law to the great Napoleon, were sent back to their own land, a mere defeated remnant of 5,000 men! Thirty thousand soldiers left their bones to rot on the soil of Haiti, while most of the blacks who opposed them remained alive to die in their own homes of white-haired old age! We are the children of those who won this great victory! Shall we be less brave than those who went before us? Tonight, far from the haunts of the white oppressors, you shall see how our forefathers overthrew the French. You can go and do likewise! Some of you will die; but you will die with the sure knowledge that you have left a free country behind you for your children to enjoy in their own way, which is not the white man's way; to worship as they wish, which is not the worship of the white man! No longer will you be compelled, outwardly at least, to conform to the tenets of the white man's god; but will be able to follow, without let or hindrance, the precepts of the Great Green Serpent as interpreted by his chosen *Papa Lou* and *Maman Lou!*"

Chal David turned slowly about until he faced toward the center of the encampment. His right arm pointed skyward, as though he invoked the blessings of the spirits of the upper air. It was a dramatic moment as all eyes turned toward the center of the huge circle which was ringed with bonfires — a circumstance which Chandler had, until now, failed to notice. The center of that circle was bare of verdure, bare as though all vestige of green had been trodden out by countless bare feet. And it was brighter than the day because of the

redness of the bonfires. A ghastly stage in a mysterious forest—set by a primitive people which had never learned self-control. Silence fell again while Chal David still kept his arm upraised.

Chandler, watching closely, could not have sworn whence came the woman. At one moment that great fiery circle was bare, the next moment and a black woman whose scraggly hair hung in ragged wisps about her face stood silently among the fires and waited. The breathless silence held for a long brace of minutes. Then a murmur went around the circle of blacks, a murmur which grew momentarily louder until Chandler could make out the words:

"Maman Lou! Maman Lou!"

This woman was the high priestess of the cult of voodoo!

A shriveled, insignificant black woman, whom any white person would have passed on the streets of Port au Prince without a second glance; yet Chandler grew cold at the feeling as of a loathsome presence which flowed out and enveloped him with invisible waves! The high priest wielded power immeasurable among the blacks; yet his power was nothing beside that of a true voodoo priestess. An evil man is a common thing, for there are many such, and of various degrees of evil. Yet it seems that there are no depths too deep for a woman who has penetrated the veil of evil. For that reason an evil woman seems to typify unmentionable horror—especially if she be a voodoo priestess, amplifying her evil with knowledge of the black magic which is hidden within the pages of the mysterious Black Book of Haiti.

Black Book! Black Magic! Black Medicine!

Three ghastly synonyms!

THE woman stood still for a moment among the fires. Chal David's right arm lowered and his eyes slowly

swept the faces of his black minions. A slow, terrible smile came for a moment and fled across his black face. The effect was all that could be desired. Chal David had set the stage well!

The woman thrust her hand forth from her long gown of flowing colors—red, white, blue; a weird travesty, for the colors, covered with unutterable filth, were barely distinguishable as colors—and swept a skinny hand around the black circle. As one man the negroes, men and women, arose and fell back as though a powerful force were compelling them—fell back until they stood outside the circle of frelight. Chandler, too, perforce, fell back to safety—although he felt sure that, with the subdued excitement which pervaded the black people, he could have walked forth among them and no one would have heeded him.

The woman began to speak—in a low voice that somehow sounded like the vicious snarl of a beast. The negroes had squatted on their haunches beyond the firelight and, as their priestess spoke, gradually raising her voice, the blacks began to sway slowly from side to side in unison, as though they were a vast instrument upon which the black woman played as she willed. Faster and faster they swayed, and their heads began to roll; but their eyes remained fixed to that scraggly-haired figure inside the firelight. The woman, repeating something of what Chal David had already said, paused for a moment; but the blacks still swayed and their heads rolled on their shoulders as they gradually worked themselves into a frenzy. In the pause in the woman's speaking a weird note broke from the lips of a single black on the opposite side of the bonfire. Chandler could not see him, or her, but he could hear the voice. So could the other blacks; for another took up the chant—another and another. Faster grew the swaying:

“*Ai! ai! Ai! ai! Ai! ai!*”

The woman's hand raised again for silence. Silence came on the instant, but the black bodies kept up their swaying.

