

Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

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*Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use
of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.*

Incident at the Galloping Horse

BY CARL JACOBI

*A horse, a beautiful woman and
a fated ride that had no return*

THERE is a curiously unreal quality to Caribbean moonlight. Standing that night on the little deck of the *Mariegalante*, I could see the waves creaming on Tortola's beach, the bearded cabbage palms, and the road stretching white and lonely across the island—the road that had been old when Morgan sailed these seas.

From below, up the open companionway, drifted voices and the strains of Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas*, one of Dolph Prescott's favorite selections. It was a paradox of the man's character that was hard to understand. The wealthy yacht-owner was indeed a strange mixture of artistic niceties and gross habits and opinions.

Presently Prescott appeared, climbing to the deck: a large, heavy man in white waistcoat with coarse colorless hair and a bristly mustache. He was followed by his wife, Claire, slender, violet-eyed, clad in an emerald evening dress.

"Hullo, Frank," he said. "You here all by yourself? Claire's got some errant idea of going ashore. See if you can change her mind."

I lit my pipe. "It might be better to wait until morning."

"Nonsense!" Claire Prescott laughed. "There's nothing on this side of the island but the ruins of that tavern, and I want to see it. Family pride, y'know."

All day she had talked of that old tavern. Dating to the seventeenth century, built of stone, it had stood here on Tortola's eastern shore, deserted and forgotten, simply another crumbling relic of the Indies. It bore the curious name, *The Inn of the Galloping Horse*, and since Tortola was one of the British Virgins, off the beaten tourist



Heading by Lee Coye Brown

track, it had gone virtually unmentioned in histories and travel volumes. Yet legend had it that Brasiliano, Bartolomew Portuguese, L'Ollinois, Morgan, and other nefarious buccaneers had all dined and drunk in its common room and slept in its beds. Somewhere Claire Prescott had come upon an old diary, and through it claimed she was able to trace her ancestry back to one of the early tavern owners.

"Have the gig lowered, Dolph," Claire said stubbornly. "I'll go down and change and see if Mark wants to go."

We were four and a crew aboard the *Mariegalante*. Besides the Prescotts and myself, there was young Mark Lockridge who was writing and gathering atmosphere for a new novel, two predecessors of which had been quite successful.

Leaving Santiago, we had come leisurely down the "bow of Ulysses," with stops at Kingston, Port au Prince, and Ciudad Trujillo; then through the Mona Passage to San Juan. But it was the out-of-the-way ports of the Lesser Antilles in which Prescott was interested, and so the *Mariegalante* had swung north by east for a brief stay at Spanish Town in Virgin Gorda. Then at Claire's insistence and in spite of the vague warnings of the Spanish Town Negro harbor-master, we had headed across the Drake Channel to our present anchorage at Tortola.

"Ef'n you go to Tortola," the Negro said, "be sure to sail south and land at Roadtown. Keep away from the eastern side and that old tavern there."

"But it's the tavern we want to see," Claire Prescott had protested.

The aged black had shaken his woolly head. "Nothin' left of that old tavern but some piles of stone," he said earnestly. "Christopher Marlet went over there a year ago, just being curious. Christopher don't talk much, but he ain't been right since." And he tapped his head knowingly.

AS I stood there on the moonlit deck, watching the sailors work at the falls, preparatory to lowering the gig, the island looked calm and peaceful like a picture post-card viewed through dark-colored glasses. Towering up in the background was the black bulk of Mount Sage. The road leading gently up the slope looked

somewhat forbidding. It was easy to picture a party of roistering buccaneers staggering down it, singing a ribald song.

At close range the beach wasn't as attractive as it had appeared from the yacht. There were treacherous coral reefs over which the water ripped and snarled and dashed back at us in a fan of spray. Presently, however, the gig grated to a landing, and the four of us, Dolph and Claire Prescott—in slacks now—Lockridge and myself, were pushing our way through the undergrowth to the cliff.

