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Contents of Autumn Issue, 1931

Cover Design.....	Lucille Holling	
The White Sawbwa of Möng Nam.....	Warren Hastings Miller	724
<i>Shan States of Burma—A vivid, breath-taking story of the kidnapping of the Little Huzoor</i>		
The Golden Girl (Verse).....	Hung Long Tom	761
The Test of a Ghost.....	S. B. H. Hurst	762
<i>Afghanistan—A dramatic story of war, intrigue and crucifixion</i>		
Rats at the Silver Cheese.....	Bassett Morgan	782
<i>Manchuria—A half-caste Chinese clerk claims the estates of a Manchu noble</i>		
Yellow Velvet (Verse).....	Hung Long Tom	793
Breakfast for One.....	Kennis Gorman	794
<i>India—A tale of passionate love and the glamorous witchery of the East</i>		
The Death-Heads' March.....	Geoffrey Vace	806
<i>Khyber Pass—A bandit who lay in wait for the life of Chowkander King</i>		
Night (Verse).....	Hung Long Tom	819
The Blood of Belshazzar.....	Robert E. Howard	820
<i>Taurus Mountains—A red-blooded bandit story of the time of the Crusades</i>		
The Song of the Cakes.....	Nat Schachner and Arthur L. Zagat	840
<i>China—A prophecy is fulfilled and blood runs red in Peking</i>		
Porcelain (Verse).....	Hung Long Tom	850
The Tribesman.....	Lieutenant Edgar Gardiner	851
<i>Mesopotamia—A heroic tale of the Mesopotamian campaign against Turkey</i>		
The Justice of the Elephant.....	Clark Ashton Smith	856
<i>Rajputana—A dancing-girl and the cruel punishment decreed by the Rajah</i>		
The Souk.....		860
<i>A chat with the readers</i>		

Breakfast for One

By KENNIS GORMAN

India claims its own, a tale of love and passion and the glamorous witchery of the East

EULALIE pressed her forehead against the train window and looked out. The narrow-gauge coach of the Delhi-Ajmere-Bombay Mail wandered desultorily through mile after mile of strange, desolate country, with hills rising with startling suddenness out of the flat, khaki colored waste.

It was hot, wavering between 120 and 130 degrees in the compartment. Perspiration dripped with a slow persistency from the edge of her ash-gold hair, down the white smoothness of her forehead, and dribbled between her shoulder-blades. Her thin garments clung to her shapely body like clutching hands, yet somehow she did not look uncomfortable. Breathing was an effort and conversation all but impossible, even if John, who sat opposite, was given to conversation when there was nothing in particular to converse about.

She glanced over at him. He was dripping wet also, his stolidly handsome face looking rather vacuous when he was off guard. But despite the terrific discomfort of the heat he had a portfolio open on his knees, was peering with his near-sighted eyes at a typewritten paper.

And this was the twelfth day of their marriage.

She studied him, there being little else to do. Besides, it would take her mind from the heat. John was good. Reliable. Those were the descriptive words that fitted him like his well-cut clothing. Those, too, were the motivating factors of their marriage which her father had pressed home to her upon her graduation from the ultra-select school where he had put her as a child to get her off his hands.

Her dead mother was a dim memory that came and went like smoke from a fire, sometimes strong, again drifting off into haze.

A creamy golden face with soft dark eyes . . . a white, white smile . . . two golden hoops swaying in her ears every time she moved her small, graceful head. That was all. That, and the name "Lalie," nothing more.

But though Eulalie saw so little of her father, his image was clear, sharp. A great blond giant, with a dream in his eyes, a dream and a sadness. She could fancy she heard him now, his short, sharp sentences. Of John Ludwig, her fiancé, he had said:

"John is good. Solid. You can always depend on him, Eulalie. And that's everything. All this tosh about love is nonsense. Utter rot. Security—that's what a woman needs. The knowledge that she is safe. Fixed for life." His face flushed a little. "I've always worried about you. You're too pretty for your own good," he muttered uneasily. "There's a streak of something untamed in you, in spite of your soft ways. I want to see you—well, safe."

An incongruous thought had struck her. Incongruous and disrespectful and so she did not utter it. But she had thought: "So might one feel in prison. A life sentence, for instance. There one would be safe, secure, and certainly fixed for life!"

And John Ludwig. . . . Though her father had been friend and business associate with him for years, she herself scarcely knew his first name.

But there was something incongruous



"The snake swayed, quivered, poised with dripping fangs and leaped toward John."

in the thought. It was ridiculous, and yet it seemed unthinkable that *she* should call her husband John. There was a soft beauty about the name that did not fit him any too well, either.

