

Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

MARCH, 1946

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NOVELETTES

- TWICE CURSED** Manly Wade Wellman 10
Do you know of those who are afraid of memory shadows and others who never fear the devil except on a dark night?
- THE MAN IN CRESCENT TERRACE** Seabury Quinn 34
The thing used its spear like a woman testing cake with a broomstraw — only the "cake" was a human!

SHORT STORIES

- THE BOGY MAN WILL GET YOU** Robert Bloch 27
That was what was new about him — the mystery, the not-knowing. . . .
- DEAD MAN'S SHOES** Stephen Grendon 48
Those who are stricken with that curious and terrible hallucination should be thankful — for it warns of something far more terrible
- CHANU** Jim Kjelgaard 54
Look closely at his cultured face and you will discern to your amazement a snarling mouth and great fangs
- THE JONAH** Emil Petaja 64
Remember the "Marie Celeste"? Here's an explanation for that and other sea mysteries that could not be explained!
- TUNNEL TERROR** Allison V. Harding 72
Strange things can happen in a vehicular tube — especially when the tunnel goes places it isn't supposed to!
- THE TRAVELLER** Ray Bradbury 82
A strange family, with no real life to any of them!

VERSE

- TREE WOMAN** Dorothy Quick 33
- FORGETFUL HOUR** Yetza Gillespie 90
- SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS** Irwin J. Weill 71
- THE EYRIE AND THE WEIRD TALES CLUB** 91

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Chanu

I FIRST saw Chanu across the lobby of the Africa Club in Mabari. Even at a distance there was something cold and feral about him, something that made me afraid. A moment later he saw me, and came across to the chair in which I was sitting.

"You're George Roberts, aren't you?" he asked.

"Ah—yes. Won't you sit down?"

He seated himself beside me with, "I'm Chanu."

Even though Chanu had evidently heard of me, I had never heard of him. But I felt that I should have. I stole a sidewise glance at him, and found nothing to criticize. His clothing was immaculate and proper, his beard carefully van-dyked. Strange little reddish eyes blinked beneath a pink brassiere of lids. His forehead was high and domed, and a heavy ridge protruded over his eyes. Outwardly he might have been a scholar—or an elephant hunter.

But still something deep and insistent within me said that I should be afraid. Had I heeded that voice, or been able to look into the future, I would have strangled Chanu on the spot. But you don't just kill people in the lobby of the Africa Club. You are frostily polite until you find out who their parents were back home, and whether they themselves might be an earl or a count, and while you are waiting this information you invite them to have a drink.

"Will you have a drink?" I asked.

Chanu chuckled, a low and throaty sound that reminded me very strongly of something I had heard before. It was vaguely like a tiny whispering wind that wishes to frolic with a few leaves, and yet doesn't wish to use them harshly. I had heard that sound before, and it had some terrible, almost unreal connotation. Yet, I could not place it. Chanu took a pair of delicate

glasses from his pocket and polished them with a perfumed handkerchief. He put them on, and blinked at me with his sunken, bloodshot eyes.

"I cannot drink," he said. "It is against the law."



"Against the law?"

"Against my law," he amended. He stared into space and for one brief second, right in the center of the Africa Club, I had a mental image of something that should not be within miles of the place. And again I could not define it. But the rustling leaves were definitely there, and with them was something wild and fierce, and wholly brutal. Involuntarily I shuddered, and I wanted to run. But another thing you don't do in the Africa Club is abandon even an unwanted guest.

"Mr. Roberts," Chanu said, "you have been in Africa a long time. Right?"

"Right. I've been collecting all over the continent for eight years."

"What," Chanu asked, "do you think of the okapi?"

THAT question caught me unawares. I knew, of course, that the okapi is a sort of half-horse half-giraffe discovered by Sir Harry Johnson in the awful, tangled forest of the Semliki. It's like nothing else ever discovered, and certainly other creatures just

as weird eventually will be found in the same country. But it is very disconcerting to be asked outright, and seriously, what one thinks of an okapi. Try it on one of your friends.

"Why—what should one think of an okapi?"

"That's right," Chanu agreed. "What should one think of it?"

