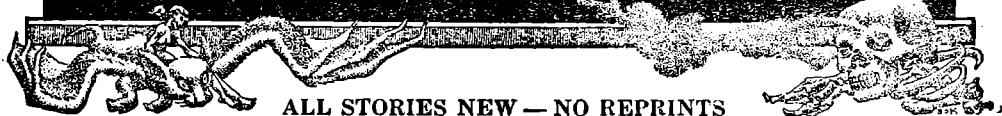


# Weird Tales



JANUARY, 1950

Cover by Matt Fox

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# The Smiling Face

BY MARY ELIZABETH COUNSELMAN



Heading by Fred Humiston

SIR CEDRIC HARBIN, the British archaeologist, rolled his head from side to side irritably on the canvas cot. It was the scream of a *jaru*—

jaguar—that had waked him this time. Two hours ago it had been the chittering of night-monkeys; half an hour before that, some other weird jungle-noise.

---

*The new guides belonged to the tribe known as the Vulture People. . . .*

From the supine position in which he had been lying for eight sweltering nights already, he glared up at the young Chavante native who was fanning him with a giant fern, to keep away the mosquitoes and the tiny vicious little *pium* flies that swarmed about him. At his look, the boy grinned apology and began to ply the "shoo-fly" with more energy, the capivara tooth in his pierced lower lip bobbing furiously. Harbin cursed, blinking away the sweat that kept trickling down into his eyes. He tried to sit up despite the adhesive strapped over his bare chest like a cocoon, but sank back with a groan.

Instantly the tent flap opened and a girl hurried in out of the humid night.

"Darling? I thought I heard you groaning. Are you in pain?"

"Not much. Just—bored! And disgusted! Haven't you gone to bed yet?"

Sir Cedric looked up at her wearily as she bent over him, gently mopping the sweat from his face and neck. She was small and blonde and exquisite, strikingly beautiful even in her rumpled shirt and jodhpurs. It was when she smiled, however, that one stopped seeing anything else. A quiet humor seemed to emanate from her broad sweetly-curved mouth and sparkling blue eyes, as though they invited one to share some joke that she knew and was about to tell. The Brazilian Indian boy beamed at her, visibly attracted. Harbin, her husband though he looked old enough to have been her father—caught at her hand gratefully.

"Diana," he sighed, "my dearest. How the devil you can be so bright and cheery, after the confounded mess I've made of this expedition? Walking into that boa constrictor like a—like a damned tourist who'd never set foot in the Matto Grosso interior!" He scowled in self-condemnation. "Don't know why I ever let the Foundation talk me into this jaunt, anyhow. On our honeymoon! What was I thinking of, dragging you out into this steaming hell?"

"Now, now, darling!" Diana Harbin laid two fingers over his mouth. She lifted his head tenderly, gave him a sip of *beroa matte* through a *bombilla* stuck in a gourd, then riffled through a month-old magazine. "Here; do try to read and relax. You can't go hunting your precious Lost City with

three broken ribs, and that's all there is to it. So stop fretting about it! Mario has the situation well in hand."

A look flashed over Sir Cedric's middle-aged face. It was gone before his wife observed it, but she did notice a peculiar tense note in his voice.

"Mario— Oh yes," the archaeologist drawled. "Our handsome and dashing young guide."

"Handsome?" His wife laughed—so lightly that Sir Cedric gave her a quizzical look. "Is he? I hadn't noticed . . . Why, Cedric!" She returned his look, eyes twinkling. "I do believe you're jealous! Of *Mario*?" She half-closed her eyes, imitating the sultry attitude of a screen romeo. "'Ah-h Senhora! You are like jongle orchid!'" she mimicked, then burst out laughing. "Darling, he's so corny!"

**H**ARBIN did not share her mirth. His gray eyes iced over, and narrowed.

"The devil!" he exploded. "Did he really say that to you? Insolent half-breed swine! Send him in here; I'll sack him right now!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" his wife laughed, kissing him on the forehead. "Cedric, don't be absurd. All Brazilians makes passes at every North American girl they meet. It's—it's part of the Good Neighbor Policy!" She gave him another sip of the nutritious tea, looking fondly amused. "Mario," she pointed out, "is a very efficient guide. He's kept these war-happy Chavantes from traipsing off to start something with other tribes we've passed. He's kept a supply of *mandioca* and *rapadura*, without trading half our equipment to get it. And he's the only guide in Belem who had the vaguest idea how to reach that Lost City of yours—if there is one," she reminded drily. "Remember, all you have as proof is that silly old paper in the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio. Mario doesn't believe it exists."

