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NO SOUND, no movement anywhere, then a perceptible awakening. A breath of wind, a palm frond moving, and shadows thickening below the hotel balcony. Jim Withers sat forward and watched the white-clad figure climbing the steep road toward the hotel. Even at that distance he recognized the man and frowned. In another moment he leaned for-

ward again and nodded his head in sign of grudging respect for the one in white. The chap was running up the hill.

*Jim's wife didn't mind if he left her alone. She was very understanding. That's what began to bother Jim . . .*

# Green Eyes



BY HAL ELLSON

But why not? The natives were capable of feats that could stun, if not kill, anyone else. But this Juan. . . . Jim sat back once more and wiped the perspiration from his face. The wind had faded, evening brought no relief from the fierce tropic heat. He closed his eyes, steps on the tiled floor alerted him. Seconds later a pair of cool hands pressed against his eyes. An exotic bouquet floated around him.

As he broke free and turned, Kathy smiled, beautiful and cool-looking in white. "Lazy-bones, sleeping again?" she said.

"No, thinking of when we're leaving this place."

"But how can you say that? I could stay forever in Acapulco."

"Then it'll have to be without me."

"Fresh," she said and laughed in a way that set his pulse racing. A wild surging desire made him want to crush her in his arms, but she stepped back, as if she had read his mind, and said, "We'd better dine, don't you think?"

"Have to wash up," he mumbled, rising from the chair. Then, escorting her as far as the stairs, he went to their room, washed quickly and hurried to the upper balcony.

In that brief interval a swift transition had taken place. The night had closed in, a vast canopy stretched overhead; on the slope of the hill below the balcony nothing but silence.

Jim sat down abruptly. "You're

out of sorts," Kathy said, watching him.

"No, it's the heat," he lied. For he could bear with that, but to have found Juan with Kathy was too much. As Juan had gone back to the kitchen, Jim said, "He's altogether too friendly."

Kathy opened her eyes wide, innocently. "You mean Juan?"

"And who else would I be talking about?"

"Oh, he doesn't mean anything. He's just friendly." She was smiling now. "But don't tell me — it's not really jealousy."

"Jealousy, hell!"

"Hush."

Warned, Jim turned his head. Others were arriving. A table for two. He nodded to the couple and turned back to Kathy.

"From Michigan. They motored down. Very nice people," she whispered.

Then Juan appeared from the kitchen bearing a large tray. He smiled. "And how are you this evening, Mr. Withers?" His white teeth flashed, his smooth brown skin gleamed. Not a drop of sweat on his face after that run up the hill.

Jim nodded, unable to speak. Juan set him on edge. All eyes for Kathy as he served, his words directed at her. She appeared delighted by his attention.

"Are you going fishing tomorrow?"

Both of them were looking at Jim now and he appeared almost stunned.

"I hadn't thought of it for tomorrow," he finally answered.

"But why wait?"

"Yes, why wait?" said Kathy. "Wasn't it one of the reasons you came?"

"If you go in a big boat," Juan was saying, "very big fish. Sailfish, swordfish, anything you can name."

"And any price the boatman can name too."

"Ah, but you are rich."

Kathy laughed with delight at this remark.

"All Americans are not rich, particularly this one," said Jim.

Exchanging glances with Kathy, Juan only smiled and said, "If you wish, I can make the necessary arrangements."

Jim finally conceded. "All right, tomorrow, at what time?"

"At six it is best for hooking the big ones."

"Make it seven."

Juan shrugged. "As you wish. The boys will be waiting at Caleta Beach. Ask for Rodriguez."

Juan returned to the kitchen. Voices in heated argument made Jim turn. No door to the kitchen. He saw a barefooted Indian woman — the cook — berating Juan.

"That old devil's at it again."

"Well, she has work to do and he's holding her up."

"I still don't like her."

"And him?"

Kathy's eyes widened. "But don't be silly, Jim. He's cute, that's all."

Jim picked up his fork, not caring

to pursue the subject. The food was excellent, as always, not to be ignored.