He took the glasses off his eyes and resumed polishing them with the scented handkerchief. Beneath his cultured face, for one brief second, I had a vision of a snarling mouth and great fangs. But it was like looking at a face half concealed by a pall of mist or a spume of water, and the vision faded. Africa is full of queer things, and I told myself that Chanu was just another in a long line of them.

But at the same time I knew that he was more than that. I did not know exactly what. But—

*Africa is full of queer things
but the strangest is . . .*



"Tell me, Mr. Roberts," he said, "if you have studied the science of genetics."

"Not especially." I was becoming a little angry with his bland, yet somehow overbearing, impertinence. "Ordinarily I just take care of my own affairs."

"Oh," he missed the rebuke and seemed disappointed. "You have missed a great deal, Mr. Roberts. It is a most fascinating study, and yet, most geneticists are fools. They are concerned with their everlasting pedigrees, and this, and that. They ignore the basic truth that strength and beauty are the only desirable factors. They—"

"Good Lord!" I broke in.

Chanu continued as though he had not heard me. "Strength survives and rules, and beauty is the reward of strong things. Lacking strength to protect it, beauty cannot live. Lacking loveliness, strength has no reason to live. The geneticists, and all who wish for a better world, should proceed on that principle if they would be right. Do you ever wonder, Mr. Roberts, what will finally emerge from the welter and hodge-podge about us?"

"No," in spite of myself I was sweating. And an inner voice was still trying to warn me against this man. He was something terrible and twisted, something out of a hellish nightmare. But, when I looked, he was only a scholarly, bearded little person who might have been anything at all. His voice rose to a high, ecstatic pitch.

"I will tell you," he said. "There is a great and wonderful fore-ordained plan that very few of us appreciate or even faintly realize. After the weak and ugly have succumbed, the strong and lovely shall combine to create perfection! Strength, such as that found in the great gorillas! Beauty, such as— Ah-h!"

He leaned forward, his eyes seeming to reflect an unholy light. His mouth was set and taut, and his whole being expressed a devilish, beastly lust. A young woman whose blue dress swirled lightly about her legs, and mouldered her lovely form in its clinging embrace, was crossing the floor. Her neck was slender, and an enchanting face was set beneath a wealth of golden curls. The eyes of every man in the lobby were following her.

"Beauty such as that!" Chanu whispered.

"A perfect specimen for breeding! Strength and beauty—who knows what a thousand years hence may see on the earth if that young woman were properly mated?"

I was on my feet. Furious anger pulsed through my entire being. Almost overpoweringly, there was upon me the impulse to take Chanu's thick neck in my two hands and squeeze it until his tongue ran purple from his mouth and his wheezing breath marked the escape of his stinking life. But I was still in the Africa Club—and there was something besides that which held me back.

Again I seemed to hear the rustle of leaves, to see snarling, man-beast faces. Again I could not get a clear picture.

"I will thank you!" I snapped, "to leave my wife out of your insane speculations!"

Almost instantly the transformation had again occurred. Gone was all impression of savagery, of rustling leaves, of ferocity. Chanu was only a surprised and humble little man who had spoken out of turn.

"A thousand pardons!" he said. "I hadn't the faintest idea that that lovely girl was your wife!"

I cast lamely about—anybody can make a mistake. "Well— Well— Your apology is accepted."

Chanu rose and bowed elaborately. "I shall see you again, Mr. Roberts. My compliments to your charming wife."

He strode away. Looking after him, I knew that he had sought from me information which I did not have to furnish. At the same time, I had an odd feeling that he had come to the Africa Club on a mission, and that that mission was accomplished.

I JOINED Ann in our rooms. She was seated before a mirror, brushing the lovely hair that crowns her small head. She had taken off the blue dress, and replaced it with a soft robe that revealed all the loveliness beneath. An American, Ann Lawless had come to Africa on a newspaper assignment. The fact that she had charmed every male who came in sight was only a by-product of that assignment. Ann is not coquettish. But she's thistledown on a dance floor, a wonderful conversationalist, and a dream in a bathing suit. Why she chose me is something that I never will under-

stand. But she had been my wife for two months.

