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OF MYSTERY AND TERROR

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*"On, on—where the Sons of Amor press thickest!"*

# The Moon-Dial

By Henry S. Whitehead

**S**AID YUSSUF, the young son of the Maharajah of Kangalore, a hill-state in the north of India, looked down through the white moonlight one stifling night in July upon the moon-dial where it stood clear of

the encompassing cypresses in that portion of the palace gardens which lay immediately under his window. Saïd Yussuf never retired without looking down at the spot where its shimmering paleness caused it to stand out clearly even on

A tale of memories immemorial  
sings in the silver magic of the  
Indian moon.

nights when only the starlight illuminated that space in the closely-shrubbed gardens.

During the day the moon-dial was only a queer, somewhat battered antique, brought from nobody knew where in the reign of the old Maharajah, Saïd's grandfather, who had remodeled the gardens. But it was Saïd himself who had named it the moon-dial. He had got that phrase from one of the works of the English writer, George Du Maurier, which his father, who had been educated at Oxford and married an English wife, had placed in the palace library. Saïd's tutor did not always approve of his private reading, but then Mr. Hampton did not know just what that included. Summers the tutor always went home to England on his three months' vacation, and then Saïd took refuge in the great library and read to his heart's content of Kipling, Dumas, Gustave Flaubert, the English Bible. Saïd, instructed for reasons of state twice a week in the Koran by the Chief Mullah of Kangalore, found the heroic tales of the Old Testament and the incidents in the life of Jesus-ben-Yussuf singularly attractive by comparison with the dry works of Mohammed, the Prophet.

Saïd had gone up to his quarters this evening, a very hot night, as usual, at about nine-thirty. Now, an hour later, he was lying on his stomach along the broad window-seat of his turreted apartment, arrayed only in a pair of European boy's "shorts," which were cooler than the orthodox pajamas these stifling nights. It was, despite the heavy heat, a really glorious night, gorgeous with the full moon, though no breath of air stirred the leaf of a single shrub or tree.

**T**HE face of the moon-dial, like very old silver, or nickel, was overscored with curious, cryptic markings which, in daylight, Saïd

was never weary of examining. This face—for the thing was movable—he had turned very slightly late that afternoon towards the west; he could not have said why he had done that. It was instinct, a vague affair like that other instinct which told him surely, because of many generations of ancestors who had believed in reincarnation, that he had lived before, many, many times!

Now, there in the window, he looked down at it, with no thought of sleep in his mind.

A French clock, somewhere, chimed eleven. A delicate, refreshing breeze, hardly more than a breath, shifted the light silk curtains. Saïd closed his eyes with the comfort of it, and the little breeze fanned his back, pleasurably, like the touch of soft fingers.

When he opened his eyes and looked back again at his moon-dial, he suddenly roused himself to full wakefulness and abruptly pushed his chin higher on his cupped hands. He gazed now with all his interest concentrated.

The dial seemed to be glowing, in a fashion he had never previously observed. A thin, lambent, eery flicker of light played over its ancient surface, moving oddly. Watching closely he saw the light take on something like form; a definite movement. Slanting rays seemed to flow down from some point above; and now, as he watched them gravely, they came down with greater and greater rapidity. The rays glowed like roses; they fell like a thin rain striking silently and appearing to rebound from the dial's surface.

Fascinated, Saïd rose to his knees and leaned far out of the window in the pure, warm night air, drinking in this strange spectacle. He was not in the least disturbed by its unusualness. All this seemed to him a recurrence of something—the

fulfilment of one of those vague, gossamer-like yearnings of his, which were wholly natural to him, but, which so seldom met their realization in this life! It seemed not unnatural that rose-colored rays should pour down—they seemed literally to pour now—and break into veritable cascades there at the moon-dial. . . .

**H**E had always, somehow, felt within himself some strange, subtle affinity with the moon. He had said nothing of this. It was not the sort of thing one could discuss with Mr. Hampton or even with his parents. Others than himself, he realized, would consider such an idea highly absurd.

Moonlight, and more especially the moon at her full, had always attracted his attention since his earliest recollection. Innumerable times he had watched it, cold and frosty on winter nights, pale and straw-colored in the spring, huge, orange, warmly luminous in late summer and autumn. It was orange-colored now, enormous, bafflingly exotic.

Great sheets of light seemed now to fall and shatter themselves upon the dial; light, orange and tenuous like the great rolling orb itself; light, alluring, somehow welcoming. . . .

A great longing suddenly invaded Saïd's mind. He wanted to go down there and stand in that light; reach his arms up into it and let it bathe him. He stirred uneasily. He had, many times, dreamed of floating down to the lawns from his window, levitated, supported by mysterious, invisible arms! Now the longing became an almost unbearable nostalgia, a veritable yearning. The light, where it had broken and splashed off the face of the dial was dancing luminously, softly, through the shadows of the great encircling cypress trees. It seemed to gather

itself together; to roll along the ground. He shut his eyes again and buried his face in his hands.

When he looked back, for he could not for very long keep his eyes away from this spectacle, the light was hurling itself down in shafts and blocks and streams upon the dial-face, with a certain rhythm. The stream was more solid now, more continuous. It broke into whorls and sparkling, dim roulades, and swept earthward, as though re-distilled from the magical alchemy of the mysterious ancient dial-face; it seemed to Saïd that it was circling, tenuously, and yet with a promise of continuity, of increasing power, about the dial's stone standard.

