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"He realized the full hideousness of the fate in store for him."

THE little stern-wheel launch gingerly nosed its way through the last maze of shifting sand-bars and headed for the cluster of mud huts that shimmered vaguely through the heat-haze of the tropical noon. From beside her stumpy funnel a plume of steam shot upward as her siren wailed over the flooded waters of the River Rinué, startling the chime-birds into frantic wheelings above the feathery tree-tops, and rudely disturbing the siesta of the dark-skinned warriors of Imanzi, causing them to draw the folds of their sleeping-ropes closer about their heads as they muttered a drowsy charm against the shrieking water-devil of the white man.

Lieutenant McFee, the young officer in charge of the Hausa patrol

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of the district, became dimly aware of the sound amid the chaotic visions incidental to the tail-end of a spell of fever. But he recognized the import of the signal, and immediately arose, swallowed the regulation quinine tabloid, swung on his sun-helmet, and sallied forth.

The skipper of the launch hailed him as he crossed the gang-plank.

"Sorry we're overdue, sir, but I got under way the first moment this old water-pusher could make head against the current—and we didn't spare the logs coming up, either. If you'll mobilize your gay soldier-lads to hump the stores ashore, I'll be casting off right away. I want to get down to Yola before those flaming shallows shift again. By the way," he added as he descended to

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the deck, "I've brought something that wasn't in your indent. It's a young swell with pots of money and no end of a pull with the Administration. He's come upstream to shoot lions and have a good time generally."

The somewhat caustic comment that rose to Lieutenant McFee's lips was checked by the approach of the newcomer. For a few seconds the two men eyed each other in speculative silence.

Lieutenant McFee saw a good-looking young man of about his own age, clad in an immaculate and expensive tropical outfit. His smart drill suit still retained its pristine snowy splendor; his cartridge-belt, riding-boots and revolver-holster were of glossy and squeaky newness. Around him lay spread a perfect armory of sporting-guns, backed by sufficient foil-lined ammunition cases to supply a punitive expedition. The Honorable Clifford Egerton, on his part, beheld a gaunt figure in sun-bleached khaki, with a tanned and thickly freckled countenance and close-cropped sandy hair. At first sight he might have been mistaken for a long-legged, overgrown schoolboy; but the grim set of the lean, clean-shaven jaws and the expression in the steady gray eyes quickly dispelled that illusion. A stickler for military smartness might have found several defects in his general turn-out. The only thing about him that was brightly polished was his revolver-butt—and that by frequent use.

"Ah, pleased to meet you, Lieutenant," said the Honorable Clifford Egerton as he came forward and shook hands. "Is there any shooting to be had around here?"

For an instant the corners of McFee's mouth twitched strangely. Then he nodded his head.

"Any amount of it," he answered gravely. And it was only subsequently that the questioner realized

the exquisite humor that lay behind the seemingly simple reply.

IN DUE course the launch disgorged her freight and headed downstream. The two men watched its receding smoke-plume above the trees until it merged into the misty blue of the distance. Then they turned and re-entered the native hut which formed the patrol officer's quarters.

"Do you know, I heard quite a lot about you at Lokoja," Egerton remarked as he threw himself into one of the long cane chairs and lit a cigarette. "They call you 'Fighting McFee' down there, and swear that the river tribes look on you as a real number-one-size tin god."

McFee shook his head in embarrassed dissent.

"Very often my sphere of influence extends no farther than a bullet can reach. I only wish that your very flattering description of my reputation were true," he added regretfully. "In that case I might succeed in ridding my district of one of the most infamous villains that has ever infested it."

"Indeed?" queried Egerton with quickened interest. "Who is he, and what particular form does his infamy take?"

"He is an Arab called Ishak-El-Naga, and he's a dealer in slaves."

Egerton twisted in his chair and stared at the speaker in surprize.

"Slaves?" he echoed. "Oh, come! I say, you don't mean to tell me there are slaves at the present day—in a British colony!"

