



SPICY- ADVENTURE STORIES

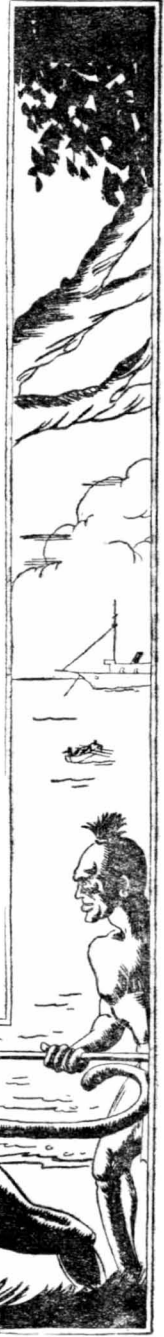
December, 1936

Vol. 5, No. 3

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She was a white girl and had no business being friendly with the coffee-colored native, even if he were a Shaihk. But she was headstrong, and only bitter experience could teach her the error of her ways

WITH contempt, Barry Wheeler eyed the *burnoose*-clad native who sought to bar his path. "Out of my way, oh offspring of many stinking camels!" he said quietly; and the very quiet of his voice was more stinging than an ordinary man's shout.

Far overhead the stars shone down upon the silent Tigris Valley; and in the nearby diggings, Iranian natives chanted a song that struck premonition into Wheeler's stout heart. It was a dangerous song the diggers were chanting; and it presaged trouble.

For many days Wheeler had sensed the approaching storm; had intuitively recognized the growing discontent of the native laborers. Which was why he was now on his way to the tent of Maureen Cornell.

Nor did he propose to allow this insolent native body-servant to stop him. His gaze bored into the man's sullen, dark eyes. "Again I say to you, out of my path!" he said with steel-hard firmness.

The native did not move, save to shift one hand downward toward the bare-bladed *fissa* at the belt of his dirty white *burnoose*. "It is the order of the white Mistress that none shall come to her tent save by her own command, *Sidi*



**By ELLERY
WATSON CALDER**

TIGRIS TREASURE

Barry pivoted, and drove the *fissa* straight into the eunuch's heart.



Wheeler. Therefore you will not approach her."

The man's tone was insulting, sneering. Wheeler knew that he must act, and act swiftly, else he would lose face with the native laborers.

He stepped two paces forward. "For the last time, out of my way!"

The native half-drew his keen, glittering *fissa*—a knife fully capable of gut-

ting a man from naval to spine. But long before the blade could come upward, Wheeler struck.

He struck with his balled right fist; for it would have indicated cowardice to draw gun against a man armed only with cold steel. So he lashed out with his fist; and his knuckles bashed home upon the native's jaw. The man went sprawling backward; fell flat; stirred once, then lay still.

WHHEELER stepped calmly over the fellow's supine form; but his outer calmness was not matched by the savage hammering of his heart. He knew that many eyes had witnessed his striking the man; and either of two things might happen. The hidden, watching natives would either draw back in respect; or a knife would come viciously arching through the air to bury itself hilt-deep in Wheeler's back.

Yet he gave no outward sign that he was even aware of the presence of other natives in the lurking shadows. Instead, he strode forcefully toward the tent of Maureen Cornell. There was a lantern burning within. Barry raised his strong voice. "Miss Cornell!"

The tent-flap was flung open. Maureen stared out into the darkness; saw Wheeler standing there. "You!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. Me."

She was a lovely creature, Barry caught himself thinking. A lovely, wild creature of untamed beauty and arrogant hardness. Her hair was the black of a raven's pinions, and her body was a symphony of sheer enchantment. Her jodhpurs outlined the straight slenderness of her legs, the sweeping arches of her hips. And her silk blouse, open at the throat, clung intimately to the swelling globes of her nubile breasts.

But in her eyes and in the curl of her crimson lips, Wheeler read nothing but arrogance and hauteur. She was like a splendid, untamed animal; an animal too long without restraint. She needed curbing, breaking. Else one day she would come a cropper against something more powerful than her own pride; and after that it would be too late, perhaps, to save the innate sweetness of her . . .

Again he spoke to her, quietly. "I'd like to have a little chat with you, Miss Cornell."

Her eyes narrowed, blazed. "I gave instructions to my servant that nobody should come here to disturb me. You dared disobey my command, Mr. Wheeler?"

"I not only disobeyed it; I popped your native on the button and put him to sleep for a while."

"You—you dared to—"

"Yes. I hit him. And I came here in disobedience of your orders. There's something I've got to say, Miss Cornell. And you might just as well get set to listen."

