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EVERY STORY COMPLETE—NO SERIALS!

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Passport to the Desert

By G. G. PENDARVES

Algeria—a story of intrigue and a perilous adventure involving an American girl and an Arab bandit and slave-dealer

1. *The Turquoise Ring*

JACK DEANE adjusted his field-glasses and looked down the gloomy gorge of El Fumm. It was a desolate haunted place. Towering granite walls shut out the sky.

"Good Lord!" He stared into the depths below at a red-brown burnoose caught among the rocks. "It's a man—dead, or badly stunned."

With the eye of an expert climber he examined the narrow ledge winding across the cliff-face, then cautiously lowered himself into the chasm, creeping by slow zigzag degrees to the fallen man.

"Ugly-looking customer! Desert thief! I'll bet he lost that eye putting up a good fight." A trickle of blood oozed from beneath the Arab's *chechia*; he hung limply across the rock, his face gray, his mouth open. Jack pulled out his flask and lifted the wounded man's head.

The Arab opened his fierce bright eye.

"It was a sharp stone, *billab*, that caught my head," he explained. "To thee, *effendi*, I owe my life. By this Gorge of Death, never shall One-Eye forget thy deed."

To divert the stream of gratitude, Jack held out the brandy flask. "Better keep this. You may need it."

The long difficult climb to the ledge above safely accomplished, One-Eye took elaborate farewell.

"May Allah have thee in his keeping!" The Arab drew a ring from his finger and held it out to Jack. "Take this in proof of gratitude, *effendi*! It is my *wasm*—the tribal mark of the Zendas.

Now hast thou a passport to the desert better than a two-edged sword."

In token of love and fealty he touched Jack's hand to breast, lips, and forehead, and, turning, walked slowly away through the gloomy gorge.

Left alone, Jack looked curiously at his gift. The ring was of wrought silver in which a turquoise was set with strange effect. Like a clear blue eye, the stone seemed to return Jack's gaze. "One-Eye's *wasm*, eh! And very fitting, too—nearly as remarkable as the man himself!"

2. *A Secret Enemy*

DRIVING slowly through the crowded streets of Zilfi one afternoon, Jack had an uneasy premonition that something evil was close at hand. Frequent narrow escapes had bred in him a sort of sixth sense of late. Some one was deliberately trying to kill him. He had made an enemy—a secret, persistent, unrelenting enemy. The whole thing was inexplicable to him, for his friendly encounter with One-Eye five years ago had proved a good omen. Ever since, he had lived on the best of terms with the Arabs, and the recent attacks on his life seemed unaccountable.

That little warning bell in his consciousness saved him. He twisted like an eel as the bearded *marabout* sprang. The gleaming blade only ripped his coat-sleeve in its downward thrust.

The old man was off through the crowd like a minnow in a pool. Across the crowded *souk* Jack followed, but was delayed by an Arab with an enormous



"A semi-nude figure emerged from the cave, making for the intruders with curses and unearthly yells."

bunch of bananas, and lost sight of the *marabout*. He returned to his car and drove off hot and angry, for these affairs were becoming a serious nuisance. He recalled one after another, as he drove on in the golden sunshine and purple shadows of the afternoon.

There was the spider—the deadly *Galeodes arachnida*. He had waked one night to see a dark figure jump off his balcony, and brilliant moonlight had revealed the spider running over his sheet. The affair of the boulder had been a nasty one, too. Placed so ingeniously at the corner of the sea-road, it had almost sent his car crashing a thousand feet to the rocks below.

This last attempt in the open street showed that his secret enemy was losing patience. He could think of but one man who might conceivably be planning his death so deliberately—Omar Ben Saif.

Leaving the car at a garage, he made his way down to the sea-road, and found Linda, his fiancée, already at their trysting-place. Sitting together on the rocks

by the dazzling sea, Jack explained what had delayed him.

"I can't figure it out at all," he went on. "The only one I know who might have a reason for getting me out of the way is Ben Saif. I shall be twenty-six next week, and am entitled then to be made a full partner with my brother, Fenton, in the firm of Deane & Son. He seems anxious enough to take me in with him, but I'm doubtful if that rascally Ben Saif will like it—and he sends the bulk of our cargoes. It's my belief that he's using our ships for private enterprises of his own."

"Yet your brother trusts him."

"In some ways I understand the Arabs better than Fenton does. He was a thorough-going American boy when dad first settled in Zilfi, and built up the shipping business. But I was born out here. True, I went home for my education, but I've lived in Algeria all the rest of the time. I flatter myself that I know the people."

"Mother thinks you are much too friendly with them. She was complaining

about it to Fenton after we'd been sight-seeing with you. Said she disliked going about Zilfi with you, because the Arabs came up and talked as if they were boys of your own class at Harvard. Poor mother, she's terrified of them."

"Mrs. Webb prefers Fenton to me as a future son-in-law. He is her ideal of a steady, industrious, wealthy man."

"She's got another grudge against you now."

"What's that?"

"The ring One-Eye gave you! It's a pity she heard that story about it. She's all upset over your having such a notorious bandit for a friend."

"Hardly a friend!" Jack laughed. "He wouldn't know me from Adam if we met now. I had a mustache five years ago, and I was wearing sun-goggles—not to speak of a bad heat-rash. Anyhow, you may be sure I'll not be the one to claim friendship. He's the biggest rogue in the Barbary States."

"I wish we could have the luck to meet One-Eye when we go to El Fumm tomorrow. It would be thrilling to say I'd met such a famous character."

"Not a chance! The French are hot on his trail after that last hold-up of his in the desert. He won't come within a hundred miles of Zilfi now. Much more likely to meet some of Ben Saif's ruffians at El Fumm; that's the reason I objected to having a picnic there. I don't see why Fenton insisted on it."

"He wanted to please me. I'm terribly anxious to see the gorge. Aren't you exaggerating the danger? El Fumm's only a few hours' ride from Zilfi. Why don't you want us to go?"

"Don't want *you* to go," he corrected. "You wouldn't guess the intrigue and plotting out here in Algeria beneath the surface of apparent order. Slavery's always existed in this country, and the Arabs can't see any moral reason for its

suppression. It goes on under the noses of the French. Quietly and secretly—just like bootlegging at home. It never stops."

"But where does El Fumm come in? Is it being used as a slave route? Oh"—Linda drew a deep breath of enlightenment—"you mean Ben Saif uses it—that he's a slave-dealer?"

"There's no proof yet, but he's under suspicion. The government can't afford to make mistakes."

"It's strange your brother is so indifferent to Ben Saif's reputation."

"Fenton finds it convenient to shut his eyes and ears. He won't listen to me. Pretends to think what I hear in the *souks* is just rumor and gossip. He and Ben Saif are hand in glove. Fenton makes no attempt to hide their intimacy. So far the government hasn't interfered. But Ben Saif is being watched, I don't believe Fenton realizes how closely."

