

CLEMENTS RIPLEY  
34 CHURCH ST.  
CHARLESTON, S. C.

June 9, 1933.

Mr. Frank H. Bohn,  
290 East Seneca St.,  
Sherrill, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Bohn,

I received your letter this morning. I am delighted that Voodoo Moon gave you some pleasure, and very much flattered to be asked to send an autograph. If you enjoyed the story perhaps you might be interested in a brief history of it. I got the idea for it about two years ago, and designed it originally as a book. It took about eight months to write---most of it I did through a Charleston summer, sitting in trousers and undershirt on my upper porch here in town. My publishers thought it out<sup>ah</sup> to serialize and sent it to Cosmopolitan with that in view. As you probably know, serialization takes a rather different form from a book, so I had to rewrite it for them. Harcourt-Brace are bringing the book out some time this month. Columbia Pictures is making a movie of it, too, but I don't know just when it will be released. I'll be having some short stories very soon in Cosmopolitan and it will give me pleasure to think that perhaps you are getting some fun out of them.

If you like adventure stories, like Voodoo Moon, you might be interested some time in a couple of other books of mine---"Dust and Sun," and "Devil Drums". You can get both from your local library, I imagine.

Good luck and good wishes to you, and thanks again for your interest in my story.

Yours very sincerely,

Clements Ripley.

H. P. BURTON  
Editor

Hearst's International  
combined with  
**Cosmopolitan**

(Trademark Registered in U. S. Patent Office)

Contents for  
MARCH, 1933

Here is one  
of the most  
absorbing  
issues of  
Cosmopolitan  
ever published

A powerful  
**SHORT  
NOVEL**

Complete in  
this issue

6 entertaining  
**SHORT  
STORIES**

2 great  
**SERIALS**

And many timely  
**ARTICLES**  
and Special  
**FEATURES**

Cosmopolitan Almanack for March	F. P. A.	15
The Age of Innocence—and I	Cora Brown Potter	16
Big Executive	Alice Duer Miller	20
Somebody's Money	James Monahan	26
Voodoo Moon (Part I)	Clements Ripley	28
Let's Dine in Europe Tomorrow Night!	Forrest Wilson	34
Gold	Hendrik Willem Van Loon	38
Washington 1789—1933 Roosevelt	Rupert Hughes	40
	<small>Copyright, 1888, by Rupert Hughes</small>	
Marijane Goes to Market	Faith Baldwin	42
To the Stars	Robert W. Chambers	46
Kathleen Norris	Alexander Woolcott	50
Enchanted Ground (Part II)	Temple Bailey	52
Ed Wynn	O. O. McIntyre	56
The Wolf Chasers	Holworthy Hall	58
Looking Out for Lean Years	Ida M. Tarbell	62
Letters to My Sons (Conclusion)	Harold Bell Wright	64
	<small>Copyright, 1885, by Harold Bell Wright</small>	
February 12th	John Murray Reynolds	66
The Big, Bad Hombre	Richard Connell	68

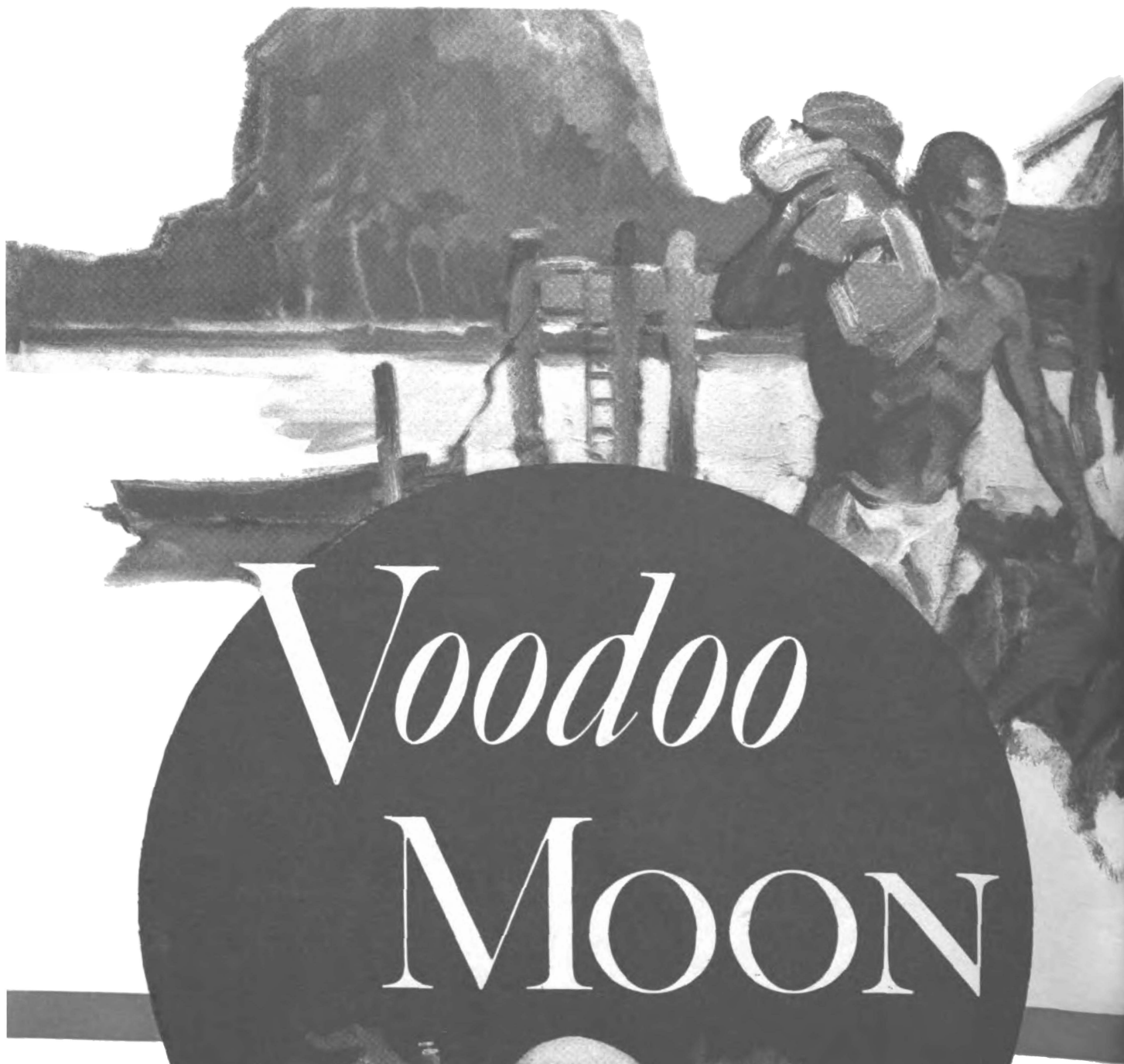
**See page 4 for news of next month's big feature**

Published monthly by INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY, INC., 57th St. at Eighth Avenue, New York City.

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, President. RICHARD E. BERLIN, Vice-President. JOHN RANDOLPH HEARST, Vice-President. AUSTIN W. CLARK, Treasurer. ARTHUR S. MOORE, Secretary.

Copyright, 1933, by International Magazine Company, Inc. All rights reserved under terms of the Fourth American International Convention of Artistic and Literary Copyright. 25 cents a copy; subscription price, United States and possessions, \$2.50 a year; Canada, \$3.50; Foreign, \$4.50. All subscriptions are payable in advance. Unless otherwise directed we begin all subscriptions with the current issue. When sending in your renewal, please give us four weeks' notice. When changing an address give the old address as well as the new and allow five weeks for the first copy to reach you. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, New York, under the act of March 3, 1879; additional entry at Atlanta, Ga.; Chicago, Ill.; Los Angeles, Cal.; Minneapolis, Minn.; New Orleans, La.; San Francisco, Cal.; Seattle, Wash. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office Department, Canada. Manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage. They will be handled with care, but this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety.

Here begins the most exciting mystery romance you



# Woodoo MOON

**T**HE YACHT lifted to the slow roll and plunge of the Caribbean. A warm wind feathered with curling whitecaps a sea as blue as a peacock's breast. And Stephen Lane, standing at the rail, tried to account for the vague sense of disquiet that had been growing on him ever since they had cast off the lines this morning.