As for me— Some people thrill to the touch of a lovely jewel, some rhapsodize over a rare painting, and some just aren't happy unless they can feast their eyes on some musty antique. I had Ann, and she was all I wanted. You could say that we'd been married only two months, and the novelty hadn't worn off. But you'd be absolutely wrong. Between Ann and myself there was something that no time or attrition could ever lessen. With all my heart and soul I believed that we had been truly made for each other, and I was wonderfully happy.

When I entered the room she laid her brush on the dresser and came forward. Her arms stole about my neck. She kissed me. It was not a duty kiss, or something that had to be done for form's sake, but a deep and sincere caress. Ann is as genuine as a tree. It just isn't in her to lie or cheat.

"Who's your friend, darling?" she asked.

"Oh, some crackpot who's been in the bush too long."

"What did he want?"

"He wanted," I said, "to tell me that nobody could imagine the race of super-people who'd be on earth a thousand years from now if you were properly mated."

Ann sniffed. "And what makes him think I'm not properly mated? What's his name?"

"Chanu."

Ann drew back and looked, puzzled, into my eyes. "Chanu?" she inquired.

"That's what I said."

"That's a coincidence," she murmured.

"I was supposed to write the story of Chanu when I came to Africa."

"Your material's in the lobby, sweet. All you have to do is corner and question him."

"But you don't understand," she pursed her lips thoughtfully. "The Chanu I'm supposed to write about disappeared a hundred years ago."

"Okay"—Ann was fast teaching me some Americanisms. "Spill the dirt, shirt."

"Squirt," she corrected. "It's more or less of a fairy tale, George. Gregory Chanu, a scholar, came to Africa in 1842. He went into the interior, and was never seen again. Three years later an insane

black, the only survivor of the expedition, returned with some incoherent story of a terrific battle. The party had been set upon by natives. Wounded, the black boy had trembled in a thicket while the rest went down. Chanu, swinging a clubbed gun, was the last one on his feet. He killed eleven natives before he finally succumbed.

"But he wasn't quite dead and—well—you know the native superstitions better than I do, George. The chief of the attacking blacks, not wishing such courage to be wasted, opened Chanu's chest and was about to eat his living heart when the blacks, in turn, were attacked by a band of club-swinging gorillas. There was another pitched battle. But, when the gorillas were driven off, a huge male lay across the body of Chanu. Both were thought dead. But their blood had fused in such a way as to impress a perfect rectangle on the earth. Seeing that, the medicine man mumbled incantations over the bodies, and Chanu arose. But he would not leave the gorilla, and when the natives tried to seize and bind him he fell beside it. Then the gorilla arose and— Do you follow me, George?"

"I'm afraid I don't."

"I don't understand all myself. But the two expiring lives had united, and the single powerful life forged from two weak ones was able to will to inhabit the body of either Chanu or the ape. The natives revered both as gods, and maintained them as such in the village. And the life they shared was so strong that only something able to kill the gorilla could kill either. But, of course, when one died, both must. I— Well, that's about the whole thing."

"Good Lord! I should think it would be!"

"Of course it's incredible," Ann said. "But Gregory Chanu has never been found and, even if he died of dysentery, there's still a good story in him."

"Well and good, my little news hound. And where is this fantasy supposed to have taken place?"

"Nobody knows. But Gregory Chanu was starting for the Zandel River."

"A-ha! The plot thickens! We may find him, his ape other self, and the worshipping savages!"

"Oh, George! Do you mean—?"

"That's exactly what I mean," I told her—Ann loves safari. "Final instructions just arrived. We go up the Zandel by boat to Charing Falls. From there, we'll pack into the forest. I'm taking a few mules along, and fifty boys."

"Oh, George, wonderful! What a perfectly glorious opportunity to get more stories!"

"Sure. You'll scoop 'em all. We may find—" I grinned. "We may find another okapi even if we can't locate the spirit of Chanu."

