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FANTASY READER

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DONALD A. WOLLHEIM

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Stories by

FRANK BELKNAP LONG	RAY CUMMINGS
DONALD WANDREI	SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT
CHARLES W. DIFFIN	AUGUST DERLETH
BEATRICE GRIMSHAW	JULIUS LONG
S. FOWLER WRIGHT	MARY E. COUNSELMAN
CLIFFORD SIMAK	CARL JACOBI
ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN	

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The Cave

by Beatrice Grimshaw

Beatrice Grimshaw is one of those gifted writers who can bring the glamour, beauty, and mystery of the South Seas into the hearts of every reader. In these days when so many Americans remember the South Seas only as a scene of battle, as an uncomfortable place for a homesick G.I. to be, it is good to hark back to those more pacific days when the true color of the Islands could be appreciated at leisure. Among Miss Grimshaw's many colorful tales, there are some which reflect the haunting mystery of those lonely places. In "The Cave" we venture to say there has been introduced what may be the largest spectre ever described. And a very small island is certainly no place to share with a very large ghost!



OVER Rafferty's Luck—misnamed—the wind seemed always blowing. Perhaps it did not really blow as much as I imagined. Perhaps, for the first time in my life, I merely had leisure to observe such things, and to be impressed by them.

To see how the long grasses shivered, showing the footmarks of the wind, as it strode over them like Peter striding on the sea; as it suddenly failed and sank—like Peter—leaving behind it a flurry of stirred leaflets that made you think of flaws on water. . . . How, in the tide of the grass, always rising higher against the few doomed buildings, there streamed and wavered, like wonderful seaweeds, long strands of bishop-purple bougainvillea, and *allamanda*, all gold—wreckage of the creepers that used to climb over the roof and wall. How a loose door, in office, or bungalow, would suddenly give itself to the wind, and shut with a thunderous noise, making one think, for a distracted moment, that somebody had returned. . . .

Nobody did. It had not been anticipated that anyone would, when the owners of the bankrupt mine had hired me to stay there. I was to hold the place by doing a little work, while they went afield looking for capital—which they hardly expected to get. There was just enough chance of it, however, to make it worth their while to send me to the island, and leave me there at a negligible salary, with six-months' stores, and the freedom of the whole place, on which there was not so much as a native or a dog. Only myself and the deserted shaft and the rotting bungalow, and the wind that blew continually, com-

plainly, through the grasses, and through the fallen creepers, wine-colored and gold.

There were these, and something else. There was a shadow on the island: the loom of a strange and eerie story but half-told.

Rafferty's Luck had not failed from the usual causes—not altogether, that is. It had gone through the common history of little, remote mines; supposed at first to be very rich in copper, it had turned out to be a mere pocket, with a problematical vein behind it, that might or might not be worth developing when found.

It had been worked by the partners—there were three—in turns. The island was far out of the track of ships; it had been visited accidentally, by a shipwrecked crew. Three of these had found the copper, and kept silence; and later on, two had gone up to work it.

They had worked it, won enough ore for a good show, and waited confidently for the returning boat. But—when it came, it found only one man. The other had killed himself. Without any reason, he had cut his throat.

The third man took his place, and arranged, as before, that a passing schooner should call. It called within a few days, and found one man. The other, without any reason, had leaped over a precipice, and died.

Upon this, the third went away, and stayed so long that the mine—which was on British territory, and under mining-laws—had nearly been forfeited. At the last moment the men now interested in it got me to go and hold the place, while the third partner went to London for capital.

They were candid enough—they told me that the island was under a shadow; and when I asked just what they meant, they said: "Exactly that. Rafferty and Wilder" (the two who had died) "both said something about shadows."

"What?" I asked.

"Nothing that anybody could understand. Rafferty had cut almost through his windpipe, and Wilder's face was smashed in by the fall. As like as not," went on the third partner,—France was his name,—"as like as not, drink had something to do with it; they were neither of them sober men."

"But you are—and you didn't come to any sort of grief?"

"I am—and I didn't."

"Yet you don't feel like staying. You only had a few days of it."

"Haven't I told you I must go and scare up some cash? Are you on, or not?"

"I am on," I said.

"Good. A man with an M.C. and a D.C.M. like you—"

"Hang the M.C. and the D.C.M. I'm going because I'm broke, and because I want to know what it's like to be really alone. As for your shadows, they won't make me jump over cliffs. I take one spot after sundown, never more."