"You know," he said, "that's the most remarkable thing about this place."

"What is?"

"The food. No two meals alike, a kind of endless variety and perfection."

"I hate to admit it, but the old she-devil does wonders."

"Probably no one appreciates it, either."

At that moment Juan arrived back at the table, apparently not upset by the argument with the cook. "A bottle of Bohemia," said Jim. "And if you don't mind, tell the cook that my wife and I are in love with her cooking."

After what had taken place, another man would have at least hesitated before such a request, but Juan smiled, as if sharing in the compliment, and went immediately to the kitchen. Watching, Jim saw the Indian woman turn her ugly pock-marked face and smile at him.

Juan returned with the bottle of Bohemia. As Jim poured the light golden beer, he said, "Coming along tomorrow, Kathy?"

"Fishing? Are you out of your mind, Jim?"

"It was just an idea."

## 2.

After dinner, a few couples gathered on the lower balcony. Intensely dark now, a soft wind from the sea,

palms stirring, the lizards darting at insects lured by the lights. Utter silence in the shadowed jungle on the slope below the balcony.

Kathy had left with the other couples to join the Canasta players in the lobby. Jim leaned over the railing. Looking down, he saw a light flash. Nothing then, but he knew of the forlorn native shacks hidden below. The cook, and perhaps Juan lived in one of them.

Jim turned away, thought of Juan rousing his anger. What does Kathy see in him? he asked himself, starting for the hall that led to the lobby. There he found the Canasta players at their tables but not Kathy. Gone to the room, he thought, and he walked through the open lobby, then down the front steps.

Palms shadowed the driveway. A night-bird cried out. About to light a cigarette, Jim turned and saw a white-clad figure jump from the small balcony of his own room and quickly disappear. In the next second he turned round, mounted the steps and hurried through the lobby.

"Kathy?" The door was locked. He rattled the knob. Footsteps, and the door swung open. No light in the room. He flipped the switch and stared at Kathy.

"Thought you were going to play cards?" he said, watching her eyes.

"I changed my mind and decided to lie down for a while."

Yes, with Juan, he thought. But when she stared innocently at him

he went out to the balcony, dropped in a chair and lit a cigarette.

"What are you going to do out there?" Kathy asked.

"Sleep. I've a big day ahead tomorrow. Wish you'd come along."

No answer from Kathy.

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing, I suppose."

"Perhaps I better not go."

"Don't spoil your fun because of me."

"Thanks." That said as if he meant it. Then: "Look, why not meet me at the beach with the camera just in case I hook a big one."

"What time?"

"Noon."

"I'll be there."

Hearing the door open, he turned and saw her smiling at him. "Now where are you going?" he asked.

"Canasta, dear. Bye!"

The door closed. He shot his cigarette away. Kathy had lied. He didn't want to believe it, the two of them together. A wild thought entered his mind. Capable of murder. He knew that now, but it was insane. Get away, he told himself. The plane to Mexico City tomorrow, anything to escape the precipice lying near in the dark.

A night-bird cried out in the palms, a wind from the sea. He closed his eyes, slept and woke again to that same mournful cry. Now stillness, everything dead, asleep. Turning, he saw a figure in white vanish behind a palm; he tried to rise and his tired eyes closed.

He opened them again to the clear tropic light and profound stillness of morning, looked at his watch, stood up, passed through the shadowed room, empty lobby and hurried down the hill toward the beach. Halfway there and he met the Indian cook; a mirrored light flashed from a machete that hung from her waist. She smiled. He smiled in turn, passed on, hurrying.

No one at the beach. He lit a cigarette. Ask for Rodriquez? As if provoked by this thought, the quiet beach came to life. A group of beach-boys arrived. One approached Jim and he said, "Are you Rodriquez?"

"Si. You are ready?"

Jim nodded. Rodriquez barked an order. One of the boys plunged into the water and swam out to a boat at anchor. Rodriquez himself took off barefooted and returned with two fishing poles. Meanwhile the boat had been brought in close to the beach. Jim and Rodriquez climbed aboard. The motor started, the boat backed away, turned and headed for the open sea.