Linda pondered. "I see. And, of course, as soon as you're a partner in the firm, you'll be able to do something about it."

"Yes, if they don't wreck the firm's reputation entirely before I get into it."

"Even if Ben Saif is all you suspect, he wouldn't dare to interfere with us at El Fumm, though."

"You might be in serious danger. It wouldn't be the first time a girl's been carried off in these mountains. El Fumm's a desolate spot. You'd disappear before we knew what hit us."

"Jack! They wouldn't steal a white girl like that! Ben Saif could never get away with such a ghastly outrage!"

"Dear, you don't begin to understand the subtle game that slave-dealers play out here. It's the hardest thing in the world to pin anything on to them. Ben Saif's cutthroats would rather die than breathe a word against him. In Algeria, a traitor's fate is—horrible!"

"You don't think——" Linda hesi-

tated, her eyes troubled. "Fenton's acting very strangely. I wonder if he——" She broke off abruptly, and got to her feet. "It's nothing—just a foolish idea! I'm so anxious about you, that's all. But we really can't back out of the expedition now. Everything's arranged. Mother's all set for El Fumm. Nothing will put her off now."

"I suppose not," agreed Jack unhappily, as they left the sea and turned to walk back to Zilfi.

3. *The Affair of the Orange*

THROUGH the Bab-el-Ghrabi, Gate of the West, they passed into the white-walled town, and, by winding streets, reached the market-place.

Ochered, crumbling walls of ancient buildings enclosing the square were brilliant with sun and opalescent shadows—blue, dusky purple, and gold-flecked green, they quivered beneath balconies and outthrust tilings, under arched doorways, and among the baskets and pyramids of fruit before the gaudy booths.

"What gorgeous color!" Linda was enchanted.

Across the *souk*, in the shadow of an archway, a little fruit-seller in black *gandourah* and dingy turban smiled ingratiatingly, beside a red-gold pyramid of mandarin oranges. Linda stopped and took one from him. He showed all his teeth in a yet broader grin, pressed another orange into Jack's hand, and spoke a few words in Arabic.

Jack peeled his fruit carelessly, absorbed in watching Linda. His mind was full of plans. Next week he would be a partner in the firm of Deane & Son. He and Linda would be married. . . .

The black-clad fruit-seller got to his feet in one swift movement, observing Jack narrowly; the whites of his eyes gleamed as he furtively withdrew and

melted into the darkness of the narrow lane beyond the archway.

Preoccupied, Jack broke off a quarter of the orange he was absent-mindedly peeling. His eyes were fixed on the fruit, but for a moment what they saw did not register in his brain. Then his absent gaze focused sharply.

The flies!

For a paralyzed second he watched them drop off, or fall dead within the hollow cut of the partly broken skin, standing up like tulip petals about the fruit.

"Linda!" He snatched at the remaining quarter of her orange.

Watching with eyes full of horror and apprehension, he saw flies hover and sip. His breath almost stopped, then came in a gasp of relief. Thank God, it was all right! Only from *his* orange the flies fell dead—poisoned! On Linda's orange they sipped, and crawled, and sipped again, unharmed.

"I thought they'd got you, too!"

"What was it, Jack? Darling, don't look at me like that! I don't understand."

"Poison! My orange was poisoned—something deadly. That fruit-seller——" He glanced round and discovered that the vender had vanished. "Where'd the little rat go? No matter, I'd never have caught him. Let's get home out of this."

She clung to him, thoroughly unnerved, the bright glory of the day suddenly darkened by creeping fear. "Jack, this is all too horrible! You can't go on from day to day, never knowing when or how they'll strike!" She shuddered, recalling the black flies speckling the dust as they fell from the poisoned orange. "I ought to tell you that—you may have guessed it, anyhow!"

He looked at her in silence, waiting.

"I'm afraid you'll be angry that I sus-

pect him." She hesitated. "It's Fenton! He wants to marry me. He wouldn't accept my refusal. I'm afraid of him."

"You—afraid?"

"Yes, yes! But that's not all. Jack, he's jealous of you. Oh, I know, I've seen his face—his eyes!"

"Why, Linda! You must put the brake on now and then. You're not trying to tell me that Fenton's out for my blood?"

"Oh, I know it sounds absurd to you. But I have the feeling that his jealousy is somehow connected with all the rest . . . with your partnership and his business with Ben Saif! Perhaps Fenton is not so ignorant of Ben Saif's secrets; perhaps he's not merely a catspaw!"

4. *In the Hold of the S. S. Pearl*

JACK guided his horse carefully, for the Empty Land was rough going. Here and there, over the dun levels, Zilfi and other small towns lay like scattered beads, their domes and white walls twinkling in the sun.

He was making for the little port of Biodh, where he expected to find Deane & Son's newest ship, the *S. S. Pearl*, in harbor. To his surprize, only a few fishing-boats rocked gently alongside the quay. He rode on to the cliffs, and saw the *Pearl* standing well out to sea, about a mile up the coast.

He was puzzled. It was unusual for their ships to leave the quay until the last possible minute—hours, sometimes days after the scheduled time. Native exporters made no effort to comply with shipping rules and regulations. They regarded the white *effendi's* passion for fixed hours as inexplicable, even impious. A ship could sail only when Allah willed. How useless therefore to strive against his decrees!

So they travelled across the Empty Land with their laden camels, bringing cargoes of fruit, wine, olive oil and cork

down to the little harbor. If no ship was there they made camp, and smoked, and dreamed away long idle days until another ship arrived.

Yet the *Pearl* lay anchored well out to sea a good twelve hours before she was due to sail.

Suddenly a launch drew out from an inlet a mile or two up the coast, and headed directly for the anchored ship.

He frowned. "Fenton's launch! Now what the devil——?"

He watched the launch cut across the sea—pink as cherry-blossom in the rising sun—and run in against the *Pearl's* star-board side, which was hidden from his sight. In a few minutes it streaked back to the coast again.

"I'm going on board if I have to swim out there," he vowed, dismounting, and giving his reins to the servant. "Wait here for me," he ordered, and tramped off with long swinging strides down to the harbor.

Pierre, harbor-master, was vehement in answer to Jack's inquiries. Recently arrived in Algeria, the young Frenchman was full of homesick contempt for everything in the country.

"No, *M'sieur!*" Pierre's voice squeaked with indignation. "I was not informed why the *Pearl* put out to sea before her time. The good God alone knows why people do things in this country!" The little sailor rolled despairing eyes skyward.

"I want you to row me out to the *Pearl!*"

Pierre chose the least clumsy of the fishing-boats moored in the harbor, and began to pull toward the distant ship.