The cliff was steep at one point; farther on it dwindled to a low rise. A hundred yards beyond we came upon the road. The road simply began out of nowhere and swept smooth and even in a gentle curve, apparently bisecting the island. At first glance there was no sign of habitation of any kind; then after we had walked a short distance, the low ruins of a building loomed ahead in the shadow of the palmitos.

"It's the tavern," Claire said excitedly. "Think of it, Mark. More than two hundred and fifty years. What stories this place could tell." And she linked her arm in young Lockridge's in a manner that brought a frown to Dolph Prescott's lips. Ever since the *Mariegalante* had cleared Jamaica, this infatuation on the part of Claire for the novelist had grown openly. It was clear that jealousy was beginning to eat into Prescott.

We came abreast of the tavern. Two walls and a part of a third were standing, the one facing the road having the rectangular opening of a doorway and an eyelike window embrasure on each side, the whole unpleasantly suggesting the face of some monstrous animal crouching there silently before us. All about were piles of crumbled masonry interspersed with clumps of yellow grass.

The tower, some twenty yards to the rear, seemed in a better state of preservation. Leaving the others to search for possible relics, I crossed the intervening space and looked for an opening in the weathered walls. There was none in evidence, but a series of steps cut deep into the stonework led in a circular fashion up to the top. I saw now what was obvious: that the tower, commanding a clear view of the Drake Channel,

had served as a watchpost for passing buccaners.

I swung up to the lower step and began to climb carefully, pressing close to the tower wall. Ten minutes later, after considerable exertion, I emerged on the top platform and saw that a man-high parapet encircled it. There were, however, a number of niches in the wall, all of them slightly rounded, apparently rests for a telescope. I strode to the seaward side and peered through one of them. The side walls of the slot were beveled and made to slant first in, then out, from a common center. A lining of an odd kind of stone had been mortised around it, a kind of porphyry that caught the moonlight and glittered dully. As I looked, it seemed that the view was magnified several times. Below me stretched the shimmering Caribbean, and there at anchor rode the dainty *Mariegalante*.

I crossed to the opposite side of the tower. Again I was struck by a strange, unreal clarity. I could see far down the deserted white road. Under the indigo glory of the heavens every tree, rock and shrub stood out with stereoscopic clarity.

For some moments I stood there at gaze. Then I saw it!

ALMOST at the limit of my vision, racing toward me down the sweep of the road, came a powerful white horse and rider. It approached at a full gallop, and the girl clinging to the animal saddleless back—for it was a girl—pulled frantically at a single rein, apparently without the slightest effect. Her undone hair streamed behind her in the wind; her gray riding cloak whipped and billowed wildly.

Now they were almost beneath me, and while a strange haze seemed to blur my vision, I could see the fear that contorted the girl's face. Her lips were clamped shut, and blood welled at the corners where her teeth had cut into them. The nostrils of the horse were dilated, its eyes glazed. It seemed to be expending every effort to increase the distance between itself and some unseen horror behind.

They passed out of sight beyond the tower. I leaped across to the niche on the opposite wall, in time to see the horse leave the road and dash toward higher ground to the

left. Up, up the frantic beast climbed, skirting rocks and thickets like some guided juggernaut. It reached the brink of the cliff, seemed to poise there motionless for a single heartbeat. Then to my horror it leaped and plunged down into the sea.

The spell was broken then, and I rushed to the tower stairs, but I still had sufficient presence of mind to descend with caution, the way down being infinitely more difficult and treacherous than the ascent. But when I reached the ruins of the tavern I drew up in amazement. There, Claire Prescott was laughing idly while Lockridge related some absurd episode of the day. Five feet away Dolph poked unconcernedly amid the rubble with a short stick. All three turned sharply as they heard my exclamation.

"That girl!" I cried. "Didn't you see her?"

Claire stared, then broke into a smile. "Don't tell me there's a princess imprisoned in the tower."

"But you must have seen her. The horse went straight down the road."

"Now it's a horse," grinned Lockridge. "I told you this place was haunted."