"Protectorate," corrected McFee. "Of course, Ishak-El-Naga does not work openly. He collects his stock-in-trade from the tiny bush villages, either kidnaping the poor wretches, or trading them from their chiefs for gin or gunpowder, or—what is worse—inciting one tribe to attack another in the hopes of bagging the survivors of the losing side. When he's

got his caravan together he drives 'em like cattle and sells 'em to the desert tribes north of Lake Chad. It's a good thousand miles, and part of the way lies through a waterless desert. I came across his trail once or twice soon after I was first detailed here, and I can assure you it was not a pretty sight. In those days he used to leave the poor devils where they dropped; now he goes to the trouble of burying them in order to make his line of march less conspicuous."

"But a man seldom falls stone-dead from exhaustion," objected the frankly skeptical Egerton. "Some of them might linger for days."

McFee gave a grim, mirthless laugh. "Rest assured, they have to get their dying over quickly when Ishak-El-Naga is around!"

Clifford Egerton started to his feet, his usually ruddy face drawn and haggard.

"You mean that he butchers the stragglers?" he cried in horror.

"What else?" answered McFee. "Do you expect an Arab slaver to run a Red Cross convoy?"

"And, knowing this, you still allow the villain to be at large?"

The patrol officer raised his sandy eyebrows and shrugged.

"Knowing is very different from proving. He's as cunning as Satan, and he has spies everywhere. If I could but get evidence against him his career would be a short one. But evidence is just the one thing that I'm not likely to get."

"Why not?"

"Because he has found a way of preventing the natives giving information against him. They are forbidden to speak by a mysterious veiled woman who appears to them at intervals. She is credited with possessing supernatural powers and they call her *Sitoka Kilui*."

"What does that signify in English?"

"Freely translated, it means 'The White Vampire.'"

A SUDDEN exclamation caused McFee to glance up. Egerton had turned and was staring with wide-open eyes at a figure which had emerged from the jungle trail into the glare of sunlight which flooded the compound.

"Gad!" he muttered half to himself. "A girl, by all that's wonderful—and a dashed good-looking one, too!"

The spontaneous tribute was not undeserved. Tall above the average, she moved with that easy grace which no amount of training can impart, but which seems to be the natural attribute of the women of the South. Her flawless features were shaded by a white sombrero, beneath whose broad brim there clustered a mass of curls of the color of freshly minted gold. Her beauty was enhanced by a skin of exquisite, creamy fairness; her eyes were dark and still as mountain pools. Eyes of night, hair like sunbeams—her whole appearance, like the fact of her presence in that wild spot, seemed a bewildering, bewitching paradox. Small wonder that Egerton stood agape and wondering at the unexpected vision.

"Who is she?" he whispered. "And what on earth is she doing here?"

"She is Señorita Juanita Rasparteo, the daughter of the Portuguese trader here," McFee informed him.

"A Portuguese? Impossible!"

McFee laughed. "Fact, I assure you. You mustn't judge the whole race by the snuff-and-butter specimens you meet at Lagos."

Meanwhile the girl was approaching with hasty steps, glancing frequently over her shoulder as though she feared pursuit—a fear which appeared to be shared by the slim native girl who followed at her heels.

The reason of their haste was soon apparent. Barely had they reached the center of the compound when the bushes behind parted and debouched a score of half-naked Bhutummas armed with bows and spears. At their head was a tall man wearing the flowing draperies and green *haick*, bound round his head by cords of twisted camel's hair, which denoted the high-caste Arab, a Hadj who had performed the Mecca pilgrimage. At sight of him McFee's hand instinctively sought the weapon at his side.

"It is Ishak-El-Naga," he whispered rapidly, "and it looks as though he's out for trouble."

Followed by Egerton, he ran out of the hut and placed himself between the girls and their pursuers.

"Greeting, O Hadj Ishak-El-Naga," he said, addressing the leader in Arabic. "Do you come in peace?"

The man stared at him insolently for a moment, then slowly shrugged beneath his gold-embroidered *burnous*.

"As Allah wills, who giveth both victory and defeat," he answered in a tone of studied indifference. "I am come to claim this maiden, Inyoni, who hath been affianced to me according to the custom of her people. A full score of oxen did I pay her father——"

"He lies, O white man, he lies!" cried the native girl, throwing her lithe body in the sand at McFee's feet. "No oxen were paid, neither was I affianced. His people seized me while I was gathering *kava* in the woods and took me to the secret place of slaves. But I escaped and made my way back to my mistress," she pointed to Juanita as she spoke. "Protect me, *Bwana* McFee! Do not let him take me away, for I am a free maiden and slave to none."