“Tonight,” screamed the woman, “you are to see how your forefathers vanquished the French hordes of Le Clair! For I, the greatest *Maman Lou*, have called back the spirits of those forefathers and the ghosts of the vanquished to re-enact the victory as an inspiration to Haiti of today!”

The coming of an earthquake would not have forced the eyes of the blacks away from the woman who held the primitive stage. Chandler, however, although later he could not have explained why he did it, had turned his gaze partially aside until it came to rest upon the squatting figure of a black woman who was a little in the rear of the others. Her eyes were glued to the face of the priestess and Chandler noticed that, when the woman began to speak, the crouching Haitian woman had taken from her lips and placed by her side a half gourd filled with some sort of liquor she had been drinking. She set the gourd aside unconsciously. And at that precise moment Chandler felt the pangs of thirst grip him once more.

Regardless of the fact that the gourd had but just left the black lips of the Haitian woman, he knew that he wanted to drink of the liquid in that gourd. Slowly, keeping in the shadow, his eyes swinging back and forth between the priestess and the squatting black woman, Chandler approached the latter. Right behind her he paused and sank slowly to his knees, holding his breath lest he betray his presence. His hand went forth and touched the gourd. The women did not heed. Swiftly Chandler drew back the hand holding the gourd, and lifted it to his lips.

He drank about half of the concoction before he realized that it was neither water nor coffee. It was ter-

rible to the taste, and seemed to burn his throat like liquid fire as it went into his stomach; but it seemed to satisfy his craving. What was it? Not rum—nor any other liquor he had ever tasted.

Keeping his eye on the woman for a moment, Chandler tilted the gourd, holding it before him against the light from the fires, and poured some of the liquid out, bringing his eye back to watch it as it fell.

Against the firelight the liquid looked as black as rainwater which gathers in the bottom of a charcoal bed!

A startled oath came from Chandler's lips against his will.

"Black medicine!" he muttered, and again: "Black medicine!"

The squatting woman looked around and right into his face—but it was patent at once that she did not see him, or seeing him, her dumb mind did not grasp the significance of his presence. For, shaking her head impatiently, she turned her eyes back toward the priestess.

Chandler dropped back and gained his previous vantage point.

He looked at the bonfires and the standing woman and saw that the whole picture had begun to blur. A queer tingling went through his body, not nauseating, but gently soothing and vaguely pleasing.

What had been in this black concoction which he had imbibed?

CHANDLER blinked his eyes and tried to make out the features of the priestess. Her words came to him dimly, as though through a curtain of heavy fog:

"Come forth," the woman seemed to mumble; "*Maman Lou* calls to the spirit of the dead to come forth!"

And, as though in answer to her bidding, the many bonfires seemed to blend into one huge sheet of flame, in which the *Maman Lou* suddenly vanished, and against which

great red canvas a ghastly picture began to appear! It seemed to Chandler as though he looked from some great vantage point into an open place bordered by shadowy trees of a vast forest. And at the moment the open space seemed devoid of life, plant or human.

Then, as though growing out of the very soil in the center of this weird canvas, a slender white pole thrust slowly upward into the heavens, narrowing gradually as its height increased. And when the top came into view and Chandler saw the flapping rag fastened there he gave a gasp of horror and amazement! *For in that flapping rag he recognized what had once been the proud tricolor of France!*

From this moment the picture grew rapidly. The open space seemed suddenly to fill with men in uniforms—uniforms which are now no longer seen except in art galleries and between the pages of history—the soldiers of older France. Tents dotted the space at intervals, soldiers lolled in groups in the sunlight. In the distance, at the edge of the weird jungle, Chandler could make out the form of a house that had been roughly builded of logs. And, by a strange sort of necromancy, he could see through the logs and into the room—across the room to where, at a rough table, sat a stern-faced man wearing the proud epaulets of an officer. The officer's head was bowed in his hands, his elbows resting on the table, and his cheeks were lined with care and worry, while his hair was prematurely streaked with gray. He sat there, motionless, silent, waiting. He seemed to have upon his broad shoulders the weight of all the troubles of the world. Back to the soldiers who lolled outside, Chandler swerved his all-seeing gaze to find the reason. He noted then that the once bright uniforms of the soldiers were ragged, torn, and smeared with mud and stains of blood.