"Mario!" the archaeologist snorted. "If Lt.-Col. Fawcett and his sons died trying to find it in 1925, there must be something to— Oh, if only I were off this ridiculous cot!" he fumed. "We're only two days' march from the place; I'd stake my life on it! I—"

"Oh well," his pretty wife patted his arm.

soothingly. "There'll be other expeditions, dear. We'll try again; but right now you must get well enough to be carried back to Belem. There may be internal injuries we don't know about. Ugh, that horrible snake! Dropping on you from that tree, crushing you—" She shuddered, then knelt beside him with a little sob, pressing his hand to her cool cheek. "Oh Cedric, you might have been killed!"

HARBIN relaxed, caressing her long wheat-blond hair, the bitterness and frustration ebbing slowly from his face.

"My dearest," he murmured, "I'll never understand what a lovely little Yank like you ever saw in a crotchety, dried-up old—Limey like me! But my whole outlook was changed, that night at the Explorers' Club in Rio, when you turned away from that ass Forrester, and smiled. At me! When—when I first saw you smile, Diana, the most wonderful thing happened. It was as though the—sun had come up for the first time in my—Oh, rubbish!" Sir Cedric broke off, embarrassed. "Never was much at expressing my feelings."

"You're doing all right!" his wife whispered. "Remind me to tell you how I felt when I first met the famous Sir Cedric Harbin. Ah-ah!" She dodged his quick embrace. "Not now! After Mario and I get back from Matura with supplies. Darling, do go to sleep so I can! We're starting at daybreak, you know."

Harbin returned her smile of gentle humor with a hungry possessive look. "All right. But you'll hurry back? I mean—Oh, dash it!"

His wife bent over to kiss him once more lightly. "Of course I will," she whispered. "Next Thursday is our first anniversary; we've been married a whole month! You don't really think I'd spend that day with Mario and a lot of grinning Tapirapes babbling '*Ticanto! Ticanto!*'—which isn't my idea of a snappy conversation to put in my diary!"

Sir Cedric chuckled and lay still, his eyes following Diana as she left the tent to complete plans for the short journey at dawn.

The river village of Matura, he knew, was only a few miles down the Rio das Mortes, the River of Death, which had once

run red with the blood of a Portuguese party of mining engineers massacred by Indians. Now it boasted a small trading post, run by a fat one-eyed Dutchman. There Diana could send a wireless message via Belem to the Foundation, saying—Harbin sighed bitterly—that he was crippled up; that he had made a complete botch of the expedition. There also Mario could replenish their dwindling stock of supplies—coffee, quinine, mandioca; perhaps even a few trinkets for the new native bearers Mario had recently added to their party. The Chavantes had not appeared to like it much, but even their *capitao*, their chief, Burity, could see his men could not carry both the equipment and the injured white explorer on their return trip.

HARBIN sipped his *matte*, and thought about the new porters. They were ugly stunted little Indians—the four Mario had hired—their loin cloths dirty and ragged, their greasy black hair hanging long and snaky under their braided headbands. They were Urubus—Sir Cedric frowned, trying to recall what the Inspector of Indians at Belem had said about that tribe; the "Vulture People," he had called them. Was it something about a history of cannibalism? Harbin could not remember. All four of the Urubus had been fully armed—with bows and five-foot-arrows, with spears, and with blowguns—when the Brazilian guide had happened across their hunting party. In fact, a poisoned blowgun dart (presumably aimed at a silver and black iguana) had barely missed his shoulder, Mario had reported uncomfortably.

"And good riddance!" Harbin muttered half-aloud, glowering up at the patched roof of the tent. "Never did trust those pretty-boys where a woman's concerned! Not one as lovely as Diana—so young and romantic and impressionable."

"Hanh? Senhor speak?" The Chavante boy startled him, waving his fern rapidly and flashing white teeth in a dark brown Mongoloid face.