She wondered, too, with a strange hotness, about their marriage. She knew John so little after all. . . . In the few fiction tales she had been permitted to read, the trying moments were passed over smoothly enough.

"And so they were married" . . .
 "Then the lovers were alone at last" . . .
 In life—

The moment she had looked forward to with a queer mingling of curiosity and repulsion and dread had come and passed. They were in the luxurious suite John had engaged on the *Ile de France*, entering upon the honeymoon that would combine pleasure with business in India. He waited until the steward had taken

himself off and then with a great sigh he said:

"A sea voyage! Lord, what a lot of work I'm going to clean up before we dock! I tell you, Eulalie, there's no place like a ship for getting work done!"

Her look of fright and half-terror passed. So that was the way it was! But then, she told herself, John was old, at least forty-five. Men were different when they grew old.

And besides, though they were married, she speculated, were they lovers? Certainly, John sat across from her now with his portfolio on his knees exactly as though being lovers and married were but another of the many common things life offered daily.

As though he felt her gaze on him, he looked up. His eyes were gray, under rather thin, finely cut brows.

"Gray eyes are cold," she told herself,

making her first really personal judgment of her husband. "But he is handsome," she added, with a painful adherence to the truth.

He smiled at her kindly. "Heat got you? You'll get used to it," he finished before she could answer. She was discovering he was like that, too. He asked a question, then, without giving one time to reply, supplied his own answer. Well, it *was* a merciful saving of energy.

"Hungry?" he asked, with a lift of his brows. "There's a passable dining-car in the rear. We'll see what they have."

He arose and obediently she followed suit. The thin folds of her silk frock clung to her, revealing her splendid figure, and though perspiration dewed her white throat and whiter face, she did not look wilted as John did.

"You'll have to get linens," he told her. "Your father should have known India can be tolerated best in linens."

"How should he have known?" she asked reasonably. "He was never here. He has always had an agent look after his business here."

He stared at her. "Why," he said, aghast, "didn't you know?"

Her eyes were puzzled. "Know? Know what?" she asked bluntly.

He pursed his lips for a long moment, evidently considering. Then: "He *was* here—once. When he was very young, in his late teens. You know his father began trading in India years before. That was your grandfather, of course."

HE SEEMED anxious to drop the subject now and as they took seats in the dining-car, she did not trouble to continue it either.

As John ordered, the train paused jerkingly in its fourteen-mile-an-hour pace. A sign told Eulalie they had stopped at Mawar Junction. Little boys with Am-

ber skins and shining eyes swarmed upon the platform, carrying pails and tin dippers, shouting a confused jumble of sound.

"*Pani, Pani!*" It was a howl that ran up into the blazing heavens. "*Cha, gharram, gharram cha!*" they screamed like quarreling pigeons.

A swarthy man stared in at Eulalie, then, followed by several women in bright-colored garments, swept with almost royal mien into the train. A boy with a basket of melons and oranges screamed: "*Narangi—Narangi!*"

Emerging from the train, there was a tall, slender figure of a man. He paced slowly up and down the platform, up and down, proud, aloof, alone.

There was something oddly fascinating in his bearing, something alien, kingly. Yet he was dressed in white linen, as John was dressed. He might have been a New Yorker observing India with cool, blasé mien.

Drawn by her gaze, perhaps, he paused, and turned. She was staring into a pair of eyes, burning, yet soft; arrogant, yet melancholy and lonely. She was strangely shaken to find that her fingers were tight on the glass she held, her blood pounding in her throat.

The train shuddered, and the man on the platform leaped lightly on the moving step. He disappeared from her vision and she leaned back in her chair, her breath escaping in a long sigh.

John was musing over their dinner. "There's not much to choose from," he muttered. "It's too hot to eat, anyway. We'll try to get something cooling."

Her reply was not given, for the man of the platform had entered the dining-car and was standing easily in the doorway, his eyes seeming not to move, yet she was sure, taking in everything in one swift glance.

His skin was of the smoothness and

color of warm amber like that of a particularly handsome life-guard she had seen on one of her few memorable trips to Newport in company with her father. She wondered about his eyes. At that moment his glance moved to her and her heart turned over. His eyes were blue as a cloudless April sky.

He was approaching, was stopping beside John's chair.

"Mr. Ludwig?" His voice was as soft, as gentle as an Indian breeze. "I am sure there can be no mistake, since you are the only American on the train and I learned at Delhi that you were en route on business."

John lumbered to his feet, taken by surprise at the encounter.