The light stream was interrupted now and again by blank spaces, blocks of black darkness; and looking for these and watching them descend like lacunae in the orange stream, he imagined them to be living creatures and half expected to see them take firmer form and dance there, weaving through and through the flickering maze of whorls.

He wanted to float down there, and the longing made a lump in his throat.

**H**E rose, silently opened his bedroom door, and listened. He could hear his father's quiet breathing, through the open door of a bedroom across the hallway. His mother slept farther down the hall, away from the great winding, pillared stairway which led below.

Silently he walked to the stair-head, turned, and went down.

He emerged on the lawn a few seconds later. He had only to unfasten a summer screen-door and cross a broad veranda. Then he was across the gravel of the drive and on the velvety lawn, and running towards the moon-dial, a little white figure in white drill shorts, his dark

hair glowing in the pouring moonlight.

He paused before pressing through the coppice of cypresses. There was no sound in the open space about the dial, but his instinct for the affairs of the moon warned him that something altogether new and strange was going on out there. He felt no fear, but knew that all this was a repetition of something, some vast and consuming happiness which somewhere, somehow, he had known before; though certainly not in his conscious recollection. It was—this feeling about something very, very old, and very lovely—no more than a recurrence or a repetition of something strange and wild and sweet which had gone before; something mellowed and beautiful because of a vast, incomprehensible antiquity.

He walked forward now, very quietly; and, for a reason which he could not explain even to himself but which he knew to be a right instinct, he proceeded, holding himself very erect, through the cypresses and out into the orange stream.

He knew even before he glanced down at them that a great black panther lay crouched, immobile, on either side of him; crystallized in the magic of the moon out of two of those black void-like things, transmuted by the power of the dial into actuality. Lightly he placed a palm on the head of each of the great ebony beasts, and the velvety touch of their fur reassured him.

**A**BOUT the dial softly-moving figures, erect and graceful, moved stately, with a vast gravity. Within the circle about the dial the flat moonlight lay like a pool of oil. Tall white lilies stood about its perimeter, their calices open to the moon. Their fragrance came to him in recurrent waves, and dimly he heard the music of lutes and the

delicate rattle of systra, the soft, musical clanging of cymbals, and a chorus of faint singing, a chant in rhythm to the beat of clanging salsalim. He heard the word Tanit repeated again and again, and he found himself saying it.

A cloud sailed majestically across the moon. A delicate sadness tinged the warm night. The lily scent grew faint. The cymbals slowed and dulled.

He felt the great beasts rise beside him. Their fur caressed his hands as they moved forward, gravely, majestically. A hand on each, he walked forward with them, towards his moon-dial. He looked down upon its face and at the faint outlines of mystical figures.

Then he knew a great happiness. It seemed to him that these ancient symbols, which had always concealed their inner meaning from him, were now plain. He was sure now that he had lived before, many times. . . .

The cloud passed, and now the figures on the dial-face were once more merely dim old markings. The statuesque black panthers were gone; there were no longer any dancing figures. A little breeze moved the leaves of the deodars.

He looked up, straight into the face of the moon, instinctively opening his arms wide towards that vast, far serenity. He passed a hand gently over the smooth, worn surface of the ancient dial. Then he walked back to the palace and up to his sleeping-quarters. He felt sleepy now. He got into his bed, drew in his breath in a long sigh of contentment, and fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

His beautiful mother was standing beside his bed when he awakened. It was broad day. She bent over him, and he smiled up into her face as she kissed him.

The Maharanee of Kangalore was a fanciful person.

"Your hair smells of lilies," she said.

**S**AI'D could hardly wait for the next night of the full moon. His sure instinct for lunar affairs told him plainly that only at the full would the moon come into conjunction with the dial.

But the experience—if it had been a real experience; sometimes, as he thought of it, he could hardly tell—lay, clear-cut, like one of the cameos in the palace treasure-room, in his alert mind. He thought over, meantime, every occurrence, all the sequences of his adventure in the gardens. He put together all its arabesque details. They crystallized into the certainty that he had been living over again something which he had known before; something very important, very dear to him.

He counted off the days and nights until the next possible time. . . .

It came on an August night of balm and spice following light rains; a night on which the tuberose and jasmine of the gardens were pouring out an ecstasy of fragrance.

Said had been in the palace treasury that afternoon, with old Mohammed Ali the Guardian, and his mind was full of the beauty of that priceless collection which had come down through countless generations: precious and semi-precious jewels; ornaments—armlets, elephant-ankuses, sword-hilts, jeweled post-tops for palanquins; innumerable affairs, including a vast number of ancient and comparatively modern weapons, weapons of every conceivable variety, which had served for many, many generations the fighting men of his house. He had poured rubies, the ransom of an empire, through his two hands that day; worn Saracenic helmets of light steel, swept through the air with a whistling sound the curved,

jewel-encrusted scimitars of his ancestors. Now, from the window-seat, the moon-dial shimmered vaguely among the cypresses. His mind was full of vague, alluring expectations; his body trembled with the anticipation of something dimly recalled, tantalizingly envisaged, now apparently imminent. . . .