"I'll listen to nothing from you, Mr. Meddlesome! You'll oblige me by going back to the digging where you belong. If you must know, I have a visitor."

FOR the first time, Wheeler stared past her into her lantern-lighted tent. He saw a hawk-nosed, dark-eyed, swarthy man standing within the canvas shelter; a man clad impeccably in Occidental garb, but whose carriage and features and general bearing betrayed that he was of the Levant. There was cunning in his sharp, dark eyes; cruelty in the thin set of his lips above the sparse, curly black beard.

Even as Wheeler stared, the swarthy man walked out. "Good evening to you, Mr. Wheeler," he spoke in a nasal voice

that was somehow mocking and sinister ; that somehow bore a veiled, vague threat.

"Sidi Wheeler to you, Akbar ib'n Bakr!" Wheeler answered quietly.

Akbar ib'n Bakr bowed sardonically. Now, instead of English, he reverted to his native Iranian tongue. "As you wish, Sidi Wheeler. One must respect the superiority of the white man, even in one's own land, eh?"

"One must, at all times!" Wheeler agreed evenly.

"Then, in proper humility of course, may I wish you farewell, Sidi Wheeler? Since you desire conversation with Miss Cornell, I perceive that my presence is awkward. Therefore I take my departure." He turned to Maureen Cornell, took her slender fingers, pressed them to his lips. "Sweet dreams, my dear," he whispered. And he strode off into the night.

Maureen followed him with her eyes; then she whirled on Barry. "How dare you treat that man in such fashion!" she blazed. "Don't you realize he's *Shaihk* of this district—a power in the land? Or are you too stupid?"

Wheeler smiled grimly. "I realize his power. And I also realize that he's a double-crossing snake. And I noticed that he called you 'his dear.' Which, if you ask me, is taking plenty of liberty with a white woman—considering his coffee color."

Her cheeks flushed with anger. "I'll thank you to keep your nose out of my affairs, Mr. Wheeler! Do you think I am incapable of handling my own business?"

"I think you're a spoiled, pampered little vixen that needs a damned good spanking!" Barry answered quietly. And he stepped into her tent.

She followed him, trembling with

anger. "I did not invite you in here!"

"But I came without invitation. Sit down, Miss Cornell. I want to talk with you."

"You have nothing to say that would interest me!" she flung at him. She took a cigarette, lighted it, inhaled with suppressed fury.

WHEELER caught himself studying the curve of her swelling breasts. . . . He smiled wryly. "Listen," he said. "Since your father was taken to the hospital at El Hadjr, you've run things with a pretty high hand. It's time to put on the brakes."

"I know what I'm doing!" she flared.

"Do you? I wonder if you realize that it's of no use to force these Iranian diggers to work in night shifts? By torchlight, they accomplish practically nothing. Moreover, the stuff we're getting out of those tombs isn't worth the effort. Isn't worth the money it costs to excavate."

"That's my affair!" the brunette girl snapped. "I've been on previous archaeological expeditions with my father. I know the value of tomb-relics. And if I wish to work the natives at night, I'll do it."

Barry stood up. "If you'll listen, you'll hear the diggers chanting. Do you know what they're singing?"

"No. Nor do I care!"

"Well, they're singing an ancient song against the infidels—the Christians. That means trouble brewing. And we shouldn't be risking trouble for the sake of the worthless junk we're getting out of the tomb."

She laughed. "So the stuff is worthless, is it? Well, Mr. Know-it-all, let me tell you that Akbar ib'n Bakr was just here telling me that the material is very valuable—and that you offered to steal

some of it, sell it to him, for a sufficiently large bribe!"

Wheeler reddened. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he had seized her and crushed her in his arms. He held her so close that her breasts were mashed flat upon his muscular chest; and deliberately he tilted her chin, planted a burning kiss upon her amazed lips.

Then he released her. "That's for believing such nonsense!" he panted. And he walked out of the tent.

AS he strode toward his own quarters, he wondered why he had acted that way. He hadn't intended to. Yet something about her—some aura of feminine challenge—had reached out and drawn him to her as a magnet attracts steel. And he was still quivering with the memory of her warm, moist lips upon his mouth; the remembrance of her soft breasts crushed to his chest. God! It would be grand to take a girl like that and tame her . . . bring her to the full understanding of humility!