"And you are Selim Singh," he stammered, a little nonplussed, not exactly knowing how he should meet this kingly gentleman with the slow smile, the amazing eyes.

Selim bowed, never once letting his glance stray in Eulalie's direction. "Just!" he said in his soft, musical voice. "We are business associates, your company and mine."

He accepted with slow grace the chair John ordered brought and he bowed and acquiesced with silent courtesy while John began a dissertation on enamels, linens and muslin, for which the country was famous.

Left out of it, Eulalie gazed out at the stretches of desolate country, frequently nothing but a vast jungle of scrub and bare thorn bushes. They passed a river bed, now only a waste of loose parched sand. A mud house or two . . . cactus. She was suddenly rebellious.

"Oh, it's ugly, ugly!" she burst out vehemently, "waste—desolation—dust! I had not thought it this way."

John paused, dumfounded, to stare with round gray eyes. Selim Singh did not stir, but his eyes went to her face for

the first time since she had seen him on the platform at Marwar.

"Patience," he said, and his voice was the low thrill of a lute. "Marwar means 'region of death,' and it is that, to the north. Desert, sand, heat, dust. Ugly . . . you called it. You are right. Here, almost twenty thousand women at a time met voluntary death rather than be taken by the Moslem conquerors. Such things leave scars, you agree? Just," he finished, when she shuddered. "You will be happier in Jaipur, in your walled garden, with your mulberry trees and your flowers."

His voice, coming as it did so unexpectedly, yet somehow seemed the thing she had waited, breathless, to hear. His assurance of the beauty to come seemed but the reality following a dream long ago dreamed.

She gazed at him with the fascinated eyes of a white dove. It was an effort to arise; her limbs felt cold and clammy and numb.

"I—I think I shall go back to the compartment," she excused herself; "it is a little cooler there."

Selim Singh arose and silently let her pass.

"I'll be with you shortly," said John, a little guiltily; "we have so many things to talk about. . . ." His voice dwindled off. He was already rushing on, in his mind, to enamels, linens and muslins.

BACK in her compartment, Eulalie stared at the door and hoped that Selim Singh would come in with John and trembled with dread that he might.

But he did not, nor did she hear of him again until she was in the house at Jaipur which was to be her home for three months. A dark-eyed, secretive-looking serving woman took away her sodden garments, and prepared an oddly scented bath and laid out a fresh loose

robe, tied about the waist with a golden cord.

"The lady was never here before?" asked the woman in a silky voice. "No?" She looked disappointed. "A passing fancy," she muttered, "nothing but an old woman's dream."

Eulalie looked uncertainly at her for a moment; then, her aura of shining hair falling about her white face, she seated herself near an open window, and remembered this was the twelfth night of her marriage.

"Then the lovers were alone together. . . ."

There was a step outside, and John came in. He flung his hat on a chair, dropped into another. "Lord, it's hot!" He looked at her vaguely aggrieved. "But you look cool enough," he observed. He arose and came over, gazing down at her.

Was he going to become lover-like? She sat taut and still, a chill feeling of revulsion moving over her. But the moment passed and he walked instead to the window, mopping his forehead. She remembered to be grateful that he was old.

"Lordy, it's torrid!" he complained. Then: "Do you know, that Singh is a charming fellow even if he is an Indian."

"Is he?" Her voice sounded far away.

John nodded. "Couldn't you tell by his name? Educated at Oxford and Harvard, though. Maybe that explains it."

"His eyes are—blue . . . blue," she said irrelevantly and gazed out at the hot silver of the moon.

"Mmmm," mumbled John, absently. "I think I'll turn in. "There's a hard day ahead of me tomorrow. Good-night."

"Good-night," she said and listened to his footsteps go.

From the outer darkness there came the sudden chatter of a monkey. A shadow

leaped to a tree branch. The scent of heavy blossoms wafted up to her. She let her mind drift as the perfume drifted, to a tall, aloof man, with a voice like a lute and burning melancholy eyes.

IT SEEMED but the continuation of her dream to see him coming out of the moonlight one night a week later. She sat in her walled-in garden on a bench scarcely more marble-like than herself in the silver glow, a filmy frock drifting like peach blossoms about her, her fair hair ghostly in the moonbeams.

Selim was followed by a man-servant who offered fresh grapes and rose apples, pale green and tasting like the petals of the vivid roses everywhere about them in the garden.