**H**E went down the stairs and out upon the lawn towards the moon-dial. He wanted to be there, this time, as soon as the light-stream should begin its strange downpouring. He was sure that it would come. He touched lovingly the ancient, scarred face of the dial runed with its cryptic markings. He had, for one brief, exulting moment, he remembered clearly, thought that he understood those markings twenty-eight evenings ago. But, the next day, when he had gone to the dial after eight hours' healthful sleep in between his extraordinary experience and the fresh light of a glorious summer morning, he had discovered that they were once more merely strange marks. The disillusion had saddened him. Things, in life, so often seemed like that! One imagined that success was in hand, and in the morning the gold had turned to ashes.

His mood to-night was one of quivering anticipation. Thrills of an expected gladness shook him, standing there beside his dial, his face turned to the sky where the August moon proudly dominated the heavens.

Abruptly the downpouring enveloped him as he waited there in an ecstasy of wild, unearthly glory.

He felt himself drowned, engulfed, in this utter gorgeousness of feeling which seemed to melt him, body and soul; to carry him, willingly, his arms outspread to receive it, up into itself. He felt himself suffused, as he yielded to it; something like a potent fluid in-

vaded him, drenched his utter inner-consciousness, satisfied his happy heart. . . .

**H**E opened his eyes, closed automatically at the sudden access of the moon's pouring power. He beheld a vast, glorious configuration, splendid, gorgeous, illuminated; growing clearer, more detailed, more utterly satisfying, like the center of all places, the consummation of all desires, the goal of all vague and beautiful thoughts. He felt, somehow, safe, with a well-being transcending all experiences; a feeling that at long last he was arriving where he had always belonged; coming swiftly, inerrantly, to the very center and source where he had, fleetingly, in occasional happy glimpses of the mind, always wanted to be; always known that he must and should be.

He stood upon a soft meadow of pale, bright grass, in the midst of a light scent of lilies, outside the slowly opening doors of a lofty temple, which towered up into the heavens and seemed to mingle its pinnacles with the nearby, friendly stars.

Now the great doors stood wide open. He walked towards them. The sense of old knowledge, of what he must do once he came within the temple, was in his mind. He slowed his pace to a formal dignified tread. He passed through the doors of the temple and stood within.

And, before he could turn his head to look about in this vastness, into his very soul penetrated the message:

"Sleep! Tanit commands."

Beside him he observed a porphyry couch, its finials glowing with complicated whorls and insets of some faintly shining metal like platinum. Upon this, without question, his mind and heart at peace, he reclined, and closed his eyes.

A sweeping, distant, heavenly-

sweet breath of music, the music of viols and systra, swept his mind. He slept. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

**H**E strode, a tall, commanding figure, through the narrow streets of the great city where he had lived and worked for many years, the city of London. Above, a waxing moon poured down her gracious light through a black and drifting mass of storm-clouds.

It was chilly and damp, and he had drawn about himself his heavy black outdoor cloak of rich dark cloth. He picked his steps through the filth and mud of the street, while just ahead of him a man-servant bore aloft a flaming cresset-torch to light the uneven way.

He proceeded onward, moved by a strong purpose. This, towards which on this uninviting night he hastened, was no ordinary appointment. What few wayfarers were abroad seemed animated by a great and consuming dread. These glanced furtively at him and at each other as they slunk along, giving each other wide berths. And, in the hand of each, a small, sponge-like object, saturated with reeking vinegar, was held before the face.

At last the two stood before the portals of a magnificent building. The servant knocked. Two men-at-arms, gorgeous in the royal livery, recognizing him, had saluted and allowed him to pass.

The doors, in answer to the servant's knock, now swung open.

A gentleman, splendid in embroidered silks, came forward and bowed. He returned this salutation.

"A dismal night to be thus abroad, My Lord Burlinghame," he remarked, and the gentleman smiled and nodded.

"The King awaits you—anxiously," said the gentleman, and turned and led the way.

He stood now, before the King, in a small, richly-furnished apartment, its walls thick with Spanish arras.

"Come," said the King eagerly, "sit, most worthy Doctor Campalunis, and relate to me the result of your labors."

He delayed seating himself until the King himself had resumed his seat. He spoke directly, pointedly:

"I know now the cause, Sire, beyond any doubt or peradventure. A surprising conclusion, upon which the astrological art and actual experiment converge to show its actuality! To state the matter pithily it cometh down to this: It is the superabundance of rats in this your realm of England that causeth the plague!"

**T**HE King started, half smiled; grew suddenly serious again, looked mystified, swore roundly a rolling oath:

"By the twenty-four nostrils of the Twelve Apostles! Good Doctor Campalunis, were it not thyself 'twould sound like a scurvy jest!"

He nodded, and smiling slowly, answered the King:

"It was in sooth a sorry task; one which, I doubt me, few physicians would have descended to! Yet did I demonstrate its accuracy; the 'calculation' was based upon the conjunction of our lady, the moon, with the planet Venus. And—it pointed to the rats!