"**A**HOY there!" Jack sent out a stentorian hail as they drew near the *Pearl*.

A turbaned head was thrust over the side, then vanished hastily.

Jack admonished Pierre in a low voice. "Get up a row of some sort with the captain. Say anything, do anything to keep him off my track. Half an hour alone on that ship is what I want."

"It will be a pleasure, *M'sieur!* For long I have desired to insult that pig of an Arab captain."

The little Frenchman carried out orders to the letter, goading the captain to fling a cup of coffee across the chartroom table. During the profane and noisy duet that ensued, Jack escaped unnoticed, and made straight for the ship's hold.

No one stopped him. Those of the crew he met saluted indifferently. The affairs of the white *effendi* were nothing to them. He went down a ladder into the hold.

Reek of tar, rope, and sacking mingled with spicier odors as he stood for a moment at the foot of the ladder. He struck a match and moved slowly forward among the heterogeneous cargo. Skirting a damp sticky mound of date-sacks, he came to a sudden pause, staring. . . .

Although he had feared and expected to see it, the thing appalled him. The match went out between his fingers. He lighted another hastily, the small action serving to steady him, and looked again at the young Arab girls huddled up in a narrow space before him. They drew their *haiks* across their faces as they confronted him.

Slaves!

His questions elicited very meager information. He gathered that the launch had brought them to the ship at different times during the past night; obviously there were more of them than could have been carried on the single trip he had seen. They had come a journey of many moons from desert oases in the south. They did not know who had brought them, or where they were going. Un-

blinkingly their dark eyes regarded him from between the folds of their veils.

"It is written," they echoed with the fatalism of the East.

Reaching the chartroom once more, he found that he had not been missed, and that Captain Robah—sprawled on the floor—would feel little interest in any one on board his ship for some time to come. Beside him knelt a frightened servant, endeavoring to staunch the blood from a cut on his head with a corner of his gold-embroidered tunic.

Pierre, waving the neck of a broken brandy bottle, waited with a rapturous smile for Jack's approval.

"Good! You've made a fine job of it."

The two hurried on deck, went down the ship's side to their waiting boat, and pulled quickly back to land.

FENTON, in pajamas and silk dressing-gown, was enjoying an after-breakfast smoke on his bedroom balcony, when Jack appeared.

"I've just been down to the harbor and found your rascally old captain had put out to sea. I couldn't understand it, so I went to see why. Good reason—he'd been taking slaves aboard."

"What?"

"Yes, slaves! Three or four dozen girls."

Fenton ground the stub of a cigarette viciously, his eyes avoiding Jack's. "Slaves! On board the *Pearl!* If the government gets wind of this we're ruined!"

"I judge they've been taken from oases in the southern territory."

"That's Ben Saif's country!"

"Those slaves have got to be taken off the *Pearl* as quietly as they were sneaked on," Jack said at last.

"It's a damned ugly business," Fenton growled, "damned ugly!"

"Who ordered Captain Robah to anchor out at sea?"

"I did. To oblige Ben Saif. He wanted to smuggle a few cases of his special *liqueur* on board. I let him borrow the launch."

Jack ran his fingers through his hair, slumped down at the breakfast table, and twiddled a teaspoon thoughtfully. He spoke with slow emphasis. "It's a thin yarn, isn't it? You'll never get away with it—not to the French!"

Fenton moved to stand directly opposite his brother, a dark purplish color rising on his flat cheeks, his pale eyes blinking rapidly. "See here, Jack, I've been every kind of a fool you like to mention. But I swear I did not believe Ben Saif would do a thing like this. You'll learn when you're made a partner, my boy, that there was a mighty big inducement to turn a deaf ear to all the rumors about him."

Jack waved the teaspoon emphatically. "Get hold of Ben Saif. Tell him to take those slaves off, and take himself to the devil as fast as he can. We're through with him."

The purple tint in Fenton's face deepened.

"I'll tell him that and a trifle more. I'll make it so hot for him that he won't two-time me, or any one else in Zilfi, again. The scoundrel!"

"I suppose it's our duty to report this business, but the firm would suffer badly if we did. The French are getting really fussy about slaves. We can put a stop to Ben Saif's trafficking along this coast anyhow."

"He's due at my office at eight-thirty; so I'll get along, and put the fear of Allah in him."

"I suppose the El Fumm excursion is all fixed?"

"Why, yes!" Fenton's voice was con-

ciliatory. "There'll be no danger of interference from Ben Saif now, as you feared. He won't try any more monkey tricks with us."

5. At El Fumm

THE *sonduk*—starting-point for the expedition to El Fumm—was the usual rectangular enclosure typical of North Africa, with arcaded walls, small stone prayer-chambers where the faithful besought Allah's blessing on their journeys, and single high narrow entrance-gate. Two *garstas* having recently arrived, the caravanserai overflowed with temperamental camel-drivers and their dusty, complaining, evil-smelling beasts.

Followed by servants and horses, the picnickers passed through the narrow gate. A few donkeys, laden with firewood and hampers of food, pattered on neat little hoofs at the end of the procession. Their patient eyes reflected a truly Arab resignation to their fate.

As the horses began to pick their way between granite boulders and lentisk bushes, Jack edged his mount alongside his brother, letting the others pass on. "You've seen Ben Saif?" he asked.

Fenton's eyes held a cold gleam. "Don't worry! I've told him where he gets off."

"He doesn't scare easily. Besides, he knows it's not to your interest to report slaves on board your own boat."

"Don't worry!" repeated Fenton. "I've got things fixed just the way I want them now—and then some."

The bitter hate in his brother's eyes fairly startled Jack. He felt for a moment as if it were directed against himself, and his pleasant, whimsical face became very grave. Fenton's temper, when roused, was a nasty one—very nasty indeed. Such cold venom was an ugly thing to witness even though Ben Saif was its object.

Linda's fears and warnings, her conviction that in his brother he had a deadly and determined rival came back to his mind as he spurred on to join the rest. Of course she was wrong . . . and yet—

"This place gives me the shivers." Mrs. Webb was wilting badly after two hours over the sun-baked plain. "It's like a cemetery."

"You're right," agreed Jack; "El Fumm's the dreariest spot in North Africa, I believe. But you'll own it was not my choice of a happy hunting-ground."

The dark gorge looked as haunted as the Arabs believed it to be. Its long tunnel was dank and sepulchral in spite of the blazing sun. The sound of rushing water reached their ears—the voice of a hidden torrent foaming at the base of mile-high cliffs, seeking escape from its gloomy prison to the sunlit world beyond.

Suddenly a shrill voice startled the sight-seers. A horrible, semi-nude figure emerged from the square-mouthed cave at the entrance to El Fumm. Making for the intruders with curses and unearthly yells, the old man leaped and gibbered, his long beard blowing about his withered neck, a wreath of yellow flowers pressed down over blazing eyes.