FEAR up the sluggish Zandel, with its murky, hippopotami-filled pools and its great, man-eating crocodiles, Charing Falls hurls its spume like a giant bridal wreath. But above the falls the river is a reluctant bride. Men, where the waddling hippopotami and lunging crocodiles will let them live in peace, have hewn their plantations on the lower part of the river and built their houses. But above the falls there are no men, or at least none who remain permanently and alive. And it is at Charing where the wedding of the known and the unknown, the civilized and the uncivilized, trembles on the verge of fulfillment.

I was going up partly to map new country and partly to collect specimens. And, in spite of the forbidding character of the wilderness into which we were venturing, I hesitated neither to go nor to take Ann. Kip, my head boy, is a Masai. He had inveigled ten of his brothers and cousins onto my payroll, and with eleven Masai one may go anywhere. Kip had personally chosen all the rest of the porters, and vouched for them.

So, as Ann and I stood hand in hand on the deck of the little river steamer *Crawford*, watching Kip order his men to the unloading, I had neither qualms nor fears. I liked safari as much as Ann did and somehow, in that moment, the sky over the upper part of the river seemed much bluer and softer than that below. It was the old, old call, the lure of the unknown. Ann's fingers twined around mine. She felt it, too, this call to go and see, the urge to find what lay beyond the ranges. More properly, here on the Zandel, we were going beyond the forest. There weren't even

ranges that anyone had reported, only some very low hills.

Kip's men laid the luggage out in orderly rows on the river bank, and six of the gleaming, nearly naked blacks returned for the mules. These were big strapping brutes, and a couple of them had evidently devoted their lives to the acquisition of an ugly temper. But with his right hand on the halter of the biggest and meanest, a brindled minion of hell appropriately named Old Nick, Kip half dragged the protesting beast down the gangplank. Then he returned to help with the rest. Blaine, skipper of the *Crawford*, touched me on the shoulder.

"I don't like to hurry you," he said. "But we have got to get down to an anchorage before night."

"Oh, yes. Yes. We'll leave right away."

Together Ann and I walked down the gangplank, and had scarcely stepped from its end when it was hoisted. Still hand in hand, we turned around and Blaine waved at us.

"Good luck!" he yelled. "I'll pick you right up here in six weeks."

"Right. Six weeks."

The little *Crawford* gathered speed, churned down the river, and disappeared behind a curve. Ann's fingers tightened around mine, and when I turned to smile at her, her eyes were shining.

"Isn't it heavenly?" she breathed. "This—This is almost like exploring!"

"It is exploring, sweet," I told her.

"Well— So it is."

Kip and two of his most trusted lieutenants were packing the mules, and I strode forward to assume the white man's burden of telling black men what to do. I didn't have to. But they expected it, and thought the more of me because I did assume the boss' place. I'd already laid out a plan. The few existing maps of the upper Zandel showed an inclined and evidently a natural path up the side of the falls. Above, on the west bank, the river was relatively clear of entangling foliage for some fourteen miles—as far as any man had gone and recorded his journey. Some half day's march from where we were now was a suitable camping place, with water and thorns for a protecting night stockade.

"We march," I told Kip.

Ann and I walked at the head of our column. Behind us came our two personal gun-boys, a pair of wizened, scarred savages whom for purposes of easier pronunciation we called Tom and Jerry, and the porters followed them. It was easy enough walking once we'd reached the top, a wide river-side path with no trees and not much grass. But to our left, and across the river, the huge-boled, vine-draped trees rose like so many dark and brooding monsters.

"Isn't it lovely?" Ann asked happily.

"Yes. I—"

I was looking at the trees. There was nothing to be seen except the mighty trunks and the sweeping vines. But, at the same time, I had a strong and wholly irrepressible feeling that something was watching us. Curiously I thought of the bearded little man who had called himself Chanu. Still within my mind was a half-sensed something that existed both here and about his person.

If I had met Chanu in this place, I would have thought that he belonged.

"I' what?" Ann demanded.

"What was that?"

"You said 'I' and stopped," Ann reminded me. "Finish what you begin."

"Oh, yes. I— Ann, don't you think we'd better turn back?"

"George! We've scarcely started!"

"Well—"

"Oh, don't be an old fuddy-duddy," Ann sniffed. "When we're seventy-five we'll be too old for high adventure."