"Then did I take three rats, and from them—oh, sorry task!—did remove, with these hands, their parasites. These did I transfer to three small beasts of various kinds, a hare, a stoat, and a mewling cat! Proof, Sire! Within twelve hours, upon all three—as the rat-fleas penetrated to their blood—did there appear tumors like to those upon the folk in this calamity we name 'The Plague' and which now devastates the realm. Soon thereafter all were

dead, each after his nature: the hare without resistance; the stoat fighting; the cat, as though she would never pass—nine lives she hath, according to the ancient saying!

"Experiment thus doth prove the wisdom of our lady, the moon. I counsel thee, then, that all rats be hunted and destroyed, that the plague stay itself and England be not thrice-decimated."

He was driving back in a great rumbling coach. Beside him, on the silken-cushioned seat, lay the great red silk purse of gold presented to him by the King—the King who, trusting him, had, before his departure, summoned Giles Talbot, his scrivener, and was even now preparing a royal proclamation directing, upon pain of the King's displeasure, all burgesses, shrieves, coroners and mayors to cause the folk to find and destroy the swarming rats and so end the plague. . . .

He glanced out through the coach window upon the hastening figures of occasional wayfarers; and, ever and again, cressets lighting the gloomy scene disclosed bearers carrying the victims of the plague, hastily and furtively through the muddy streets to the charnel-house. . . .

Above, the moon, now clear of clouds, looked serenely down upon this theater of death and destruction, where ruthless King Plague had well-nigh replaced the reign of kindly King Charles.

\* \* \* \* \*

**C**ARRYING a small heavy package, he stepped briskly along a sunny roadway towards a goldsmith's shop. He stepped within and the apprentices raised their heads. Welcoming smiles, murmurs of pleased greeting met him; and then rapid questions in the soft Italian argot.



"What, the masterpiece? Finished at last!"

"*Ecco, Ascanio, fratello.* It is done, eh?"

"The Master will be pleased."

"*Per Baccho!* A purse that it is magnificent!"

He placed his burden upon the central table. The others were all crowding about him now eager to see.

"Touch it not, colt of a jackass!"

"Room for our Ascanio, the new Cellini!"

"Run—fly, Beppo! Fetch the Master."

He left the inmost wrapping, of silk, where it was, closely draped about the figurine. It stood, shapeless under the unrevealing drapery, about nine inches in height. The apprentices hopped in their anxiety to see it.

Beppo dashed back into the workroom, the Master following. All stood aside as the tall figure, dressed in plum-colored silk like a nobleman, came hurriedly into the room. The bearded face lighted.

"Ascanio! The Virgin—not finished—tell me not—"

"Finished, I believe, to the limit of my poor skill, Messer Benvenuto," he said, and gravely removed the silk wrapping.

There arose a chorus of shouts, squeals, hand-clappings, murmurs, small mutterings and sighs from the apprentices; then, this dying down, he looked at the Master. The others, too, were looking at him. His was the ultimate decision, the last opinion of the workroom, of the city of Florence, of the great world. The master goldsmith stood, motionless, silent, frowning slightly, before the figurine.

It was of red gold, the Virgin Mother of God, chaste, beautiful, cunningly wrought; glowing now in the freshness of the new metal; gleaming, exquisite.

The Master took it into his

hands. He held it off, squinted at it; held it close, gazing intently, silently. He laid it down, reached into a pouch, brought out a magnifying glass, sat down on the stool Beppo had placed for him. The apprentices dared barely to breathe.

Messer Benvenuto laid it down at last. He returned, without a word, the glass to his pouch. He turned about and looked at his visitor.

Then abruptly, suddenly, he held out both sensitive hands.

"A masterpiece!" he pronounced, and rose from the stool.

"And this—" he indicated the base of the statue, "no goldsmith hath so done before, Ascanio. Inspiration! Thou hast gone far—to the end of our art. The moon—as a pedestal for the Mother of God! It smacks of the perfection of art. I hail thee, Ascanio—Master!"

\* \* \* \* \*

IT was very early dawn, a fresh, cool, sea-dampened dawn, just breaking to a delightful smell of dew-wet heather. He paced up and down on the rough stone flagging. He paused, looked about.

Over towards the east the sun, glorious, burst over the horizon. He had been watching for it from the wall's top, over the gate, and now in its new illumination he gazed out, frowningly, beneath the pressure of the great bronze helmet; over the gray and brown gorse hummocks and undulating prairie of rough furze, into the north. There, always concealed, always ready to strike, signaling with their fires to each other, chieftain to chieftain, lay the Picts. Against these this ultimate fortification had been built.

Behind him, to the south, under the wall, a great din arose, a noise compounded of the disassembling of *ballistae*, much hammering and wrenching as the heavy timbers were taken apart; metallic clang-

ings as the breastplates and *scuta* were stacked, in tens, a mule-load each; shouts, commands; the ringing, brief blast of a bugle.

The relief, marching briskly, the never-changing quick step of Rome's invincible legions, came now to a last routine duty. He raised to his lips a small golden whistle, fastened about his neck with a leathern thong. His men came in from east and west. He saluted the approaching centurion. The guard above the gate was changed mechanically, the two officers exchanged brief greetings. His own veteran century behind him, he marched off duty; descended towards the gate at the south side.