"What? Oh! Nothing. Just talking to myself," Harbin snapped. "Swat that damned tarantula over my head, will you? It's going to drop on me."

"Si, senhor!!" The boy hastened to obey, his solicitude born of the fact that Diana had promised him a pair of her husband's cufflinks for his pierced ears.

Harbin closed his eyes, now lulled by the throbbing hum of frogs and cicada, now startled awake by the moaning hiss of a near-by anaconda or the splash of an alligator in the river washing sluggishly against the sandbank where they had made camp. Presently, in spite of the *pium* flies, Sir Cedric drifted into a troubled slumber—and a recurrent dream in which his lovely young wife was lost in a tangle of undergrowth and looped lianas. She kept calling him, calling and laughing, somewhere just ahead, just out of reach. And he slashed away helplessly at the green wall of jungle with a *faca*, a cutlass-like machete, which kept turning to flimsy rubber in his hand—

WHEN he awoke, torpid and head-  
wachey, the tent was steamy with mid-morning heat. The Chavante boy was setting his tray of breakfast—roast crane, *farinha* gruel sweetened with the toffee-like *rapadura*, and coffee with fermented sugarcane. Harbin made a wry face, and squinted at the boy, whose black eyes were gleaming with a curious excitement. His calm voice, however, betrayed nothing.

"*Bon dia! Senbor durmiou bem?*" he inquired politely.

"*Muita bem,*" Harbin grunted, yawning. "Where's the Senhora? She had her breakfast yet?"

The boy smiled brightly, his face an inscrutable mask now, mysterious and unreadable as the jungle itself.

"*Senhora pé, pé,*" he announced, then elaborated in a painful combination of Portuguese and English. "Senhora es agone. Senhora, Senhor Mario. Es agone. Say let you esleep, you seeck, no wake."

"Oh! Gone already, have they?" Sir Cedric looked disappointed, then shrugged. "Well—they should be back by tomorrow at sundown. Matura's only a few miles down the river. They—" He broke off, puzzled again by the sly look of amusement on the Chavante boy's face. "Eh? What are you grinning about?" he demanded.

For answer, the boy ran to the door of

the tent and beckoned. An older, nervous-looking Chavante—possibly the boy's father or older brother—entered warily, braced as to dash out again if the white man appeared angry.

"Senhor? Pliz?" the man stammered; he was Burity, the chief; Harbin recognized him suddenly from the dried palm frond stuck in his pierced lower lip, like a spiky beard from his hairless chin. "Senhor?" he began again. "Geev present? Geev present if Burity tell?"

"Tell what, you gibbering ape?" Sir Cedric snapped. He tried to prop himself up on his elbows, a sense of foreboding suddenly knotting his stomach muscles. "Yes? All right, all right—a present! Speak up!"

The Chavante chief swayed, steadying himself against the tentpole. He was drunk, Harbin perceived; a strong whiff of fiery native rum reached his nostrils. Twice Burity started to speak, blinked and grinned foolishly, then blurted out:

"Senhora. Senhora et Senhor Mario. Es no go *down* rio, es go *op*. No go Matura. Es take boys—" He held up one finger, then two vaguely. "Es ron away, go Goyaz. Es no come bock."

"*What!*" Harbin wrenched himself to a sitting posture, oblivious of the pain that knifed through his broken ribs. "You're lying!" he roared. "I'll—I'll beat you to a pulp, you lying scum! I'll cut your tongue out for saying a thing like that!"

Burity cringed, shaking his head violently. "No lie! No lie, *Capitao!* Es atruth! Senhor *zangado?* No be *zangado* for Burity. Me no do *nada*, me *manso*—good Indian!"

Sir Cedric glanced about wildly for something to throw at him. But the Chavante whirled and darted out of the tent, followed by the explorer's angry curses.

HARBIN fell back on his cot, breathing hard. Pain clutched at his chest under the strapping; he had probably torn loose those half-mended ribs again. The fury of complete helplessness wracked him for a moment. That Indian was lying; of course he was lying! Diana would no more desert him in this condition than—than— Or, would she? Could a middle-aged husband

ever really be sure of a young and beautiful wife?

Sir Cedric forced himself to lie still, teeth clenched, fists knotted at his sides. The Chavante boy crawled out from behind a trunk where he had hidden, and began timidly fanning him again. Harbin waved him away irritably, then called him back.