I fought back my anger and explained what I had seen. Or thought I had seen. Now I wasn't so sure. And my uncertainty was made even more patent as the three of them sought to discredit my story.

"You say you heard no hoofbeats?" Lockridge smiled urbanely.

"I said I wasn't aware of any. But I saw that horse and rider—a girl—gallop down the road and plunge over the cliff. Good Lord, man, I'd scarcely imagine a thing like that. Not at my age."

Lockridge could be unpleasant when he chose. "There's always self-hypnosis . . . auto-suggestion, Doctor Kennedy," he said. "And you did have a number of cocktails before coming out here."

I let it go at that. Perplexed, I walked slowly back down the road, studying its surface carefully. There was no sign of hoof marks. Nor did the soft loam of the cliff betray any sign of the animal's passage. And when I reached the summit and looked down into the dark water, I saw no floating object of any kind.

Back on the *Mariegalante*, I went to my cabin and brooded a half hour or so over a

tasteless pipe. Auto-suggestion, Lockridge had said. And yet I had heard nothing beyond the tavern's name and the vague warnings of the Spanish Town harbormaster which would induce such a state of mind.

Dolph Prescott had in his cabin several good books on the Indies, and it occurred to me that one of them I had overlooked might possibly contain some mention of the tavern and that strange tower. I put on a dressing robe, entered the passageway and drew up short. At the far end of the corridor where but a single night light burned now, Claire Prescott was in Mark Lockridge's arms. Embarrassed, I withdrew into my room, waited a moment, then rattled the latch loudly and stepped out again. As I did so, the door of Lockridge's room closed, and Claire Prescott came pacing down the passage toward me. She nodded and looked at me curiously.

"I want to see Dolph," I explained. "He has some books I'd like to borrow."

In the Prescott cabin the atmosphere was strained. Dolph's face was tense, and I got the impression he was controlling his emotions only during my presence. I found a book on the shelf—it was Hardy's *Caribbean Primitives*—and left as quickly as I politely could. Even as I closed the door behind me, I heard Dolph's voice, low but pulsing with anger.

"Well, my dear, just how far is this going to go?"

Back in my own cabin, I tried to thrust aside all thoughts of this unpleasant triangle that had developed aboard the yacht and thumbed nervously through the book.

I found but a brief mention of Tortola:

Although the people of the Virgins and the Lesser Antilles were Caribs and a different race from the Arawaks of the larger islands, there is evidence that some of them too originated from the Mayans in Yucatan. Traces have been found on Tortola of a degenerate form of worship, obscure sacrifices to the horrible feathered serpent god, Kukulcan, or as he was called farther south, Huitzilopochtli, and other frightful forms of demonology.

T WENT to bed at length and slept fitfully. Morning, and I entered the tiny salon to find two of the passengers missing.

Dolph Prescott, brooding alone over his coffee, informed me sullenly that Claire and Mark Lockridge had gone ashore again "to inspect the tavern in daylight." It was with difficulty that the yacht-owner kept his emotions under control.

As the hours passed and his wife did not return, he grew more and more irritable. We went up on deck, and from time to time he sent his gaze shoreward, but there was no sign of familiar figures on the beach to call for the gig's return.

Then at a little before noon they finally did appear, and even at that distance there was evidence that both Lockridge and Claire were distraught over something. When they came aboard, Claire's steps were faltering and her face was white.

"I saw it!" were her first words. "You weren't imagining things, Doctor Kennedy. I saw the girl and the white horse . . . saw them both plunge over the cliff. In heaven's name, what spell hangs over this place?"

She slumped limply into a canvas deck chair and ran her kerchief over her face. In a strained voice she explained what had happened on shore. She and Mark Lockridge had spent some time around the tavern without finding anything of interest. But when it came to climbing the tower, Mark had complained that heights made him dizzy. She had therefore mounted the stone steps alone. Reaching the top platform, she had experienced an odd feeling of detachment, as if she were both on the ground below and there on the height at the same time. From then on, much the same had happened to her as had happened to me. She had looked through the niche in the parapet, had noticed the strange clarity or magnification of the view below, and finally had seen the horse and girl rider.