A vast bustle greeted him. The troops were preparing for their final evacuation of the wall. All about him this clang of weapons being packed rose to heaven.

**H**E was being saluted. He stopped, listened to the message. He was to go to the Emperor, at once. He acknowledged the orders, dismissed the messenger, turned to the west.

"As thou knowest, oh, Gaius, the barbarian hordes press back our legions. By sheer force of their incredible numbers, they have worn down the defences of the north. They slip through. Rome herself calls, at long last. For Rome's defence we must go.

"But, oh valiant one, these legions must go safely. It were to serve Rome ill to lose a single quaternion against these Picts. Take thou of thy men, and stay behind, then, here upon the wall. If, at the expiry of two days, thou are yet alive, then follow the legions. Yet, by all the guile and all the skill and all the love of Rome thou dost possess, hold the gate against the north until we are away. I leave thee to the bravest task of all, oh, Gaius!" . . .

With his six legionaries, he

strode up and down above the gate, watching the north. For a day and a half the three legions had been marching, ever southward, towards their embarkation-points, through the fair and glorious country of Brittain which the wall had made possible; fifteen thousand seasoned veterans, returning to hold off, if might be, for another decade perhaps, the swarming barbarians who were pressing down upon the Mediterranean world.

For the first six hours nothing had taken place upon the Picts' side of the wall; only the increase of signal fires. Then had come the slow gathering of this barbarian horde. Now, on the evening of the second day, as he looked down, despite the threatenings of his sweating legionaries, with their rocks, their small catapults, and now—as a last resort—the dreaded fire-pots, he saw the Picts gathered in their thousands. A dank smell rose from these barbarians; a smell compounded of the sweat of laboring naked bodies, of furze smoke, of the skins of wolves from which they fashioned their scant garments.

**A**LREADY the gate was down; already, in their hundreds, the Picts swarmed down below there on the south side of the wall, the Roman side. Convinced now that the garrison had departed, that these on the wall's top were merely a scant guard remaining for the purpose of fooling them, of holding off their own inevitable attack, the leaders of the Picts were haranguing them to the massed attack up the ramps to the wall's top.

Abruptly the moon rose over the western horizon. And with its rising a message, authoritative, definite, filled his mind:

"Well done, and bravely, valiant one, friend of Tanit! And now I take thee unto myself, ere thou perish in the body."

He struggled mentally to reply, as he looked at his hard-bitten, middle-aged men, old legionaries who had remained; who were giving all for *Roma Mater*. They stood now, massed together, just within the barrier which blocked off the ramp's top, their shields interlaced, their spears in a precise row behind them, their short blunt swords in their right hands; silent, ready for their last stand. As he looked at these faithful men his heart went out to them. Their devotion, their iron discipline had never once wavered.

"Nay," he answered. "Nay, Lady Diana, grace of all the *Dii Romae*, I go not willingly, but purpose rather to stand here with these!"

He stepped towards them, his own, somewhat heavier, sword ready in his hand, his shield affixed to his left arm. The roar of the mounting Picts came bellowingly through to them now as the horde swarmed up the ramp. Now the barrier was down, crumpled before the irresistible urge of numbers. Now the short swords were in play, taking terrible toll, like flails, like machines.

Then all that space was abruptly illuminated, as a huge ball of what seemed to the stricken Picts pure incandescent fire smote the stone flooring of the great wall's top, burst into a myriad fragments of light, gathered itself together, then went out into a sudden blackness; and through this blackness the figure of their centurion showed itself to his legionaries like Mars Invictus; head up, sword raised on high, and then, as abruptly, vanished.

**T**HE Picts had disappeared. The legionaries looked at each other blankly. One, Tertullius, looked over the edge.

"All run through the gateways into their territory," he reported to his companions.

"And Gaius?" one asked, "What of our centurion?"

"It is the high Gods! He hath gone to Odin!"

"The light swallowed him up. Hail, O mighty Mithras!"

"He is gone from among us, O invincible gods of Rome!"

"He was godlike. His was the kindness of Chrestus!"

"Olympus receives him, doubtless, O Venus Victrix! A great marvel, this!"

Within a few minutes six hard-bitten veteran legionaries were at the double on the trail of the main army, going straight south, pausing not over the various and sundry abandoned arms and supplies, jet-sam left strewn along that way of retreat.

And upon the unanimity of their report and the surprise which their arrival, without their officer, had caused in the ranks of Maxentius' legions, within the year a shrine to Gaius, who had been taken up by the old gods of *Roma Mater*, was rising in the little hills above Calericum, which had been the Centurion Gaius' native village.

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**H**E rose to his feet, stiff from that long reclining, and stretched himself. It was night, a night of warm and mellow airs playing about the olive trees under the full-moon of the early Palestinian spring. He gazed, grave-eyed, towards that sinister hilltop where three Roman crosses stood athwart the moon's light, dark and sinister shadows of death and desolation. He looked long at them, stooped, and adjusted a loose sandal-thong; rose again, and, turning, began to walk towards the city, beautiful upon its own hill of Zion, the temple pinnacles white and glorious in the pouring moonlight.