Reason told me that she was right. Yet, something else told me to turn back now, to get out of here while we were still able to do so. If I had not been educated to the point where I listened to reason—

"You're right," I told her.

"Of course, I'm right! Come on, and think of the grand things we'll see. I'm going to write a whole book about this trip."

"If your picture is on the front cover, darling, it will be a best seller."

"Now you're normal," she admitted.

"Turn back indeed! I'm having the time of my life!"

But still there was an insistent, unquenchable little voice within me, and it said, "Turn back now."

IN SPITE of fears, I slept well that night.

A thorn stockade surrounded our camp, fires leaped all about, and Kip and his Masai personally assumed sentry duty. Nothing could possibly break through and harm us. Yet, until Ann pillowed her sleepy head on my shoulder and snuggled up beside me, my uneasiness had mounted. Afterwards, I think that nothing could have disturbed me. There is a peace and serenity about Ann that is contagious. She has confidence in herself. That transmitted to me, and I slept to awaken in the first cold light of early morning. Kip, my double-barrelled Hollands under his arm, stood before our tent and I gave him my usual morning salute,

"Was all well?"

"All is well."

He had used the present tense, not the past, and all had not been well while we slept. Kip turned towards me. There is no fear in a Masai, but plainly he was concerned. Keeping his voice pitched low, so Ann couldn't hear, he said:

"There was something out there."

"What was it?"

"I do not know," his brow was wrinkled.

"It swung through the trees, and crossed the river on a log. Almost to the camp it came. But, when I would have shot it, it was no longer there. It was a huge and hairy thing, and it walked upright."

"Was it a gorilla?"

Kip shook his head. "No. It was not a gorilla."

"A man?"

"No. It was not a man."

"What was it?"

"I do not know."

We went onto the grassy river bank to search for tracks of the thing that might have invaded our camp. But the grass, very thick and springy, held no tracks that even Kip could discern. If he failed, it was hopeless for me to look.

"Was it a dangerous thing?" I asked.

"I do not know," Kip's face was still puzzled.

I looked towards the tent where Ann was still sleeping, and gazed down the river. The sun burst into the sky and burned away the morning mists. And, for some reason, the instinctive, warning voice of last night was silent. There were new and unknown things

up here—Kip did not tell fairy tales. And part of the reason for my presence above the falls was to find new things. We had an impregnable fort, a strong force, should easily repel the attacks of anything that this brooding forest might produce. We would go on.

"Say nothing about it," I counselled. "If it comes again, try to shoot or capture it."

"Yes," Kip said simply.

Ann came out of the tent, fresh and radiant at the morning itself. Even jodhpurs could not hide the grace and slimness of her lithe limbs, nor did the man's shirt conceal the delicate roundness of her upper body. I think that clothing has never been designed so coarse and rough that her beauty would fail to shine through it.

"Good morning, George," she called gaily. "Do you still want to turn back?"

"You're dreaming! Who said anything about turning back?"

Ann smiled. "I must have been dreaming," she said cheerfully. "Oh, George, it's so beautiful up here that I wonder if we didn't stumble onto some fairyland by mistake."

"You'll find out you didn't when the flies start in," I teased. "They won't bother me because no fly in its right senses would bite anything else while you're around."

"Thank you, kind sir, she said." Ann made a little curtsey and washed in the tin basin of water that our personal tent-boy brought her.

Gathered around their fire, the rest of the boys were feasting on provisions we'd carried along. I'd have to shoot a buck today, or get other fresh meat. It didn't matter what because an African boy isn't very particular as to what he eats. Tethered outside the stockade since daylight, the mules were cropping the rich river grass.

IT WAS about mid-day when we reached the farthest part of the river that was marked by any map, and here the character of the place changed abruptly. The great, sky-probing trees gave way to smaller and scattered forest growth. Lush green grass carpeted the open spaces, and tiny, fox-size antelope bounded back and forth. It was a scene right out of Hans Christian Anderson, and almost involuntarily I found myself

looking for the fairies that should grace it. As though she had read my thoughts, Ann said:

"The antelope will have to do. They look like fairies."