It wasn't, he assured himself, any doubt of the wisdom of what he was doing. Certainly, he wouldn't go back now if he could. But, watching the Haitian coast sag below the horizon to the northward, he was beginning to

feel a certain—not apprehension exactly, but strangeness.

He hadn't felt strange about it in New York, or on the ship coming down. That had been all eager impulse—the thrill at the prospect of seeing Amalia. And Port-au-Prince yesterday hadn't made him feel strange, because it was show. Sleepy, sun-washed streets, saddle-colored elegants—even when they showed you the spot where, no longer ago than 1915, the black mob had torn the living body of President Guillaume Sam to bloody shreds, it was still a show.

by  
**CLEMENTS  
RIPLEY**

*Author of "Dust and Sun"*

*Illustrations by Pruett Carter*

have ever read, by a brand-new **Cosmopolitan** writer



*There was an impression of power, perfectly controlled, about Doctor Perez. Lane liked the man instantly, as he had liked the old priest.*

*To walk from the modern world of skyscrapers into a primitive world where black magic weaves a net of fear from which there is no escape—that is the adventure which makes this novel one of the most thrilling ever written*

But now, with Port-au-Prince dipping out of sight with every lift and swing of the white bow carrying him farther south, towards a port nobody had ever heard of, things seemed to tighten around him with the grip of reality—a reality that was somehow troubling.

Of course the letter that was bringing him down here was enough to account for a good deal of strangeness. A queer letter. He could almost have quoted from memory the stiff, flowery phrasing—tight little bouquets of words, incongruously typewritten—inviting him down for a visit. And then, across the bottom, that scrawled amazing postscript: "If you love her, I beseech you, for God Almighty's sake, come!"

He twitched his lean shoulders. Evidently he had a fine sense of drama, this Doctor Almon Perez, but he might have been more explicit. Amalia's uncle, he supposed. She had an uncle, he knew, who lived on

this island, San Cristóbal, and raised coconuts or something. Well, whatever his idea was, the letter had done its work. He was coming. "If you love her . . ."

He let his thoughts run. Amalia—her vivid slenderness, like a silver arrow; her soft poise that gave something of herself, yet always held something back.

He remembered the first time he had seen her. Somebody's débutante dance, and Ellen Weymouth dragging him over to be nice to some girl she had met coming home from Europe. "She's a *rubia*," Ellen explained. "That's a blond Spaniard, you know. And she lives down on an island somewhere; you know, coconuts and pirates and mangoes—or is it mangroves?—and things."

Queer, now he thought of it, as well as he had known Amalia that winter, he hadn't known much more of her background than that. She was staying at a quiet, very expensive hotel in the Sixties and there was a

vague, massive person—it might have been a maid or a duenna or an aunt. Every well-brought-up Spanish girl had something of the sort, he supposed. And there was this uncle, who lived on San Cristóbal—her guardian. Somehow, you never thought of things like her background and family. She was simply and wonderfully Amalia, and what you thought of was something high and far off—beauty and gallantry moving stately through the measures of a dance; violins on a shaded lawn—

He broke off to wonder a trifle shamefacedly what the crowd would think of that. But why not? After all, there was something to living besides yelling and wise-cracking and going somewhere at sixty miles an hour. Anyhow, that was how she did make him feel. She had a trick of being quiet that made the rest of them seem—not cheap, exactly, but kiddish. A kind of cool poise, an old-world sophistication. Didn't turn loose and make herself wide open to everybody. Only that last night, at the opera . . .

He remembered it, even after six months, with an odd pang. The dark, packed house, the stage a pool of hot amber. And then the clash and jangle, the pounding roll of kettledrums. Queer music—exotic. And then Amalia—something about her—her quickened breathing, the steady flare far back in her eyes, hot, sultry, startling. Amalia, usually so cool and silvery and untouchable.

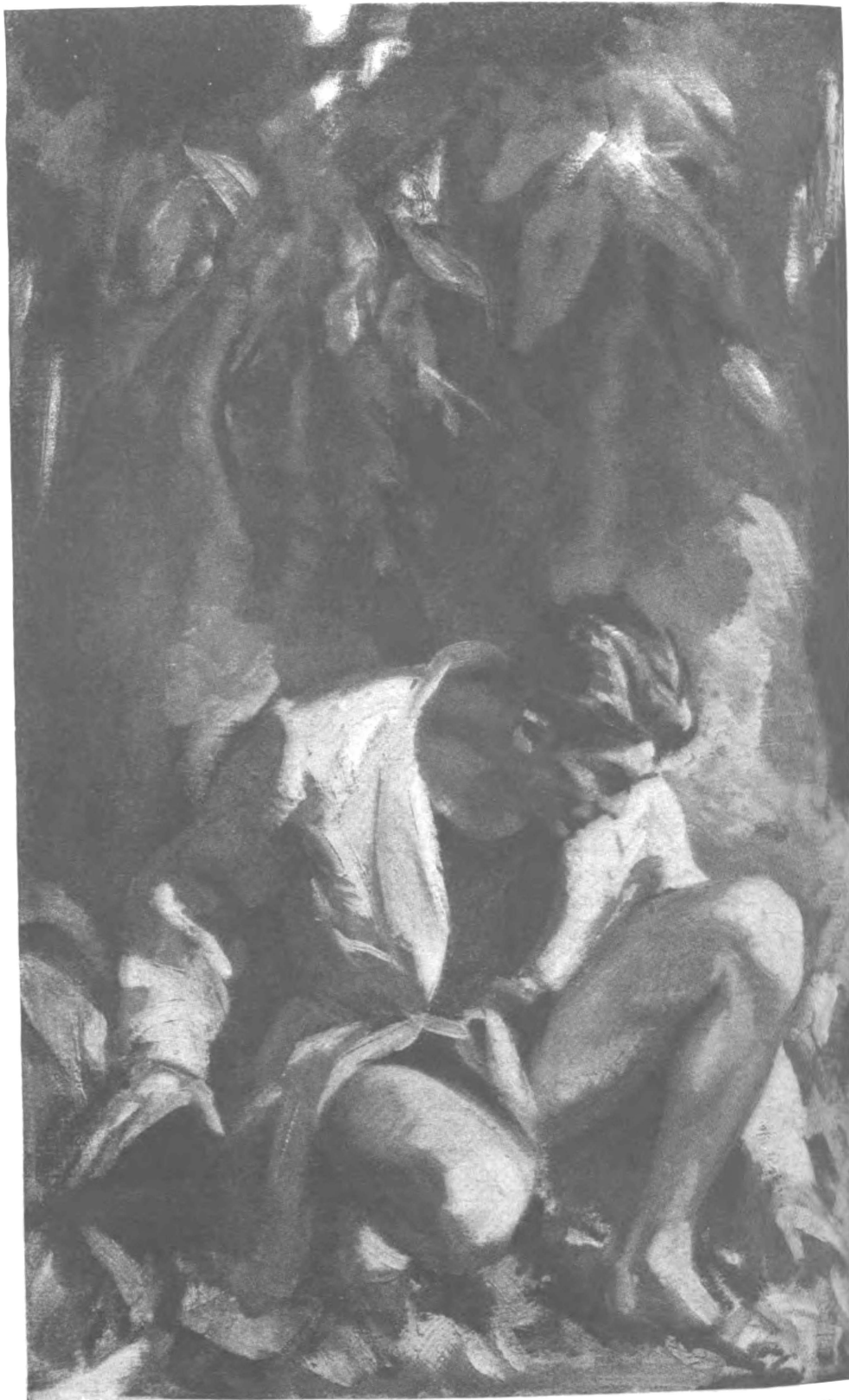
He had kissed her that night. Oh, before, of course, but never like that. He had gone away drunk with her. And that was the last time he had seen her.

He had come next day expecting to take her somewhere for dinner, and she was gone. That was all—no word, no forwarding address, nothing. A week later a note, cool, pleasant, unsatisfying, telling him that she had been called back to San Cristóbal suddenly.

His square chin grew squarer. That had been six months ago, and he still couldn't think of it without being unhappy. A man ought to have enough self-respect—when this letter with its troubling postscript had come, he had decided to pay no attention to it. He had decided it all the way to the steamship office and most of the way down on the boat. Even when he got to Port-au-Prince, he had made up his mind to spend a week in Haiti and go back. But this Doctor Perez had sent his yacht to meet him with a flowery little note of apology for not having come himself. He couldn't let the man down, after that.