"Boy—?" He hesitated, flushing at his own lack of reserve. "Boy, did you—? Do you happen to know which way my—the Senhor Mario went? Up river, or down?"

"No, *Capitao*." The Indian boy lowered his eyes respectfully, but Harbin could detect a secret contempt in his impassive face.

"Is there anyone who could find out for me? A tracker? A tracker could tell which way the *bataloa* took off, couldn't he?" Sir Cedric pressed.

"A tracker, *Capitao*?" The Chavante was standing before him, still outwardly respectful. "Yes; tracker tell. But—Brujo know more better. Ask Brujo look upon Senhora's *bataloa*. Brujo see all theengs—today, yesterday, tomorrow."

"Bru—? Oh yes. Quite."

Sir Cedric suppressed a smile. This was not the first time he had heard marvelous powers attributed to the Brujos, the witch-doctors of these Matto Grosso native tribes. The Inspector of Indians had advised him to take one along on this expedition—as arbiter, medico, and general adviser to his Chavante bearers. Brujos were usually old men with wrinkled faces and mystic eyes—half-crazed from addiction to *yagé*, the deadly topaz-green drug brewed from liana pulp. Murika, the Brujo of his Chavantes, was no exception.

But Murika, Harbin considered swiftly, would know about Diana and that sneaky Brazilian, if anyone would. All rumors, all remnants of local gossip, found their way quickly to those wise old ears—to be palmed off later on the credulous as knowledge gleaned from supernatural sources.

"Of course, Murika!" Sir Cedric nodded eagerly, snapping his fingers at the Indian boy. "Well? Go fetch him! At once!"

The young Chavante nodded and dashed out of the tent. He dashed back presently, but more reverently, holding the tent flap aside for a wizened old Indian to enter.

Murika was a very small man, for a Chavante, most of whom stood well above six feet. But there was something about his erect bearing, about the serene wrinkled face under its feathered headdress, that commanded respect. The old man's face and chest were heavily pigmented with red and black, blue-black stain from the *genipapo* fruit and red from the *urukú* berry. A jaguar skin, with the tail dragging, was wrapped around his skinny loins, and a great deal of stolen copper telegraph wire coiled around his arms from wrist to elbow. In his pierced lower lip was a rather large bone from a howler monkey, which affected his speech but slightly. He evidently knew no English at all, but spoke perfect Portuguese, probably learned at a Christian mission school before he took to black magic. His voice was deep and mellow like the music of a distant oboe, and Sir Cedric was impressed in spite of the smile that twitched at the corners of his mouth.

"Murika?" he greeted the old Indian haltingly. "I—I called you here to—to—"

The aged Brujo nodded matter-of-factly, stuffing some kind of fibre shreds into his cigar-holder-like pipe. He sat down cross-legged beside the explorer's cot and leaned back comfortably against the tentpole. Without a word he closed his eyes, puffing slowly at the pipe. A peculiar acrid odor filled the tent, making Sir Cedric feel suddenly light-headed and queer. He frowned, annoyed.

"Now, see here," he said. "I've no time for a lot of mumbo-jumbo. Just tell me if you know which way my—"

The Chavante boy hissed sharply, shaking his head and making a silencing gesture. On the opposite side of Harbin's cot, he whispered in obvious awe:

"Senhor—do not espeak! Brujo esmoke the *ayahuasca*. The drug of second sight—"

"Oh!" Sir Cedric snorted, impatient. "I've heard of that—damned lot of nonsense. Or," he smiled wryly, "maybe it isn't. Maybe it works something like sodium pentothal. Releases the subconscious mind. Helps dig out facts the conscious mind's forgotten. Hmmp!" He rolled over on his side, wincing, to watch the old man as he sat, swaying and smoking, in utter silence.

Presently, however, the Brujo's eyes opened. They had a weird doped look staring unseeingly at Harbin as though they gazed through him, through the stained tent walls, and farther, much farther, through the matted jungle outside. Very slowly the old witch-doctor began to speak, chanting a curious singsong now in Chavante, now in Portuguese. Harbin made out the Portuguese with an effort, but the Indian was beyond him.