I grinned, and was about to reply when a shouted order made me turn. Kip was running through the grass, trying to head off the bolting mules. Just beyond, the point to which they were bolting, the grass grew especially lush and green over a sort of rock formation, and Old Nick had decided to sample it. I don't know how mules communicate their thoughts. But evidently the big brindled beast was the ringleader of this stampede, and had invited his comrades to go with him.

Suddenly, Old Nick reared. But, before he was halfway up, as suddenly and swiftly as though he had received a shot in the brain, he fell to the earth. Another mule screamed, and the scream was choked in the middle as it, too, sprawled forward. The other four tried to run, took one or two jerky steps, and went down. I saw something in the grass at their feet, something sinuous and whip-like, a squirming, hideous something that struck viciously at one of the dead mules.

"Keep away!" I warned Kip.

"I see," he said calmly.

Tom passed the light rifle into my hands, and Ann trembled beside me as we slowly retraced our steps towards the mules. The earth about them was alive with snakes, scaly, monstrous-headed things with gaping white mouths and club-like tails. One reared, spread a hood, and hissed at us. About two feet long, they were similar to the rhingals. But they were not rhingals, but something far more deadly. From the time the first one struck, it had taken less than a second to kill the six mules. Ann shuddered, and put her hands to her mouth.

"Oh how ugly! Come away from them!"

"I need one for my collection."

"Come away! Please! George, I'm going to be sick!"

Walking very gingerly, his eyes glued to the earth before him, Kip came to my side and took the gun. He grinned, and began shooting the snakes that clustered around the dead mules—their packs had to be rescued. But before I led Ann away, Kip

flashed me a fleeting, sidewise glance that in itself spoke volumes.

"Do you still think it's a fairyland?" I asked Ann.

"Take the bitter with the sweet," she said grimly. "George, those poor mules!"

We waited in a little open glade, looking towards a thick growth of trees through which we would have to pass, and listened to the 'snap-snap' of the little gun as Kip killed the snakes. The gun became silent, and I looked around to see the boys dividing the mules' packs. They shouldered them, a grinning, sinuous line, and Kip handed the gun back to the bearer. Again Ann and I took the lead, starting straight through the thick trees.

The scream that rang out from the end of the porter's line was so shriekingly bloody and so coldly despairing that I missed my first grab for the heavy gun. Turning around, I saw a pair of hairy arms seize Kip and tear his head off. Behind the arms loomed a mighty furry body, and an evilly grinning face. Almost at the same second Ann was snatched from my side into a tree. Mercifully, she had either been knocked unconscious or she had fainted.

Then everything went black.

THE first thing I thought of when I awakened was Chanu. I don't know why. My head was throbbing, there was a thick, nauseous taste in my mouth, and when I tried to lift my arms all strength seemed to have departed. But still, before me, danced the scholarly, bearded face of the little man whom I had met in the lobby of the Africa Club. Then the vision faded, and I regained complete consciousness to look squarely at a black and hideous ape.

I blinked, doubting my eyes and my own sanity. But when I looked again the ape was still there, and now I saw that it was confined in a wooden cage. Eighteen grinning white skulls adorned the eighteen upright bars of the cage. Apparently asleep, one of the ape's clumsy, short-thumbed hands were outstretched on his enormous thigh. His neckless head was slumped on his mighty chest. I had seen gorillas, had broken through a trackless, bush-strewn little stretch of jungle and come upon them feeding. I had heard them beating their chest, and their

roars of rage when they fought. I had watched an old male seize a boy by either leg and tear him in half. But I had never seen any ape, or anything else, that for sheer brutality and strength compared to the thing in the cage.

Had he stood erect, he would have been more than six feet tall. But it was the massiveness of his body, the mighty muscles that bulged on his chest and in his tremendous arms, that were most impressive. The gorilla equalled the weight of five big men. And it was easy, looking at him, to believe that such beasts had taken clubs and beaten even elephants to death. The captive gorilla was the personification of uncontrolled and mighty power. And, as I looked, I saw him come awake.