Selim no longer wore the conventional linens similar to John's and the English and American merchants and business men in the city. Instead, Jodhpurs fitted tightly about his shapely calves, to fall away into graceful wrinkles at his ankles, and his *safa* lay in immaculate folds over one ear, the long end swinging almost to his slender waist. He seemed, somehow, more regal and aloof than ever, yet his eyes on her were blue, blue. . . .

"John is somewhere about," she said, her voice sounding oddly remote from the darkness.

"I shall go," he said and arose.

"No," she told him, quietly. "It's quite permissible for a woman—even a bride"—her voice grew suddenly bitter, then instantly was remote again—"to talk to a man alone. Weren't you educated in America?"

"But we are now in Jaipur," he reminded softly. But he did not go.

She grew oddly embarrassed at the silence that fell between them and because he made no effort to break it, she said: "Tell me about India . . . I should love to hear it."

And so, in a voice that was lute-like in its music, he talked. He wove for her the tale that was Rajputana, the land of infinite romance, of heroism undreamed of, of chivalry unguessed. He told her of his people, the Rajputs, the kingly people, the royal races who were descended from the sun or moon, no less. He spoke names that were a song in themselves, Ajmere—Sholapur—Jaisalmer—Hubli—Chitor—Huldighar—names that were mournful or lilting or exquisite on his tongue.

He made a vivid word-painting of the bloody battles that had drenched the land, mulching its soil from which the flowers grew.

"And then the warriors put on the golden robes and went out to die, and the princesses built a great fire, into which, with their servants, they flung themselves. And when the conquerors, dripping with the blood of the Rajputs, entered the city, there was naught to behold but the dying ashes of the funeral pyre!"

"How terrible!" she shuddered. "And yet how gallant, how terribly brave!"

"Just," he bowed in quiet agreement.

He told her of men. Names rolled off his tongue like notes from a plucked string. Prithi Raj . . . ruler of an already ancient civilization when the rest of the world was a barbarian chaos. Uday Singh . . . Pertap Singh. . . .

"I feel that I've been here before," she said haltingly. "I have known all these things for a thousand years. I feel I have—how shall I say it?—come home," she ended after a long pause in which he had not interrupted her thoughts. He did not scoff as John would have done, but merely bent his head. "It is exactly," she finished uncertainly, "like picking up a book that one has laid down and almost forgotten."

The night was filled with the music of his words, and John's coming seemed a rude interruption.

AFTER Selim Singh had gone, John turned to Eulalie with a self-satisfied expression on his face.

"He's a prince in his own right, Selim Singh is. Absolutely filthy with money. I'm glad to get in with him. Besides, he has a personality; the man can talk, which is more than can be said of a lot of those English traders."

Eulalie seemed to have heard, her golden head resting against her locked arms.

"He told me of Sambhar Lake," she said dreamily, "which was of solid silver until the greed of men aroused the anger of the Goddess Sakambari and she turned it to salt, though it still gleams like liquid silver when the sun is high."

John stared at her in the darkness. "So that's what he was talking about, alone here with you! Goddesses! Fairytales!"

He laughed aloud, his cheeks shaking with mirth. She watched him without speaking, a faint scorn creeping into her expression.

Selim came again, bearing as before gifts, this time of *mithai*, sweetmeats, and chilled fruits. His servant withdrew, after offering them, and Eulalie daintily peeled an orange and separated it into golden sections. John did not eat, preferring to smoke his black pipe, his somewhat nasal voice droning on in the brooding quietness, while Selim Singh listened with the beautiful courtesy of India.

Eulalie was silent also. "He talks on and on and on," she thought, of her husband. "It is like water rushing through a gutter."

John's drone was interrupted by a sound floating over the wall as though borne by the heavy flower scents. It was

low, muted, scarcely different from the wind that blew down from the desert. Eulalie sat erect, the flesh on her spine and the backs of her hands quivering.

"What is it?" she whispered, seeing that Selim was gazing at her. John seemed not to have heard.

"A faker," explained Selim, smilingly, "I'll send him away."

He clapped his hands to his servant who lurked somewhere in the shadows, but she demurred.

"No, no. Let him come in. I'd like to see what he can do."

The servant went toward the gate that was hidden in a tangle of vines. The music faltered, died. The servant returned, at his heels a naked, emaciated object of a man. In his hands was the instrument which had drawn forth the weird sounds she had heard. In the other arm, crooked lovingly, was a round basket.

She watched, fascinated, as the man set the basket on the ground almost at her feet and picked up his reed-like instrument, his eyes never leaving her face. He began to call forth the peculiar shrill wail she had heard, stopping on occasion to sing-song in a monotonous, yet oddly stirring voice.