Tomorrow morning—afternoon, at the latest—they would slip into some lagoon between palm-fringed shores and Amalia would be waiting, all cool loveliness. And he would take her in his arms.

A sound made him turn to find that the yacht's other passenger, an elderly Roman Catholic priest who had come aboard that morning, had joined him at the rail.



*The bad-luck charm seemed to be nothing  
"Wonder whom this is for." Lane reached*

Lane was instantly attracted by his fine, thin face with the halo of white hair above it and by his smile as he gave him some greeting in Spanish. At least Lane supposed it was Spanish. As he knew no Spanish at all, he answered in English and smiled back.

Later, when the priest, with a bow and another smile, settled himself with a thin-backed book in one of the wicker chairs aft, Lane took occasion to wander about the yacht.

The helmsman, a grinning Negro who spoke an understandable patois of French, nodded and pointed out an unnamed dot on the chart which Lane took to be San Cristóbal. The breeze was freshening a little now. Occasionally a glitter of spray swept the forward deck—just enough to lend a pleasant sense of adventure. And



but a coconut shell, bottom up, with five little pegs driven into the ground. a curious hand towards it. "Don't do that!" said Gale sharply.

as Lane passed the engine-room hatch, a fragment of song floated up above the hum of the engine, and was whirled away by the wind.

He stopped short—listened. There it was again:

"Star of the Eas', star of the Wes',  
Wish 'at star was in my breas'—  
Lawd! how y' gonna miss me when I'm gone . . ."

Surprised and curious, Lane swung himself down the hatchway.

A slender yellow boy in dungarees, with an oil can, grinned and ducked him a nod. "Aft'noon, suh!" He was obviously pleased with Lane's surprise.

Lane grinned back. "That you singing just now?"

"Why, yesso, reckon it was. Gets kin'a lonesome

down here an' a heap o' times I sings to break the monopoly. You havin' nice trip, suh?"

"Sure thing," Lane told him. And then, curiously, "You're from the States, of course. How'd you happen to get down this way?"

"From Gawgia—yesso. Name Lunch McClaren, but ev'body, black an' white, they jes' calls me Lunch. Mighty glad you havin' nice trip, suh." He set down the oil can and turned, his head a little on one side, to sniff.

"You doan' min' if I ast, suh—ain' 'at a Dromeda'y you smokin' theah, suh? . . . Yes, suh! I figured it was." He nodded sagely. "Seem like I can always tell one 'em Dromeda'ys by how it smell. Doan' hardly miss once in a thousan' times—well, in a hundred, anyhow . . . Why, thank you, suh! Sure do 'preciate 'at."

He got a match out of the band of his cap, lighted the cigaret, and drew a deep, relishing lungful.

"Hoo-ee, 'at tas'e good! 'Ese monkey-chaseh cigarets what they got down here, they awright, but they kin'a different, like ev'thing else in this country."

It was pleasant to hear the homely speech. Lane braced himself comfortably against the yacht's roll. "I suppose you get homesick once in a while?" he suggested.

"Why, sometime seem like I do, an' sometime seem like I don't. 'Ese monkey-chasehs, they awright, but they ain' like us. An' the doctuh, he a mighty nice man to work fo', but it ain' jes' like workin' fo' reg'lar white-folks . . . Well, I mean, he white-folks, o' course, but he ain' American. Still, he mighty nice so long a boy min' his business an' doan' mess into nothin' 'at ain' concern hin'."

There was a curious emphasis on this last that made Lane wonder. But he didn't like to seem to pry, so he only said, "That sounds all right."

"Well, it awright, o' course. Only the' ain' so much fun on San Cristóbal. Seem like I'd like right well to get back to Harlem an' make me some good ole whoopee. You live in New

Yawk, suh . . . You know Hotel Granada? . . . Hoo-ee, 'at soun' jes' like home! I used to run elevator inna Granada. You 'member Adolphe, used to be haid wait'h?"

Lane proffered another cigaret on the strength of Adolphe. Lunch accepted it gratefully.

"Reckon you comin' down to fetch Miss Armstrong back, suh? I done heerd she was fixin' to go back No'th."

"Miss Armstrong?" Lane hadn't heard about any other guest at San Cristóbal. Then, in a natural exuberance at being so near her, he volunteered, "Why, no; it's Miss Amalia I'm coming to see."

The instant he said it, it was evident that something was wrong. Lunch's eyes widened. The hand

with his cigaret stopped half-way to his mouth.

"Oh, Miss 'Malia!" He turned, picked up his oil can. "Oh, you means Miss 'Malia. Yesso—o' course."

Puzzled, Lane stared at him. It was on the tip of his tongue to ask, "Well, what's wrong with that?" but some instinct held him back. Instead, to change the subject, he said, "Who's Miss Armstrong?"

The boy's eyes shifted. "Miss Armstrong? Why, she's a white lady—'Merican lady—been stay-in' down yonnuh." Guarded—very guarded.

"And she's coming North?" Now what on earth was it?

Lunch scratched his head. "Why, seem like sometime I heerd she was an' sometime I heerd she wasn't." He grinned ingenuously, too ingenuously. "I reckon it's jes' nigger-talk, mos' likely."

He turned back to his engines, leaving Lane bewildered and troubled. Somehow, he had managed to drop a barrier between them.

On a sudden apprehensive impulse Lane asked, "Look here, Miss Amalia's all right, isn't she?"

"Miss 'Malia? Oh, you means is she sick or sup'm? Well, now, I wouldn' wan' take no oath, not to swear to in no court—"

"But my Lord, you'd know whether she was sick, wouldn't you?"

Lunch looked at him sidelong. "Why, seem like I ain' heerd nothin'—"

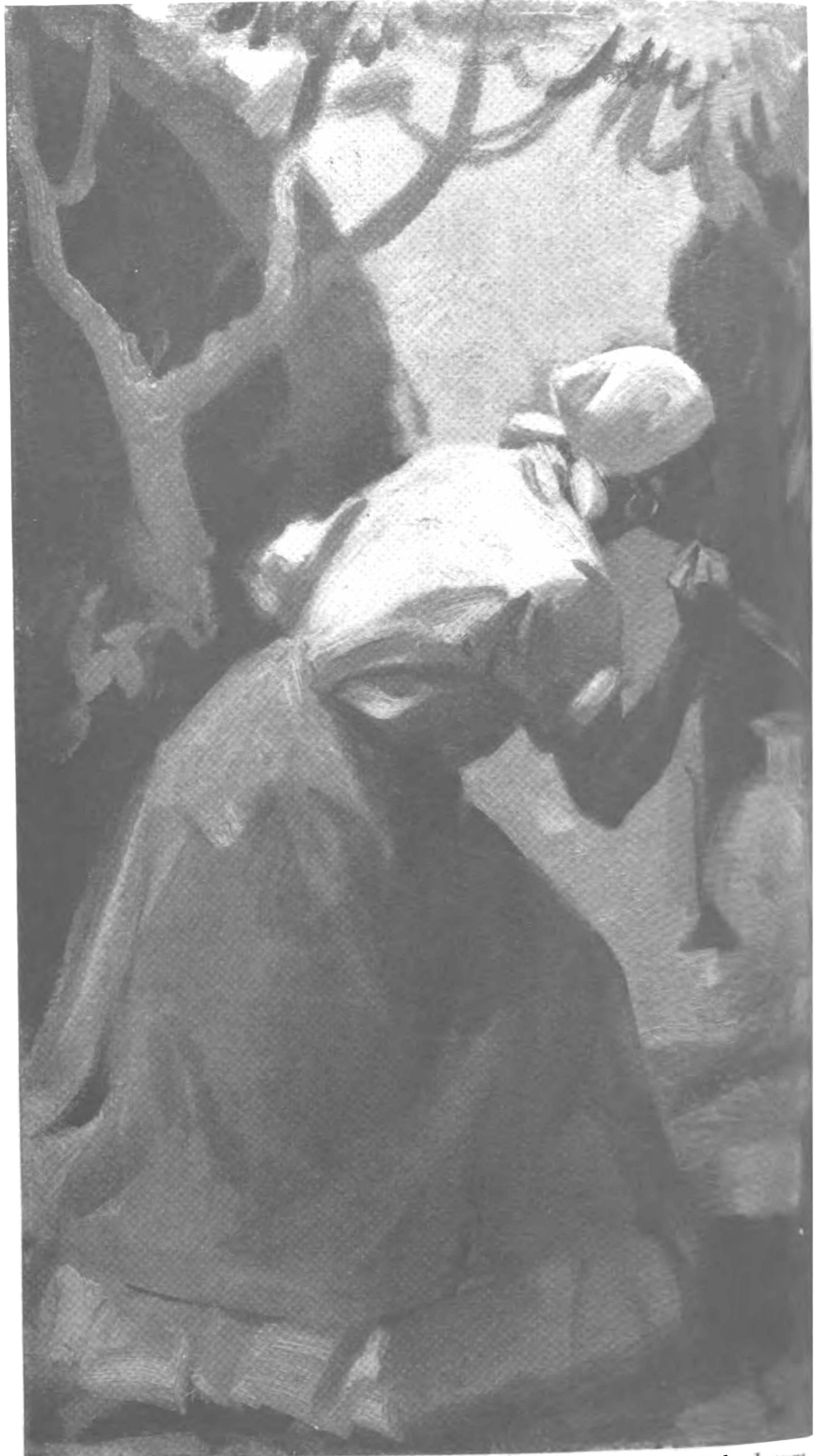
He broke off and turned back to his engines. "Heyo! Listen 'at ole bearin'! Seem like she jes' eat oil." He fussed about with a great show of concentration. "Done tole the doctuh only las' week, he got to lemme take an' get new bearin'. Oil, oil, oil. Seem like she never do get her s'ficciency."