Under other circumstances, the trip alone would have been worthwhile, but Jim was preoccupied. Himself out here, Juan didn't have to climb the balcony. Knock on the door, walk in and strip for action, he thought.

A strike and his line went taut, the pole bent. Excited, the beach-

boys rose to their feet. Far astern the placid surface of the sea broke as the fish that had struck jumped clear and flashed in the brilliant sunlight. Minutes later the fish was boated.

"A durado," one of the beach-boys pronounced it and with a blow from a club stilled it forever.

One more strike, and thereafter the sea gave up nothing. Only the scenery now, great cliffs with the sea battering them, then miles of beach and white surf wild and booming like cannon. Jim barely took notice, his mind on Kathy and Juan. He had been tricked and couldn't wait to get back.

At noon the boat nosed against the beach. Jim came ashore, eyes searching for Kathy. Rodriquez handed him his catch. Fifty yards away he saw Juan squatting on the back of his legs and Kathy lying on the sand. He dropped the fish, started forward, fists clenched. The sun was blinding, he began to run, caught himself.

I'm going mad, he thought, and he was gasping when he stood over Kathy. Juan was standing now. Kathy smiled at him. "Ah, your husband is back," said Juan.

"Didn't you catch anything?" Kathy asked.

"No luck."

"As I said, you must leave early for the big ones," Juan put in and, excusing himself, he walked off toward the hotel.

Kathy lay back on the sand again,

aware that Jim was staring at her. "Angry that you caught nothing?"

"Not about that."

"What then? My boy friend? There, you are jealous?" She laughed, pleased with herself.

"It's nothing to laugh about."

"Oh, come now, you're old enough to know better."

"I wonder," he said casually. And to himself: I wonder how long it's gone on?

4.

Evening on the balcony with Juan serving, and a new air about him that smacked of amused assurance which Jim found aggravating. He showed it, too, but to no avail. Juan's usual argument with the cook ensued. But back he came to the table in the same high mood — and with a new suggestion — a trip into the jungle. "Not quite for a lady," he added. "But I am sure you would enjoy it," he said to Jim.

It was obvious enough now that they wanted him out of the way, Jim realized, but he wondered if they took him for a fool. This time there would be no trip. But suddenly he changed his mind. It was insane, yet he made the decision quickly, saying, "I suppose it would be interesting."

"Something to remember after you leave," said Juan. "You won't regret it."

Jim looked at Kathy. "Oh, go along," she urged. "I wouldn't have you miss it for the world."

"But what will you do?"

"Occupy myself." This as she looked directly at him, as if deliberately flaunting him.

"Your wife is very obliging. An admirable quality," Juan smiled. Jim was afraid to look up, wanting to bash the fellow.

"It's an all-day trip," said Juan. "A man named Varga will pick you up at nine."

"Good. Bring me a Bohemia," said Jim, this to get rid of Juan. Then he looked at Kathy. She was lighting a cigarette, poised and cool-looking while he soaked in his own sweat.

What am I doing? he thought. Giving her to him. Trying to torture myself? The trip was a foolish idea, and yet behind the madness — method.

"Anything wrong?" Kathy asked.

"Just thinking."

"You're not going to change your mind about the jungle trip?"

"Does it matter if I do?"

"Of course. Don't let me spoil your fun. I'll be perfectly content here — and no one will steal me."

He felt she was laughing at him and almost exploded. Tomorrow will tell, he thought. Things are beginning to square. That made him smile, and Kathy asked why.

"It won't be long now."

"Meaning?"

"All sorts of things, mostly that we'll be flying home."

"I hate the thought of it. Aren't you going to miss all this?"



"A bit. What particularly will you miss?" he asked, feeling almost malicious now.

"Oh, everything. When are we coming back?"

"That all depends."

"On what?"

"Several things, my dear," and he smiled, seeing her frown.