"All right, Linda!" Jack touched her arm reassuringly, as he moved to stop the capering madman. "We've disturbed the old *marabout* at his devotions, it seems. I'll try to soothe his ruffled feelings."

A handful of cigarettes, a few small coins, and a ceremonious apology soon pacified the offended saint. With a wide, toothless grin, he invited Jack to inspect the treasures of his cave. To humor him, Jack followed to his grotto, but halted on the dark threshold and peered into the gloom, mindful of possible danger. He waited, alert and wary, one hand on

the butt of his revolver, until his eyes accustomed themselves to the darkness. A flickering lamp burned in the shrine. The grotto was small and untenanted save for the *marabout*, who knelt before his tiny altar, fumbling a string of beads and muttering rapidly.

"Jack! Jack!" Linda's voice, calling on a high quick note of terror, struck to his heart like a knife.

He wheeled swiftly. At that moment he collided with Fenton, and the impact sent him reeling backward. He staggered, recovered himself, and burst out of the cave with the force of a young bull charging into the arena. Mrs. Webb was stumbling awkwardly across the rock and stubble toward him. The servants, huddled in a frightened group, stared and pointed down the gorge.

His eyes followed their gaze. He could see nothing.

He turned to Fenton. "What was it? Where is she?"

Winded by the force of their collision, Fenton crouched gasping outside the cave, one hand pressed to his side. "Over there!" He waved vaguely to the gorge. "Arab knocked me down . . . can't go after her . . . sprained ankle. . . ."

"Jack! Oh, Jack!"

Faintly the cry reached his straining ears. Head thrust forward, body tense, he strove to pierce the gloom of the gorge. Suddenly he saw her. She was slung over the shoulder of a desert man in dark *burnoose*, who was running, swift and sure-footed, along the giddy path, into the yawning blackness of El Fumm. Tailless monkeys watched him from the lofty crags. In the narrow roof of sky above, vultures hung, brooding like evil spirits over the abyss.

JACK was a good athlete, almost as lean and hard as the Berbers themselves, but as he started in desperate pursuit, he

realized that he was outmatched. The delay caused by Fenton had given the Arab an excellent start. Loose stones underfoot, and tough polished tree-roots lay in wait to trip him on the narrow, giddy trail. Cursing his heavy riding-boots, he slackened speed. He dared not take them off. His feet had not the tough calloused soles of the desert man running barefoot ahead.

Resolutely he thrust aside his fears for Linda—fears that sent his wits spinning—and began coolly to plan and calculate his chances. Nothing was to be gained by overtaking the Arab on this narrow ledge, where a struggle would send all three into the chasm. There was only one chance—to catch them before the Arab could plunge into the dense cork-oak forests at the farther end of El Fumm.

He forced himself to look to his footing, to keep his eyes from watching the glimmer of white on the brown back ahead of him. As he followed the dizzy path, he was no more conscious of its peril and the yawning depths below, than of the stones hurled by the monkeys above. To decrease the distance between himself and the swift-footed Arab was his only thought.

The last two hundred yards of the gorge took a sharp turn. As the brown *burnoose* vanished round a shoulder of the rock, he set his teeth for a terrific spurt. Luck was with him, as flinging all caution to the winds he dashed forward and scrambled round the intervening bluff.

He was gaining. The Arab was impeded by Linda's weight, but they were very close now to the dark sheltering trees, and the distance widened as the kidnapper put forth a last desperate effort.

They were gone! At the spot where they had vanished, Jack stared desperate-

ly round. A flash of white sent him full tilt toward a clearing near by.

He reached it too late. Only the trampled earth where the Arab's horse had stood; only the sound of hoofs over the rustling leaves; only a glimpse of Linda's white dress in the crook of her captor's arm! He drew out his revolver, but stuffed it back with a curse. He couldn't risk trying to shoot the horse with Linda on its back. If he could only get nearer! But the Arab guided his beast with cunning skill, weaving his way without hesitation through the tangled woods.

The trail grew steeper, winding up to bare rounded hills. Soon, neither sound of hoofs nor glimpse of white dress guided him any longer. Drawing clear of the trees at last, he saw them a mile ahead. The horse cantered lightly and easily over the smooth slopes. They were on the road that led to the mountains, and he watched intently, making certain of their direction.

Yes, they were going to Ubbeyt. The mountain road they followed led to no other goal. Assured of this, he flung himself down in the lee of a great boulder, panting and exhausted. It took all his resolution to lie there while he gathered strength for the long pursuit, knowing that every minute bore Linda farther from him.

Twenty miles lay between him and Ubbeyt. But in that mountain village he could count on one good friend. Tollog the Shaikh would give what help he could, lend him a horse and put him on the right track.

His mind flashed back to the rest of the picnic party. They must have left El Fumm by now. Probably they were hurrying to give the alarm at Zilfi. Certainly none of them could, or would, follow him. Fenton was helpless with a sprained ankle. No bribe or threat would

induce the servants to enter the haunted gorge. And Mrs. Webb would be expending her energy in telling the world her grief.

6. *Night in the Hills*

THE sun, throwing down long javelins of fire in its flight, was hurrying westward as Jack took the mountain road to Ubbeyt. He loped along in a jog-trot that ate up the long miles steadily, his shadow lengthening behind him on the white dusty road. The hills humped massive green shoulders in his path, as he doggedly advanced toward the black jagged line of the Atlas Mountains.

Soon, from deep valleys on every hand, crept purple mists and shadows to veil the hills and shroud the clear shining of the afterglow. A chill wind blew fitfully from snow-capped ranges. Night, like a black veil dropped before his face, made him falter and stumble in the dark.

He was devoutly thankful to see the moon rise at last, round and full and brilliant. Jackals howled dismally from barren hillsides as he toiled on. Dark bird-shapes swooped and hovered. Bats squeaked and circled about his head. Inky shadows, sprawling across his path, concealed stones and hollows which brought him crashing to his knees. But he stumbled on, husbanding his strength, fighting the impulse to shout, to dash blindly into the darkness in a last desperate effort to overtake Linda.

As the moon climbed he made better speed. His thoughts, less occupied by the path, turned to the tangled web of his fears and suspicions. He was convinced that Ben Saif had planned Linda's capture. He knew he was following her into a baited trap. She was being used as a lure to get him where Ben Saif wanted him.

It was Fenton's part in the affair that

worried him. That his brother had delayed him purposely at the cave seemed certain. But did this mean that he was fully cognizant of all Ben Saif's schemes? Had he agreed to them even to the point of murdering an inconvenient younger brother?