By infinitesimally slow degrees he raised his fanged head. I shuddered, and looked away. The head was a small thing on so huge a torso, a little, weaving bubble that seemed almost ridiculously out of place. The gorilla rose on his legs and forearms, waddled almost lazily to the side of his cage, and drew himself erect. His piggish little sunken eyes blazed in his ridged forehead. But right at that moment, for some reason, they seemed devoid of all brutality. There was a passion in them, a deep and yearning lust that was almost human.

Again, at that moment, there rose before me the vision of Chanu. I saw the scholarly little man as he sat beside me in the lobby of the Africa Club, and it was as though his face mingled with that of the gorilla. But once more it was like looking at a face half hidden by a pall of mist or a spume of water. He stood behind the ape, spouting crazy, half truths about genetics and the turmoil of life within the world. I heard his spoken words, "Beauty such as that! A perfect specimen for breeding. Strength and beauty—who knows what a thousand years hence may see on the face of the earth if that young woman were properly mated?"

I wanted to keep my eyes closed, to battle with the horrible dream that was engaging my mind and awaken with Ann's head cosily pillowed on my shoulder. But some inexorable and mighty force that I could not combat forced me to look again. I saw the ape's yearning, unholy countenance, followed his gaze, and tried to tell myself that I would

not see that which was going to meet my eyes. It was a horrible, unreal dream. It could not be. But Ann was there!

Trussed to a post, her long, round arms were bound behind her. Her head was up, and there was no hint of panic in her blue eyes. Apparently she was unharmed.

My dull, feverish eyes roved beyond my wife. A row of conical, thatched huts rose among the low trees. Beside them, stacked in an orderly row, were all the boxes and parcels that the porters had carried. My life had been spent collecting and I suppose it's only natural that, even now, I should first seek the specimen boxes. Automatically I selected those which had been personally carried by Kip.

"If that young woman were properly mated—" Through the haze that clouded my mind Chanu was again there, speaking to me in the lobby of the Africa Club and following my wife with avid, lustful eyes. Chanu wanted Ann. But Chanu was the huge gorilla in the cage of the eighteen bars and the eighteen skulls. Ann raised her head, looked towards the huts, and it was then that I saw the blacks approaching.

THEY were tall men, big-boned and muscular, and sweat shone like satin on their rippling bodies. They bore shields of rhinoceros skin, carried long-hafted spears with cruelly pointed tips. Except for their gear, which was strange to me, they might have been Masai. In solemn procession they filed towards me, and with heads averted passed Ann. One nudged me with his foot, and spoke in a variation of the Masai dialect.

"You have awakened."

Almost automatically I answered, "I have awakened."

"It is good," the black said simply. "M'gungu will be pleased."

A pair of blacks reached down to grasp me by the arms and lift me to my feet. I stumbled forward, and would have fallen, had not they upheld me. The blacks half-dragged me to Ann, and untied her. Her soft arms passed around my neck. I looked at her eyes, saw a great compassion and pity there, but still no fear.

"I—," I began.

But I was drowned out by a mighty bel-
low from the ape. He began to beat his huge

chest with his mighty arms. Slaver dripped from his jaws. He paced up and down the cage, and flung himself against the bars. My arms went around Ann, as though to shield her from the awful thing in the cage. The gorilla beat his chest harder and faster. Rolling, drum-like echoes came back to mock me. The black pulled me away.

"It is good," he said. "M'gungu will now take his mate."

"His what?" I demanded.

"His mate," the black said calmly. "M'gungu has never had a mate, and he might kill this one had he not seen with his own eyes that another male desired her."

"George," Ann said desperately, "what are they going to do?"

I looked at the huge ape, thought of my own bruised and almost helpless self. But, even had I been unhurt and strong, the gorilla could have ripped me to shreds in a second. The whole hellish scheme became apparent. The blacks had deliberately taken me to Ann in order to incite the jealousy of the thing in the cage. He recognized me as Ann's mate, and when he killed me he would take her for himself.

"Beauty such as that," I remembered. "A perfect specimen for breeding. Strength and beauty—"

Again, behind the gorilla's mask of hate, rose the scholarly, ascetic face of Chanu. He was not here. Yet he seemed to be here. I thought of Ann's fable—one life that could inhabit either a man or a gorilla. That was obviously absurd. But still, Chanu's face seemed to be mistily hovering behind that of the gorilla.