They finished dining and went to the balcony below. Then Kathy joined the card players. Jim didn't mind, for he wanted to think and the coolest place was the balcony.

### 5.

Later, he sought the lobby but didn't see Kathy. He went to their room and knocked. No answer. For a moment anger assailed him, then he managed to grin, knowing she was with Juan. Stupid little Kathy, he thought. Quickly he turned round, passed through the lobby and down the front steps. The road curved and darkened under the palms; up ahead he thought he saw something white disappear in the shadows. Then Kathy emerged from the darkness.

"Hello, what are you doing out here?"

Kathy advanced, then stood face to face with him. "Taking a breath of air. It was stifling inside." Perfectly poised, she raised a cigarette to her lips for him to light it.

"Dangerous walking this road at night," he said calmly as he struck a match. Her face was caught in the light, innocent. She smiled.

"Worried about me?"

"A bit." He dropped the match and added, "Terrible job you did on your mouth. Your lipstick is smeared. Here." He gave her his handkerchief and turned round. Up ahead, he again thought he saw a white shadow turn the curve in the road and he quickened his steps. A tall man in white entered the hotel.

"You're walking so fast," Kathy complained.

"Sorry."

He slowed his steps till they reached the lobby where Kathy joined the card players. Then he went to a rear balcony and found a tall man in white leaning against the railing, another waiter.

"Ah, Alfredo."

"Good evening, Mr. Withers!"

"It is very hot."

"Yes, very hot."

"Hotter when one walks fast."

Alfredo lifted his head and dropped his cigarette.

"You warned them, didn't you?" Jim said, and his hand went to his pocket. Alfredo stiffened, then saw the crisp bill in the hand extended toward him.

"I was asked to," he said, accepting the money and shrugging his shoulders.

"Who asked you?"

Alfredo hesitated. "The lady."

"I see. And suppose I asked you to do something?"

"I should have to consider."

Alfredo's meaning was clear, and Jim was already prepared with a



sheaf of pesos. Handing them over, he named a cafe in the city and said, "I'll be there all day tomorrow. If Juan should happen to go to my room, telephone me immediately. Is that clear?"

"Perfectly," Alfredo answered with a smile, and Jim turned and walked away, everything clear in his mind, too. Kathy and Juan expected him to go on the jungle trip. Which gave them all day to themselves, the leisure of time and freedom. Jim grinned unpleasantly. If Alfredo called, he could make it back to the hotel in ten minutes with a fast taxi.

Kathy was still in the lobby. With a glance toward her, he went to their room and turned in. It was stifling and close, yet he managed to fall asleep.

## 6.

Morning and he left the room, Kathy asleep yet. Foregoing breakfast, he sought out the guide, said he had changed his mind about the trip, tipped him well and took a taxi into the city.

There he bought a three-week-old New York paper and found an outdoor table at the cafe. Morning passed, the heat blazed. Noon and he retreated to the cooler interior of the cafe. With the siesta, the streets emptied and came to life afterward. Jim sat outside again, nerves ragged, patience worn. He had changed from coca cola to brandy and soda. Time oozed, the

phone call from Alfredo never came.

At five, he gave up waiting, hailed a taxi, drove back to the hotel and sought out Alfredo who met him with a smile that made him want to smash his face in.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Withers, but there was no need to phone."

An obvious lie, but it was too late to do anything about it. "How much did you ask of the lady for not phoning me?" said Jim.

"Your wife? But she knew nothing. I went to Juan and he offered more than you." Alfredo smiled and shrugged. "Of course you want your money back."

"Keep it," Jim snarled, walking away.

The shower was running when he entered the room. He slammed the door shut and Kathy called out: "How was the trip, darling?"

"Wonderful. I didn't go."

"You didn't?" The pattering and splashing ceased in the bathroom. Towel around her, Kathy came out to find Jim standing at the door to the balcony, his face flushed and sweated, his eyes like glass.

"I don't understand," she said.

"There's nothing to understand. I didn't go because I met a party from New York. We went to a cafe and talked."

"And drank."

"So what? As long as you enjoyed yourself."