And that was that. At the mention of Amalia, the yellow boy had simply withdrawn into some vague reserve of his own, and something told Lane that no amount of direct questioning would bring him out of it. He passed over the few remaining cigarets in his pocket (that might pave the way to future confidence), and wandered out on deck again. The old priest had gone below. He found a sheltered spot and sat down to think it over.

His thoughts brought him to only one conclusion. First, that troubling postscript to the doctor's letter; then the curious behavior of the yellow boy the moment he had spoken of Amalia. Something was definitely wrong on San Cristóbal.

It was mid-morning when they finally raised the island. The old priest first pointed it out to him—a blue cloud haze on a blue horizon—as the two stood together at the rail.

Since his experience in the engine room the afternoon before, Lane had found himself seeking out the

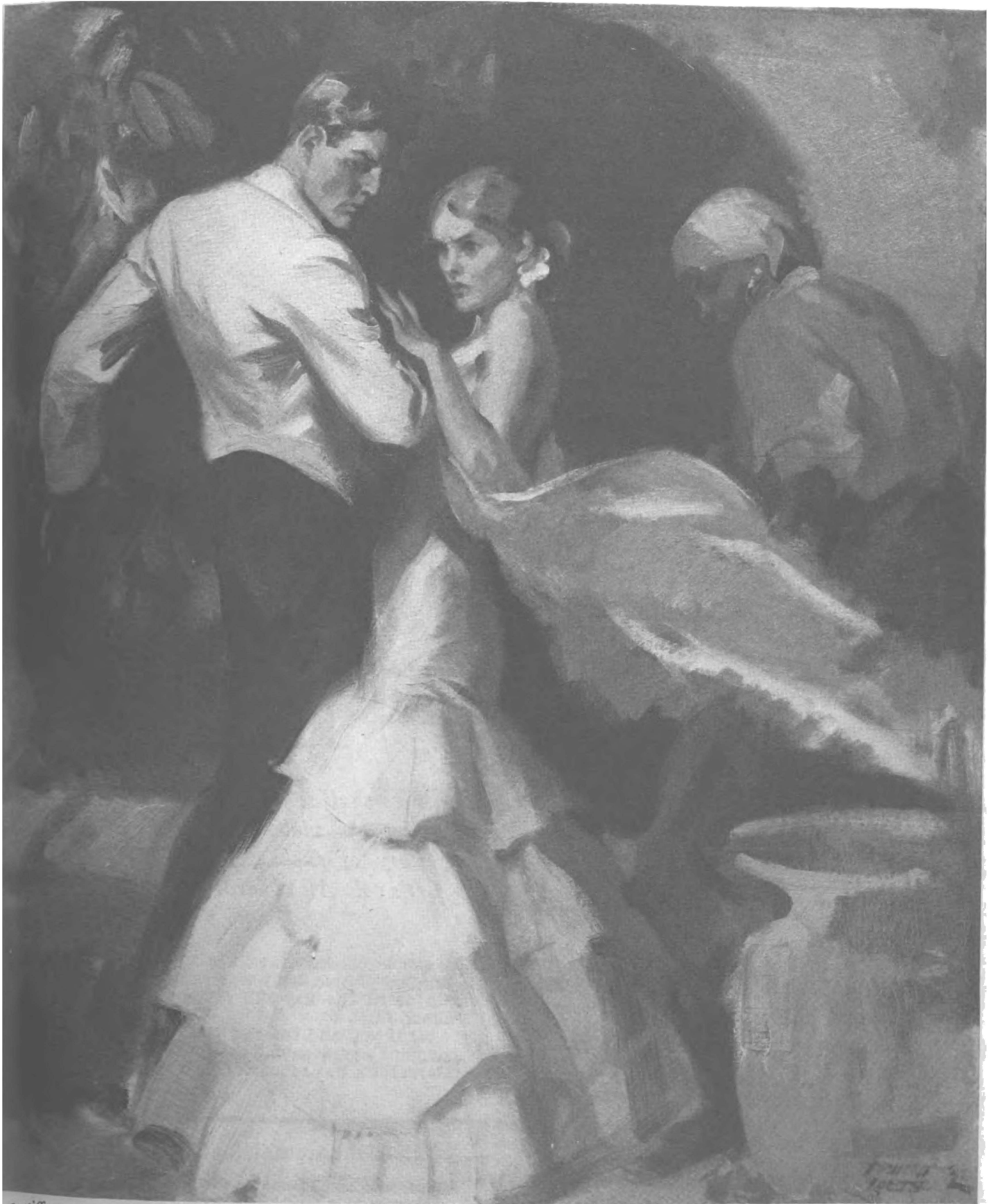


Lane had a glimpse of the two maids gliding out of the doorway;

old man. He couldn't talk to him, of course, but there was an atmosphere about him, a fine strength and gentleness in the old, lined face that drew him. It was hard to imagine anything very wrong going on where the priest was.

More than ever, he was wishing he could ask him about the things that had been troubling him. He had a feeling that it wouldn't take more than half a dozen words from him to put things right and clear up what was beginning to be a very uncomfortable mystery.

He would have liked to know him for his own sake, too. There were things about him—his thumbs, for instance—Lane had noticed them at dinner. He had been watching his strong, finely tapered fingers—and



~~a stiff, angry pain~~ kept him from turning his head. And then Amalia was suddenly rigid, eyes staring.

then, with a feeling of shock, he had seen the thumbs. Each of them had a long, seamed scar that ran from under the nail over the ball, almost into the palm. Old scars—they were thin white lines now—but the cuts must have been deep. He was curious about them.

They plowed steadily through a sapphire sea. San Cristóbal was beginning to take shape, blue against the surrounding blueness. He strained his eyes across the heaving space and thought about Amalia.

As always, the thought sent a warm, tingling wave of excitement over him, and his formless misgivings melted away for the moment. It was fun to be alive this morning. Fun to lean against the rail and watch the water rush past, to be twenty-three and have a

future provided for, and to be swinging south through warm seas to a silver girl waiting under a palm tree with a flower in her hair.

He watched the haze lift and the island take shape—jagged mountains and valleys, sharp lights and heavy shades, lone, windy pinnacles. San Cristóbal! He had a picture of a great, cool house with gracious verandas.

A sound from behind him broke his train of thought. He turned to see the thin face of the yellow boy peering from behind the cabin. As he looked, the boy shot a quick, furtive glance at the wheelhouse and beckoned cautiously.

Curious, a little troubled, Lane followed. A moment later he faced the obviously (Continued on page 112)



## Voodoo Moon (Continued from page 33)

worried Lunch across the spinning en-gines.

"What's on your mind?" He tried to make the question sound casual.

The boy shuffled uneasily. "Well, it ain' nothin' *much*. Only, las' night I got to figurin', an' I kin'a figured it'd be betteh, maybe, was I to see you alone."

"Yes?"—encouragingly. "Something you wanted to tell me?"

"Well, it ain' nothin' *much*," Lunch said again. "Only, you comin' from New Yawk—well, seem like it's mighty nice knowin' a reg'lar American again. Mek me feel like I was back home once mo'—you folla me, suh?"