"Good," said France again. He looked at me as if it was in his mind to say something more, but whatever the thing was, he kept it back. . . . "About the journey," he continued. . . .

Six weeks later I was left at Cave Island by a whaleboat—the last step in a decline that began with an ocean liner, continued through inter-island

schooners and trading ketches, and ended in the last ketch's boat, sent off to ferry me through a network of reefs too dangerous for any sizable ship.

"If there is payable ore here," I thought, "small wonder it's been overlooked; God-forsaken and Satan-protected the place is, and out of the way of the world!" And I began to wonder, as the whaleboat stemmed green shallows, making for the hummocky deserted bay that stretched beyond, whether I had done well. I am from Clare; I have seen the dread sea-walls of Moher, and felt, on their high crowns, the "send" of that unknown evil that men of Ireland, for the confounding of strangers, chose to personify as the frightful Phooka. "This too is an evil place," I thought, and on that account, I said a small prayer. Now mind you, it was well done, as you shall afterwards know.

Then we beached, and began unloading my gear; and I was too busy with that, and with carrying most of it up to the bungalow, before dark should fall, to think of anything else. By and by the boat was back at the ship's side, a long way out, and the ship had made sail, and when I looked at her, in the last of the light, and saw her fading away like a ghost that has given its message, and goes back to its tomb, I knew that I was indeed alone—pressed down and running over, I had my wish!

After a day or two, I began to wonder what all the trouble was about, if indeed there had ever been any trouble except drink and the consequences of it. Cave Island was a windy spot, as I have said; not very large or long, only a mile or two at biggest, it was swept by all the winds that blow across the immense, lonely spaces of the central Pacific world, where almost no land is. In the mornings and at nights it was cool; during the day nothing but the wind saved it from most torrid heat. It was a barren place, and full of stones, some of them black and spongy and as big as houses. There was coarse grass, that never seemed to be still, almost as if things unseen ran under it, and kept it moving even in a calm. There were a few flowers that Rafferty had planted in his time, and there was the iron bungalow, and a storing shed, and a shaft with bucket and windlass dangling over, and tools abandoned by the side. For the rest, there was the sun wheeling over the island, at night the myriad un pitying stars, and always sea and sea. So lonely it was, that you could hear yourself breathe; out of the wind, you could listen to your heart beating. When you got up in the morning you took the burden of yourself upon your shoulders, and carried it, growing heavier and heavier, all day; even at night, it was with you in your dreams. Yet I liked this, as one likes all strong, violent experience. Solitude is violent; it is delicious, it is hateful; and as surely as a snake unwatched can strike, so it can maim or kill. . . .

What do you know, you who think that solitude is a locked room in a city, or a garden with the neighbors shut away?

A week or so went past. Every day I went to the workings, did a job with pick and shovel; wrote in my diary what I had done, and for the rest, was free. I liked to be free. Not since the war—and certainly not in it—had I been my own man; if I was not filling one of the blind-alley jobs that

confront the untrained, hardly educated man of near forty, I was harder at work than ever, hunting another.

But if I was free, I was not at ease. I could see, after the first few days, that there was not much in the mine—worse, that there was never likely to be. I had worked copper before, and I judged that the worst of it was better than the best of this, once the surface show had been removed. In fact, it was nothing but a pocket. And how was a mere pocket going to give me a brick bungalow with an arched veranda, in Bondi or Coogee, and a garden behind it and a little touring-car, and a tobacconist's business somewhere near the surf beaches, to keep all going; and in the garden, behind the window-panes of the bungalow, in a long chair on the veranda, at the wheel of the car, or swimming brown and bonny through the surf—always there, in my heart and in my life, the girl of my hopeless dreams.

No, I had not told France all the truth. He is a good fellow, but one does not give him confidences. Being broke was nothing new to me; being alone, the spice of it, the strangeness, I could have done without. But Rafferty's Luck offered the one and only chance I had of making my dream come true, and I would have taken it if it had led halfway to hell.

Instead, it seemed to lead to nothing.

I was so disappointed, so sore against France—whom I now perceived to be engaged in the familiar trick of unloading a hopeless venture upon a public too far away to understand—that I set my teeth, and resolved to hunt the island from coast to coast—to comb it through for a better show, and if found, to take that show myself. I don't know that this was moral; I only know I was prepared to do it.