But on an olive-bordered slope

he paused and looked steadfastly up into the calm moon's face. There seemed to him to be, struggling towards clear understanding, some message for him in what he had seen that day, the marvels he had witnessed, he, a Greek of Corinth, sojourning in Jerusalem with the caravan of his uncle Themistocles the merchant. The moon had always been his friend, since earliest infancy. Now, aged twenty, he felt always an inspiration, a kind of renewed vigor, when she was at full.

She was at full now, and he remembered that these Palestinians based one of their religious observances upon the lunar cycle. It was now begun. The middle-aged man next him had explained the ritual to him just before sunset, when those bodies had been taken down from the crosses.

It had been a harrowing experience. These Romans were a ruthless lot, "conquerors of the world," indeed. Greece lay beneath their heel. This Palestinian country, too, was a mere procuratorship, however; not a province like his own Hellas. This execution—he had heard of that method, though he had never witnessed it before—had, however, seemed to meet the approval of the Palestinians.

**T**HE "message" troubled him. Something was pressing through to his consciousness. A duty was being thrust upon him. That, of course, had happened before, in much the same way—warnings, admonitions, growing in his mind. He had always followed them, for, indeed, they had been unmistakable things, matters germane to his inmost thoughts, parts of his own consciousness. What would it be this time? He opened his mind, looking up at that bright, mysterious disk, which, as Aristotle, or was it old Zeno?—he could not remember precisely; he was a merchant, not a

philosopher—had taught, regulated the waters of the universe; the tides. An odd conception that! True, doubtless. Something caused the ceaseless ebbings and flowings of his own blue Aegean, of the *Mare Internum* as the Romans named the great sea about which their vast empire now centered itself.

The "message" had to do with finding someone. He lay down upon the warm grass as yet unaffected by any distillation of morning dew.

"Search—search—here in this city of Jerusalem, for one named—"

The name eluded him. He moved his feet, impatiently. There were ants here. One had crawled upon the side of his right foot. He moved the foot, and it encountered a small obstacle. He sat up, rolled over, reached down. It was a stone, a small, round pebble—*pétros*.

Then the "message" came clear like the emergence of Pallas Athene full-armed and cinctured from the mighty head of Zeus!

"Search! Find—Petros!"

It burned in his brain. He sat there, cogitating it. One named Peter he was to find, here in this city of Jerusalem. He nodded his head in acquiescence. A rich energy suffused him as he looked up once more into the moon's quiet face.

He rose, lightly, drew in a deep, refreshing breath laden with the sweet dry scent of myrtle, then he walked down the hill towards Jerusalem, in search of someone named Peter.

\* \* \* \* \*

**T**HE faint memory of an evil dream contended with a fetid odor which drifted in through the methodical row of star-shaped windows opposite his polished wooden couch with the henna-stained horse-tails at its curved foot. The dream, an unpleasant, vague memory now, faded from his waking conscious-

ness, encompassed by that smell. That would be from the *ergastulum*, the slave-compound of the suffete, Hanno, whose somewhat more pretentious palace towered over his own on the upper slope of the hill. Hanno, now in the field against the revolting mercenaries, was badly served at home. He must send a peremptory message to the keeper of the *ergastulum*! This was intolerable. He rose to a sitting posture, throwing off the linen coverlet with its embroidered horses and stars thickly sewn upon it, and looked down his long body.

There were unmistakable evidences of emaciation, loss of weight. No wonder, with the scarcity of food now prevalent in Carthage. He rose and clapped his hands together.

Through a curtain entered instantly a huge Nubian, Conno, the bath-slave. Conno's soot-black arms were full of the materials for the bath; a red box of polished enamel containing the fuller's powder, large squares of soft linen, several strigils, a cruse of rose-colored oil.

He followed the slave to a far corner of the lofty room, five stories above the roadway below, sweating now, like Conno himself. The early morning heat poured in dryly through the many windows. He cast himself down on a narrow couch of polished marble, and Conno poured a thin stream of the hot water from a small amphora along his back, spreading it about with the palms of his muscular, yet soft hands. Conno was a very skillful bath-slave. He was dumb, too, which, despite the deprecated savagery of a former owner who had had his tongue removed to gain this desirable end, was, somehow, an advantage on a hot and blistering morning like this!

**C**ONNO sifted reddish-brown powder onto his back, working it with the water into a paste.

When the paste was set he rolled over and Conno repeated his ministrations. Then he stood up, and the slave rubbed the thin paste into his muscular arms, down his thighs, about his neck, delicately on the smooth portions of his face where his beard did not grow.

After this preliminary kneading, Conno thinned the paste with more hot water, and began to use the strigils. Then Conno skilfully rinsed him from head to foot, the red-stained water running down into an opening in the floor whence a pipe led it away.

Conno kneaded his muscles with oil, and, at last, gathered his paraphernalia together and walked out of the room.

He returned to the part of the room where his bed stood. Here, awaiting him, stood a slender, dark Numidian, a young girl, who deftly dressed his hair, pomading it with great skill.

Two more slaves entered with the garments of the day. They were green, a cool color which he liked to wear. Dressed, he continued to sit, frowning thoughtfully. That dream! Thoughtfully he attempted to reconstruct it, to bring it back to his conscious mind.