The faker's tune changed. It held a new note, strongly heart-chilling. His eyes were now fixed on the basket. Eulalie's gaze followed and she saw the basket stir. Her breath came short, and she saw the lid rise, fall, rise again. A great head came forth and she stifled a gasp. A snake, small of body, huge of head, with glowing yet cold eyes, glimmered whitely in the starlight.

The music changed, grew faster, faster, and Eulalie felt her pulses thudding in tempo with the notes. Slowly, almost as though she had no control over her own muscles, she began to sway as the white object in the basket swayed; slowly she moved as the hooded thing moved.

The breath-taking scents of flowers seemed to sink, to rise again and warm like a hot light on the night damped earth. Her lips parted and she hummed clumsily the weird wail of the faker.

The music was triumphant, exulting when John snapped: "Stop it! Stop that caterwauling at once, do you hear, you foul heathen!" He let out a stream of vilification that ended with a sound kick at the basket.

The faker cried out in a strange, terrible voice. There was a faint gasp from Selim. The snake swayed, quivered, poised with dripping fangs and leaped toward John.

Eulalie cried out loudly and at the same moment swept the white horror up in her arms in one swift, sure motion. It swayed against her white throat and breast like a palm frond.

Selim leaped to his feet, snarled an incomprehensible word at the faker, and the latter, his vindictive eyes on John's horrified face, lifted the snake from Eulalie's arms. She stood quivering like a shaken lily.

"Get out!" screamed John in a high falsetto. "Don't ever let me see your damned ugly face again!"

Eulalie was still like one waking from a trance. "Here," she muttered, "money," and emptied her purse in the faker's palm.

He gibbered: "May you find love, lady, and peace." He was gone after one evil glare at John.

John was mopping his brow, his hands unsteady with horror. He remembered Eulalie then, and Selim. Oddly, they stood hand in hand, and quiet. John had an incomprehensible sensation that they two were one, alien to him, aligned against him.

"You were not wise, perhaps," said Selim in an expressionless tone at last.

"Besides, he was not foul. And," he added very softly, "he is *not* a heathen."

He made his adieus and disappeared almost as mysteriously as the fakir had done.

John continued to mop his face, his entire body still unsteady. "Damn' nonsense—you calling in that fraud," he muttered angrily. "That slimy snake might have killed me!" Then, evidently remembering that it was her swift sure action that had prevented that very thing, he added testily: "And you—picking up the evil thing!"

She did not answer, and he growled at her: "Why don't you speak—say something? You stand there like a—like an Indian!" he finished vehemently, and then, biting his lip, he strode into the house, leaving her motionless in the moonlight, a faint contempt curling the soft outlines of her lips.

After a time she followed. Everything was still, but for the occasional scream of a peacock somewhere without. The servant, Ameera, appeared, as usual seemingly from nowhere.

Through the open window toward the east the black outlines of a house were visible, a huge house, with snowy walls and scrolled windows and a magnificent walled garden. One window glowed like a sleepless eye.

"Who lives there, Ameera?" Eulalie asked, nodding toward it.

"Selim Singh," the woman said. "A gentleman, lady, a dreamer, a poet. He was educated in England and America, but India always claims her own." There was a subtle triumph in the boast.

"A fine house," Eulalie observed quietly. "That is all for tonight." She dismissed the woman. Her heart had known, instinctively, that Selim Singh was within that room with the lighted window.

A shrill quaver arose on the perfumed

air. A quiver passed over her and she leaned far out the window. Somewhere in the night a voice was lifted in a weird, barbaric chant:

This is wisdom . . . to love, to live, to take whatever the Gods may give . . . to ask no questions, to make no prayer . . . to kiss the lips, to caress the hair . . . speed passion's ebb as you greet it's flow . . . to have—to hold—and—in time—let go.

Eulalie felt her face and throat flush. She shivered in the steaming stillness, for it seemed that the soft shadow souls had whispered the words at her ears and something hot and tremendously vital stirred restlessly within her.

She pulled the window wide and lay quietly, while the quaver of the singer wove itself into the stuff of her dreams of Selim Singh.

THE next morning she was listless and pale, and John scolded, advising a diet he had found beneficial to him. Meekly, she ate what he ordered.

But . . . in the evening there was the quiet darkness, and the garden, and Selim, very still, his arms folded, there in the silence that breathed strange delights.

He is like, she thought, a figure carved in amber, out of which his smile shows white as jasmine flowers.

And nightly, there was the singer, without the garden walls.

Little life has got to offer . . . little man to lose. Oh, wherefore, then, refuse to take the transient hour while poppies are in flower. . . .