"And that's the honest truth, Mr. McFee," said Juanita, speaking for the first time. Her voice was full

and musical, and bore an accent that showed that she must have spent some years at least in the United States. "Ishak offered his oxen to me if I'd give up the girl to him. But I wasn't trading any."

Lieutenant McFee turned to the scowling Arab.

"Bring hither the maiden's father that he may testify that thy words are true," he said sternly.

A line of gleaming teeth showed between the black beard as Ishak-El-Naga burst into a scornful laugh. "Am I Allah, that I can cause the dead to walk?" he jeered.

McFee started and his gray eyes hardened to two points of steel. "You mean that her father is dead?"

"It was written that this morn should be his last," Ishak answered sullenly. "The man was old. He died. It was the will of Allah."

"By heaven! I more than half suspect that the scoundrel has murdered him to make good his claim," McFee muttered to Egerton. Aloud he said: "I must look further into the matter, O Hadj. Meanwhile the maiden Inyoni remains with her former mistress."

"Then is it fated that you defy me?" The Arab's words were accompanied by an evil scowl.

"It is," answered McFee curtly. "Thou hast my permission to depart."

The Arab raised his clenched hands above his head.

"O beardless dogs!" he shouted furiously. "Fools of a nation of fools! May the fire on thy hearth be quenched and thy house be desolated. As for this maiden," he went on, fixing a baleful glance on the shrinking girl, "her fate shall be whispered of for generations to come. Beware, O thou accursed McFee, beware!"

Turning on his heel, he rapped out an order in the native dialect and, accompanied by his savage body-guard, plunged into the winding trail and disappeared.

"And now," said McFee, gently raising the trembling Inyoni to her feet, "tell me how I may find the secret place where Ishak-El-Naga keeps his prisoners, so that they may be freed and he punished."

A look of distress came into Inyoni's dusky features.

"Gladly would I do so, *Bwana*," she said haltingly, "but I am afraid. Were I to name the place, the *Sitoka Kilui* would surely slay me."

"You see," McFee said in an undertone to Egerton, "the White Vampire again! By heaven! it almost maddens me to think that hundreds of lives should be sacrificed for the sake of one unspoken word. Inyoni," he went on, turning again to the girl, "you *shall* speak. You shall tell me of this secret place, so that I may gain evidence to crush this Ishak-El-Naga like the loathsome reptile he is. Speak, Inyoni—I command you!"

The trembling girl hesitated, her dark eyes fixed on the young officer's face. Something that she saw there must have given her courage, for she drew herself erect with an air of sudden determination.

"Yes, I will speak!" she cried. "If you will hunt the White Vampire——"

Above the drone of insect life and murmur of the distant river there sounded a shrill whistling note, and Inyoni sank into McFee's arms with the shaft of a Bhutuma arrow quivering in her rounded breast.

In an instant all was confusion. The hastily mustered Hausas sent volley after volley crashing through the tangled undergrowth whence the arrow had sped. But it was wasted ammunition, and none realized the fact better than McFee. Lucky indeed would be the bullet that found its billet amid that wilderness of canes and trailing vines. At length he ordered his men to cease fire and retraced his steps to where Inyoni lay. He tenderly lifted the limp

form and bore it into the hut, and with difficulty managed to force a little brandy between her lips. After a while her eyes slowly opened.

"The vengeance of the White Vampire has fallen." The words came faintly between the last fluttering breaths. "Avenge me, *Bwana* . . . watch . . . beside the Pool of Ghosts . . . at moonrise . . . tonight! . . ."

Within the hour McFee and Egerton, armed to the teeth, set out to solve the mystery of the fearsome being whose presence lay like a blight over the countryside. But before they left, the spirit of Inyoni had already solved the last great mystery of all.

THE western horizon was ablaze with the vivid hues of the tropical sunset when the two white men reached the large, circular sheet of water known to the natives as the Pool of Ghosts.