"Sure. Nice to meet somebody from home. It made me feel that way, too."

Lunch nodded relievedly. "Yesso, ain' it the troof? 'Nen you gimme cigarets—hoo-ee, does I get to smokin' 'em ole Dromeda'ies, seem like I'm right back home. So I figure us Americans ought to stick together. So I figure I bet' tell you—this a kin'a funny place you comin' to. What I mean, the colored folks here ain' like the colored folks you're used to up No'th."

Lane said, "Look here, what're you getting at, anyhow?"

"Well, it ain' nothin' *much*. Only, the folks hereabouts, they mostly Haitians. Well, what I mean, they calls it *brujeria* an' they calls it *rada* an' all, but what it is, it's jes' common ole voodoo."

"Voodoo?" Lane was startled. Then he laughed. "Voodoo, huh? Say, you don't believe that stuff, do you?"

Lunch grinned uneasily. "Me, suh? You means, do I figure they can conjure me? Nawsuh, I ain' figure they can hurt me a-tall." His voice took on a note of reassurance, as though he were convincing himself. "Why, suh, 'at's jes' a lot o' monkey-chaseh nonsense, 'at's what it is. 'Sides which, I got me good strong *obeah* trick."

"*Obeah*?" Lane was curious. "What's that?"

Lunch's forehead wrinkled. "*Obeah*? Why, 'at's jes'—well, it's a kin'a conjurin', only it ain' like thisyere voodoo—'at's jes' monkey nonsense. But this *obeah*, it kin'a bring you luck, like—fix it so's nobody cain't put no wish onto you. This trick I got, I got it right in Harlem, right from ole *obeah* doctuh woman. Yesso, right from good ole Harlem. 'Em Harlem doctuh forgot more'n 'ese monkey-chasin' *papalois*'ll ever know."

"What's it got in it—your trick?" Lane was relieved and amused.

Lunch glanced uneasily at the hatchway. His fingers fumbled at his neck and brought out a little leather bag on a string. "Cain't open it—'at's bad luck, to open a trick. But it's mighty pow'ful. Now, I was jes' studyin'—"

He broke off, his forehead corrugated.

"Yes?" Something in his manner had caught Lane now.

"Well, it's like this. Mostly the colored folks, they kin'a keep thisyere talk 'bout *obeah* an' all to theyselves. But down here, us both bein' Americans, seem like it's different. You know, I like mighty well fo' you to have a trick yo'self. Now, I got me some goofer dus'—'at ain' so good as a trick, but it's mighty pow'ful jes' to scatter 'roun', does you get in some trouble. Now seem like, was I to give you some—"

"Look here," Lane interrupted, "what makes you think I need anything like that? I wish you'd tell me if anything's wrong."

The instant the words were out he regretted them. Lunch's face was suddenly blank, guarded.

"Why, nawsuh, ain' nothin' wrong—not a thing. I was jes'—well, I kin'a likes to talk sometimes; break the monopoly. Jes' nigger-talk—ain' mean a thing." He hesitated, chuckled nervously. "Listen, suh, what I was really fixin' to ast you, is you got 'nother 'em ole Dromeday cigarets by you, suh?"

"But look here, you meant something. All that about voodoo—"

"Me, suh?" Lunch shifted his feet. "Nawsuh, I ain' mean nothin'. Seem like this job gets mighty teejus, an' I kin'a talks to hear myself. If I bother you, I sorry. Heap o' white folks kin'a interested in 'at monkey-chaseh nonsense."

Lane gave it up. Evidently, whatever it was, he wasn't going to hear it from Lunch. He produced a pack of cigarets, nearly full. "Here, take these; I've got plenty." And then, tentatively, "If there should be anything you want to tell me, I'll understand and keep quiet."

"Yesso!" Lunch's face showed relief. "Mightily obliged to you, suh. I'll keep it in min'—yes, suh!"

It was mid-afternoon before they slid into a green lagoon and slowed to a soundless glide over water as smooth as glass—a reflecting pool for the heavy blue-green of jungle, picked out here and there with a splash of color where some flowering liana coiled about a great tree.

Lane stared up at the heavy, jagged mass of the twin mountains that hung over them darkly, their windy pinnacles wreathed in torn witch-locks of cloud. His nostrils were full of warm smells, a smothering blanket of sweetness, underlaid with a curiously animal odor, like the breath of some great beast. He had the feeling that the jungle was creeping out to meet them.

As the sudden rattle and splash of the anchor chain startled the heavy stillness, a small boat shot out of the palm-fringed shadow, four oars shattering the glassy surface. He strained his eyes towards the figure in the stern, disappointed to see that it was a man.

That would be Doctor Perez, he supposed. But Amalia would be somewhere not far off behind that wall of green, cool and poised and lovely, long lashes drooping over the clear pools of her eyes. He would take her in his arms . . .

But the boat was coming up. He stared at the figure in the stern. He had made more than one mental picture of Amalia's uncle, of course, but none of them fitted this man.

He sat easily, a spare, well-knit figure of medium height that gave, even at that distance, a suggestion of finely tempered steel. There was easy grace in the wave he gave them, a wave which the old priest returned with cordial enthusiasm, and Lane, a trifle diffidently.

Now that the moment was here, he was a bit ill at ease as the boat came alongside, and the man came up the ladder, to grasp the priest by the hand, and then by the shoulders in an affectionate half embrace.

Almost with the same motion, he turned. "Mr. Lane? I am Doctor Perez. Delighted, sir, that you honor us."

There was an impression of power, perfectly controlled—in his handclasp, in the lean, finely chiseled face with its slightly arched nose and square chin. Lane liked the man instantly.

"My niece," the doctor was explaining in flawless English, with just a trace of accent, "is desolated at not being herself here to welcorne you. A slight indisposition—oh, nothin' serious, but I have thought it unwise for her to leave the house in the heat of the day."

Talking all the while, English to Lane, Spanish to the priest, throwing directions in Creole to the boatmen who were stowing Lane's suitcases and the priest's battered telescope bag, he shepherded them down into the boat.

Lunch shoved them off. The rowers dropped their oars. And as they pulled away from the yacht, Lane glanced back.

The yellow boy stood at the rail, and his thin face was puzzled, troubled. As their eyes met, his hand went in a furtive gesture, not to be mistaken, to the bag with the *obeah* trick at his neck.

San Cristóbal, the doctor explained as the three struck into the jungle-walled path that wound up from the wharf, had been settled in 1729 by Admiral Almon de Gutierrez y Perez. Among other things, he pointed out the top of a square tower, glimpsed in the distance above the sea of green. The Admiral's grandson had built it, he said, at the time of Toussaint's revolution in Haiti—a stronghold in case the fever for black independence should spread.

"Oh! And did it?" Lane's inquiry was a bit absent. He was thinking about Lunch's gesture as they left the yacht.

"Not only then, but many times since," the doctor assured him. "There is a contagion to such ideas. That tower has seen savage fighting in its day. Even now—but see, we come to the house."

The path had opened abruptly onto a wide, shaded lawn, set about with shrubs and great old trees. And at the farther side the house rose, square, massive, but with a hint of gracious hospitality in its great, open doors and colonnade.

Lane felt that warm, golden wave go over him. Everything else was swept away in the sudden reality of the fact that in a minute he would be seeing Amalia. His pulses were hammering as they came into a high-arched patio. He would take her in his arms; everything would be as it had been.

And then he saw her.

In that first instant, he just stared. She was even lovelier than he remembered—a clean, silvery loveliness that was breath-taking.

"Steve!" she said softly. He moved forward.

How it happened, he never quite knew. Her face didn't change by the flicker of an eyelash. But in the three steps that it took to reach her, he found himself taking her hand instead of taking her in his arms. A slender hand, soft and cool as a flower, thrilling. And yet—well, he had pictured it differently.

He had been so intent on her that it wasn't until he stepped back that he noticed the other girl—Lunch's Miss Armstrong, he supposed. An instant later, Amalia's introduction confirmed it.

At another time, he would have thought her rather impudently attractive, a brown little thing with wide-apart gray-green eyes and a nose that just missed being snub. But at the moment he was filled with a rather bewildered disappointment. Naturally, now that he had time to think, he realized Amalia wasn't going to kiss him before all these people. Still, it was a let-down.