Determinedly he put Maureen Cornell out of his mind; turned his thoughts to Akbar ib'n Bakr. The man was dangerous. True, he was *Shaihk* of the district—the tribal chief. But he was more than that. He wielded an ominous force over the native diggers; held them in the palm of his brown hand. He could make things plenty tough of he wanted to!

Akbar ib'n Bakr wanted something from the Cornell archaeological expedition. That much was certain. But what was it he wanted? It couldn't be any of the practically worthless junk that was being taken from the tombs, Barry knew. Then what did Akbar ib'n Bakr want?

Barry thought of what Maureen Cornell had just said. So Akbar ib'n Bakr had claimed Barry had come to him with an offer to steal some of the tomb-stuff,

eh? And the truth was just the other way around. Akbar ib'n Bakr had come to Barry, offered a bribe—which Wheeler had refused, of course. But the native chieftain's slimy lie had done its work. Maureen no longer trusted him!

SCOWLING, Wheeler walked into his tent. And then he brought up short in stiffened astonishment.

There was someone in his tent. A girl. A native girl! And except for a jeweled loin-cloth, she was nude!

Barry recognized her. She was of Akbar ib'n Bakr's household—a concubine in the *Shaihk's harem*. But what the hell was she doing here?

He stared at her. "What is the meaning of this?" he demanded roughly.

She came to him. "It means that I have long loved thee, oh *Sidi Wheeler*. I would savor the strength of thy sinews and the hardness of thy body!" She flaunted her tawny body; swayed and undulated her hips with a challenging invitation impossible to misunderstand.

"Get out!" Barry Wheeler grated.

"Not until I have tasted thy kisses!" she retorted boldly. And she suddenly clung to him, pressed her semi-nude body close to his own.

He could not deny the thrill that coursed through him at the contact. But he sensed something wrong in her presence here. He took her by the shoulders and roughly sent her spinning out of the tent. "And do not return!" he spat at her.

Then, puzzled, he sat down upon the edge of his cot. But scarcely had he done so when he leaped up again. Someone had come smashing into the tent, unbidden and without knocking. Barry sprang to his feet—and saw Akbar ib'n Bakr standing there with glittering eyes and snarling lips.

"Let me taste thy kisses," she murmured, and, despite himself, he thrilled to her beauty.



"Infidel dog!" the swarthy man grated. "Thou hast one of my wives in this tent with thee! Produce her, ere I slit thy gullet!"

"So that's it!" Wheeler murmured. . . . It was an Iranian version of the ancient badger game! Akbar ib'n Bakr had planned to surprise him here with the girl; blackmail him. . . .

"Your scheme didn't click, oh Akbar ib'n Bakr!" Wheeler grunted. "Your

concubine is not here. I kicked her out. And now, let's get down to cases."

The *Shaihk's* eyes narrowed. "Just what do you mean?"

"I MEAN I'm wise to you!" Wheeler said in a soft voice that masked the steel beneath. "First you offered me a bribe if I would steal some of the junk from the digging."

"Aie. I made you an offer."

"And I know why you made that offer!" Wheeler went on. "Had I agreed, you would have turned evidence of my crookedness over to the Iranian government; had me jailed."

"You seem very wise, my white friend!" Akbar ib'n Bakr sneered.

"You bet I'm wise. And when that scheme didn't work, you tried to queer me with Miss Cornell. You seem damned anxious to get me out of the way, Akbar ib'n Bakr!"

"Perhaps your presence here is offensive to me."

"Yeah. I think it is. Because as long as I'm here, you're a little afraid to make a play for Maureen Cornell. With me out of the way, you think you can put her in your *hareem*! Well—I'm warning you; don't try it. While Miss Cornell's father is ill in the hospital at El Hadjr, I'm sticking around, see? I'm keeping an eye on his daughter. And the moment you start trouble, I'll break you in half!"

THE swarthy man's answer was a gesture so unexpected that it caught Wheeler off-guard. With a snake-like motion of his right hand, Akbar ib'n Bakr pulled a whistle from his pocket, blew three piercing blasts on the thing before Wheeler could spring at him.

With a curse, Barry leaped for the *Shaihk's* throat. He snatched at the whistle; sent a savage fist into the man's midriff. Akbar ib'n Bakr staggered backward, his swarthy face a greenish, sickened hue. Then he recovered; smiled. "The damage has already been done, my friend!" he said. And he raced out of the tent.

Barry Wheeler went lunging after him. Outside, a sudden pandemonium had arisen. From the diggings came a

sound of native shouts, curses, yells. Flames began to lick at the tents of a few loyal natives. A scattered volley of shots punctuated the night. From somewhere in the distance, a woman screamed.