"By God," burst out John, his face purpling. "I'll have him thrown in prison! Whining under a man's window like that!"

Selim's face was inscrutable, and he made no reply, and though John threatened, the singer continued as though in mockery, each night a madder plea.

Oh, that we, who have for pleasure so short and scant a stay should waste our summer leisure: Will you come to me today?

"The audacity of it!" burst out John. "Singing heathen love-songs here!"

Selim's lips flicked back and he looked at Eulalie. In the darkness her hand flowed, almost of its own volition, to his and was caught. The singer's voice arose in a wilder, shriller beat. Above, the stars blazed and burned. The touch of Selim's fingers was living flame, there in the silence that whispered of wild and passionate things.

THE hot scented nights slipped away behind the moon until the very eye of Eulalie's going. Upstairs her trunks were packed, the room she had grown to love, denuded. For almost five nights now the singer had been mute, silent. John was filled with a great satisfaction.

"I've set guards at the walls," he confided, grimly. "He'll stay away with his fool songs or suffer a cracked skull for his pains."

Selim said nothing, but Eulalie gazed at her husband, a faint scorn frosting her eyes.

"And anyway," added John, with an obvious relief, "we pull out of here tomorrow!"

Selim's voice out of the silence was soft, serene. "I should like to show you Mount Abu before you leave." He was looking at John, but his words seemed to be addressed to Eulalie. "A visit to India is scarcely complete unless one has climbed the holy mountain."

John pleaded business, his usual excuse. Besides, he hated sight-seeing. "Leave that to the school-teachers, crazy to get a peep at a sheik." But Eulalie, here . . . of course she would go.

"Just," bowed Selim, and at the soft satisfaction in his voice Eulalie felt the touch of a hand on her heart.

"It is certain to be hot," she wavered, hating herself for the banal excuse, refusing to acknowledge in her soul the

wild longing to go, to be alone with Selim for a few last hours.

"Nonsense!" scoffed John. "You can't sit in the garden all the time. You won't mix with the few women here . . . you must go about a little. You get whiter and thinner daily. It's that snake-charmer singing under your window . . . keeping people awake." He scowled. "But he'll not bother you tonight!" he prophesied, grimly.

Eulalie stole a secret look at Selim. Since the first night they had never been alone. Now—for a few short hours. . . . And then to go her way throughout the years with John Ludwig. . . .

Well, why not? Where was the harm?

To drift down the drugged hours, feeling him close, listening to the wonder of his voice. . . . If that was sin then she would be a sinner. If this terrible joy was wicked, yet would she drink of it to the very dregs.

It was settled then that she go, and Eulalie made no further protest.

Yet Selim was all that could be asked in the way of propriety. He explained to her the meaning of the ornate procession in which an arrogantly handsome young man was being borne on a palanquin between four man-servants in spotless white.

"A young bridegroom being carried to his bride," he said, and smiled with her at the romantic excess of it.

Her attention was then attracted to a high-walled enclosure, with exquisitely fluted windows before which grilled fretwork was fitted.

He explained, his eyes enigmatic: "A zenana."

She stared up at the windows with curious eyes. "Don't they ever come out?" she asked, of the women within those walls. "Once in, they do not return," he told her quietly, and, for the first time, looked directly at her, his eyes

deep chalices in which his soul was mirrored.

His glance on her brought the blood to her face like a fondling hand. "Oh!" she murmured, and laughed a bit unsteadily. "They too are safe! Secure!"

She brought herself up with a start, finding that a high, nervous note had crept into her voice. At his questioning look she explained, "My father told me that everything else—love—was tosh. That was his word—tosh."

She stopped, biting her lip, for that flash note was there again.

His fingers, somehow, had found her hand. "You know now that he lied!" His voice was a low, throbbing whisper.

A vibratory thrill, half of terror, yet more of piercing joy, flowed over her as their flesh touched. "Let us go on," she said thickly.

He did not try to press the subject and they said no more until they reached Mount Abu. Here, anew, was borne in upon her the strangeness of India, where people, rubbing elbows, were still centuries apart in custom and habit. There were hot-faced tourists who had rushed up to see what was to be seen, and having seen, rushed off again. The women appeared restless, filled with a fever that forever burned, the men perspiring, ill-tempered. Contrasted with the cool-looking native men in immaculate white *safas* and flowing garments, they were like whirling dynamos forever racing on their own generated energy.

Eulalie admired the intricate tracings of the Jain temples, and Selim explained that to spend even a day on Mount Abu was to endow one with special powers, for here, verily, the gods had trod.