Breasting a steep hillside, at last he caught sight of the village of Ubbeyt. In the moonlight it gleamed white on a distant mountain spur. His eyes, keen as a falcon's, raked the rough track which led to it. No horseman, no object of any kind moved there. Yet he stood watchful, alert, waiting for evidence of something he expected to see.

He counted at least half a dozen tiny red points of light. They flickered intermittently at shadowed angles of the road between himself and Ubbeyt. He knew those red sparks to be glowing *kief* pipes. Not one solitary figure was visible, but each pipe stood for an Arab with gun and twisted knife.

"Ah, I thought so!" his parched lips whispered the words in disgust. "This is Ben Saif's work, all right. No one else would be smart enough to post sentries. That damned scoundrel's the only competent Arab in Algeria. I'll have to leave the road and crawl over these cursed hills to the far side of Ubbeyt."

The detour took even longer than he had feared. He was cut, scratched, bleeding, and weary to death when he reached the hill above Ubbeyt, and crept through the scrub and coarse yellowed grass in the cactus-hedge about the village.

He wondered if he could manage to summon his friend, Tollog, without rousing other sleepers. He crouched down near the hedge and gave a long rasping parrot cry—the signal his Arab friend knew well. Again and again he repeated it, his eyes on the white walls of the shaikh's house.

HE HAD begun to despair of making the old man hear, when a bearded face and red *chechia* were thrust from a window. A hand signalled to him, and the head withdrew. In a minute or two, Tollog's lean wiry body wormed itself through a thin place in the cactus-hedge, and cautiously advanced to where Jack lay. Not until the two had crawled up the hill and gained a strategic position overlooking both road and village, did Jack explain himself.

"*Uggurah!* I knew not it was a white *Sitt* he held in his arms. She was swathed in his burnoose close as a young ear of corn in its leaves. I caught no glimpse of her face, and she sat before him on his horse without sound or movement."

Tollog's words brought a stifled bitter curse to Jack's lips.

"What road did they take past Ubbeyt?"

"The road to Beni-Ghat, *effendi*. The Berber told me he was going back over the hills to Biodh."

"Back to the coast—to Biodh!" Numbing fear dawned in the chaos of Jack's mind.

"*Allah ya' sallamah!* God save you!" was Tollog's pitying reply. "She will doubtless be put on board a ship with other slaves for Arabia."

"Not while I'm alive!" The mad *marabout* himself had not looked more savage than Jack. "Get me a horse, Tollog, and I'll pay you anything you ask. These sentries——"

"Leave them to me, *effendi!*" Tollog wagged a benevolent beard. "They are thirsty as the desert sands, the miserable ticks of an ass's tail. I will take them *lakby* to drink. They shall hear and see nothing when thou dost ride from Ubbeyt, I promise thee!"

Tollog made good his boast. The strong, fermented juice of the palm

scarcely needed the drug he added to it. In a short time Jack rode from Ubbeyt under the paling stars, while on the road behind him some half-dozen veiled and bearded men lay snoring noisily in the dust.

He rode his strong, sure-footed mountain pony hard. At Beni-Ghat the road forked, and Jack took the track leading back over the hills to Biodh, as Shaikh Tollog had advised.

Dawn found him emerging from the hills to the gray level of the Empty Land. Beyond it the sea was brightening in the east, as it had been twenty-four hours ago, when he had looked down at that stretch of water and seen the *Pearl* riding at anchor, with her cargo of slaves on board.

The light, reflected from the gleaming water, struck his aching eyes with intolerable glare. The harbor was empty, save for a few fishing-boats. Neither at the wharf nor out at sea was there any glimpse of the *Pearl*. She had sailed.

Down on the quay, Jack marked the many cargoes that had come too late. There must indeed have been desperate need of haste.

Was Linda on board the *Pearl*? She couldn't have been put on at Biodh. A cold conviction seized him. The Berber had taken her by the other road from Beni-Ghat to some spot farther up the coast. Tollog had been deceived in thinking she was to be brought to Biodh.

7. *The Truth—or Some of It*

"YES, yes! I can understand you feel that way, Jack! But try to be reasonable. Linda's in no real danger."

"Then you and I have different ideas about danger." Jack strode up and down the private office of Deane & Son, dusty and unshaven, his eyes desperately anxious under his rough thatch of hair. "You've

kidded yourself about Ben Saif all along. You're still doing it. What possible reason have you for not wanting him shown up?"

Fenton ran a finger round his immaculate collar, and shot a quick glance at his brother, standing at the other side of his broad desk. "The trouble with you is," he began impressively, "that you imagine our business can be run on the same lines out here as if we were in Boston, and dealing with dyed-in-the-wool New Englanders. Now about Ben Saif, let me tell you——"

"You're stalling! I came to tell *you* something! I'm on my way to report at Headquarters. Linda's gone, and I'll burn up the whole of the Barbary coast to get her back, if necessary."

"Linda's safe, I tell you." Fenton's calm was beginning to wear thin. "If you'll give me twenty-four hours, I'll have her back in Zilfi again. It's only a question of money. That's all Ben Saif wants. Just leave him to me, I'll fix him."

"You're the last man on earth to handle him now, if what you told me about the infernal racket you kicked up with him yesterday was true. He'll double-cross you again as he has before. He'll take the money and keep Linda, too. This can't be handled privately now. I don't care what it costs the firm in money, or reputation either. Linda's safety is all that counts."

"Linda's safety is not endangered, you headstrong young fool! It's you who'll put her on the spot if you interfere."

"Did Ben Saif take those slaves off the *Pearl*?"

"Certainly he did. I superintended the job myself."

"Now I know you're lying!" Jack put two extremely dirty hands on the polished desk, and thrust his angry face within a foot of his brother's. "I've been to Biodh

this morning, and found that the *Pearl* weighed anchor within an hour of my visit to her yesterday. *She sailed without putting off those slaves!* And more than that—your launch took Linda out to the *Pearl*?"

Fenton stared into Jack's face with pale eyes that blinked just once, but gave no further sign of perturbation. "Quite an amateur detective in your own way," he remarked, mechanically straightening the pens and pencils on the blotter under his hands.

"It's true, isn't it?" Jack still leaned across the desk.

"How should I know?" parried Fenton, his face mask-like as he sorted pens and pencils. "And how do you know?"

"I asked the coast guards."

"And they saw Linda put on board?"

"I'll admit it's only a guess about Linda. But I'm determined that ship's going to be searched for her anyhow. I'll use the slaves to get the French going on the job."

"Once and for all, Jack, I tell you Linda's perfectly safe. You'll see her again tomorrow morning as surely as you see me now."