"God!" Berry panted. "That's Maureen Cornell!" And he launched himself toward her distant tent.

But a knot of native Mosul diggers blocked him; sprang at him with drawn *fissas*. He ducked them, eluded their concerted rush. His balled fists licked out; and one of the Mosuls went kicking in the dirt. Barry struck again. Another native went down. But now the remaining attackers were closing in. Wheeler felt fists and knees and feet battering him, smashing him off-balance.

He went to his knees under the showering hail of vicious, raging blows. His flesh awaited the sharp slicing of a *fissa*—but it did not come. Instead, something heavy and metallic and hard bludgeoned down on his skull. Blinding brilliance blazed before his agonized, pain-shattered eyeballs. He felt himself toppling, reeling, slipping into a black infinity of unconsciousness.

Then, half senseless, he felt himself being dragged along the ground; felt his wrists and his ankles being roped together with sharp, cruel lengths of camel-hide cord. Dully he knew that he was being boosted upon the saddle of a fleet *mehari*—a racing-camel. Then, for a long while, he knew nothing.

WHEN he next awakened, he was untrussed, unfettered; and he saw that he was in some sort of small room—unfurnished save for the pallet of stinking camel-blankets upon which he lay. His body ached savagely from the battering he had taken, and his head was a inferno of pain.

Through the room's single, small window, he saw a faint grey light; but whether it was dawn or dusk he could not tell; nor could he know how long he had lain unconscious.

But as full consciousness returned to him, he was filled with sudden icy knives of bitter fear. For—not for himself, but for Maureen Cornell! There could be no doubt of it: she had fallen into the hands of Akbar ib'n Bakr. And the fate she would suffer at his bestial hands was not a pleasant thing to contemplate!

Grimly, Barry Wheeler realized the truth. Akbar ib'n Bakr had desired the girl from the very first. And when her father had fallen ill, he had seen an opportunity to take her.

The ground had been well prepared for his move; the seeds had long been planted by the stubbornness of Maureen. Despite Barry's warnings, she had insisted upon working the natives in day and night shifts. They had grown restive under such driving. It had been easy for Akbar ib'n Bakr to go among them and stir their discontent to a flaming rebelliousness.

All of these things were clear, now, to Wheeler; and he clenched his impotent fists as he thought of Maureen in the arms of that swarthy, bearded chieftain. He knew what would be her fate. She would first be stripped of her clothing while the *Shaiikh* watched with avid eyes, drinking in her virginal charms. Then she would be bathed, perfumed, painted and roughed and kohled. And after that, Akbar ib'n Bakr would take her to his *hareem*. . . .

BARRY stifled the groan that arose to his lips as he envisioned Maureen struggling, fighting vainly against the swarthy man's revolting advances. In imagination he could see Akbar ib'n

Bakr's brown hands upon her—ruthless, ravaging. . . . And then. . . .

Well, after that, she wouldn't have much to live for. Either she'd kill herself at first opportunity, or she'd remain in the *hareem*, a love-slave for as long a time as her beauty lasted. Then Akbar ib'n Bakr would tire of her, as all Levantines tire of white women after a certain time. She would probably be sold to some wandering, nomad desert chieftain; would undergo fresh degradations. . . . Until in the end she would wind up on the waterfront at Cairo, in some foul dive frequented by lice-ridden, disease-ravaged native sailors. . . .

Not a pretty picture! Not by a damned sight! Well, it was her own headstrong fault, Barry Wheeler tried to tell himself. But no matter how hard he tried, he could not drive thoughts of the girl out of his aching mind. What if it had all been her own fault? She was a white girl, wasn't she?

He told himself that he should have spanked hell out of her when he was in her tent; should have whipped some of the pride out of her, some of the arrogance. Instead, he had only grabbed her and kissed her! A fat lot of good that had done!

He still remembered that kiss; still recalled the sweet firmness of her young breasts upon his chest. And at the thought, red rage descended before his eyes. Now all that sweetness, that fragrant loveliness, would belong to the sinister Akbar ib'n Bakr. . . . !

"Damn it to hell!" Barry Wheeler rasped out. "I've got to get her out of here some way—!"

EVEN as he spoke, it seemed that his problem was answered. He heard a key rasping in the lock of his prison-room; saw the single, narrow door swing

open. Someone stepped into his tiny cubicle. He stared—

"Good Lord!" he whispered. "You!"