She looked down on a bottomless lake, created, it was said, by a goddess.

The slope of the hill was a jungle where bears and panthers and an occasional tiger roamed unmolested. In a

black hole in the hill she thought she saw a moving object. She spoke of it to Selim.

"A cave wherein a hermit lives, a *sad-dhu*. They come here to sit at the feet of the holy man and gain wisdom. In the East," he explained at her glance of question, "one does not gain knowledge by asking. No. One just sits still and wisdom comes."

Her eyes were dream-filled, abstracted. "One just sits still. . . ." she murmured. Here, a hundred years was a breath, a thousand years a day. "A unique method," she smiled. "And so easy in this heat, where even thinking is a task."

The last ended on a heavy sigh and his eyes flicked to her face. "Thinking is always a task," he agreed. "And so foolish, you know, when living and feeling are so much easier, and so much more natural."

"Oh, you. . . ." she managed, vividly remembering the mingling of their hands in the nights while the faker sang. "Things are so easy for a man. It is different with a woman. She goes forward, never can she come back. Never, never." Her voice had risen on a semi-hysterical note and her eyes were like birds swept on the wind. They caught at him, clinging, until he felt himself drowning in a trough between two giant seas.

"It's like that *zenana*," she said, thickly, passionately; "even you say that no woman ever returns from there. That's the way it is with a woman. She must take what life offers, even though it is like biting into a red apple to find a rotten core. She must barter herself for security, a home, a smug little place in the world. She rarely gets these and love too. Therefore, love is a cheater, a short-changer. She—I—will never love."

His look was a blue flame, scorching her, burning her through and through.

He said in French: "*Quel dommage! Une belle femme doit être aimée!*"

She laughed, and repeated in English: "A beautiful woman ought to be loved. . . ." Her fair head went back in defiance, so that the sun wrought a kind of shine and shimmer in her hair. "But I tell you I shall not! Never! Never!"

He observed almost quietly, yet with a fatalistic stubbornness: "We have a saying here—'One drinks no more when one has drained the cup!' You . . . you have never known what love is! This," he ended swiftly as she winced, "though you are married!"

"And I tell you there is no such thing as love!" she flung back. "My father—I have his assurance that this is so!"

She turned and fled before him, while Selim, his silence that of one who says the more for saying nothing, slowly followed. She was rebelliously gay when he caught up with her.

"Now let me sit at your holy man's feet," she scoffed, "that I may absorb the wisdom that is India's."

His answer was quiet, serene. "And your own, Lalie."

The name was a key that unloosed a floodtide of memory. Lalie . . . her mother's name. Yet Selim had been the first to call her so, and the diminutive was sweet-sounding in her ears, personal, dear.

She paused again and looked at him, a long intimate look. All the unknown longings that had no names, yet burned like hidden flames since she had met him were suddenly clear. And it did not seem strange, then, that he could so readily read her mind.

For he said: "In love, Lalie, we are no more free than a ripple is to rise and leave the sea."

She laughed, terror and ecstasy inextricably tangled in the sound. But what she

said was: "Shall we go back now? John—will be waiting."

He bowed, his face devoid of expression, his eyes smiling and yet curiously patient.

"Just."

He paused at the garden entrance and gazed at her. It was evening, the sudden night of tropical lands, and starlight, silver and sable, was on her hair. Far out, on every hill, there were camp fires red against the soft delusive purple of the night. Closer, from within the walled garden there were moghra flowers to intoxicate the hot and quivering air.

Somewhere, from the shadows, wavered the lilting music, a flute-like sound.

This is wisdom . . . to love, to live. . . .

The faker had outwitted John's strategy.

She brushed a hand before her lips as though to ward off a secret kiss. "I am tired," she said wearily.

She stood motionless and watched him go, slow and graceful as a palm tree swaying in the wind. A queer pain gnawed at her. Tomorrow she was to leave. . . . Could everything end this way? To go their ways and never meet again, never to know the glory of each other's smile, the ecstasy of lip on lip. . . .

Love. . . . She knew it now for what it was—a thing to cancel a thousand ties, a thousand sins. . . .

She stumbled as she made her way through the darkness to her room.

The servant, Ameera, watched her with enigmatic eyes as Eulalie sluggishly put on the garments laid out, and lifelessly and for the first time made no objection to the perfume the other touched to her eyelids, her throat, her fingertips, her lips.

"What is it?" she asked, her heavy

lashes hiding weary eyes. "It is very sweet."

"Moghra flowers, lady," the woman murmured; then, in a low intimate tone, "he likes them best, I understand."