"... They go toward the rising sun. The *batalao* moves slowly. There are three bearers, Chavantes. The Smiling One sleeps under the *oldo*. The man watches . . . Now he shoots the gun, killing a blood-red *arara*. He brings the feathers to the Senhora. She laughs, thanking him and putting the feathers in her golden hair . . ."

SIR CEDRIC cursed, heaving himself upright again furiously. It was all a lot of silly patter, meaningless and without any foundation on truth, he told himself sickly. Or, was it? *Toward the rising sun*, the old man had said. Then the *batalao* was being paddled east toward Goyaz, just as Burity had said; not west to Matura. Did the Brujo know for certain, from tracks he had found along the riverbank amid a network of other spoors—the round cup-like tracks of jaguars, the broad three-toed marks of a tapir, the splayed track of the capivara, those sheep-sized water-guinea-pigs of the jungle? Or was he only guessing?

"... Now she sings," Murika droned abruptly. "She sings this song, it is plain to hear . . ." He began to hum. And Harbin's scalp prickled as he recognized the halting strains of Noel Coward's *Never Try to Bind Me*, an old favorite of Diana's. The very tune she had been dancing to, with young Forrester, at the Explorer's Club that night—that night—

Amazingly, unbelievably, Murika was even singing the words now, although he knew not a phrase of English:

*Never try to bind me,  
Never try to hold . . .  
Take me as you find me,  
Love and let me go . . .*

The sound of those words, their import so obviously meaningless to that wrinkled Chavante singer, stabbed at Sir Cedric like a knife thrust.

"Stop!" he yelled furiously. "That's—it's a lot of damned nonsense! How . . . how could you possibly hear them, if they set off down the river—or *up* the river, as you say—four or five hours ago?"

The old Brujo closed his eyes, for answer. In a few moments, when he opened them and looked at the white man again, their weird faraway look was gone. He rose from his cross-legged position and stood quietly beside Harbin's cot, waiting. Sir Cedric glowered at him, then shrugged and thrust a cheap plug of tobacco at the old Indian, who took it with a gracious air of bestowing a gift rather than of receiving one.

"Is there more which you wish to know, *Capitao*?" he asked softly. "Murika has looked into the past—and has seen the *padre* in Rio speaking the marriage vows. The *Capitao* drops the ring, in his eagerness to place it on the Smiling One's finger. A man with a golden mustache picks it up and gives it back to—"

Harbin started, his scalp prickling again. "Kimball!" he murmured. "He—he was my best man. And I did drop the ring . . . How could you possibly know . . .? Did you ever overhear Diana and myself . . .? That must be it," he broke off, surreptitiously mopping at his forehead. "Of course. Nothing . . . supernatural about it!"

Murika's bland expression did not change. He merely stood quietly, waiting, looking more sure of himself than Harbin had ever felt in his whole life. In fact, the quiet wisdom in that wrinkled face made him feel more unsure of himself now than ever.

"Do you desire that I shall look into the future, *Capitao*?" the old Chavante asked gently. "The *ayahuasca* sends the eyes in all directions. One is able to see what was, what is, and what is to be."

"The devil you can!" Sir Cedric snorted, more to convince himself than to scoff at Murika. "All right!" he snapped. "What is to be? My wife's run off with a damned Brazilian, you say. Is she coming back?"

Murika took another puff at the pipe

his eyes again taking on that opaque drugged look, the pupils widening until the iris had disappeared. Harbin watched him, fascinated, trying to feel amused and scornful, trying to deny that hollow sick feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Murika opened his eyes wide, swaying. His voice sounded very thin and echoing as he spoke, like the voice of one shouting down a mine shaft.

"I see . . ." he intoned. "I hear . . . the Smiling One . . . screaming. It is written in the stars . . . that the *Capitao* may keep before him, for all the rest of his days, the smiling face of his *senhora*. But . . ."

"Yes?" Harbin urged tensely, as the Brujo paused. "Yes?"

"But it is also written in the stars," Murika said thinly, "that the sight of it will drive the *Capitao* into madness. This I see, and no more."