They were alone. Lieutenant McFee—a keen student of savage psychology—had quickly sensed the superstitious dread with which the mere mention of their destination had been received by his men. Strong as a horse, brave as a lion, an adept at bush tactics, the Hausa as a fighting machine is perfection itself. But the moment his imagination begins to busy itself in occult speculations, then the thousand and one devils that comprise the savage Pantheon enter into his thick, woolly pate and he is apt to become no better than a frightened child. And on such an errand, McFee decided, a crowd of jumpy followers would be a source of weakness rather than of strength.

Twilight is always brief under the equator. In an instant the scarlet and gold of the heavens were obliterated as though a huge, invisible brush charged with indigo had been swept from zenith to horizon. Then the thronging stars of the tropics flashed forth like thick-sown gems, and it was night.

But Lieutenant McFee and his companion had no time to waste in admiring the beauties of nature. They took advantage of the last few seconds of daylight to make a survey of their surroundings, and on the ground about the margin, muddy from the recent floods, they discovered something to send a thrill through the stoutest heart.

"Lions' spoor!" said McFee, pointing to the deeply indented impressions. "Look—there are hundreds of trails—the place must be infested with the beasts! By Jove, Egerton, it looks as though you were going to have the chance of bagging your first lion straight away."

"Nothing would please me better," was the delighted reply. "That's really what I came up country for, but things have been happening so quickly since my arrival that I'd almost forgotten the fact."

Something like a sigh escaped McFee's lips. "I had hoped there would be sport afoot more exciting even than lion-hunting," he said regretfully. "However, let us make ourselves comfortable in one of these trees and we'll take things as they come. Remember, when you draw at a lion, aim just behind the shoulder. A bullet planted there is more likely to drop him than one in the head."

Egerton made a wry face in the darkness. "I'm not likely to hit a haystack just at present. It's so dark that I can't so much as see my foresight."

"Wait," answered McFee. "There will be light enough presently."

Even as he spoke the sky began to blanch, and presently the rim of the full African moon pushed its way above the surrounding tree-tops and filled the little clearing about the lake with its cold, bright radiance.

"Hist!" The warning whisper from McFee recalled the other's wandering attention. "Look—on your right!"

For a moment the less experienced

Egerton could detect nothing unusual. Then, among the tall grass, he saw a ripple slowly passing as though a gust of wind had stirred it. But he knew that could not be the explanation, for the night was still and breathless. Again the grass-stems rippled; then slowly parted, and into the moonlight there stepped a beast that caused an involuntary gasp of wonder and admiration to escape the lips of the watchers.

It was an immense albino lion!

FROM the top of its mane-crowned head to the ground it was the height of an average man; from nose to tail-tip it could not have measured an inch under twelve feet. But, large as it bulked, its unusual color made it appear still larger. In every species of animal there occasionally occur specimens who, through some obscure defect of the pigment-cells, fail to assume their normal coloration, and it was to this rare and interesting type that the beast belonged. Its color throughout was a pure, silky white, except the eyes, which smoldered red as garnets in their deep-set sockets, and the half-opened, fang-fringed mouth. As it stalked proudly forth, the moonlight gleaming on its mane and hide, it presented a weird yet magnificent sight; so much so, indeed, that Egerton, keen hunter as he was, felt a pang of compunction to think that this marvel of strength and beauty would soon be rolling in its death agony.

But the feeling quickly passed and one of elation took its place. What a trophy to take home! His first lion—and such a lion! Mindful of his friend's advice, he pressed the butt of his repeating cordite rifle into his shoulder and took careful aim. The next moment the heavy bullet would have been sent crashing on its deadly errand, when he felt an iron grip upon his arm.

"Don't shoot!" McFee whispered the words with his mouth close to the

other's ear. "That is no wild lion. It wears a golden collar—I just caught the glint of it beneath the mane."

Too much astonished to answer, Egerton lowered his weapon and stared at the strange beast, which had now advanced to the edge of the pool and was lowering its head to drink. As it did so the moonlight fell full upon a massive golden collar encircling its neck.

Having drunk its fill, it raised its head and sent a low, reverberating roar into the night; then turned about and slowly passed out of sight among the long grass. Lieutenant McFee at once slung his rifle and prepared to descend to the ground.