"It was horrible," Claire said. "That poor girl, riding as if she were possessed . . . as if some demon pursued her."

It was easy to see that Dolph Prescott put little stock in this narration, but attributed it to a clever screen contrived by his wife to divert attention from her long stay ashore. For politeness' sake, however, he did ask a few questions. Then Lockridge took up the subject.

"I suppose you could say that a psychic residue of some event of the past still exists

there on the island. You could say that if you were a spiritist. But I'm not a spiritist."

"I think I shall take a look at that tavern again myself this afternoon," Dolph said. "Frank, you'll go with me."

I CONFESS my nerves were on edge when at two bells Prescott and I left the *Mariegalante* and were rowed ashore. Once again we picked our way across the boulder-strewn strip of sand, climbed the low cliff and found ourselves on the road. The island in the daylight appeared strangely unreal. The air was utterly still; not a bird or an insect broke the heavy silence.

We came at length to the ruins of the tavern and began to climb the tower silently. The two of us were bathed in perspiration by the time we reached the top. But, as I had expected, I saw nothing unusual through the niches in the wall. Moreover, the effect of magnification which had been apparent before was now absent. Prescott showed but little interest. His eyes were bloodshot; from time to time he glanced at his watch and then down to where the *Mariegalante* rode at anchor. I realized that I must steer his mind into other channels.

"That settlement on the other side of the island . . . Roadtown, I believe it's called. Perhaps they know more of the tower's origin there. Care to hike it?"

He assented dully. We descended the tower and in spite of the blazing sun set off at a brisk pace. It was the better part of two hours before we swung down a last hillock and entered the sprawling village of Roadtown.

Spanish-style, it consisted of a collection of clapboard huts, flanked at one end by a church and at the other by a stone fort overlooking the mile-long harbor.

There were few shops and few white residents. An old negro woman with a gay-colored kerchief tied about her head answered our greetings and talked a bit about the island. But when I brought up the subject of the tavern, she put a clay pipe in her mouth and pretended to go to sleep, though I saw she was watching us through half veiled eyes. In the single pub which the town boasted, the barkeeper viewed us with suspicion as he stood polishing his glasses. No, he knew nothing about the other side

of the island. His business was here in Roadtown.

We continued through the village. Dozing in the shade of the church wall was a white-haired patriarch of a man who appeared bright and alert in spite of his age. He nodded as we approached.

"How long have I been on Tortola?" he repeated. "A long time, *Senhor*, a very long time."

I put the question point blank. "There's an inn on the other side of the island known as the *Galloping Horse*," I said. "What do you know about it?"

The Portuguese' bright little eyes blinked. He slid a Cuban cigarette between his lips and lit it with a match scratched on his belt buckle.

"I know all about it, *Senhor*," he said. "I know . . . but then you are not interested in legends."

"Legends are exactly what we are interested in."

He hesitated. "The place is very old, *Senhor*. It was once visited by Morgan and again by that cruel French buccaneer, L'Ollinois. It is said that it was built as a cache for treasure stolen from the Spanish flota ships by Pierre le Grand."

"You spoke of legends," I broke in. "Have you ever heard anything of a galloping horse and a girl rider as apparently seen from the top platform of the lookout tower near the tavern?"

The cigarette slipped from his lips as a gleam entered his eyes.

"Have you?" I insisted.

HE RAN a tongue over toothless gums. Quietly I took out my wallet and drew forth several bills of American currency. The Portugee accepted the money with feigned reluctance.

"I can tell you but little, *Senhor*. Only snatches of a story that has been handed down from one islander to another. During the time the Frenchman, L'Ollinois, stayed at the tavern, the innkeeper was a man by the name of Besalt. He had a wife, a wild young thing who was forever making eyes at the guests, and once she had seen L'Ollinois, she fell head over heels in love with him.

Now Besalt recognized the buccaneer

for what he was. He warned his wife to have nothing to do with him.