And ever and anon members of the group would start up and stare fixedly at the encroaching menace of the surrounding jungle. Others would sprawl in the sun as though they sought to sleep for a moment against their cares to come—and those who strove to sleep would leap suddenly to their feet as though an inner voice had aroused them; cries of fear would come from their lips as they, too, searched the walls of the impenetrable jungle so close at hand. Then they would fling themselves down, only to leap up again in a few minutes to repeat that searching glance toward the jungle.

What did it mean?

Chandler's gaze swerved again to another, and larger, wooden house, where, looking through its thick walls, he could see row on row of motionless figures covered with rough quilting. Over these figures busy men hovered and ministered with skilful hands. The hospital attached to the encampment! And ever and anon one or another of the figures would start up and cry out, looking around toward the walls as though, even through the logs, the startled one could see the jungle outside with searching eyes.

WHAT strange fantasies haunted these people?

Seeking an answer to this question Chandler looked toward that jungle wall. No necromancy was there to aid the soldiers, but Chandler, blessed with weird vision because of something outside of himself, could see into and pierce the jungle with his eyes. He saw, then, the reason for the hideous unrest of the French soldiers.

For the forest was peopled with a whole army of black, human beasts, resting there, sitting on their haunches, looking into the camp with drooling lips half opened.

Then Chandler understood!

It did not really need that other view to tell him. But he watched it

come and go, just the same. He saw for an instant another open space on a hillside—an open space which was thickly dotted with rough wooden crosses, and connected with the encampment by a narrow trail through the woods. And through that trail at this instant wended a ghastly caravan—a group of soldiers bearing on their shoulders the silent and motionless body of a buddy who had died. The slow, funeral march of the burial squad! Time seemed to pass swiftly for a while, and Chandler watched those crosses multiply as though a lavish hand had planted them. And as they grew, Chandler looked back at intervals into the ghostly encampment to see that the little army in the woods was dwindling inversely as the number of crosses grew.

Chandler knew!

This army of soldiery was the ghostly army Le Clair had brought to Haiti under orders from the great Napoleon, and he was being granted a vision of that army's passing! He had been told, or had read, how this army could have wiped the negroes off the island had it been able to close with them in battle; how the negroes, evading the soldiers during the long hot days, luring them into the wilderness and losing them, wearing them down to utter exhaustion, had always returned on their heels at nightfall, to make the night hideous with their screams, their tom-toms, and their chanting, denying to the white man that one necessity without which man may not exist—the God-given boon of healthy sleep!

Denied their sleep night after night, growing more and more nervous as their fevered brains saw in the jungle the shadows of weird pictures which did not really exist, as they read in the chants of the negroes ghastly messages of promised tortures—is it any wonder that the bulk of Le Clair's little army sickened and died off? Until,

(Continued on page 276)

Black Medicine

(Continued from page 166)

out of an army of 35,000, a mere handful returned to tell of the hell through which all had gone! No wonder the hair of the man in the little house was prematurely streaked with gray! A general may be confident when facing flying lead; but what can he do when his men sicken and die in the silent places, untouched by machete or bullet, transferred into gibbering skeletons by the mere presence of black brutes with not a weapon in their hands! With only the vast knowledge of evil tactics possessed by the brain of a single negro who was as elusive as a will-o'-the-wisp!

The officer in the little house came to the door and looked away toward the jungle wall. Chandler saw him beckon to a private soldier who stood just outside. The soldier placed a metal instrument to his lips and, though he could not hear it, Chandler knew that the man was blowing the call which would assemble the soldiers for, startled, they leaped to their feet. The officer raised his hand in a signal and the soldiers began to fall in, in long, ragged ranks. The officer placed his queer-shaped hat upon his head, looked around the jungle once more, turned about and deliberately touched fire to the building he had just left!

The camp was being abandoned! Chandler saw the blacks in the jungle lick their drooling lips with red tongues. Then, with the officer leading, the little army fell into step and marched into the forest, its members scanning the close-ranked trees for signs of the black hordes which they could not see, but which they knew were watching their every step.