Sir Cedric expelled a quivering breath. Rubbish, all of this, sheer rubbish. And yet . . . That bit about the Noel Coward song, and the dropped ring. And Kimball's blond mustache—he and Diana had certainly never mentioned *that* in Murika's hearing, though it might have been only a clever bit of guesswork. Still—

He lay back on his cot, battling for self-control. At his sides his hands were clenched so tightly that his nails bit into his palms. Two drops of blood oozed from the broken flesh and ran down his wrists, unfelt. But Murika noticed them, and approached the white man's cot. He made a few curious passes in the air with a monkey skull produced from somewhere under the folds of his jaguar skin, then laid the skull gently on Harbin's forehead.

"*Capitao*," the old man said. "Forgiveness is better than vengeance . . ."

The archaeologist jerked his head away savagely, the monkey skull bumping hollowly to the ground as he glared up at Murika.

"Get out of here!" he grated, sweat popping out on his forehead and upper lip. "What are you trying to do to me, lying here trussed up? Are you trying to drive me crazy? *Get out!*"

He wrenched himself up again, panting and cursing. The Chavante boy dodged be-

hind his trunk again, but the old Brujo merely bowed slightly and backed toward the tent opening.

"Jealousy," he said in his soft mellow Portuguese, "is like a poison, *Capitao*. The *Senhor* stands where the trail forks. Think well!"

"*Get out!*" Harbin roared, hurling his gourd of *matte* at the old Indian's head. The missile described a peculiar curve as it neared its target, however, and fell harmlessly to the floor. Again the white man shivered; he had heard before how a Brujo can deflect the flight of an arrow or a blow-gun dart. Impossible, of course.

HE FELL back, gritting his teeth against the pain of his ribs. Sweat poured from his forehead now; the tent was like a steam cabinet. From outside he could hear the faint splashing of an alligator somewhere upriver, the dismal hiss of a flock of *ciganas*, the mew of a hawk sailing enviously above where some of the bearers were shooting fish with their short bows and five-foot arrows barbed with the tails of *arrays*—sting-rays. Harbin's mind sailed upstream, following a *batalao* where a lovely blond girl and a handsome young man sat very close together under the palm-thatched *toldo* awning. Perhaps they were kissing now; perhaps only clinging together, in the way of young lovers.

A groan escaped him, half rage, half pain. Diana, Diana. Of course it had been too good to be true. The first handsome, virile young idiot to come along, and she had left him—the glamor of his reputation worn thin, now that she had seen him make such a botch of this expedition. He would never hold her again, never see that dazzling good-humored smile of hers that had caused the Chavantes to call her *Ris-sante*, the Smiling One.

Harbin's eyes chilled. Dammit, she was always smiling! Had she actually been cheerful and courageous, or was she merely laughing at him? These American girls, they were so light-hearted, so unconventional—unlike all the strait-laced British women he had known. Perhaps she had merely married him for a lark, planning all along to leave him when she became bored! Leave



him to face all these grinning natives, to get back to Belem the best way he could—without a guide.

At the thought of Mario, Sir Cedric's face hardened. Damned insolent Brazilian! If he could follow them, if he could only get his hands around that tanned neck! His fingers flexed with the desire to kill, and suddenly he let out a roared command:

"Boy! Boy! Where the devil are you hiding?" The Chavante lad scrambled out from behind his trunk, quaking. "Get me Burity again!" Harbin snapped, then shook his head. "No, no—he wouldn't go. It's Urubu country. Ah—!" His eyes glittered. "Those new porters! Send them to me. Now!"

The Indian boy dashed off to obey, eager to placate and worried about that gift of cufflinks. He was back with the four squat Urubus in five minutes, and Harbin looked them over, still quivering with rage. He blurted his order in Portuguese, then in a few halting words of Chavante, but the Vulture Men shook their heads, grinning foolishly. Harbin scowled, resorting to sign-language.

"Senhora . . ." He drew the form of a woman in the air. "Understand? I want you to . . . bring her back," he made scooping motion toward himself.

The leader of the Urubus, a stocky evil-eyed Indian with deep scars cut from eye-corners to mouthcorners, nodded suddenly, and jabbered a few words to the other three. They nodded eagerly, gabbling—and sounding for all the world, Harbin thought with a shudder, like the nauseous, hideous-looking birds they worshipped. The leader edged forward, beady eyes gleaming.

"Turi?" he asked slyly, then brought up an English word, pointing to Harbin, then vaguely out into the jungle. "Mon?"