In the process his eye lighted on an ornament on the stand beside him, a serpent carved cunningly in ebony, and polished to brilliance, a coiled serpent, its tail in its mouth—emblem of the endlessness of the universe, a symbol of Tanit, goddess of the moon, one of the city's ancient, traditional, tutelary divinities. She was somewhat neglected now in the stress of this famine, result of the mercenary-troops' revolt which had been going on now for five months. Yes, there were even certain rumors that the college of priests which had served from time immemorial the temple of Tanit, was breaking up; these men, or half-men as he con-

temptuously thought of the white-robed hierophants, were slowly deserting the gentle Tanit for one or another of the severer deities, representing the male principles; *Baalim*, violent gods, requiring a more sanguinary ministry.

Tanit—the dream! A message, it had been: “Go to the northeast, to where the main aqueduct runs underneath the wall’s top. Drive out from there—”

HE rose and clapped his hands violently. He strode towards the doorway with its silk curtains wrought in flowers and stars and horses, emblems of the Carthaginian timocracy, and met the hurrying slave.

“Swiftly, Bothon, my litter and a light spear!”

The slave ran. He stood, awaiting his return gazing pensively out of a window, open to the scorching African sunlight drenching the world of Carthage; up to that magnificent location, the finest in the city, where, near the hill’s summit towered the vast palace of Hamilcar Barca, sea-suffete of the republic. If Barca would only return! No man knew where he was, save that with a few galleys he was at sea. Barca’s return, if, indeed, he should return, must mean a turning-point in this campaign, so far ineffective, against the revolted troops, now compassing the city from the scorching, desert plain below; the campaign of the evil old suffete, Hanno, whose lifetime of debauchery had left him treacherous, ineffective, and leprous.

The slave announced the litter and handed him a light spear. He balanced it in his hand, thoughtfully, then descended to the entranceway. Here, again, the fetor of that slave-compound assaulted his nostrils. He laid the spear carefully lengthwise of the litter’s edge and stepped within. He could feel

its hardwood joints creak, even though they were oiled daily; even oil dried quickly in this drenching heat. He heard the muffled grunts of his four burly Nubians as they shouldered the litter. Then he was swaying lightly in the direction of the aqueduct. . . .

He stepped out, looked about him. He was not sure what it was he was to search for, even though the “message” had been peremptory. In the scorching sunlight, and here atop these smoothed stones the squaring and piling of which had consumed the lives of countless war-taken slaves a generation past, seemed almost unbearable, he walked along, slowly, contemplatively, now and again sounding with his spear’s polished butt the hollow-sounding stones. Down below there lay the encampment of the mercenaries, their numbers augmented now by revolting desert tribesmen, arriving daily, a vast configuration, menacing, spreading, down there on the sand which danced in the heat-waves. . . .

HE slowed his pace, stepped softly, now, more slowly. Now he paused, a tall, slender figure, atop the aqueduct. He listened. Ahead there—a chipping rending sound. Someone was concealed below, tearing out stones! The precious water, the city’s very life! One of the mercenaries, undoubtedly, who had worked his way in from the broad-mouthed vents, was doing it. As he stood there, listening, he remembered that he had himself warned the Council of that danger. If the water supply were diverted, destroyed, the city would perish! He lay down flat on his side, his ear against the smooth masonry, listening. Ah, yes—it was plain enough now, that chipping, grinding noise of breaking stonework. . . .

He rose, ran lightly forward, on

his toes, the spear poised delicately. He paused above a large square block of the hewn stone. He laid the spear down, placed both hands under the stone's outer edge, then, violently, skilfully, pulled it straight up. He let it fall against another flat stone, and, reaching for the spear, thrust once, straight down through the aperture he had made.

A groan, a gasping sigh, then the soft impacts, growing rapidly fainter, as a body was borne down, knocking against the remoter stone angles and corners down inside the great aqueduct there under the wall's top; a body bobbing and bumping its way on a last brief journey, to the vents below.

Then turning to the west, where a faint moon rolled palely in the blue, scorching African sky, he raised both arms straight towards it, a gesture of salutation, of adoration.

"To thee the praise, O Lady Tanit, tutelary of Carthage; to thee the praise, for this warning! Again, O effulgent one, hast thou saved the city; to thee all praise and thanks, adulation and attribution of power; to thee the adoration of the faithful; O perpetual bride, O glorious one, O effulgence, O precious one, O fountain of bounty. . . ."

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**H**E leaned heavily against the rounded edge of the wide war-chariot, three spears in his left hand, long and slender, fresh-ground from the day before by a cunning armorer of Gilgal. He had been wounded twice, both times by hurled darts, tearing his right thigh above the greave which encompassed the lower leg, and again in the top of the left shoulder; flesh-wounds both, yet throbbing, burning, painful.

The slaughter by those confed-

erate Amorites had been heavy, and here on the plain of Beth-Horon, the fighting still progressed, even though the rapidly descending sun had, with its decline, brought no coolness. Great clouds of dust filled the hot, palpitating air. He raised his head, and gazed down towards Ajalon. Above the fringe of distant tall cedars which marked the valley's nearer edge, the moon sailed, pale and faint. To the west the sun was now sunken half-way over the horizon, blood-red, disappearing so rapidly now that he could follow it with his bloodshot, dust-smearred eyes.