The army of Le Clair had begun the first leg of its long journey back to France, to report dismal failure to Napoleon!

Slowly the flagpole, bare now of the flapping tricolor, began to shimmer and grow dim, until it vanished altogether. The flame from the house which the officer had occupied blended slowly with that vaster flame against which the weird picture had been painted by the horrid necromancy of a voodoo priestess. This huge flame divided slowly as the picture vanished, and through it came the figure of the voodoo priestess herself!

CHANDLER blinked his eyes as he saw the blacks seated around him and took in the circle of fires, ordinary fires now, upon a hilltop, with the motionless figure of Chal David in the background, arms akimbo.

The woman spoke again.

"See!" she cried; "see the potency of the black medicine which we of the Green Serpent have created! You have drunk of it and have seen a vision which cannot but inspire you to go and do likewise! The point of the sword of Dessalines is lowering! The medicine is almost perfect—lacking but a single ingredient—"

The woman paused for effect.

"You all know that ingredient," she screamed, "and know that only the blood of a hated *blanc* can complete the brewing of the black medicine—that medicine which is to help us make a new Haiti which shall be a country for followers of the Great Green Serpent, in which there is no room for white masters! Across the border, yet far from the rifles of soldiers, there are white people. One of you will now be chosen to cross that border and return with either a white person or a small portion of that life-giving element which flows in his veins! It shall be a charm against the rifles of the soldiers after

we have mingled it with our black medicine!"

The woman paused again and Chandler knew that she was preparing to choose her emissary for this ghastly mission. Slowly she looked around the circle of black faces. Her eyes rested at last on the face of Chal David.

"And who," she said softly, "could be more fitted for such a mission than our greatest *Papa Lou?* Chal David is chosen!"

The woman extended her arm, pointing toward the east.

"In that direction lies your pathway, Chal David," she cried. "Go!"

Chal David bowed slightly and turned. Almost instantly his huge form vanished in the shadows as he moved away on his mission. The woman spoke once more before she, too, turned away and walked into the woods:

"Chal David will lead us when we hurl the whites into the Gulf of Gonaves! What more fitting than that he should also furnish the last and necessary ingredient for our black medicine?"

Chandler waited to hear no more. He knew that, did Chal David return, his mission successful, these crazed blacks could be induced to hurl themselves into the mouth of hell at his wish. Chal David must not return! Many lives might depend upon the coolness of Chandler.

He plunged into the woods, circled the bonfires, and set out in the direction taken by Chal David. As he hurried through the night he was glad that he could not know what terrible things had already gone into the brewing of the black medicine—of which he himself had partaken!

4

SOME little time was required for Chandler to skirt the camp of the black folk, and by the time he had accomplished the feat, Chal David

had been gone about ten minutes. And Chandler knew that the huge negro walked swiftly. He prayed that he might be able to keep near him. When his feet stumbled at last into a hard-packed trail he was more than thankful. Yet he had been in Santo Domingo and, once upon a time, had been a member of the Dominican border patrol; therefore he knew that he might not, after all, be in the trail which Chal David followed. For at the border there are many trails which connect the two little republics. Chandler, however, believed that he had found the right trail. He stopped to listen, hoping to hear the scuffling of feet. But he could hear nothing beyond the monotonous "*Ai! ai!*" of the negroes he had left back there upon that bare hilltop. He must trust to blind chance and keep his head level.

Gone now were any thought of hunger and thirst. Chandler, a true American, had a duty to perform, perhaps some lives to save; and the knowledge that this was so drove all lesser thoughts from his mind. He wondered, as he walked, just how far he might be from the border. He had knowledge of another matter, of which Chal David was perhaps ignorant—which was that, right near the border on the Dominican side, most of the population was as black as is to be found in all Haiti. This argued that there must needs be some little delay while Chal David skulked about in search of the white-skinned one who would fulfil the specifications of the high priestess. And any delay would militate in Chandler's favor, he fervently hoped.

An hour passed. Chandler saw a light ahead which told him of the location of a native hut. He approached it carefully, making no noise. Inside he could hear the sleepy tones of a man and woman and they were speaking the Spanish *patois* of

Santo Domingo. This told him that he had crossed the border into the sister republic to the east. He wondered if Chal David had discovered this house, and if anyone inside it were light enough of skin to satisfy the priest. Chandler crept closer and looked through a chink in the framework of the wall. The people inside spoke Spanish, true enough; but they were as black as Chal David himself.