"But as the woman continued her flirtation, Besalt became almost mad with jealousy. There was a band of Indios on the island at the time who were worshippers of a serpent god. It was said that they practiced horrible sacrifices before an image which stood not far from the tavern. Besalt suspected this to be the trysting place of his wife and L'Ollinois, and he got one of the Indios to help him frighten her. She was a simple girl, and he thought that if he could put the fear of Satan in her, he would have little trouble with her love affairs in the future.

"I don't know what the Indio did. I do know that he gave Besalt pieces of a strange kind of stone and told him to place it around a window or high place where he could look upon his wife as she returned to the tavern. He also gave him some queer markings to copy and a few words of Indian gibberish to commit to memory.

"On a night when the moon was at the full, Besalt's wife took one of the tavern

horses and rode off. A half hour before L'Ollinois had gone the same way. Besalt climbed the tower and placed the stone given him by the Indio in each of the telescope slots there. He didn't have much interest in this heathen flummery, but he agreed to follow instructions.

Besalt had not long to wait. He looked through the telescope niche and saw the horse bearing his wife come galloping down the road. He saw that she was frightened. And then he saw that both she and the horse were all but overwhelmed by a nameless horror. The horse left the road and climbed to the cliff edge. But not until it reached the brink did he realize what was happening. Then it was too late."

With these words the old man ceased talking abruptly.

"What happened to L'Ollinois?" I said.

The Portugee shook his head. "That's a matter of question," he said. "He left Tortola unharmed, but some say that after that he was hopelessly mad and that his madness was responsible for his murder later on the mainland."

"Go on," I prompted.

He stood in silence, then reached into his pocket and drew forth a dirty roll of leather. "Perhaps the *Senhor* would be interested in seeing an *Indio* charm made of the same kind of stone *Besalt* used in the telescope niches. Look, *Senhor*. It is very rare."

I looked upon the flat stone disc, and my interest in the man's story faded. So the whole thing was another tourists' come-on. Doubtless the *Portugee* kept a supply of these charms to be sold to any gullible listener.

But Prescott took the charm and turned it over and over in his hands.

"How much?" he said quietly.

THE day was now well spent, and it was time to think of returning to the yacht. As we headed down the road I glanced at Prescott. Either the *Portugee's* story had made a great impression on him or he was still worrying about his wife, for his eyes stared into space and his jaw was set hard.

The sun was descending in the west, and shadows began to lengthen across the road. But the air was still stifling, and perspiration stood out on our faces as we paced down the back trail. We were nearing the tavern when suddenly Prescott drew up short and stood staring off to his left.

"What's wrong?" I said.

And then I *felt* it. An invisible aura radiated out of the jungle and descended upon us. As a medical man with a professional skepticism, I am aware how absurd such a statement sounds. But skepticism or no, the feeling was there, a malignant miasma that swept across the road like an under-current of evil.

"There's something in there," Prescott said.

Together we plunged into the underbrush and began to fight our way forward. For a dozen yards or more it was island jungle at its worst. Then I sensed a subtle change in the foliage. The brambles and thickets gave way to short grass, yellow and under-nourished from lack of sunlight, and this in turn changed to a flinty topsoil, barren of vegetation of any kind. It was as if we were advancing on unhallowed ground which all life avoided. Only the trees continued, but now they arranged themselves in strange arboreal corridors and galleries, winding be-

fore us, ever leading us farther from the road.

Suddenly the corridor widened, and I saw far ahead an open glade, like the nave of a cathedral. The dying daylight was feeble here, the shadows confusing, but there was a thing of movement in the center of that glade. At first I took it to be a mass of whitish *chapla* vines stirring gently in the wind. But there was no wind, and as we went on, a figure evolved in the gloom ahead.

Prescott came to a halt. "In heaven's name, what's that?"

How much I witnessed at that instant and how much my inner eye supplemented in the after glow I do not know. For there was a glow, a violent radiance that swept from one side of the glade to the other. It might have been a last penetrating ray of the descending sun, but it not prevent me from seeing for a full instant that figure in all its diabolic horror.