By this time, I had forgotten all about the "shadow," and the suicides. Men who have roughed it, who own little, are not particularly shocked at suicide, or sudden death of any kind. You must have much to lose before you shudder at the passing breath of the storm that has swept another from his hold on life, and that will one day sweep you too.

So I did not think about Rafferty, or about Wilder—until the day when I found the cave; and after that it all began.

I had been prospecting over the summit of the island, without much success. On this day, I went down to the beach, and began patiently to circle the whole place, resolving, literally, to leave no stone unturned in the search for something better than Rafferty's Luck. It takes longer to walk all around an island than you'd think, even if the island is no more than a mile or two across. I spent all day upon the job, eating a biscuit for dinner, and drinking, once or twice, from the little streams that ran out of the crevices. If any of them had tasted ill I should have been glad; but they were all fresh as milk, no tinge of metal in them.

Toward sunset I came upon something that I hadn't noticed before—a cave. It was at the foot of an immense wall of rock; you could not have seen it from above, and the only way of reaching it was the way by which I had come, a painful climb along the narrow glacis of stones on the windward side. The beach and the anchorage were of course on the lee side.

Ships wouldn't, for their lives, come up to windward; I was therefore almost sure that nobody, save myself, had seen or visited the cave.

That pleased me—you know how it is. I was glad that I had brought my torch with me—a costly big five-cell, like a searchlight, that She had sent me when I sailed; she hadn't sixpence to rub against sixpence, but she would have given her head away—and so would I; that was why we both were poor, and likely to remain so. . . .

I had a good look at the cave. It was very high; seventy or eighty feet at least. It was not quite so wide, but it seemed to run a good way back. The cold stream of wind that came out of it had a curious smell; I could not describe it to myself, otherwise than by saying that the smell seemed very old. I stood in the archway, in that stream of slightly tainted wind, examining the rocks about the mouth of the cave. There was not much daylight left now, but I could see, plainly enough, that here was small hope of a better find. I kept the torch in my hand as I went on into the interior of the cave; time enough, I thought, to turn it on when I had to; there were no spare batteries on the island.

By and by I began to go backwards; that is, I went on a little way, and then turned to look at the ground I had passed, lit up by the stream of light from the entrance. Coral, old and crumbling underfoot; limestone; a vein of conglomerate. Nowhere any sign of what I sought. It was getting darker; the cave, arching high above me, seemed to veer a little to one side, and the long slip of blue daylight was almost gone. Now, with half-a-dozen steps, I lost it altogether; I stood in complete darkness, with the cool wind streaming about me, and that strange, aged smell, now decidedly stronger.

"Time for the light," I thought. Something made me swallow in my throat, made me press my foremost foot tight to the ground, because it seemed, oddly enough, to have developed a will of its own; it wanted to move back, and the backward foot wanted to swing on its toe and turn round. . . . I will swear I was not afraid—but somehow my feet were.

I snapped on the light, and swung it ahead. It showed a narrow range of rock wall on each side; a block of velvet darkness ahead, and in the midst of the darkness, low down, two circles of shining bluish green. Eyes—but what eyes! They were the size of dinner-plates! They did not move, they only looked; and I was entirely sure that they saw me. If they had been high up, I do not think I should have minded them—much. But they were, as I have said, low down, and that was somehow horrible. Lurking. Treacherous. . . .

I had shot crocodiles by night, discovering them exactly as I had discovered this unnamed monster, by the shine of their eyes in torchlight. But I had had a sporting-rifle to do it with, and knew what I was shooting at. Now I was totally unarmed; the futile shotgun I had brought with me for stray pot-hunting, was up at the bungalow. I had not the vaguest idea what this creature might be, but I knew what was the only thing to do under the circumstances, and I did it: I ran away.

Nothing stirred. Nothing followed me. When I reached the outer arch of the cave, all glorious with sea and sunset, there was not a sound anywhere but the lifting crash and send of the waves upon the broken beach.

I stood for a moment looking at the magnificent sky that paled and darkened while one could quickly have counted a hundred. "I shall have to come back," was my thought, "with a charge of dynamite, and a bit of fuse. Shotgun just as much use as a pea-shooter." I told myself these things, but now that I was out of the cave, I could not for the life of me believe in what I had seen. "It wasn't the sort of smell it ought to have been," I said aloud weakly, and kicked the stones about aimlessly with my foot. Something rolled. I looked at it, and it was a skull.