It was a girl—a tawny-skinned, voluptuous Iranian girl. A girl who wore nothing save a jeweled girdle; whose breasts stood forth firm and resilient, whose hips arched magnificently, whose thighs were lush columns of tan marble. It was Akbar ib'n Bakr's concubine—the one who had come to Barry's tent that night!

"You!" he repeated in a harsh, strained whisper. "What the hell are you doing here? And where am I?"

"Thou art in the house of Akbar ib'n Bakr, *Sidi Wheeler*," the girl answered in a low, vibrant voice. "Thou hast been here since last night, when thou wert captured. And now it is dawn, and the night has passed. And I have come to thee. . . ."

Dawn! The night was over! Barry stiffened. That could mean only one thing. Whatever was going to happen to Maureen had already happened by this time.

The girl came closer. "Thou wouldst like to know why I have come to thee?"

"Yes. Why are you here?"

"Because, last night when I was in thy tent, I conceived a passion for thee! Even though I had been sent to thee by my master, Akbar ib'n Bakr, to trap thee, I conceived a sudden longing for thee. So that my words to thee were indeed true! I would taste the hardness of thy sinews and the sweetness of thy caresses, oh *Sidi Wheeler*!"

He narrowed his eyes; a sudden plan leaped full-blown into his seething, racing mind. "And if I do that which thou desirest, wilt thou effect my release from this place?" he whispered tensely.

"*Aie*. That I will, oh my lover!"

GRIMLY he swept her lithe figure into his arms; crushed her almost-nude body upon him. His mouth sought her lips with a burning kiss; and he stroked her sleek flesh with sensation-arousing fingers. And she undulated against him with a savage, barbaric fervor that bespoke much knowledge of the arts and artifices of love—for was she not an inmate of Akbar ib'n Bakr's *hareem*, where such things are taught.

At last the Iranian girl lay wearily in his arms, looking into his flaming eyes.

"Thou art a splendid lover, oh *Sidi Wheeler*!" she murmured. "And now . . . it is time for me to fulfill my bargain. Come; I will lead you from this place and show a way of escape."

He followed her as she guided him from his prison-chamber and led him toward a narrow, concealed staircase.

"This leads upward to the women's quarter, the *hareem*," she whispered. "Thou must walk warily, for the women are asleep; and the eunuchs also. But if thou wert heard, thou wouldst be slain!"

He nodded silently; followed her up the narrow steps. And at last she came to a door which she pushed open; and he found himself in a cool, spacious room. In the center he saw a splashing fountain which was also a sort of bathing-pool, apparently where the *hareem*-inmates disported and swam in the hot afternoons. Beyond the pool he saw a high window.

TOWARD this window the girl pointed a tawny, slender finger. "Thou wilt escape by that means, oh *Sidi Wheeler*. And now must I take leave of thee, for it would mean my life were I found here with thee—even as it would mean thine if thou were discovered in this place where no strange man must ever come."



From his costume she thought he was the Shaikh returning and she moaned.

Again he nodded. "And you?" he whispered.

"I go to my own room." Suddenly she smiled. "Be sure you do not follow me, or go into the room of any other woman here. For it is the sport of the eunuchs to spy upon the women through

the lattice doors of the rooms; and to watch whenever our master, Akbar ib'n Bakr, visits one of his wives. Therefore, do thou not visit any of the women, or thou might be seen and killed!"

"Right!" Barry grunted. And he watched as the girl passed through a door into a small chamber beyond the room of the fountain-pool.

There were many other doors, he noticed, now that he was alone. Each must lead into the sleeping-quarters of *hareem*-women. And in one of those chambers he knew he would find Mau-

reen. But which one? He started to cross softly toward the nearest door. And then, even as he approached it, the portal swung outward. A man stepped into view—

It was Akbar ib'n Bakr himself!

He was clad only in breech-clout of

white silk; he was carrying his burnoose upon his arm. And from the chamber he had just quitted there came a sound of muffled feminine sobs. . . .

Barry went white. He knew the meaning of the sobs. In that chamber was Maureen!

And at that instant, Akbar ib'n Bakr spotted Barry.

THE *Shaihk* started to cry out in astonished rage; but before a sound could issue from his lips, Wheeler was upon him. If one whisper escaped the swarthy man, all was lost. Any noise would bring eunuchs, guards, on the run—and that would mean the end!

Barry leaped at his enemy; wrapped steely fingers about the man's throat. Akbar ib'n Bakr's cry died, in his teeth. In silence he struggled to pry Wheeler's fingers away from his windpipe. But the American clung grimly; tightened his grip.