"I didn't exactly pine away."

Still acting, flippant now. He wanted to knock her little head off.

Why in hell did I marry her? he asked himself. But he knew why and turned away, going to the bathroom to shower himself. "I'll meet you on the upper balcony," he said.

Kathy was waiting for him and, as usual, Juan was at the table. He bowed, smiled at Jim, drew out his chair, and suddenly the cook began screaming at him from the kitchen. She was brandishing an ugly machete. Juan turned pale and didn't move till she turned away. Then he scampered into the kitchen.

"My God, did you see that?" said Kathy.

"Perhaps he'll tend to his business now," Jim answered calmly.

But he was wrong about that. At least, Juan found time to return to their table to drop a word when he served them coffee.

"And how was the jungle trip?" he asked with a gloating smile.

"You should know," Jim answered. Then, to deflect comment concerning this curious remark, he quickly turned to Kathy and said, "You know, we're leaving tomorrow. Do you think a hundred and fifty pesos too little to tip the cook?"

"Are you going out of your mind, Jim?"

"In deepest appreciation for services rendered, that's the way I feel about it."

"Oh, do what you wish."

Smiling, Jim counted out the money while Juan watched, obviously shocked. "And this is for you," said Jim, adding a mere ten-peso

note as a tip for Juan who could not protest. He looked sick but managed a smile and retreated to the kitchen from which he returned some moments later to extend the cook's appreciation.

## 7

Later, on the lower balcony after Kathy had gone to join the card players, Jim sat with another guest. Conversation led to the cook and her tirade against Juan.

"Nothing new about that," said the other guest. "Last year she got to him with that machete and put him on his back for a month."

"Really?"

"A nasty old woman, but she can really cook."

"The best," said Jim, looking at his watch. He stood up, excused himself and went to the upper balcony. Quiet there, the diners and waiters gone, a light in the kitchen, the Indian woman cleaning up. As Jim stepped into the kitchen, she turned.

"Just wanted to make sure you received the tip I sent you," said Jim. "You did get it?"

The cook nodded, smiled.

"All of it? A hundred and fifty pesos?"

"It was but ten, Señor."

"That was for Juan. He must have made a mistake," said Jim and, with that, he turned round and left the kitchen.

Some minutes later, while standing at the front of the lobby, Juan

passed him without notice and started down the dark road under the motionless palms. Almost within seconds the Indian woman followed him.

Next morning neither the cook nor Juan appeared at the breakfast hour. Then news came of the murder. Juan had been found just below the hotel in the bushes, hacked to death. The Indian woman could not be located.

The guest of last year, whom Jim had spoken to the night before, was heard to say the obvious: "I wouldn't be surprised if it was the cook. They scrapped last night, and she slammed him with that machete once before, you know. Too bad, because she could wrestle up a meal."

Kathy had nothing to say. Not until she and Jim were aboard the plane and flying north toward Mexico City. Then she turned to Jim and said, "Wasn't it awful?"

Not looking at her, he lit a cigarette. "You mean about Juan? He had that coming, I think."

"What do you mean?"

"Jealousy, of course. The cook was soft on him, but yesterday she found he'd been going around with another woman. One of the hotel guests. Lucky the cook didn't go to work on her."

Kathy had turned dead white. "How do you know all this?" she finally asked.

"Alfredo told me," he replied, continuing the lie. Then he waited, for she had to ask, her woman's curiosity greater than her fear.

"Did he say who the woman was?"

Her words were weighted, barely audible. They made Jim smile, and at last he turned and looked at her. "Alfredo didn't have to," he said slowly, watching her turn pale again. Then she raised her hand in a peculiar constricted gesture, as if to ward off a blow, and he laughed.

"You see, I knew all the while," he went on. "And next time, if there is a next time, you'll know what to expect."



# MUGGED AND PRINTED

HAL ELLSON's latest story, *Green Eyes*, is another completely different yarn from the author of *Duke*. The only similarity it bears to his previous *Manhunt* appearances is that it's a terrific story.