"Peter Riordan," I said, "this is not your lucky day." And I picked up the skull. There were bones with it, all loose and lying about. "I can make a guess what happened to Mr. Bones!" I said, peering through swiftly falling twilight at the skull. It was like a shock of cold water to see that it was old beyond computing—almost fossilized, dark and mossy with the passage of incalculable time. As for the bones, they crackled like pie-crust when I put my foot on them. I could see where they had fallen out of the rock; they must have lain there buried, for a long time.

"I don't understand," I thought. "Things don't fit together. This is a hell of an island." It seemed good to me to climb the cliff as fast as I could, making for the solid walls of the bungalow, and leaving behind me in the inhospitable twilight those queer bones now unburied, and the cave, and the immense green eyes that did not move.

The bungalow was a good way off; in order to reach it, I had to cross the empty rolling downs on the top of the island, with their long grass that never was still, and their heaps of hummocks of black stone. By this time it was so late that I could only see the stones as lumps of indefinite darkness. Some of them were big even by daylight; by night they looked immense. They were queerly shaped, too; once, when I paused to get breath (for I can assure you I was going hard) I noticed that the biggest one in sight looked exactly like the rounded hind-quarters of an elephant, only no elephant ever was so big.

I leaned against a boulder, and mopped my face. There was a rather warm wind blowing; it brought with it the sort of scents that one expects by night—the dark-green smell of grass wet with dew, the curious singeing odor of baked stones gradually giving out their heat, little sharp smells of rat and iguana, out hunting. And something else. . . .

"Peter Riordan," I said, "you quit imagining things that aren't there. Rafferty did, and Wilder did." And I propped myself against the stone, and took out a cigarette.

It was never lighted. Just as I was feeling in my matchbox, I looked at the giant boulder again, and as I hope for heaven, I saw it walk away. That is, it did not walk—it hobbled, lurching against the sky.

For obvious reasons I didn't light the cigarette, but I put it into my mouth, and chewed it; that was better than nothing. "We aren't going to be stampeded," I said (but noiselessly, you may believe). "We are going to see this through." And, being as wise as I was brave—perhaps a little wiser—I got inside a sort of pill-box of loose stones, and peered out through the openings. By this time it was as dark as the inside of a cow; you could only see stars

and stars, and the ink-black blots made against them by one thing and another. And the great black thing that wasn't a boulder, and wasn't an elephant, went lurching and lumbering, smashing through Orion, wiping Scorpio off the sky, putting out the Pointers where the Cross was waiting to come up; it seemed to swing all over the universe.

"It's chasing something," I thought.

It was. One could see it tack and turn with incredible swiftness, swinging behind it something that might have been legs and might have been a tail. Clearly, it was hunting, like the rats and the iguanas, and now I could see—or thought I could see—the thing it hunted: Something very small, compared with the enormous bulk of the beast; something that dodged in and out of the stones, running for its life. A little, upright thing with a round head, that scuttled madly, squeaked as it ran.

Or had I fancied the squeak? The whole amazing drama was so silent that I could not be sure. It seemed to me that if there had been a cry, a queer thin cry, I had heard it inside my head, not outside. I can't explain more clearly, but there are those who will understand. At any rate, I was sure the thing had cried, and that it had cause. The end was approaching.

There was another frantic doubling, another swing around of the immense hobbling beast, and then the little creature simply was not—and the enormous shadow had swept to the edge of the cliff and over, and was gone.

I felt my forehead wet. My breath was coming as quickly as if it had been I who had squeaked and doubled there, out among the night-black grasses and the stones. . . . The shadow! They who died had seen shadows.

"But," I found myself saying argumentatively, to the silent stars, "I am real, and that wasn't. It's like things in a dream, when you know the railway engine can't run over you, because it isn't really there."

Something obscurely answered: "Rafferty is dead, and Wilder is dead. Death is real."

I got out of the pill-box. "I shall say the multiplication table all the way home," I told myself. And I did. But when I had got home to the bungalow, I said something else—I said a prayer. "Perhaps *they* didn't," I thought. Then I went in, and cooked my supper. It was quite a good supper, and I slept very well.

Next morning nothing seemed more impossible than the things that, I was assured, had not happened last night. All the same, I decided to go and have another look at the cave, with plenty of dynamite, and the shotgun, for what that might be worth. I could not forget that Beth, who would give her head away—and who had given her heart—was waiting for that brick house, and that little car, and those Sunday mornings on the surf beaches. And I was resolved that she should not miss them.