"And just how can you swear to that little fact? There's only one reason that can make you so all-fired certain! You and Ben Saif planned the kidnapping together! You're both out to get me, and you're using Linda, you——"

"If you'll only listen to reason, no one's going to get you. You've guessed half of it, however; so I might as well acknowledge that the kidnapping was an arrangement to which I gave my consent—a most unwilling consent. Ben Saif had me cornered. The girl's perfectly safe." Fenton drew back from Jack's furious gesture. "She's being held until Ben Saif gets clear away. He didn't trust you. He didn't believe you'd keep it dark about

the slaves until he'd made his getaway."

"I'm through with you! I'm off to report all I know about Ben Saif's dirty work, and your part in it, too."

"No!" Fenton took up a heavy ruler.

Jack flung himself bodily across the desk. He knocked Fenton backward, and the two of them crashed to the floor. They fought silently, with the suppressed antagonism of years. Rolling and scuffling over and over in blind rage, neither was aware that a door opened close by, or that a man entered softly.

"*Gibani!*" Ben Saif closed the door behind him, and stood for a minute to watch the struggle. At last, seeing Fenton's purpling face, the Arab unwound his sash in deliberate fashion, and joined in the fight. Jack was tied up and gagged almost before he recognized his new antagonist.

"All haste is from the devil, and tardiness from the All-Merciful!" quoted Ben Saif with pious unction. "Jack, *effendi*, thou wilt learn patience in the long years which I pray Allah may grant to thee. The slave's yoke is heavy, but are not thy shoulders broad to bear it?"

Fenton took a bottle of brandy from a wall-cupboard, and his eyes met Jack's with bitter scorn. "So now you know!" He filled and raised his glass. "Here's to your future career! You'll be celebrating that birthday of yours on board the *Pearl* in a day or two."

Jack lay still, his eyes fixed on Fenton's face. It was not a pretty sight, with its bloodshot eyes and mottled flush.

Fenton went out with Ben Saif. The door was slammed, and Jack heard the sharp click of its double lock.

8. *Another Visit to the S. S. Pearl*

AT THE end of a grim twelve hours, Jack still awaited Fenton's return. He had slept at intervals, uneasy sleep

with dreams that were a punishment, but it had partly restored his strength. Through the windows of his prison he saw the sky change to flaming gold and crimson sunset, fade to shadowy purple, deepen at last to profound night-blue. Brilliant stars blinked. Voices, laughter, the distant sound of native music died. Night, and sleep enfolded the little white town.

When the door opened to admit Fenton and Ben Saif once more, he lay in the half-stupor of exhaustion, and took them for another nightmare dream. But he began to believe them unpleasant facts when his bonds were loosened, and the gag removed.

The food and drink put before him cleared his wits. Strength and confidence revived. He felt new springs of hope rise. After all, he was alive! That was something.

He began to expect a miracle. True, his enemies held all the trumps, but there was still another round to be played, still a chance that luck might deal him a winning hand at the finish. Bound and gagged once more, he kept up his courage during the ride that followed, by concentrating on the lucky but improbable break for which he hoped.

After an interminable drive, the car stopped somewhere on the seacoast. His gag was finally removed, and, with wrists bound behind his back, he walked across the sand-dunes to where Fenton's launch awaited them. The outline of the *Pearl* loomed up about a mile away on the moonlit waters, a light smoke rising from her funnels.

Jack watched that smoke-veil with a sinking heart. So the *Pearl* had steam up all ready to start! He didn't quite know what else he had expected. But the sight of her brought home to him how very slim was any chance of escape.

As he climbed the ship's side, and set foot on the white deck, he looked round instinctively for Linda. No one was visible. His tottering hopes crashed about him as he reluctantly followed his captors down the companionway.

In the cabin, Captain Robah awaited them. Jack leaned back against a white and gold pillar, and returned the venomous regard of his three enemies with what insolence he could muster.

His heart almost stopped as Linda appeared in the doorway.

She was standing very still, her face was white and tear-stained, her shadowed eyes were fixed earnestly upon him. Her face grew whiter still as she saw his bonds, his exhaustion, and the despair in his eyes which not all his will could hide from her.

"Jack! Jack!" she whispered with shaking voice. "I thought I should never see you again!"

She clasped him to her, and for a minute they stood forgetful of everything save themselves.

Fiercely jealous, Fenton put a shaking hand on Linda's arm. He could bear it no longer, even though he had planned this farewell scene himself. He had wanted Jack to drink the very dregs of torment, to go straight from Linda's arms to a slave's yoke. Sharply he pulled the girl back, looking from one to the other, with envy that almost choked him.

"I have a choice to offer you." His pale eyes made Linda shiver. "Please listen very carefully unless you want Jack to die at once."

"Don't believe his lies." Jack's voice was low and shaken. "Don't be trapped into giving your word to anything."

"Keep quiet!" Fenton snapped savagely, then turned back to Linda. "Your first and wisest choice is to marry me. If you

consent to this, Jack will become a slave with the privilege of seeing you once a year. I must point out that he will live just as long as you keep silent. If you betray me, he will die by torture—the desert tribes are good at that sort of thing!"

Extremity of fear kept Linda silent. With horror she stared into Fenton's pale eyes. Her white lips strove to answer him, and failed.

"You may prefer the second choice, after all." Fenton's eyes were merciless as they met the utter loathing in the girl's. She could not have regarded a swamp-adder with more intense aversion.

"The alternative to marrying me is this: I will have you both flung overboard to the sharks."

"To the sharks! Murder both of us . . . like that! Oh, no, no! You'd never dare! You couldn't get away with it . . . you couldn't!"

"Quite simple." Fenton glanced at Jack, and, satisfied by the expression of his brother's face, smiled at Linda. "Ben Saif has reputable witnesses ready to swear the two of you were carried off into the desert and abandoned. We shall allow a reasonable time to elapse for you to die of thirst, and for the vultures to dispose of you. Then we shall produce two skeletons of you—they're all ready, and waiting among the sand-dunes for their cue."

Jack did not respond to the anguished appeal in Linda's eyes. He couldn't. His mind was picturing her tossed overboard to the hungry sharks. For himself, he preferred death—even the cruel death offered—to the long purgatory of a slave's existence. But she must not die.

Linda turned again to Fenton. Her eyes loathed him. The four men watched her silently. The very walls of the cabin seemed waiting in hushed expectancy for her decision.

A LOUD yell sounded above. A babel of voices broke out. There was a rush of feet. A long clear whistle cut through the noise with penetrating command. Two sailors in torn dirty rags burst into the cabin.

"The French! A cutter approaches!" they babbled fearfully. "By Allah, they are coming to search the ship! They will shoot us all! What evil chance! What *shaitan* has betrayed us?"

"Get back, miserable mud-fish that you are!" Robah's heavy hand and loud voice drove the men out. "Let the accursed Nazrani search—what have we to fear?"

Jack's eyes flashed to Linda's. Was a miracle to happen after all? His body tingled, his heart thumped against his ribs. Then he suddenly became aware of a new element in the situation between Fenton and the Arabs.