"Oh—the white man? Mario?" Harbin's face was contorted. "The devil with Mario!" he growled. "I don't care what you do to him!" He made a broad gesture of dismissal, at which the Urubu chief grinned delightedly, nodding and replying with a throat-cutting gesture. His face held the unholy delight of a child given permission to pull the wings off a fly.

Then they were gone, like a flock of gabbling scavenger-birds, and Harbin lay

back on his cot, closing his eyes wearily. In a day or so the Urubus, in a light fast *montaria*, could overtake the other slower boat. And well, if they were cannibals, if that was what the Inspector of Indians had warned him, the devil with Mario! Luring a man's wife away from him as he lay helpless, unable to follow! Diana, they would bring back with them, and—well, he could take it from there.

TEARS of reproach seeped from between Harbin's closed lids. Diana—how could she have done this to him? But she was such a child, easily impressed, overly romantic. Forgiveness? What was it old Murika had said about forgiveness being better than vengeance? Sir Cedric smiled wryly. Well.



after a time, perhaps he would forgive her. They could build a life together, even with the memory of her having run off with that handsome guide standing like an impenetrable wall of jungle between them. It wouldn't, really. Harbin's smile became peaceful, almost eager. He was a civilized man, he told himself. The daily sight of

his wife's smiling face would not, as Murika predicted, "drive him into madness." Probably, after he forgave her for this outrageous escapade, she would love him all the more, really love him.

"*Acu!*" one of the Chavantes in the river-shallows was shouting; he had evidently speared a *pirava*—or else been bitten on the bare leg by a man-eating *piranha*, those murderous little fish that could strip a man's skeleton in a few minutes. "*Acu!*" they were forever shouting, these savages—the word meaning "Hello!," or "Hooray!," or merely "Ouch!" according to the events of the moment. Harbin smiled at their simplicity.

Sighing, settling himself to wait and to forgive, the archaeologist drifted into a restless slumber, with the Chavante boy plying his giant fern once more timidly. His eyes on Harbin's sleeping face were wide and shocked, and warily respectful now.

ALL night Sir Cedric dreamed of his lovely wife. All the next day, and the next two following, he lay docilely on his cot, taking the last of the quinine and eating what was brought him without a murmur. A hundred times, sentimentally, he made up speeches to chide Diana, ever so understandingly, for her unfaithfulness. She would cry, then fling her arms around his neck and beg him to forgive her. Which he would, Harbin told himself wearily, humbly. All he wanted was to have her back, smiling at him, smiling in the old way as if none of this had ever happened. A small prickle of conscience nagged him now and then, thinking of the Urubu's gesture when he spoke of Mario. Suppose Diana loved the blighter? Had he any right to—? But what sort of life would she lead with a jungle guide? Harbin snorted. Whatever the rotter was going to get, he richly deserved! Killing a man, or having him killed, for seducing your wife was the accepted thing, here in hot-tempered Brazil. Besides—Sir Cedric gave a hard laugh—he could say he hadn't really given that order to the Urubu chief; that the Indian had misunderstood him.

On the fifth day after the Vulture Men had set out, old Murika walked silently into his tent. He stood for a moment, staring curiously at the supine white man, then walked slowly over to him.

"*Capitao,*" he said softly, "you have given an order to the Urubu men, and it is not good. The Senhor stood at the forked trail, and he has taken the wrong turning."

Harbin started. Had the old blighter been hovering outside his tent, eavesdropping? He scowled, ordering the Brujo to leave with an impatient gesture. Arrogant old devil! Give them an inch and they'd take a mile!

But Murika did not leave. His large vague eyes were troubled, and again they had that faraway look. Again Harbin's nose wrinkled as he smelled the acrid odor of *ayahuasca*, from the Brujo's pipe. Murika was staring at him—and through him.

"I see . . ." the mellow voice intoned. "see . . . a Lost City, which the jungle has eaten. There are great blocks of stone, carven with strange writing. The Smiling One stands before it, while the man takes her picture."

"The devil you say!" Sir Cedric pulled himself erect, glaring. "So the rotter's not only stolen my wife, but he's jumped the gun on my expedition, eh? Going to claim the credit for finding my—" His eyes glittered coldly. "Well, then—it's good enough for him, whatever they'll do to him!" he muttered under his breath. "I'm glad I sent them! I'm glad!"