He forgot it a moment later, however, when the doctor showed him up to his room, an airy place on the second floor.

"Your bath is just beyond," he explained. "Oh, in some respects we are quite modern. When one has a modern girl growing up, one moves with the times, eh? I have even thought of electric lights, but I find it hard to bring myself to give up my candles. Strange how we cling to familiar things, is it not?"

Quiet coolness in the arched windows, a white bareness, restful to the eye . . .

Lane said, "I can understand that, sir. It's perfect."

The doctor showed even teeth in a smile. "Your appreciation is gratifying. I hope you will use it long and often. We have an old saying, you know—'God sends the guest.' A trifle flowery, perhaps, to your ears, but I like the old forms. A certain leisuredness, is it not, that gives time for living?" He smiled. "Time, at least, we can make a servant on San Cristóbal, instead of a master."

And that, Lane thought with a sense of bewilderment, as he slipped into a soft white shirt and white mess jacket for dinner, was the man who had scrawled that amazing postscript: "I beseech you, for God Almighty's sake, come!" What had it taken to make him do that?

Well, never mind anything in the peace and quiet dignity of this place. Amalia, too, he seemed to understand better, now that he had a glimpse of her background. Amalia was a poised, silver goddess made to trouble people's minds. He tied his black tie, brushed his sandy hair, and went downstairs.

Dark had fallen with tropic swiftness. In the dim dining room the table floated in a sea of amber candlelight. Bare-foot black maids padded in and out, and talk was keyed to the soft stillness, a thing of pauses and low voices. To Lane, watching the play of candlelight in Amalia's hair, the whole thing seemed to take on a character of unreality—a dream in which anything might happen.

He knew, though, what was going to happen. He was going to get that girl alone after dinner and ruffle that ivory smoothness. Make her like it, too. He hadn't come all this way for a handshake.

But when, at length, they pushed back the chairs the doctor produced a decanter of port and three fragile glasses, and he couldn't refuse. He glanced regretfully after Amalia and sat down again, concealing his impatience.

Talk—amiable and pointless conversation, with the doctor juggling Spanish and English so deftly that he was hardly conscious of the difference in language between himself and the old priest—Father Anselmo, as he had learned to call him. The older man excused himself presently with a bow to each. Lane finished his wine and prepared to follow. But the doctor was refilling the glasses. He looked up, a glint of amusement in his eyes.

"A bad host, I fear, keeping you here when I know you are impatient—oh, no need to protest, my dear fellow; I have seen you watching that door. But if I may trespass—something that will interest you." He hesitated. "We shall be more private in my study, I think."

He led the way across the hall. Lane followed, with mounting curiosity, which, for the moment, overcame his eagerness to be with Amalia. That postscript—he was going to know now why he had been summoned.

He glanced at him while the doctor lighted the hanging lamp above the great center table. There were books (the one or two titles he read seemed to deal with psychology), a stained bench littered with test tubes and retorts, a white surgical cabinet with glittering instruments in meticulous rows.

Startlingly, an odd little animal came out from under the cabinet and darted to the doctor's shoulder.

"A kinkajou," he explained tranquilly, as Lane stared. "Ah, Bobo!" He held the little beast in front of him and kissed it on the nose.

If any other man had done that, Lane reflected, he would have considered him an affected ass. But somehow, with the

doctor, it became merely a casual gesture of affection.

He had set the kinkajou (it seemed to be half monkey and half cat) on his shoulder again, and was raising his glass. "Your very good health, sir. And now, if you will be seated—" There was a pause. Then: "You are wondering, doubtless, why I wrote you as I did."

Lane said, "Well, I supposed you had some good reason."

Doctor Perez nodded soberly. "A good reason—yes. Mr. Lane, may I ask a question—very personal? Believe me, I should not ask it if it were not necessary. Am I correct in assuming that you love my niece?"

Lane hesitated, taken aback. But the man's eyes were searching him. He said, "Why, yes. Yes, of course I do."

"Ah!" The lean head nodded. "Otherwise you would not be here. And you wish to marry her—but naturally!" He smiled an apology. "I startled you, I fear. I had forgotten that the North American does not say, 'I love,' but 'I am crazy about,' is it not?"

Lane grinned, at ease now. "You've certainly got us right," he admitted. "Funny, when you think about it, how we dodge around that word."

"A matter of temperament. Rather a hobby of mine, these differences. But I forget." His brows drew down and the amusement died out of his eyes. "Mr. Lane, I have asked you to honor us, not only for the pleasure of your company—which is much—but because I need your help. To be frank, I am—was, I may say—at my wit's end." He stepped over to the long window. "Will you have the goodness to come here for a moment?"

Wondering, Lane stared into a night drenched with tropic starlight, heavy with sweetness, a green darkness pressing on hands and lips. Then, the doctor's whisper, "Tell me what you hear."

He listened. Drowsy hum of insects, soft, distant rush of surf, a heavy plop as a ripe nut fell somewhere in the jungle. And then, faint and far away, a rhythmic throbbing.

He turned questioning. "That? But what is it?"

The doctor was listening, eyes intent. "Drums! The *rada* drums!"

Lane stared, as his mind caught at the word. The hot, oily smell of the engine room . . . "They call it *brujeria* and they call it *rada*." He said: "Say, *rada*—that's voodoo, isn't it?"

The doctor's look startled him. "You know of such things?"

"Lord, no! Just happened to remember the word. Your engineer—"

"Oh!" The doctor sucked in his breath softly. "Oh, of course. He told you—other things of it, perhaps?" Again that look, like a knife.

Lane remembered suddenly the stress Lunch had laid on a boy's minding his own business. He said quickly, "No, he wouldn't. I'd heard about it and I was interested, but he wouldn't answer questions. He shut right up."

"Ah! Well, not surprising, that. The black is close-mouthed."

"But what does it mean?" Lane indicated the distant throbbing.

The doctor shrugged. "Mean? Who knows? But this I do know: never have the drums beat so on San Cristóbal without—trouble."

The word had snapped out in stillness like an electric spark.

"You mean, trouble with the Negroes? An uprising or something?" Lane glanced swiftly out into the dark. The faint, far-away pulsing suddenly seemed louder, filling the night with menace.

Without answering, the doctor closed the long window. He stepped to the

door and peered into the hall, while Lane watched apprehensively.

"So—it makes it hot, but it is best to be careful. One never knows. And now, you ask if it means an uprising? Hm!" He sat down, leaned back. "Something is happening. You ask me what? And I can only answer that I do not know. I merely consider that we are five whites (six, if you count Ramon, my Dominican boy), and two of the six are women. Around us, five hundred blacks. And something is happening."

"They look peaceable enough," Lane protested.

"Ah, peaceable! But you have yet to see the Haitian peasant when he runs mad."

"But you aren't expecting——"

"My dear fellow, I expect nothing—and anything. But I do not forget that fully three-quarters of my blacks are *cacos*—hill bandits, who are fugitives from Haiti. The *caco* makes excellent labor. It takes, you understand, a certain initiative to become a bandit. But at a time like this, it is not reassuring."

Lane wet his lips. Then he caught the doctor's quizzical glance, and stiffened. "You've seen signs of it coming?"

"Signs? In a sense—yes. You see, I know the black as much as white man can be said to know him. A part, scientific knowledge. A part intuition—my subconscious, to be exact. I feel that something will happen—perhaps. But what will happen, that I cannot tell. Absurd it seems to you, possibly? Absurd—perhaps. But this is sure. I cannot neglect any warning, however vague. Those drums, for example—every night since the new moon. Hear me—my letter with that foolish postscript. Melodrama, you thought it; hysteria. Admit it! Ah, but if I tell you that that postscript was added not an hour after I found the body of my *sobrestante*—my overseer—hacked to pieces by machetes? We found him by the wall there, not fifty feet from where we sit."

"You—murdered?" Lane shot a startled glance at the window.

The doctor nodded soberly. "An excellent man, by the way. But, you will ask, why do I bring you here, then? Expose you to danger?"

The final words jolted Lane out of his trance of stupefaction. He straightened. "I'll tell you why, sir. Because if Amalia's in any danger, naturally, I want to be here."

The doctor inclined his head. "Your saying that," he said slowly, "makes what I have to propose easier. Shall we make two words of it? I suggest, then—urge, in fact—that you marry Amalia and take her away. At once!"