The charioteer turned, his reins lying loosely over the sweat-caked backs of the horses and addressed him:

"If but Jahveh would prolong the light, oh, My Lord Joshua!"

He raised his weary eyes to the west once more. The sun was now merely a rapidly descending tinge of brilliant carmine in the sullen sky. He spoke to his God:

"Let the light as of day continue, O Thou of Sabáoth Who rulest the up-rising and the down-setting of Thy people. Stay, light of sun, that Jahveh's host may see; and thou, too, O luminary of night, do thou, too, aid our host!"

A pink afterglow rose slowly from the west, spread far through the heavens, then, as though reluctantly, faded. The night fell rapidly, the manifold noises of the hand-to-hand conflicts grew fainter; the chariot-horses stirred as a faint breath blew up out of the tree-sheltered Valley of Ajalon. He turned to feel it on his face, and as he turned, a vast portent appeared to him.

For, from the moon, orange now, glowing enormously, there came first one single penetrating ray which seemed to reach down here to the plain of the House of Horon, and spread its radiance along the

ground; and then others and others; until the great level plain was illuminated as brightly as though by the sun himself. A breeze swept up from the valley. The horses plucked up nervous heads, their cut manes bristling. The charioteer looked about at him inquiringly. He shifted the three spears into his other hand.

"On," he cried, "on, on—where the Sons of Amor press thickest! Drive, drive, like Nimrud of the Great Valley, like the Lion of The House of Judah roaring after his prey! Drive, that we may smite afresh the enemies of the Lord, God of Hosts. . . ."

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**I**T was with these mighty words in his mouth and the sense of battle in his brain that he stirred into consciousness on the porphyry couch. A roseate atmosphere filled the temple, as of approaching dawn, or some mellifluous afterglow; and to his nostrils, scorched with the smoke and dust of battle, was wafted the refreshing scent of lilies.

And into his mind drifted the gentle command:

"Up, beloved of the Moon, up; arise, for Tanit comes."

He stood upright, waiting.

Then he heard a gentle voice, like a silver bell, and yet a voice of power; a voice before which he bent his head and covered his eyes.

"Hail, beloved of Tanit, giver of kindness, fountain of power, hail, and welcome here! Thou hast been permitted to see again thy existences; yet are these but a few, for thy encouragement, oh, well-beloved. In those past lives thou hast never wavered in thy steadfastness. Carry then through all of this thy present life the certainty of power, and of my love and aid.

"Go now, beloved, and take with thee—this!"

The voice ceased, and he felt, upon his left arm, a gentle touch.

He opened his eyes, lowered his folded arms.

He stood upon the lawn, beside the moon-dial, under the moon. He gazed up at that gleaming serenity with a great, deep love in his heart. It seemed to him that he had just passed through some wondrous, now nearly-erased, experience; an experience of wonder and power. He felt tremendously happy, content, safe. He raised his arms impulsively. Something caught his eye; something that gleamed.

He completed his gesture, but his eyes were, despite themselves, drawn around to the wondrous thing sparkling upon his left arm, just above the elbow! It shimmered like the very diadem of Tanit. He brought his arm up close to his eyes, looked at the glimmering jeweled thing, an inch and a half wide, which encircled his upper arm. It was a bracelet encrusted with shining jewels; a bracelet of some metal that he had seen before, inset, somewhere; pale, beautiful metal, like platinum. He moved it, slightly, up and down his arm, with his other hand. It moved, freely, and when he tried to draw it past his elbow—for there seemed to be no clasp to it—it came freely, and off over his hand and into his other hand. He held it close to his face and peered at it lost in a maze of wonderment mingled with faint recollections of brave happenings; not quite clear, yet somehow sure and certain in his mind.

**T**HEN, carrying it, and looking lovingly up again at the moon, he turned, for he felt, suddenly, quite tired and sleepy; and walked back to the house through the cypresses, to the murmur of countless tiny whirrings and pipings of insects in the hedges.

He carried it into his bedroom



and lighted the electric lamp on his bureau, and looked at it in the artificial light, closely, admiringly. It reflected this strong light in millions of coruscations; green, yellow, burning red, pale blue, every shade of mauve and lavender and deeper purple, all the manifold shades and variations of the gamut of colors.

He sighed, instinctively, and placed it in one of the smaller bureau drawers.

Then, strangely happy, contented, he went over and climbed into his bed. He stretched himself out and rolled over on his left side, for he felt very tired, although very happy and contented, and almost instantly fell asleep; but into his dreams of heroic deeds and great daring, and faithful vigils, and honorable trial, he carried the strange conviction which had come to him when he had turned the magnifi-

cent armlet about under the light.

The markings on the smooth inside of that clear, pale, heavy metal, were the same as the ancient marred runes, on his moon-dial, down in the garden; those runes which he had studied until he knew them by heart, could draw on paper, with a pencil, unerringly.

And now that he knew in his deep inner consciousness what the runes meant, he was ready, with a heart unafraid, to live his life, free, and full, and clear, and honorable, and beautiful; a life in union with the moon, his beloved. . . . He would know how to rule, when The Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies came and took his father away—might it be a long day, in the mercy of Allah!—and he, Saïd Yussuf should reign in his father's room over the great hill-state of Kangelore.