"George, what are they going to do?" Ann pleaded.

I looked at her, saw all the softness and glory of the beautiful girl I had married, and glanced from her to the raging M'gungu. And, in that moment, I knew that if I had a knife, spear, or any weapon, I would have left Ann lifeless at the foot of the post. But I had nothing, could do nothing except ask an inane, "And must I fight M'gungu without weapons?"

"Choose any weapon," the imperturbable black said, "except a gun."

"What if I defeat him?"

"Then," the black's face did not change, "you have a warrior's promise that you, your

goods, and your woman, shall be returned to the place where M'gungu ordered his people to capture you."

"What's going to happen?" Ann begged.

"I am going to fight the gorilla," I said. "You're the prize."

"Oh, no," she pleaded. "Not that! George, leave me! Get away and let them have me!"

As coldly as I could I turned my back on her and walked away. I stumbled to the specimen boxes, selected one by the number, and my numbed hands nearly dropped it into the grass. But it was only a little box, twenty inches long by sixteen high.

"I am ready," I said.

The black man looked, cynically amused, at the puny weapon. With a tall black supporting either arm, I was guided down to the cage that housed the huge gorilla. M'gungu retreated to the far end, beating his hands against his chest as a challenge to battle. The blacks opened the door of the cage, shoved me inside, and stepped back. Walking on his feet and the knuckles of his hands, M'gungu advanced in a slow and terrifying walk. My hand was on the spring cover of the little box. At the proper moment I opened it, flung its contents halfway across the cage.

M'gungu straightened, and a fleeting look of horrible agony crossed his reddish little eyes. He threw himself forward, one huge hand brushed my chest and sent me sprawling. Slowly, like a deflating toy balloon, M'gungu collapsed at my feet. Kip, an understanding man, had done his work well. Noting Ann's terror, he had waited until we were gone, then had captured one of the mule-slaying serpents for me. The snake slithered on the fallen gorilla, hissing.

But again the awed blacks were at the cage door, and I fell into their arms when they opened it. Reeling between them, I watched them pick up Ann—who had fallen at the foot of the post—and take both of us towards the huts. They carried Ann and guided me into one, and dimly I was aware of the man lying on the pallet.

It was Chanu. But it could not be Chanu. The man on the pallet had been dead for years. When I touched his taut, wrinkled face, it crumbled dustily under the pressure of my finger. Groggily I felt about him,

transferred something from his hand to my own pocket.

Once more I lapsed into unconsciousness.

WHEN I awakened it was to hear the roar of the river. I was lying in my own tent and dimly, over me, I saw Ann's pale, worried face. I tried to smile, and she fell, crying, into my arms.

"George!" she sobbed. "Thank God, you're all right!"

"I— Uh— Of course."

The tent flaps rustled and a man entered. It was Gam, another Masai, and Kip's trusted lieutenant.

"You may kill me if you like," he said. "But we fought the gorilla people as best we could. We were driven by them to another part of the forest, and fought six hours before we could return."

"You fought well," I said. "Know no shame. We shall start immediately back to the falls, and when we come again we shall have more armed men."

"We shall do that," Gam echoed.

On silent feet he left the tent, and again Ann bent over me. Her face was pale, and heavy circles were etched beneath both eyes.

"George, dearest," she said. "You were right. We should have turned back when you wanted to. But who would have thought that gorillas might attack us?"

"Nobody," I reassured her. "We'll go back down the river, and come again prepared to deal with them."

Ann shuddered. "O-oh! I think I never want to come back. George, when those terrible things attacked, and I fainted, I had the most horrible dream! I dreamed that we were both taken to a native camp, and that you had to fight a huge gorilla that wanted— Oh, I'll never forget it!"

"Yes, you will," I soothed.

But, all the while I was trying to comfort Ann, my right hand was desperately working to claw a hole in the dirt floor of our tent and bury something. It was something that had unreal and terrible associations, something that I did not dare look at.

But, even by the feel and scent, I knew that I could not possibly mistake the perfumed handkerchief with which Chanu had polished his glasses back in the lobby of the Africa Club.