Chandler moved back and hurried on. A half hour later and he paused once more. Surely he had gone far enough. He stood still and pondered.

His head jerked up suddenly. Faintly to his nostrils came the unmistakable odor of native tobacco! But they used the same sort of tobacco in Santo Domingo, so that might mean nothing at all. Down in his heart, however, Chandler believed that Chal David lurked somewhere near in the darkness. And when that odd chuckle came to him out of the shadow he was sure! Chal David knew that he was watched: but did he know the identity of the one who spied upon him?

The chuckle did not come again. Thinking to mislead Chal David, Chandler, making plenty of noise now, turned and fled hurriedly back the way he had come, intentionally brushing the tree limbs as he passed. Chal David gave no sign.

Thinking that he had gone far enough so that the sound of his footfalls would have died away anyhow, Chandler stopped and once more climbed a tree to wait for morning. He guessed that it was about 2 o'clock, some several hours before the coming of daylight.

ONCE during the night he awoke, thinking that a terrible scream, somehow akin to the screams of those who had signaled when he had penetrated the jungle, had gone winging its eery way through the night. But the scream was not repeated and,

thinking that it had been but part of a horrible nightmare, Chandler sank back and dropped once more into slumber.

He awoke to find that the sun was all of two hours high. He swore roundly at himself, believing that Chal David had had, perhaps, sufficient time to complete his mission and to return. There was no noise in the woods except the twittering of forest birds.

But stay! Was there no other noise?

Faintly, while he strained his ears to listen, there came to him out of the east a wailing chant which, in its way, was as soul-searching as the chanting "*Ai! ai!*" of the Haitians:

"Ai, mi hijo! Ai, mi hijo! Habla otra vez con su mama! Ai, dios! Dolor da curazon!"

It was the heartbreaking wail of a Dominican mother who wept aloud over her dead!

Chandler had heard those pitiful cries before now, and had been a bit cynical anent such lavish display of sorrow—sorrow perhaps for dead who, in life, had been granted more blows from stout cudgels than maternal compassion. But now there was a difference. Chal David, the high priest who sought for the blood of a white child, was somewhere near.

SLIDING down from his tree, Chandler hurried in the direction of the sound, finding himself shortly in the little yard, freshly cleared, before a Dominican hut from which issued those heartrending wails. Chandler knew that he had been on this spot before and that, on his previous visit, there had been no yard and no hut. A Dominican family had moved here to build a home and, in so doing, had apparently played into the hands of Chal David—if Chandler's guess were correct. He strode forward and knocked loudly. Silence fell upon

the little hut. Then came the quavering tones of a woman:

"Quien toca?" (Who knocks?)

Chandler answered:

"Un Americano!"

A sigh from beyond the door, which was immediately thrown open to expose a ragged Dominican woman, almost white, whose eyes were red from copious weeping. Chandler judged her to be beyond the thirty year mark, although, in Santo Domingo, a woman grows old swiftly.

"What is it, mother?" asked Chandler gently.

For answer she stepped aside, signaling Chandler to enter. He stepped inside, instinctively doffing his hat. The woman beckoned toward another door which led into the sleeping room, and Chandler moved ahead. Very little light came into this room, but there was sufficient for Chandler to make out the still form which lay in a huddled, blood-stained heap upon the narrow cot. A mere boy it was, barely in his teens. Dead!

Chandler drew closer and peered into the pinched pale face.

There were blue marks upon the white throat, and the jugular vein had almost been torn away. The ghastly wound had bled profusely and the woman had tried to stem the life-tide with whatever bits of cloth she could find. But she had ceased to try long ago, and the gory bandages had fallen away from the gaping wound. The boy had been dead so long that the body was beginning to stiffen.

Chandler drew back in horror. The woman began to weep afresh. She wrung her hands as she sank down beside the cot and leaned forward to stare into the still face. And her broken phrases told Chandler something of what had happened.

"¡Ay, el negro! Un hombre sin curazon! Un hombre quien parece el diablo!" (Oh, the black man! Man

without a heart! A man who is like the devil!