Akbar ib'n Bakr dropped his burnoose; flailed his arms. In the silent, deathly struggle, both men neared the brink of the fountain-pool. Abruptly, Barry's eyes blazed. He tripped his antagonist. The *Shaihk* went down with Wheeler astride him. And then—

Deliberately, calmly, Barry Wheeler thrust Akbar ib'n Bakr's head under the water and held it there. Bubbles, foam, froth, came from the man's inundated lips and nostrils. For a long while he struggled. And then . . . he went limp as water filled his lungs and brought him to death at last.

VERY quietly, Wheeler lowered the *Shaihk's* corpse beneath the surface of the pool. Then he ran toward the door from which Akbar ib'n Bakr had just come; and he snatched up his dead enemy's *burnoose* from the floor as he

ran. He slipped into its white folds. . . .

He reached his goal; reached the door of the little chamber where he knew Maureen must be. He entered the tiny, perfumed room; closed the portal behind him. He stared—

Maureen cowered upon a pile of cushions. A jeweled girdle and golden breast-plates were her only garments. Her eyes were wet with tears; and her lovely white body shook with the agony of her sobs.

She saw Barry entering; and from the white *burnoose* she must have thought him to be Akbar ib'n Bakr returning to her. "No—no!" she moaned piteously.

And then she saw his face.

"Y-you—!" she gasped.

He leaned over her. "Yes. Here I am. And now we're getting out of here—damned fast! Come on—*wait!*" he added in a tense, sudden whisper. And he shoved her down again among the perfumed cushions.

"Wh-what—?" she quavered.

"There's someone on the other side of the door!" he told her in a grim undertone. "A eunuch, probably. We're being watched right now!"

"Oh—God—we'll be caught together and killed—!" she moaned. Her face was white.

"No. If they'd realized my identity they'd be in here by now! They can see only my back; they probably think I'm Akbar ib'n Bakr himself. Now listen. We've got just one chance to get out of this. Are you game?"

She closed her eyes. "N-nothing matters . . . now. . . ."

HE gathered her into his arms, kissed her lips, held her close to him. And what at first had started out to be play-acting, suddenly became reality to Barry Wheeler. Racing, dancing thrills coursed through him as he held Maureen in his

arms, inhaled the fragrance of her dark hair, felt the sweet nubility of her feminine body against his own.

Then, harshly, he raised his voice in the Iranian tongue. "By Allah," he rasped, "I wonder if any of my slaves are watching us, little white flower? If I thought so, I would have such spies torn limb from limb!"

From outside the door, he heard scuttling footfalls; then silence. . . .

Perhaps the coast was clear now; but he could not be sure. It might be better to wait a short moment . . . and the waiting, with Maureen in his arms, would be very pleasant. . . .

He felt her lips against his mouth; felt her arms go about his neck. He stared down into her eyes.

"Sweetheart!" he breathed. . . .

LONG moments later he went cautiously to the door; peered outside. He saw nobody in that outer room. "Come!" he whispered. And he drew Maureen with him out of her little room. Together they sped toward the window that would give them passageway to safety—

And at the last instant, a eunuch came leaping from a far corner—came leaping with drawn *flissa*!

Maureen moaned in terror. Barry pivoted, dived at the onrushing slave's knees. His shoulders bashed into his enemy. The man went rolling. Wheeler

snatched at the *flissa*—and sent it plunging into the eunuch's heart.

Then, with the dripping blade clenched in his fist, he grabbed once more at Maureen's arm. "Now!" he grated. And he smashed himself at the window, went hurtling through its shattered glass. It was only three feet to the earth outside; he landed on his feet. Maureen came scrambling after him; he caught her in his arms. Beyond the palace lay the camel-stables; one great, ungainly *mehari* stood haltered in the tiny *kraal*.

Barry leaped for the beast, grabbed its bridle; forced it to kneel. "Climb!" he panted to the girl at his side.

She scrambled upon the *mehari's* back. Wheeler followed her. He kicked the camel's ribs. The fleet beast lumbered upright, broke into a ground-eating stride . . . toward safety.

And then, as they left pursuit behind them, Barry slipped a strong arm about the lithe, slender waist of the girl who rode in front of him. He held her, steadied her; and he chuckled grimly in her ear. "So there was a treasure for me here in the Tigris Valley, after all!"

She turned in his arms. "T-treasure—?"

"Yes. You. I'm going to marry you."

"M-marry me? In spite of that night . . . in the *hareem*?"

He chuckled again. "That, my dear, was exactly what you needed to tame you!" he said.