In spite of Robah's bravado with the frightened sailors, Jack was convinced there were slaves on board. The captain and Ben Saif seemed to consider themselves completely masters of the situation, but if the slaves were stowed away so secretly that there was no danger of discovery, why was Fenton so uneasy?

Clearly all was not going as his brother expected. Had the Arabs something up their sleeve—a surprize for their confederate?

"You take it coolly!" Fenton's voice was as sharp and uneasy as his look. "Where have you stowed the slaves? The French won't miss much!"

"By my beard, there are no slaves, *effendi!*" The captain showed his white teeth. "I put them ashore before you came on board."

"No slaves . . . no slaves on the ship?" Fenton's surprize was almost grotesque.

"You have made a mistake." Ben Saif regarded him contemptuously. "You sought to play your own game. You meant to find safety for yourself, while

I paid the price for both of us. *Ya bissabi*, you thought to cast Ben Saif like a worn sandal to the dunghill."

"What do you mean?" Fenton made desperate efforts to control his rage.

"I mean that I sent a spy after you today. You went to the French to tell them I had put slaves on board the *Pearl* without your knowledge or consent. You asked them to send a cutter tonight, knowing that I should be here, and hoping to witness my capture. All this my spy heard as he lay outside the room where your treacherous, lying tongue betrayed me. Do you not recall the old beggar who lay in a fit outside the commandant's room as you left it? It is a marvel that poor one sees and hears so much during fits so terrible! But, Allah be praised, he recovers rapidly. He was able to report every word that you said."

The tramp of feet sounded on deck above. "*Uggurah!* They come aboard!" said Robah. "May Allah prosper their search."

"But"—Fenton started forward—"I must see them—tell them——"

"Already has your tongue told much, too much!" Ben Saif made a fierce gesture to the captain. "In there, until this farce is over."

Robah manipulated a panel of the wall, which slid back to disclose a small cupboard of a room. Into this the Arabs bundled Fenton with Jack and Linda. All three were gagged and securely bound. Satisfied that they could make neither sound nor movement, their captors left them and closed the panel.

A long agony of waiting ensued. Jack fought and struggled to loosen the cords that fastened him, to spit out the gag. He nearly strangled himself in the attempt, but it was no use. The Arabs had made an excellent job of it. He was forced to give up at last, and, as he lay

with pounding heart and aching muscles, voices from the cabin reached his ears.

He listened, his gloomy thoughts brightened by the knowledge that Fenton was also overhearing the conversation, and that it must be gall and wormwood to him.

"I offer the deepest apologies, Sidi Ben Saif!" came the clear, crisp accents of the French officer in charge. "There has been some deplorable mistake. You shall receive an apology from Headquarters, in addition to my own, at the first possible moment. We acted on the best authority, from information received. I regret exceedingly to have held you prisoner while the search was conducted, but we had our orders."

"It is understood." Ben Saif was suave. "I have many enemies, alas! Many who envy my wealth and authority. Jackals run ever in the lion's train. You do not tell me the name of your informant." Jack could imagine Ben Saif's mocking smile. "It is for me to speak it then. It was Deane, *effendi*, who came to you with lies under his tongue concerning me. May his face be blackened! May his soul rot in Gehenna!"

"Certainly! Certainly, Sidi Ben Saif! It is understood! Great injustice has been done you."

"Not to you, the blackening or the shame!" Ben Saif raised his voice, and Jack understood the reason for it as he heard the Arab's last vindictive words. "Not on you, nor even on those who sent you is mine anger! But that traitor who sought to ruin me—he shall pay the price!"

The voices ceased. Footsteps were heard retreating. Silence fell. In a few minutes the panel-door was opened. Robah dragged the prisoners back to the cabin and pushed them roughly down on a long seat. Their gags were removed,

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and their agonizing tight bonds were loosened.

Jack despaired. The cutter was gone. He had enjoyed Fenton's unmasking, but it did not improve the situation for Linda and himself. On the contrary, Ben Saif would not spare the brother of one who had so utterly betrayed him.

And Linda! What would happen to her?

"No one plays a game with me—and wins it!" Ben Saif assured Fenton. "You tried to use your brother and me as pawns in your double-dealing. Jack, *effendi*, wished also to destroy me, and for that he shall pay dearly. Moreover, being of your accursed blood, he is not fit to live. But you shall pay a greater price."

"You're wrong." Fenton strove for his old decisive manner. "Let me explain. I——"

"You desired," Ben Saif interrupted, "to rid yourself of me. You have made a fortune through our slave-trafficking. But it was inconvenient that I should know the origin of your wealth, thereby holding the whip-hand over you in future."

Fenton began to stammer, to plead, to bargain.

Ben Saif laughed at him. "A great sum you offer for a worthless life! Is it not wisdom to crush the scorpion when it lies before one's tent? *Ya, amma*, thou blind one! Now shall your traitor's mouth be filled with dust.

9. *The Wasm*

"THIS one's launch?" Ben Saif asked the captain, gesturing contemptuously toward Fenton.

"Yussuf ran it up into a cove until the cutter was gone. He awaits but our signal to bring it alongside again."

"Give the signal, then."

Ben Saif turned to Linda. "I will take you to a place of safety among my friends, *mademoiselle*. To my so beautiful oasis I will take you. Ah, not that oasis of which the French have knowledge! No—for doubtless they will search for you.

will take you far south to my desert stronghold, inaccessible to all save the desert-born. There you shall repay me for my losses and trouble over this affair."

Blind, suffocating rage seized Jack. The Arab's words stung him to battle like a galvanic shock. Tied though his wrists and ankles were, he launched himself at the speaker like a human battering-ram, attacking head-foremost in a dive that took the other completely off his feet.

With an astonished grunt, Ben Saif went down like a ninepin, as Jack butted him savagely. Unfortunately, in place of the Arab's yielding and vulnerable solar plexus, a solid teak table-leg met Jack's head. He lay stunned, while Ben Saif got to his feet and drew a long gleaming *telek* from his girdle.

Linda shrieked as she saw the dagger. She stumbled awkwardly across the floor. Ben Saif paid no heed to her at all; he was staring down at Jack with a surprise so great as to be almost stupefaction. When Linda tried to interpose her slender body between Jack and the glinting knife, Ben Saif put her aside as if she were an importunate child. He bent over Jack and took up an object fastened by a long chain about the unconscious man's neck.

In his infuriated attack on the Arab, Jack's shirt had been ripped open to the waist, exposing the turquoise ring he wore beneath. Its strange blue eyes seemed to regard Ben Saif with solemn reproach as he stooped to take it in his hand.