"I intend to follow that lion," he said in answer to Egerton's whispered query. "Perhaps it may lead us to the very heart of the mystery we set out to solve."

At first sight the spot where the beast had disappeared seemed to be an impenetrable thicket of aloe bushes and thorny canes. Closer inspection, however, revealed a narrow path intersecting it, and into this, with wary eyes and ready rifles, the two men plunged. They had barely proceeded a dozen paces, however, before the even straightness of the path aroused a growing suspicion in McFee's mind. Stooping down, he drew his hunting-knife and thrust it through the ankle-deep grass. A few inches below the surface of the ground the blade grated against something hard. Twice he repeated the experiment at different spots; then he sheathed his knife and turned to Egerton.

"I thought so," he said in a low voice. "Beneath us is an ancient roadway faced with blocks of stone. The thin layer of soil which has been deposited on it in the course of ages is not deep enough to enable the larger bushes to take root; otherwise it would have been overgrown long since."

"What, a stone roadway in the

heart of the African bush? Impossible!"

"It may not always have been bush; I have a very shrewd idea that at one time the river came up as far as this—you know how the bends are apt to silt up. Anyway, an ancient roadway naturally presupposes something equally ancient at the other end, so come on. Keep your gun handy, but don't fire unless you have to."

A few minutes later McFee's surmise received ample confirmation. The path turned sharply and then terminated in a wedge-shaped opening in the side of a low, conical hill. Although both jambs and lintel were thickly incrustated with moss, there was not the slightest doubt that they were of artificial construction.

"Why, it's a regular tunnel!" exclaimed Egerton. "And look at the carvings! I know I'm not much of an archeologist, but they look to me exactly like those I saw at Luxor. Surely the ancient Egyptians could not have penetrated so far up country?"

McFee did not answer. He was staring with a puzzled frown at the hill before him. He had previously noticed that its outline seemed suspiciously symmetrical, but it was not until his companion mentioned the word "Egyptian" that his mind grasped the startling truth. "Why, the thing is nothing more nor less than a pyramid overgrown with vegetation!" he cried. "It's the very thing I've been trying to find ever since I've been stationed here."

Egerton grasped his arm. "You mean it is the secret slave-hold of El-Naga?" he breathed.

Lieutenant McFee unslung his rifle and pushed forward the safety-catch.

"More than that—it's the home of the White Vampire!" he said grimly. "Forward!"

Followed by his friend, he stepped across the threshold and plunged into the yawning blackness beyond.

Twenty paces; then a faint flickering light became visible ahead. At the sight they pressed forward eagerly. Then without warning the solid ground seemed to slide from beneath their feet and they pitched headlong forward and downward.

McFee was conscious of a sickening blow on his head—a thousand lights danced before his eyes—then he remembered no more.

WHEN McFee next opened his eyes the sight they beheld was so extraordinary that for a moment he thought it the figment of a dream.

He was standing on a long, raised platform in the center of a lofty hall, which, from the solidity of its construction and the character of the decoration on its walls, was evidently situated in the heart of the pyramid. On each hand stretched a sea of upturned savage faces. Their dusky features were indistinct amid the gloom, but the myriads of watching eyes, catching the wan light which struggled from above, stood out in startling contrast. Six yards in front of him, its blood-red eyes watching his every movement, crouched the albino lion. Behind him was a pillar of granite, and to this McFee's arms and legs were fastened by means of four hinged bronze staples of curious, and seemingly antique, workmanship. In spite of the stifling heat of the crowded and ill-ventilated place, McFee felt a chilly shiver pass down his spine as he realized the full hideousness of the fate in store for him. A helpless prisoner, he was about to be subjected to the onslaught of the white lion!

For what seemed like hours he stood gazing into the smoldering eyes of the beast before him, dully wondering at its delay in giving play to the instincts of its natural blood-lust. Nor did his wonder lessen when at length he perceived the reason of its seeming inactivity. A steel chain stretched from the wall to its collar, preventing

its further progress. For the present, at least, he was out of reach of its teeth and claws. The deep sigh of relief which he uttered was answered by a voice close at hand.

"Thank God, you're still alive, Mac!"