A huge figure of incredible stature and coffee-colored features, it held in one hand an elliptic shield, in the other, a blue spear. A pointed feathered headdress surmounted its skull, and its naked limbs were mottled with splotches of blue pigment. On either side of the head and near each foot writhed a serpent.

Then it was gone, and Prescott and I paced slowly forward. We entered the glade and stared in disbelief. There was no living creature in evidence; only a crumbling stone platform stood there, its surface covered with *carven hieroglyphics*. Prescott bent down and began examining these markings. He took out a little leather-bound notebook and copied them carefully. He drew from his pocket the charm sold him by the *Roadtown Portugee* and compared the symbols on it with those on the *dias*. Then, using his pocket knife he began to chip free a small section of the stone.

"It's *Kukulcan* all right," he said. "There was an image to him here long ago. Kennedy, did you see what I saw?"

"A mirage of some sort," I suggested feebly. "They're common in the tropics, you know."

"Mirage?" he repeated slowly. "Not here. Not here in the jungle."

I looked at the stone he had broken away

from the dais, and I saw that it was the same lustrous kind of porphyry that had been used to fashion the Portugee's charm . . . the same material that had been mortised in the telescope slots of the lookout tower.

PRESCOTT and I returned to the *Marie-galante* just as the yacht's chronometer was striking eight bells. On deck Lockridge and Claire were waiting for us. I saw Dolph glance at the younger man and then at his wife sharply, but he said nothing.

That night, as if by common agreement, conversation was strained, and when a sullen thunderstorm swept out over Mount Sage, the little dining salon became a place of gloom, which not even the brilliant electric lights could dispel. Then an hour later the clouds were swept away, and the moon rode high and clear. Once again the island was bathed in that blue light.

Strangely enough, it was I who suggested we go ashore again, though Prescott agreed at once. The strange story told by the Roadtown patriarch, the attitude of the village folk—I carefully forced aside all thought of our strange experience in the jungle—had instilled in me an urge to see the island again.

The gig made an uneventful trip to the beach. The roadway was full of pot holes of muddy water, and Claire and Lockridge, more agile, gradually increased their lead and were soon lost to view. Over the dinner table Prescott had briefly described the strange dais, though he had avoided all mention of the vision he had seen. When I turned to speak of this now, I saw Dolph too was striding ahead rapidly. I was therefore alone when I reached the tavern, and in the ancient courtyard I saw no signs of the others.

Slowly I crossed to the tower and climbed the circular steps. Emerging on the top platform, I found the yacht owner standing before one of the parapet niches, a pair of night glasses to his eyes. The man's face might have been chiseled out of stone; all save his lips which were trembling convulsively.

Silently he turned and handed me the glasses. I saw nothing at first. Then midway down the road a pair of figures focused themselves in the lens. They were Claire and

young Lockridge, standing in the shadow of a flanking cabbage palm, and they were oblivious to all else, locked in each other's arms.

Dolph Prescott leaned weakly against the wall; abruptly he roused himself and took off his coat, though the air was still chill from the recent storm. With his hands he began to clear the debris away from the center space of the platform floor.

I stood there in the moonlight, watching him. He worked with a strange grim intent. When he had cleared away a section roughly six feet square, he took from his pocket a piece of chalk and slowly and carefully began to trace a design there on the platform floor.

THERE was something weird in the scene, and I felt a strange thrill of excitement as I saw that he was copying detail for detail the hieroglyphs from the Kukulcan dais.

The work completed, he suddenly became aware of me. "Frank," he said, "I seem to have lost my notebook. I had it with me when I left the ship, I'm sure. Would you mind going down and looking for it for me? It probably slipped from my pocket somewhere in the courtyard."

"Notebook?" I repeated stupidly.

He nodded. "Yes. A little leather-bound book. Will you, please?"