One-Eye's *wasm*! The magic passport which meant more to a traveller over the

unknown Sahara than an army with banners. Ben Saif looked at it with wonder; then, knife in hand, he bent over Jack. Linda shrieked again.

"*Uggurab!* Thou foolish one!" With a firm hand Ben Saif led her back to her seat. He returned to Jack, and with one slashing cut of the *telek* severed the cords about his prisoner's ankles. A second cut freed the wrists.

Recovering consciousness to find his enemy splashing water over his head and chest, Jack was under the impression that it was a preliminary to some form of torture. He set his teeth and glared at Ben Saif. To his surprise, the Arab met his fierce look with a smile, and took his hand to touch it to lips and forehead.

"Will some one wake me up?" muttered Jack. "Is this a salute to a brave man about to die—or what?"

Ben Saif, who had found the English language a useful acquirement in his far-flung enterprises, answered with a yet broader smile. "A brave man, yes! But to die, no! May Allah grant thee long years! Where did you get this ring, *effendi*? This is the *wasm* of the famous One-Eye. How is it that you possess this passport and mark of favor from one so powerful?"

With a rush of new hope, Jack faced the Arab squatting beside him. "You recognize the ring?"

"*Billab*, truly I know that *wasm*. God be praised, I saw it before my *telek* cut thy soul from out thy body. By the life of thee, why hast thou kept this thing hidden from me?"

"Never guessed One-Eye was a friend of yours!" Even now, Jack did not altogether trust this change of front, and his doubtful glance searched the Arab's face narrowly.

"*Ullab alem!*" Ben Saif was deeply hurt. "God knoweth my thoughts are all for thy good, *effendi!*"

"Go ahead, then, if that's how you feel. Cut loose these two, and we'll begin to talk."

Without hesitation, Ben Saif freed Linda. He stood before Fenton in obvious doubt, the long twisted dagger balanced in his hand. Fenton shivered as he met the Arab's eyes, fiercer and more menacing than the gleaming knife. A moment's tension; then, with a snarl, Ben Saif cut Fenton's bonds.

"Is it enough?" he asked. "Now will you tell me where you got that ring, *effendi*?"

"Surely," agreed Jack, one arm holding Linda closely. "It was given to me by One-Eye in the gorge of El Fumm five years ago. He had slipped off the path, and I heaved him up on deck again. That's all there was to it. One-Eye swore eternal friendship and gave me this ring as a memento of our meeting."

Ben Saif stood, staring incredulously at Jack.

"Five years ago! At El Fumm! You saved the life of One-Eye?" He repeated the words in amazement, his eyes still frowningly intent on Jack. "Allah! How many times I have come near to destroying you—you whose life is sacred to me. By my *wasm* here, Allah hath spared us both."

"Your *wasm*?" Jack blinked in amazement at Ben Saif's words, and the genuine remorse with which they were spoken.

"By Allah, and by Allah, I will show you that the *wasm* is mine own! Look!"

Ben Saif slipped off his hooded white burnoose. Erect as a palm-tree he stood in the red and brown striped *gandourah* and black, tightly bound turban of the Zenda tribe. A broad red leather belt clipped his slender waist, supporting a miniature arsenal of weapons. Lean, and long, and swarthy he faced Jack. Desertman unmistakably!

With a swift movement, he put up a hand to his left eye.

"One-Eye! You are One-Eye!"

"I am One-Eye." The man Jack knew as Ben Saif smiled at the profound astonishment he had caused. He held the glass eye he had removed. The sunken hollow of his left eye-socket, and the peculiar wrinkling of surrounding muscles, altered the Arab's dark face indescribably. His remaining eye took on a strange and sinister brightness. "I am One-Eye, whose life you saved, *effendi*!"

With eyes on the savage bandit figure, Linda whispered incredulously, "You will let us go?"

One-Eye made a magnificent salaam. "*Mademoiselle* is free to command me."

He escorted them up to the main deck. Fenton brought up the rear like some neglected cur that hopes for a stray bone. No one spoke, or looked at him.

ON DECK, the captain glowered in angry astonishment at the three unbound prisoners. His fingers involuntarily sought the handle of his dagger. Ben Saif explained in a few brief guttural words.

"May Allah reward him!" Robah saluted Jack with grudging respect. "But this one?" The captain spat contemptuously in Fenton's direction. "Is this traitor to go free? Is thine honor not to be avenged?"

"Mine honor holds the name of Deane for ever sacred." There was a regretful note in One-Eye's voice, and he turned his gaze from Fenton as if resisting temptation.

"By the hundredth name of Allah!" swore Robah, "thou art unwise in this."

"I have spoken," One-Eye answered haughtily.

After a long, vindictive look at Fen-

ton, Robah spat again, then turned to Linda. Carefully he assisted her over the ship's side, and down the ladder to the launch. Jack followed. Last came Fenton, stumbling and uncertain, to make straight for the tiny cabin and a certain locker where drinks were stored.

With Linda close beside him, Jack took the wheel, and was only vaguely aware that Robah at last left them to return to the *Pearl*. Intoxicated by freedom and happiness, he steered for land.

Leaving the launch safely moored at the water's edge, he and Linda began to walk over the sand-dunes to the car, looming black and solid in the misty dawn.

"Good Lord! Fenton! I suppose he's blind to the world by now! I'd forgotten he existed."

Jack hobbled stiffly back to the launch, hoisted himself on board, and went into the small cabin. At first he thought the place was empty. Then he caught sight of his brother.

Fenton lay sprawled on the floor, a dagger in his heart. The distorted face and horribly staring eyes were things Jack strove ever after to forget.

With a tremendous effort he pulled himself together at last, left the cabin, dropped awkwardly over the side of the boat, and rejoined Linda.

"Robah had no honorable scruples

about the family of Deane. Fenton's dead."

She took his hand in silence, and in silence they walked over the sands, leaving the launch with its dreadful passenger behind them. Sea-birds wheeled and cried about the boat, waves lapped and rocked it softly. In its cabin Fenton lay still, oblivious to his requiem as dawn rose in the east.

THREE months later, when their grim encounter with the bandit had been forgotten in a more wonderful adventure, One-Eye again reminded Jack and Linda of his existence.

A camel-driver stopped the pair in the streets of Zilfi, and put a packet into Linda's hand. With a few words to Jack, and a quick salute, the man made off.

"He says it's a gift to you from One-Eye!" translated Jack.

Linda unwrapped crimson folds of silk, and stared at the ring in her hand—a perfect oval sapphire, curiously set in a hollow meshwork of gold.

"One-Eye's *wasm!*" she exclaimed.

"Hm-m-m! Wedding gift with the bandit's blessing! You ought to be happy. You've done very well for yourself in the short time you've been in Zilfi, I'll say! Picking me for a husband, and the biggest rogue in the Barbary States for a friend!"

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side;

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

—*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam.*