Lane stared. This sudden advancement of his plans was rather breathtaking. "I—why, I——" He floundered, and then, collecting himself, "Why, naturally, I wouldn't ask anything better. But Amalia—well, things haven't got quite that far with us yet. And this afternoon it seemed to me—well, she hadn't seen me for a long time, you know. I don't know——"

There was a hint of amusement in the curve of the doctor's lean mouth. "It seemed to you that she was a little cool?" he suggested gently. "You were disappointed, no?"

"Well, not disappointed exactly. But she'd been more——" Lane broke off uncomfortably.

Smoothly, the doctor took it out of his hands. "More—ardent, shall we say?" He smiled. "But my dear fellow, consider! That was New York. Now, she is on San Cristóbal—her home. She acts merely as any well-brought-up Spanish girl might. No," he went on

"give yourself no uneasiness. Amalia gives me her confidence. May I assure you that she loves you?"

"Say! Honestly? She told you that?"

"Should I have written you otherwise, my dear fellow? Now, please—I understand that in your country such things are settled by the young people themselves. But Amalia, after all, is Spanish. And you will lend yourself to her tradition, will you not? For her sake?"

"Why, of course!"

"Ah, you will not regret it . . . I have taken the liberty—you will not think me officious?—to hasten matters a little. It is for that that Father Anselmo—" He paused delicately.

Things seemed to be happening to Lane in a sort of dream. "You brought him over to marry us?"

"Subject always to your wishes. And I suggest, if you are willing, that the marriage take place as soon as possible. Say, day after tomorrow? In view of what I have told you, you understand."

Lane had straightened suddenly.

"A little sudden, perhaps? But the circumstances—" The doctor gestured towards the dark outside.

"But—gosh, I haven't even had a chance to speak to her yet."

"My dear fellow, I do not mean to press you. But in view of the situation—"

Lane drew a quick breath. "Good Lord, yes! The quicker the better!"

The doctor relaxed. "Good! Oh, I know the suddenness is a bit unsettling. But hardly a time to stand on ceremony, eh?"

Lane said, "Of course." He was trying to think. "You couldn't send her away for a while? Not that I'm not keen for it," he added hastily, "but Amalia—I don't want to rush her into anything."

The doctor shook his head. "Thoughtful, my dear fellow. But impossible, I fear. Frankly, if it had been possible, I should have done it. I have, I admit, called on you as a last resort. Amalia," he explained, "knows nothing of this. But that there is something wrong—that, I think, she suspects. I beg, by the way, that you will say nothing of this to her."

"Oh, sure not. No sense worrying her."

"Exactly! And for another reason more compelling, even. If Amalia were to suspect that I am sending her out of a danger in which I remain, nothing would persuade her to stir one inch. But the wedding makes an excuse, eh? As a bride, her head is full of other things than worries over an old uncle. Besides which, she will go where her husband goes."

"Oh, yes, sure!" Lane was beginning to accept the situation. "But what about you, sir? You can't stay here."

Doctor Perez hunched his shoulders. "My dear fellow, my place is here. I can hardly leave my properties at a time like this. And besides, for a Perez to run at the first hint of danger—"

"It's what you want me to do," Lane pointed out uncomfortably.

"But my dear fellow! This is not your affair. If you had interests here—but Amalia's little fortune is in securities. Oh, of course she will inherit some day, but until then—and do not forget that her only chance of getting away is to leave with you."

That was true, of course, but not very satisfying. Lane frowned. "Well, you ought to have a guard, anyhow. Marines or something."

"Ah! If this were Haiti, under United States protection! But my own government concerns itself little with San Cristóbal. Except to collect my taxes, of course." The doctor smiled, a bit

cynically. "And upon what grounds shall I ask troops, my dear fellow? Because of this and that? Drums in the night? I should be laughed at."

"Well, that's true, I guess. But I hate the idea of running off and leaving you. And on the other hand"—Lane grinned with wry frankness—"damned if I'm keen about staying, either."

The doctor laughed. "Now there," he observed, "you speak both courage and sense. But you must not be troubled. I have, perhaps, given you a wrong idea. Today, tomorrow, next week, nothing will happen. Perhaps never. If I seem to press haste upon you, it is because of my anxiety for Amalia."

"But all the same—"

"My dear fellow, I assure you! And I have seen this sort of thing before, remember. There is my tower—the one I showed you—ready provisioned. I have the only firearms on the island. The yacht—the engineer (you talked to him, I believe? A delightful original, that one) will be faithful. Ramon, my Dominican. Ah, and Bobo!" He stroked the kinkajou, which chattered delightedly. "And now, shall we consider the matter settled for day after tomorrow? . . . Excellent! And please to think no more of the—unpleasantness. But doubtless you have ceased to think of it already." He smiled. "No, no; no protests! Go to your Amalia, my dear boy, as you have been impatient to do this hour past."

Lane had come into the patio with the doctor's hand on his shoulder and his mind and body filled with a strange, heady ecstasy. And then, somehow, the others, the doctor, Father Anselmo, the Hamilton girl, had faded away, and he was alone in the garden with Amalia.

Heavy, heady scents—great, sleepy masses of bloom. And her face was a flower, dusky white in the starlit dark. A tall goddess in shimmering silver, cool with a quiet, unawakened virginity—untouchable.

And then, quite suddenly, she was soft and lovely in his arms.

"Oh, darling, you'll marry me?"

A second that was all taut agony. Then her voice, cool and clear as clear water, "Why, of course, Steve dear. Whenever you want me."

Later, there had been handshakings, congratulations, flowery toasts drunk from silver cups. The Armstrong girl's gray-green eyes on him in a kind of curious speculation. Amalia, glowing with a cool radiance. And now he was in his room—and he couldn't sleep.

Not that he particularly wanted to—the picture of Amalia, the softness of her lips on his own were still too vivid to lose. She had kissed him, simply, unembarrassed, and yet with a shy reserve. A lovely statue brought to life. He got up presently, slipped into his bathrobe, and went over to the window.

Like all the windows in the house, it came down to the floor. With a couple of cushions, the three-foot embrasure made a good place to lounge and dream, while the perfumed night wind stirred sleepily.

For the moment, the thought of Amalia had crowded everything else out of his mind, but now, of a sudden, a shift of breeze brought again that faint pulsation that he had heard earlier in the evening—the *rada* drums.

It was only for an instant, a queerly accented little rhythm, but it broke up the train of his imaginings and swung him uncomfortably to a different set of pictures. The deep blackness of the jungle; firelight on squatting forms. Bare feet prowling the vine-hung paths. A tiny scraping sound somewhere

along the eaves. Something—the jungle—drawing in. Soft, mysterious, merciless, closing in with hot, sweet breath. The jungle of the blacks—black, sooty skins, toughened to the heat. Laughing at the white men who couldn't stand the sun. Black laughter—the terrible, secret laughter that no white man understands.

Lane's nerves jumped as a door opened somewhere below, stealthily. Then he settled back with a shamed grin as steps crunched the oyster-shell walk under his window. There was something companionable about the sound. He wondered who was below there. Somebody else who couldn't sleep and had come out in the cool. The doctor, maybe.

The steps were turning the corner of the house now. Lane leaned out a little, but the colonnade hid the walker.

A sound jerked him upright. Something around the corner—a gasp, a wiry, cutting noise, a quick rush of feet! Darkness below, where the shadow of the house fell. He strained his eyes, listened. Some movement, half imagined.

"What's the matter? Is anything wrong?"

No answer, but a dark clump of shadow seemed to dissolve.

On the instant, almost without conscious intention, Lane had crossed to the door and let himself out into the dark hall. He stood uncertainly, his hand on the latch. Probably nothing—just make a fool of himself, plunging around in the middle of the night. He tried to reconstruct the sounds: the gasp; the padding of bare feet. Probably nothing. But all the same, the *sobrestante*, hacked to pieces with machetes . . .

Down the hall a latch clicked. He jumped, banging his elbow on the door casing. Somebody drew a quick, frightened breath. Out of the dark a small voice asked a question in Spanish.

"Who's that?" The words jumped out of him before he knew it.

An instant of silence. A voice of relief. "Oh! It's me. Gale Armstrong. Wait!" She came towards him with a faint rustle of silk. "Listen!"—a whisper, close to his ear now. "Did you hear something? Outside?"

"Just a second ago? What was it?"

"I don't know—a sort of groan." A strand of her hair tickled his cheek in the darkness. "Maybe we ought to go and see—if anybody's hurt, I mean."