Chandler touched the woman's shoulder.

"Where is your man, mother?" he asked softly, "How did this happen?"

"We sent Felipe out before the sunrise as always," moaned the woman, to bring in water for the morning meal. It must, as you perhaps know, be carried several miles from a stream at the base of the Bahoruco. He had scarce gone when we heard a scream from the same direction he had taken. Juan, my *hombre*, was afraid to go forth; but, *ai, dios!* I knew that something had befallen Felipe. So I pounded Juan into wakefulness and ordered him to follow Felipe's trail. A few minutes and he came back, his back bowed under the dead weight of our little Felipe, blood flowing from that terrible wound in his neck! Juan told a wild story of seeing Felipe in the trail—with a black beast kneeling beside him, his head bent over as though his lips were against Felipe's neck! Juan was very much frightened at first, not seeing what manner of beast it was. Then the beast raised its head and Juan saw that it was, after all, nothing but a crazy Haitian—who was more frightened than was Juan himself; for he looked all around him as though fearing discovery. He did not see Juan, and Juan gained enough courage to find a stout club. With the club in his hand Juan fell upon the black man and pounded him until he sank down, unconscious. Then he brought Felipe back here."

"Where is Juan now?"

"Gone! He went back to take vengeance on the Haitian."

"What direction, woman?"

The woman went to the outer door and pointed. Chandler, speaking a few hurried words of condolence, hurried forth upon the trail the woman

had pointed out. And came upon Juan!

The Dominican was standing before Chal David, and Chal David, conscious, covered with blood from his own wounds, was trussed upright to the bole of a tree—*above an ant-hill!*

Merely saying that blows from the stout club which Juan carried had broken many bones in Chal David's body, we will draw down the curtain here.

Chandler hurried forward to speak to Juan. Juan turned with a beastly snarl and struck out at Chandler. Chandler fell like a lump of clay.

When he regained consciousness he was on the floor of a native hut, and a dozen curious Dominicans were gazing in upon him from the doorway. He looked about him and saw Chal David, miraculously still alive; but stark, staring crazy! He groveled on the dirt floor like a rag man, his black and grimy hands weaving here and there as though searching—searching; his eyes, devoid of any human expression, moving about as he looked around his cage. Chandler knew that Chal David's hours were numbered, even as he knew how tenaciously a Haitian clings to life.

A bowl of rice and beans had been placed at Chal David's side, and the high priest's hands, ever and anon, wandered to this bowl and scooped up handfuls of the unsavory-looking mess which, instead of eating—he carefully smeared over his naked body!

One of the Dominicans entered and spoke confidentially to Chandler, gesturing toward the black as he did so.

"Just a crazy Haitian," he said, "hungry for human flesh!"

Chandler nodded wearily, steadfastly refusing to look again at Chal David who, now, would never lead his followers in a massacre of the whites—yea, even though the whole statue

of Dessalines were to bow and beckon!

The Dominican continued: "Luckily you were not killed. If you are able to walk you will be taken to the Haitian border, given a bit of food, and turned loose to find your way back to the capital as best you may. We know whence you came, because you talked wildly when your eyes were closed."

THREE days later two American officers entered the foyer of the American Hotel, supporting between them a wildly babbling man whom no one there would have recognized as Chandler—clothes torn, hair disheveled, grimy with the dirt of the trail.

"We found him at the edge of the city," they said, "and he was screaming, 'Ai! ai! Ai! ai! Ai! ai!' at the top of his lungs! Does anyone here know him? He seems to be a white man."

A man in white duck stepped forward and looked closely at the white man.

"Must be Chandler," he said; "he's been missing for a week and no one knew where he had gone. Drank too many cocktails, I guess, and went off his nut!"

"Sure!" babbled the ragged man, "it was the cocktails! But even so, it is all the fault of Dessalines!"

And the white people of the American colony there present looked soberly at one another, and touched their foreheads with significant gestures!

Later, after the fever induced by his hardship in the jungle had subsided, people pressed around Chandler and asked what he had been doing during his week of absence, and when he tried to tell them they smiled so significantly their unbelief that Chandler finally closed his lips about the matter, vowing that he would never mention it again. What was the use?