It was Egerton who spoke. Turning his head to the left, McFee saw that Egerton was secured to the pillar in the same manner as himself.

"Looks as if I've landed you in a most unholy mess, old chap," McFee said apologetically. "Apparently Ishak-El-Naga is about to provide an elaborately staged spectacle for his edification and amusement of his slaves, with us as the star turns! I wonder what is to be the first item on the program?"

"Probably the first item will also be the last," Egerton answered dryly. "Ishak came round while you were still out for the count, and made a long speech to the audience, and I think he was promising them something top-hole in the way of thrills. I couldn't understand what he was saying, of course, but his expression wasn't exactly benevolent. After he'd finished speaking his piece he flitted off, and in flitted the White Vampire."

"You've seen her?" cried McFee. "What is she like?"

"She's got eyes as black as"—he gave an unsteady laugh—"as that beautiful Portuguese girl's. As for the rest of her appearance—well, you'll soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself!"

A sudden blare of barbaric music echoed through the temple and from the door at the farther end there emerged a party of Bhutumas lustily blowing hollowed elephant tusks. These were followed by a double file of warriors bearing shields of white ox-hide and long, spade-headed spears. Then came four young native girls, their slender, oil-anointed bodies bending and swaying beneath the weight of a huge golden canopy, un-

der which there glided an imposing and sinister figure which came slowly forward and halted before the pinioned men.

Lieutenant McFee and the White Vampire were at last face to face.

DRAPED in robes of spotless white, with a veil of the same color completely enveloping the head, the thing bore a shuddering resemblance to a walking corpse. Only the eyes which glittered like polished jet through the slits of the head-dress told that the being within, be it man or woman, was at least alive. Although McFee had steeled himself to meet the unexpected, the effect of that veiled presence was both repulsive and terrifying. Immeasurably greater was its effect on the minds of the ignorant savages. A whimper of abject terror rose from a thousand throats as they prostrated themselves face downward on the ground.

"Sitoka Kilui . . . Sitoka Kilui . . ."

During the hush which succeeded the utterance of the dread title, two of the guards came forward and cast something on the bronze braziers which glowed on either side of the recumbent lion, and immediately a haze of aromatic fumes floated up and began to eddy about the head of the animal. Whatever subtle drug may have been employed, its effect was almost magical. In an instant the beast's lethargy had vanished. The long, tufted tail began to lash from side to side; the nostrils to dilate and twitch; the eyes to glare furiously. Rising to its feet, with stretched forelegs and arched back, it stood for a second motionless; then, with a roar that seemed to shake the very earth, launched itself straight at McFee.

Brought up short by the restraining chain, it stood reared up on its hind legs, a vision of bristling mane and bared teeth, as it pawed the air in a vain endeavor to reach its victim. But the chain held fast, and the foiled brute retreated with a low

growl, only to turn immediately and repeat its leap.

Time after time the beast threw itself against the straining chain, and to McFee's excited senses it appeared as if each successive leap brought it nearer and ever nearer to him. For a while he set this down to mere imagination on his part. Then he began to gage the forward leaps by comparing them to the cracks in the stone flooring. At once a dim suspicion of the truth entered his mind. He looked at the chain, and horror clutched his heart like an icy hand.

Instead of being fastened to the wall, it really passed through an opening, and was being gradually paid out from the other side!

"It's no use, Egerton, old man," he groaned. "We're booked this time. He intends to let that beast play with us just like a cat with a couple of crippled mice, before finishing us off. No wonder he succeeds in keeping his slaves in a state of terror. I suspected something pretty bad—but nothing so devilish as this!"

The chain tautened with a jingling crash as the lion leapt again. So close was it now that he could feel its hot, fetid breath on his forehead. The end was near.

A cold, implacable fury took possession of Lieutenant McFee. He had faced death too often in the routine of his duties at that lonely outpost to feel overmuch fear at the certainty of meeting it now. But to die without striking a blow, the sport of a rascally Arab slaver—oh, for a dozen files of his beloved Hausas, with old Sergeant Momo Assar at their head! Oh, to hear the swish of steel and the sharp, short snap as the bayonets were unsheathed and fixed! What bayonet-play they would make among the Bhutumas, with their "long point—short point—jab!" . . .