It was now about ten days since I landed, and I began, for the first time, to count the days that remained. France would have to reach London, find a simpleton who would finance his venture (I knew he'd do it—he could have squeezed money out of a concrete pillar), return to Australia, and make his way to the island. Six weeks; three weeks; six weeks; three or four weeks. Nineteen in all. And I had put one week and a half behind me. There

remained seventeen and a half. Four months and a half. A hundred and twenty-two days, if I succeeded in keeping my senses. If I did not, it was a hundred and twenty-two minus x .

I could see the x in front of me; a black, threatening thing, big as a garage door. But I defied it. "You won't get *me*," I said. "I'm bound for Bondi and the brick bungalow." And, whistling "Barnacle Bill" to keep my spirits up, I began to cut lead piping into slugs. "Ought to have brought a rifle," I thought, "but never mind; I can do something with these, and a bit of dynamite and a fuse."

It took me about fifteen minutes to cut up the slugs. When I raised my eyes from the table on which I was working, I saw, through the window of the cottage, a steamer—a small trading-boat with a black and white funnel. She was out in the roadstead, and she was just preparing to let go anchor.

I let off a shout; you should hear a Clare man do it!

"X, I've got you," I cried. "Dead as a doornail—stabbed with your own beastly minus!" And I sent the lead pipe flying across the floor. I just had to make a noise.

In the roadstead, the little steamer was making a terrible row with her roaring anchor-chains, and a whaleboat was rapidly being lowered. Within ten minutes, France and I were shaking hands.

"Never went to London at all," he told me at the top of his voice. "Got the whole lump of expenses right in Sydney, from two or three splendid chaps who were staying at my hotel. Loads of money. Country fellows."

"They would be," I thought, remembering France's local reputation.

"Brought the machinery up with me. Brought a geologist. Get a start, get a nice report, go down again and float the company."

"Leaving me in charge?"

"That's right."

"It isn't—not by a mile! France," I said, looking him straight in the eyes,—he had candid, jolly blue eyes, the little beggar, and he had a smile under his toothbrush mustache that would have wiled cash out of a New York customs-officer,—“France, I don't like this affair of yours any too well, and I'd prefer to be out of it.” For I knew, now, that the little car and the Sundays in the surf would have to come by some other road.

"Got the wind up?" he asked, cocking his hat on one side of his head, and looking at me impertinently.

"I don't know about that," I said,—and indeed I did not know; it was a puzzling matter,—“but I do know that there isn't enough payable copper here to sheet a yacht.”

"Oh, you're no expert," he said easily. "Let me introduce Mr. Rattray Smith, our geologist. Mr. Peter Riordan."

"Why not a mining engineer?" I asked curtly, glancing with some distaste at the academic-looking youth who had followed France out of the boat.

"Came too high," explained France with a charming smile. "Smith knows copper when he sees it."

"I reckon he knows which side his bread is buttered on," I commented, without troubling to lower my voice over-much. I simply could not stand

that geologist; he was such a half-baked looking creature, fairly smelling of chalk and blackboards.

"Quite," was France's answer. "And he's got all sorts of degrees; look lovely on a prospectus."

"Maybe," was all I answered. I heard afterwards that Smith's degrees were more showy than practical, from our point of view—B.Sc., F.G.S., and something else that I forget; palæontology was his special game, and he knew next to nothing about metals. France had got him cheap because he had been ill, and needed a change. France, it appeared, meant to make full use of Mr. Rattray Smith's shining degrees in the forthcoming prospectus; meantime, as he somewhat coarsely put it to me, he intended to "stuff the blighter up for all he was worth."

"You go and take him for a walk," he said to me now. "Show him the workings, and help him with his notes. I've got to see the machinery ashore."

I didn't want to see that machinery land; I knew only too well what it would be—old, tired stuff that had been dumped on half-a-dozen wharves, for the deluding of share-holders, in many places; stuff never meant to be used, only to be charged at four times its value in expense accounts. . . . I took Smith to the workings; showed him the ore, lowered him down the shaft, displayed the various tunnels. I said not a word. He could delude himself if he liked; I meant to have no hand in it.

Perhaps he was not such a fool as he looked; perhaps, I cynically told myself, he was more knave than fool. At all events, he said very little, and took only a few notes. I began to like him better, in spite of his horn-rimmed glasses and his academic bleat.