I shrugged and headed for the staircase. Descending carefully in the half gloom. I let my thought run wild. What was Prescott up to? What was the significance of all his actions there on the tower platform?

Once the ancient masonry crumbled beneath my feet and threatened to pitch me headlong; I threw my weight backward and to the side just in time. I had reached the bottom step when a sudden thought struck me. I turned and hurried up the steps.

As I emerged on the platform I saw Prescott kneeling in supplication before his chalked design. In front of him he had placed two objects: the piece of stone he had chiseled from the dais in the jungle glade and the Indio charm given him by the Roadtown Portugee. And as he knelt there he began to chant a low incantation. Strange words and syllables flowed from his lips as he stretched his arms outward.

When finally he rose and turned to me, his voice was dry and hard.

"You think I'm mad, Frank? Well, you wouldn't, if you had studied comparative religions as I have; if you had gone into the philosophical thought processes of these ancient Mayas. The temples of Kukulcan, before the time of the conquistadores were large and imposing, and the people prospered."

There was no doubt about it, in his present state, the man was definitely psychotic. His eyes were contracted, his face, ashen. He took the night glasses again and looked through them.

"They're going to the dais," he said huskily. "I knew they would. Damn their souls!"

Drawn by an irresistible lure, my gaze turned to the nearest niche in the parapet. Below me the white lonely road was etched in sharp relief by the bright moonlight. Below me was desertion, with no sign of movement save the tops of the palmistes waving in the night wind. A deep hush seemed to have fallen over the island.

And then, knifing through the stillness, a sound transfixed me. It was a woman's scream, and it voiced agony and terror. With the sounding of that cry the strange effect of magnification of the scene viewed through the parapet niche returned tenfold, and the white road leaped forward to meet my eyes.

Far off where that road blurred into the moonlit haze of distance a white shadow had appeared. The shadow grew, took on proportion and form. Now it was racing toward me at incredible speed. I felt my pulse begin to pound as I saw that it was a horse, a huge white horse with a woman rider. At a pounding gallop the horse swept down the curve of the road and swung into the straightaway. The woman on its saddleless back clutched the animal's mane, and her disheveled dress whipped and billowed out behind her. Her eyes were wide with terror.

Now they were passing out of sight beyond the tower wall. But in that instant before I found myself compelled to leap across to the niche on the opposite parapet, I looked back down the road. And I saw . . .

Was it a shadow caused by a fleeting cloud over the face of the moon? Or was it, as

every instinct told me, a monstrous naked figure, mottled with splotches of blue, arms extended, holding two writhing serpents, advancing down that road in slow but gigantic and relentless strides?

Then it too was gone, and I leaped across to a niche on the opposite side of the parapet. Straight down the roadway the horse was galloping, but now suddenly it veered off to the left and began to climb up toward higher ground. With a grim fascination I watched it circle thickets and boulders, mount higher and higher toward the cliff edge. It reached it, and the woman turned and cast a last frantic look over her shoulder. For a fleeting instant I saw her face—black hair and terror-stricken eyes . . . *The woman was Claire Prescott!*

Then the horse plunged forward into space. An instant later only a blank expanse of moonlight hillock was visible.

ON April 12th the Kingston *Crown-News* of Jamaica published the following item:

Roadtown, Tortola—The body of Mrs Dolph Prescott, wife of the well-known millionaire and sportsman, was recovered today from the off-shore waters of the eastern side of this island, a few hundred yards from the anchorage of the Prescott yacht, *Mariegalante*. Death was attributed by the British warrant officer of Roadtown as due to accidental drowning.

Further police investigation, however, was indicated at a late hour when several details in connection with the death were uncovered. One of the passengers of the yacht, Mark Lockridge, author of several popular novels with a West Indian locale, was found some distance inland on the island, his body bruised and lacerated as if from some sharp instrument. Dolph Prescott was reported to be in a dazed condition and unable to be interviewed.

A curious sidelight was added by the fact that the right hand of the drowned woman was found to be clutching a tuft of white hair from a horse's mane. There are no horses on Tortola.