"Fix . . . bayonets!"

Lieutenant McFee started, and endeavored to shake off the torpor into which his mind had fallen. Had he

spoken his thoughts aloud? Or were his senses playing him false under the terrible strain?

The crash of a disciplined volley, a rush of feet, the sound of the Hausa charging-yell, told him it was no delusion. When he opened his eyes it was to see the lion stretched lifeless on the ground, together with most of the slaver's guards; while the remainder stood huddled together, covered by the rifles of a score of Hausas.

But the White Vampire was nowhere to be seen.

IMMEDIATELY upon being released McFee set a guard on the door of the pyramid, and then with an armed party instituted a thorough search of the maze of passages and cell-like rooms with which the main temple was surrounded. This, although a protracted task, was far from being a tedious one. It is impossible to feel bored when your next step may be greeted with a shot at close quarters.

That Ishak-El-Naga would make a desperate fight for life when discovered seemed almost certain; but the scene which actually followed took McFee entirely by surprise. Pushing open a heavy teak door at the end of one of the passages, he found the slave-dealer standing in the center of a room which, unlike the others he had visited, was richly furnished and lighted by hanging lamps. He made not the slightest movement until McFee had covered him with a ready revolver and ordered him to put his hands up. Then he merely lifted his shoulders a fraction of an inch and smiled.

"I expected your coming, Englishman," he said indifferently, as he pointed to two ivory-handled Colts and a long curved sword lying on the table beside him. "There are my weapons. I am your prisoner. But first I demand to know the crimes with which I am accused."

"They are many, Ishak-El-Naga," said McFee sternly; and for the next

five minutes he recited a catalogue which sickened him merely to repeat.

At the conclusion the Arab gave an elaborate yawn. "What have I to do with these crimes?" he asked wearily. "By your own showing they were committed by an unknown person who goes by the name of 'The White Vampire'."

Lieutenant McFee pointed an accusing finger at his prisoner.

"The White Vampire was—*yourself!*" he cried.

Ishak-El-Naga threw back his head and uttered a scornful laugh.

"Prove that to the judges at Lokoja!" he sneered. "Tell them thy fable of a veiled spirit who enslaved thousands by the mere terror of her name. Bah! the English require proof—not empty words! They will laugh thy accusation to scorn!" He drew himself up with an air of defiance. "Take me to Lokoja. I am ready to face my trial."

For a full minute Lieutenant McFee stared at the man in silence. For the wily Arab spoke no more than the truth. There was not a shred of actual proof against him. If he accused him, the case would assuredly fail. And yet—was this monster to escape scot-free? The vision of In-yoni's death-agony rose before the eyes of the lieutenant and his features set in an expression which caused the watchful Ishak to quail.

"Thou art mistaken, O Hadj," he said in a voice of terrible calm. "Thy judges are not at Lokoja. They are here."

"Here?" gasped the Arab. "Who are they?"

"Thy victims!" was the answer. "Thou shalt be delivered into the hands of thy slaves, that they may do with thee what they will."

Ishak recoiled a pace and his face appeared suddenly gray.

"But they will torture me!—I shall die by inches!" he almost screamed. "You—you dare not do

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The White Vampire

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'this thing. Mercy, *Effendi!* have mercy!' He threw himself on the ground in his terror and strove to embrace McFee's dusty riding-boots. "If die I must, at least let me die while I still resemble a man!"

Lieutenant McFee crossed to the table, took up one of the revolvers and threw open the breech. Eight little brass cylinders were ejected by the self-acting mechanism. Seven of these he placed in his pocket. The other one he slipped back into the firing-chamber, closed the breech, and laid the weapon on the table.

"There's one round left," he said significantly.

Ishak-El-Naga bowed his head as a sign that he understood, and his hand closed eagerly over the ivory butt.

"I bear witness that there is no God but Allah," he cried. "And Mohammed is the Prophet of God!"

Lieutenant McFee raised his hand to the brim of his topee in grave salute.

"I knew you'd take it sensibly," he said in Arabic. "Thou hast my permission to depart."

As he closed the door behind him there came from within the sound of a muffled shot. Ishak-El-Naga was dead.