"Look here," I said, as we were returning to the house. "I've been all over the damned island, and I'll eat any payable stuff you find."

"All over?" he said, cocking one currant-colored eye at me through his glasses.

I began to think he might not be such a fool as he looked. Clearly he had sensed a certain reserve that lay behind my speech.

"Well," I said, not caring enough about him to mince words, "there's a warren of caves down on the wind'ard side of the island and I tried to investigate the biggest one the other day."

"What did you find? Any indications?" he squeaked.

"Couldn't tell you. I was stopped by a beast. Nightmare beast, with eyes as big as plates. Hadn't a gun with me, but I meant to have a go at it later on."

"But that's—but that's most—" he began to stammer eagerly.

France, who had gone to the house for a drink, looked out of the window, and interrupted me.

"What's this about beasts, and why are you making slugs for your silly old shotgun?" he demanded.

I told him.

"You've got 'em too," was his only comment.

This, for some reason or other, made me desperate.

"That's not the whole of it," I said. "Last night I saw a thing as big as six elephants chasing a little thing in the dark."

"You would," he said. "Have a hair of the dog that bit you, and take some bromide when you're going to bed."

"Look here—will you come down to the cave yourself?" I pleaded.

"With all that machinery to land, and the ship bound to clear before sundown? Not much."

"Very well. Will you come for a walk on the top of the island after dark?"

"Oh, yes," he said, casually. "Never saw anything when I was here for a fortnight, and don't expect to now. But I'll come."

"Was it moonlight when you were here?" I shouted after him as he started for the beach.

"What's that to— Yes, I reckon it was."

Rattray Smith began deliberately: "The influence of light on all these phenomena—"

"What d'ye mean?" I asked. "Are you a spiritualist? Surely you couldn't be."

"In the excellent company of Sir William Crookes and Sir Oliver Lodge, I certainly could," he answered. "I suppose you think that the modern man of science is necessarily skeptic, like his—his—"

"I think he believes either a darn' sight too little, or a devilish sight too much, if you ask me," I said. "But wait till tonight."

We waited. And after dark, we all went up to the top of the island and posted ourselves in the "pill-box." There was an enormous sky of stars above us; all round us the faintly smelling, feebly rustling grasses, and standing up among them, big as cottages and railway cars, were the silhouetted shapes of gigantic rocks.

I had thought we might have hours to wait, and after all might see nothing; but I was wrong. We had not been in the pill-box ten minutes, before a whole mass of stars before us went suddenly black. It was just over the biggest of the cottage-sized rocks, and I had a nasty idea that the rock itself—or what we had thought to be rock—was part of the rising mass.

Have you ever seen an innocent stick turn into a serpent, a log in a river show sudden crocodile-eyes and swim away?

If you have, then you will know how I felt.

Up went the monster, half across the sky; and now it began to lurch and hirlle with that strange movement I had noted before, covering immense areas of ground with every lurch. I heard Rattray Smith draw in his breath with a sort of whistling noise.

"I don't think it'll touch us," I whispered, with my lips on his ear. "Keep quiet."

"Man," he said. "Oh, man!" and seemed to choke.

France kept quite still.

I smelled the queer smell of it, not the sort of smell it should have been; strangely old and non-pungent. I saw a small shadow, round-headed, come out of nowhere and scuttle away. I saw the great shadow hunting it. Smith saw too; for some extraordinary reason, he was crying, in broken, half-suppressed sobs.

"I don't reckon it can—" I began, in a cautious whisper. He interrupted.

"Man," he said, "you—you—don't know. I've seen discarnate spirits; I've seen—I— No matter. This is beyond everything one ever— *Woopl!*"

They were out of the pill-box, like rats breaking cover, and I after them, going I didn't know where. I had seen what they had—and even though I didn't believe it, I ran. The big shadow had turned toward us, suddenly rearing itself up, up, until it stood a hundred feet high among the stars. It leaned a little forward, like something listening; it was semi-erect, and in its enormous forepaws it held a small dark thing that kicked and then was still.

"I—I—" stuttered Rattray Smith as we ran. "Discarnate dinosaur—spirits if they get angry— Where's the house?"