Eulalie opened her eyes. "He?" she said, sharply. "Mr. Ludwig?"

Ameera looked meekly at her own bare shapely feet. "I did not mean Mr. Ludwig, lady."

"You may go, Ameera," said Eulalie shortly.

The woman went soundlessly as usual. Alone, Eulalie put out the light and stood in the darkness. The light that came from Selim's window sprang up, a yellow glow. In that room he sat. . . .

There was a stir of a breeze and on it came the singing of the faker she had heard as she had stood with Selim at the gate. It wavered like bowing grass in the humid air.

In the coppice I await you. . . . Will you come to me today?

She was shaking as she shook the servant's bell with a great jerk. When Ameera, expressionless, appeared, she panted:

"Why is he out there—why?"

Ameera's voice shamed her hysteria as the woman opened wide, soft eyes like black opals. "The singer? Oh . . . the snake-charmer, lady. You gave him money. . . ." The last was a faint accusation. "He is praying that you find love and peace," she ended.

Eulalie searched for her purse, emptied it into Ameera's palms. "Take it, throw it at him, have him flogged, anything, but see that he leaves!"

"Just," murmured Ameera, and was gone.

Eulalie listened until the music faded, died out. There was nothing but the silence and the scent of flowers. She pulled shut the windows, dropped to a woven

pallet, flung its damask cushions on the floor and laid her face against the cool reed. Her forehead was wet, her hands unsteady.

Almost instantly she slept, heavily as one drugged, her face seeming more transparent, more colorless. It was so that John found her when he entered.

She sat up, looked around her as though she had awakened in a strange room.

"John," she said, clinging to his hand, "stay here beside me for a while. I—I am lonely," she ended, on a falter.

He peered at her in the moonlight, yawning widely. "Nonsense, child! You're worn out from the sight-seeing today. I'll have Ameera fix you some quinine."

He stood up, stretching like a great brown bear, his glasses catching and reflecting the star-glow.

"Good-night," he said from the doorway. "You'll be fit enough in the morning."

Eulalie said nothing. Her eyes were wide like one who walks in her sleep, her body tense. The snake-charmer, with true Indian patience, had begun his burning pleas anew.

John went out, still yawning. She could hear the heavy crash of his boots as he undressed, the sigh of his bed under his weight.

"He is old," her thoughts ran. "He can not know that the night is like a great black pearl, and the poppies are in flower."

Slowly, graceful as the white snake in the basket, Eulalie arose, moved toward the window. In the east, she could see the dark shadows that were Selim's house. One window glowed in the darkness. Through the whispering night, the unseen singer pleaded:

Little life has got to offer, and little man to lose. . . . Then take this transient hour. . . . while the poppies are in flower and the mangoe tree abloom.

She moved with graceful unhurry out into the darkness. She paused to pluck a flower scarcely whiter than her hand, pressed it against her lips, breathing in its fragrance. The singer seemed farther off, as though moving as she moved.

Suddenly the black outline that was Selim's house was radiant with light. The music slowed, was gone.

IN THE morning John looked disapprovingly at Eulalie's empty chair. "Mrs. Ludwig not about yet?" he asked of the silent Ameera. "Have you seen her?"

Ameera seemed not to have heard. "I would ask a question, master," she mumbled, peering at him from keen black eyes. "A dream is with me always . . . A dream of a golden babe named for her mother, my mistress, Lalie. My lady died, and the babe was sent to her father to his native land, America. . . . A thousand, a million pardons, but is my lady . . . your wife. . . ." she quavered, her eyes eager. "She is so golden," she murmured, "so lovely . . . so like my lady, Lalie."

John seemed about to leap from his chair in his rage. "Silence, you witch!"

he shouted. "You and your dreams! What do I care for your fancies! Forget this, do you hear? Never let me learn that you have spoken a word of this to Mrs. Ludwig or—or——"

He stopped, stuttering, but Ameera meekly bowed her head, her smoldering eyes agleam with triumph that she had read his vehement lie.

"India claims her own!" she breathed, exultantly. "Like to like!"

John glared at her. "What are you mumbling?" he snapped belligerently.

She looked meekly down. "I said only that I saw my lady," she murmured. "She was going toward the east gate. She wore a moghra flower in her hair."

John scowled. He hated having his routine interrupted. Now, on top of this disturbing insolence of this old witch, breakfast was ten minutes late.

"I think I'll wait," he said testily. "That is," he amended, looking longingly at his iced orange, "if you think she will not be gone long."

"I think," observed Ameera, looking meekly at her bare shapely feet, "you had better eat."