Murika said nothing, but shook his head very slowly.

"They are but children," he said quietly. "Do not condemn the forest people, *Capitao*, if they do not understand. They go only to do the Senhor's bidding."

Harbin nodded impatiently, eyes narrowed. "All right. So I told them to kill him! What's it to you, you shriveled-up old fool?" he snapped, waving Murika from his tent. "Get out of here! They should be back here with my wife by tomorrow at sundown—and that's all I want!" he muttered. "I—I'll never let her out of my sight again, and that's certain! Romantic child. Doesn't know her own mind."

He reached for his gourd of *matte*, sipped at it, then lay still. Through the long sweltering jungle-night he lay, sleeping little, his heart pounding with eagerness. Through the steaming day he waited, trying to peruse the old magazine he had read through twice already. The pain in

his ribs had subsided now; the broken ends of bone were knitting again. Well, the devil take his confounded ribs! Tomorrow he'd have the bearers lift him into the boat, and he and Diana would go back to civilization. They'd follow the river, even if it took longer. He'd not keep her here in this green hell another day longer than necessary. Back at Belem, in a decent hotel, he'd make her forget all about Mario. He'd shower her with presents, make subtle love to her.

**A**BRUPTLY, a cry reached his ears. He had been straining for the sound, praying for it to come. The Urubus were back. Now, darting to the tent opening, his Chavante boy turned and nodded, wide-eyed and subdued.

"*Capitao?*" he announced, in a respectful whisper; almost as he addressed the Brujo. Harbin noted with a grin of self-satisfaction. "*Capitao?* The—the Senhor Mario is not with them. The three bearers of our tribe were slain, or escaped. But—the Smiling One, they have brought back as the Senhor ordered."

"Oh? Good, good!" Sir Cedric mopped at his face, nervous and eager. "Have they landed? Send them in here. Hurry! Hurry!"

He braced himself for the sight of his wife, perhaps being dragged angrily in between two grinning Urubus. But the chief came in alone, to present him with a crumpled sheet of paper. Harbin frowned, reading it swiftly. His heart leaped. It was a note Diana had evidently been writing to him when the Vulture Men overtook them at the Lost City; a note proving her innocence, her loyalty, the love he had doubted.

Flushing, miserably ashamed but grateful, Harbin's lips moved, reading:

My darling—

I'm sending this message back by one of the Chavantes. By now you must know we didn't go to Matura, and never planned to go. I persuaded Mario to take me on to your Lost City, so your expedition need not be a flop. My dear, it

seemed to mean so much to you, and I couldn't bear to see you looking so disgusted with yourself. I didn't tell you because I knew you'd stop me from trying it alone.

Mario has taken some pictures, and I've copied a few hieroglyphics off the stones, also some pottery. Darling, you and Lieutenant Colonel Fawcett and your silly paper in Rio were right. There's a sort of temple here, Inca, I believe. The altar stone, for sacrifice, is inlaid with gold and silver—I wish you could see it. But I've made maps, and we can come back after your ribs ha—

The note broke off, significantly. Sir Cedric raised his eyes, looking up at the grinning Urubu, beaming down at him like an evil stunted child of some forest-demon. Again he nodded happily, pleased to have carried out the *Capitao's* orders so well. Again he made the throat-cutting gesture—and suddenly, like a cold hand on his heart, Sir Cedric remembered what the Inspector of Indians had said about the Urubu tribe. Not a history of cannibalism. Of head-hunting!

Harbin swallowed on a dry throat. What had he caused his young wife to witness, what horrible rites? Would she ever forgive him, ever look at him again without a shiver of revulsion? Would she—?

"Rissante?" he asked hoarsely. "Where's—where's my wife?" He made the sign of a woman's body in the air hurriedly, pointing to himself. "Tell her to come in! Bring her here! Quickly!"

The Urubu grinned evilly, nodding several times like a small boy proud of the homework he was handing in to Teacher. He called out a few words of his dialect, and one of the other Indians entered, carrying a small wicker basket.

Even before he jerked off the lid and saw the shrunken thing inside—lips stitched together in a hideous travesty of a smile, the long blond hair unbound and carefully brushed clean of blood-flecks—Harbin began to scream. . . .