"Wrong way," I panted, seizing his elbow. I had caught a pale gray glimmer in front of us, and realized we were heading for the sea. We stopped and looked back. Something immense rocked heavily against the stars, coming up with appalling swiftmess. I saw that it was between us and the bungalow. Not that that mattered; by its size, it could have cracked the bungalow like a nut—and that it meant, for sport or for spite, to drive us over the cliff. I knew—I don't know how—that it was powerless to treat us as it had treated the little black ghost of prehistoric man, in that strange reproduction of an age-old drama, but that it was an evil thing, and would harm us all it could. And I knew too, in the same swift enlightening moment, why one man of the two who died had fallen over the cliff, and why another had slain himself. The last had not been able to endure this terrible rending of the veil. . . .

"Smith," I panted, "stand your ground; you'll break your neck. It can't harm us. It's only the fear."

"Discarnate spirits—" he babbled. I did not heed him. I was busy doing what the soldier did for Joan of Arc, in her evil moment—making a Cross of two sticks, with a stem of grass twisted round them. I held it in my hand, and I said—no matter what. Those who know will know.

By ever so little, the giant shadow missed us, lurched forward and with one toppling leap, went down the cliff.

"Come on," I shouted to Smith and France, though I could not see the latter. "I've got my torch and a plug of dynamite; we'll see the whole thing through."

"What are you going to do?" squeaked Rattray Smith.

"Put out those eyes in the cave," I shouted. I was exhilarated, above myself—as one used to be in the war. I scrambled down the cliff in the transparent dark, feeling my way; slightly surprised, but not much, to hear Smith coming after, I found the cave.

We stood for a minute gaining breath, and looking about us. There was nothing to be seen anywhere; nothing to be heard but the steady slapping of waves on the beach.

"I'm with you," declared Smith squeakily. "As a palæontologist—"

"A which?" I said. "Don't trip over those bones, and don't stop to pick them up now!"—for he was stooping down and fumbling. I added, without quite knowing what I meant, "The dinosaur's ghost didn't have eyes." But

he seemed to know; he said: "That makes it all the more—" I did not hear the rest; we were too busy picking our way.

Round the corner, we stopped. The eyes were there. Low down, unmoving, unwinking in the ray of the torch as I threw it on. Big as plates; blue-green, glittering—

"Hold the torch while I fix this," I whispered. Smith took it; his hand was unsteady, but I could not blame him for that. I bit off my fuse as short as I dared; lit it, and tossed the plug. . . .

There was a boom that almost cracked our ear-drums; immediately after, stones and dirt came smashing down in such quantity that we found ourselves staggering wildly, bruised and cut, beneath a hundred blows.

"Are you hurt?" I called to Smith.

"Bring your damned torch here," was his only reply.

I came forward, and found him on hands and knees in the midst of an amazing raffle of half-fossilized bones; some of them were as big as the masts of a ship, though partly smashed by the explosion. Almost falling loose from the cliff above our heads was the most astounding skull I had ever dreamed of, a thing far bigger than an elephant's, with huge eye-sockets set well forward, and the tusky jaws of a tiger. Behind the eye-sockets, as I waved the torch, shone a mass of something vivid, greenish blue.

"Oh, God," cried Smith—who didn't believe in God,—"you've broken up the finest dinosaur skeleton in the world!"

I was too busy to trouble about him. I had climbed a little way up, and was scraping at the mass of iridescent, green-blue crystals in which the skull was set; which, through uncounted ages, had sifted down through various openings, filling the huge orbits of the eyes, so that they gleamed in the light as if alive.

"I'd break up my grandmother's skeleton," I told him joyously, "if it was bedded in copper pyrites. We've found the paying stuff at last!" It was not the dark roof of the cave that I saw, as I said that, not the glittering pyrites, or the amazing great bones, or the scrambling, complaining figure of Smith on the floor of the cave. It was St. Mary's in Sydney, on a summer morning, with a white figure coming up the aisle "on her father's arm"—to me!

Rattray Smith, I understand, has written a great deal for different scientific magazines about the curious happenings on Cave Island. In one, he told the story of the great skeleton; how it was found, and where, and how put together again. He doesn't say what he got for it, but I believe that was something to write home about; good dinosaurs come high, with or without incredible ghost stories attached. The spiritualistic magazines simply ate up his account of the prehistoric ghost and its sinister activities. Especially did they seem to like his conclusions about the skeleton acting as a sort of medium, or jumping-off point, for the apparition. He may have been right or wrong there; at all events, it is certain that after the removal of the bones, no one engaged in working the mines ever saw or heard anything remarkable.

France? We found him in the bungalow, drunk, and under a bed. He says, and maintains, that we were all in the same condition. A man must save his face.