"Well, probably nothing. Listen, you wait and I'll go."

He felt her shiver. "I'd shrivel up and die, waiting up here. Do you think we ought to wake Doctor Perez?"

He considered. "No—no, I don't believe so. Just look foolish, probably."

He added, "Let's go down together, then. Unless you'll go back to bed?"

"I see myself! Come on, watch the stairs. Here!" A small, muscular hand found his. She drew him down the stairs, feeling her way. "Here's the door," she whispered. "Can you find the bolt? Easy, or you'll make a noise."

He slid it gently. Just as he was about to open the door, she whispered:

"Wait. Have you a revolver?"

The thought startled him. "I don't even own one."

"Oh! Well, I guess it doesn't matter. Come on!"

They slipped out into the hot starlight. He went ahead, wishing he had shoes on instead of flip-flopping straw sandals. Behind him, her small slippers crunched the oyster shells. She had on some sort of short, dark kimono, her pajama legs white below it.

At the corner he warned her back with a gesture. But there was nothing—the

dark masses of shrubbery, the path white in the hot starshine. He turned to find her treading on his heels.

"That's my window!" She pointed. "It was right under there. But there's nothing there now, is there?"

"Not a thing!" He spoke aloud this time, cheerily, but with no very firm conviction. There might not be anything there now, but he would take oath there had been. It occurred to him with an unpleasant chill that this might be a darned dangerous thing they were doing. The *sobrestante* . . .

He schooled his voice to carelessness. "I guess we've got steamed up over nothing. Let's go back and—" The words died in his throat. That dark blotch on the whiteness of the path; he hadn't seen it before.

"What is it?" The Armstrong girl gripped his arm, shook it. "What is it?"

He relaxed; let out a slow breath. "Seeing things!" He laughed a bit unsteadily. "Just a patch of shadow. Sorry! Wait here and I'll take a look."

He stepped forward. Shadow, of course. Couldn't be anything else. Or some discoloration of the ground, maybe.

Her small slippers pattered behind him. He turned with nervous exasperation. "Wait, I tell you. Damn it, it isn't anything!"

"Oh, don't be so *male!*" She was staring down at it, her breath coming quickly. "Wha-what is it?"

Cold fingers fumbling for matches in the pocket of his bath robe. "Oil!" he heard himself saying. Why oil? Oh, never mind! He said it again: "Must be oil or something."

The match sputtered blue. He shielded the flame. They stooped.

There was a flash of time, infinitesimal and yet endless, while the stuff winked up at them—red, shining, horrible in the yellow flare. The match fell from his fingers, hissed out.

He blinked, the flame still dancing before his eyes. There was a sick, sweetish reek in his nostrils. The faint throb of the drums was a rolling thunder.

"It's blood!" he was saying dully. "Blood!"

There was a whimpering gasp beside him. The girl's hands went up to her face. "O-o-oh! It isn't! It can't be!"

"Well, you would come!" He heard himself say it, while he felt for his matches again. "Wait!" he snapped. "Don't look!" The match cracked. He bent again, touched it with a forefinger. Wet, red, sticky. He stared at his finger in sick revulsion. The girl's shoulder sagged against him. He wiped the finger hastily on his bath robe and steadied her. "Pull yourself together! Atta girl!" He was cold and his knees were clogged with a deadly weakness.

She took a deep breath. "All r-right. I'm a f-fool about b-blood." Her teeth chattered. "What must we d-do now?"

"Have to tell the doctor." They were moving back towards the front door. "Got to wake him up. Come on!"

They reached the door. She hesitated. He could feel her shaking, but her voice was steadier. "I wonder—would it be all right if I didn't go with you? And if—if you didn't say anything about me? Being out here with you, I mean."

"Why, I guess so. But why not? Why shouldn't you have been?"

"Well—oh, it's silly, of course, but they don't understand. I mean," she amended hastily, "the doctor's Spanish. Wandering around with you in pajamas—he'd have a fit. No Spanish girl would do it."

"But with a thing like this!"

"You don't know the doctor. He'd never believe any good of me again. Please!"

"Oh, of course, if you'd rather. Chase along to bed. Or—wait! Tell me where his room is, will you?"

She told him, a bit breathlessly. The next instant she was gone. From the bottom of the stairs he listened to the small sounds of her going up. Funny—until now he hadn't thought about her being in pajamas. By some mental twist, the image transferred itself to Amalia, asleep somewhere, her soft hair against her white pillow.

A door closed gently in the hall above. His mind clicked back to that dark pool in the starshine, the business in hand.

As he began to grope along the wall with cold fingers, a queer panic tightened about his heart, whispering, "Hurry, hurry!" Fear, stalking the dark with iron steps that filled the heavy stillness and beat in his brain with the beat of the pulsing drums. He quickened his pace.

An orange glow, sudden, bright in the blackness ahead.

He stopped, rigid. Instinctively, he flattened himself into the shelter of a recessed doorway. The glow widened. Then he could have laughed for sheer relief, for around the corner came the doctor—the very man he was hunting.

At another time his appearance in a nightshirt and tasseled cap would have been comedy. But Lane wasn't thinking of comedy now, least of all when he got a clearer view of the man's face.

The candle flame, shielded by a translucent hand, threw into stark relief the heavy lines and edges. His eyes stared wide into the dark and his lower lip was caught between his teeth in a look of haggard anxiety. Lane caught his breath as he stepped out of the shadow.

"Listen—" he began.

The doctor started back with an exclamation and dropped the candle. It went out, leaving them in blackness.

Lane cursed himself for forgetting that anybody might well be startled under the circumstances. "It's me—Steve Lane," he said hastily.

"Ah!" A sigh of relief. Then, a bit shakily: "But you must forgive me, my dear boy! I was—it was sudden."

"I know, sir. I ought to have realized. Wait, I've got matches here." He struck one, retrieved the candle, and relighted it. "I was looking for you." In a dozen sentences he told what he had seen.

The doctor was staring as he finished, eyes quick with alarm. He made a little hissing sound. "Blood, you say? On the path?" His brows drew down. Lane had the impression that he was thinking swiftly. Then, with a quick nod, "I must thank you, my dear fellow, for going at once to investigate and coming to me at once, without alarming the household. That was thoughtful."

"That's all right. But we ought to do something."

"Do? Yes—yes, of course." He hesitated. Then, delicately, "But I wonder—could it be possible that after our talk tonight, in which I may have stressed too much the danger—" He stopped.

"You mean, did I dream it or something? Good Lord, no! I heard it as clear as I hear you now. Besides, it wasn't just hearing. I went out and saw it—the blood and all."

"You are convinced, then, that there has been an—accident?"

A sudden, hot impatience filled Lane. Arguing here, while not a hundred feet away that pool of blood soaked into the earth. "There's been murder!" he snapped desperately. "Oh, Lord, I don't know. Come on, I'll show you. It's right outside."

The doctor shook his head. "No need. What you tell me is sufficient. But I—"

there is one of the household ill. That is why you find me here in this unconventional dress. I was on my way to him; I must go to him now."

"But it won't take a second."

"Please. We can do nothing tonight, and I have delayed too long already. Besides, we have a saying, '*Z affaires nègres, pas 'z affaires blancs.*' You understand? 'The affairs of the black are not the affairs of the white.' These things are much better left to the light of day, believe me."

"Well, of course——" Lane was a little taken aback. To leave a thing like this until tomorrow! Still, the doctor ought to know what he was doing. "I just thought——" he was beginning, when a sound came from the other side of the house.

The doctor turned sharply, listening, his face drawn, anxious. Then, as it came again—a heavy, stumbling tread, a murmured snatch of Creole—he seized the candle, which Lane still held.

"Your pardon!" He glanced again into the darkness. "I am needed." He turned and retreated down the hall.

Lane said, "If there's anything I can do?"

"Nothing; nothing, my dear fellow. It is Father Anselmo. A heart attack." He threw the words over his shoulder. "We shall investigate in the morning. But now—your pardon—most necessary——" He disappeared around the corner, leaving a sudden well of thick blackness.

For a moment Lane stood there, bewildered, feeling a little flat. But the thing was serious; he hadn't been making a stir about nothing. He wondered if he ought to go out and look again. But the doctor had said these things were best left to the light of day. He certainly ought to know. Might ball up everything by interfering.

He frowned. Pretty casual—a murder under your window and you wouldn't even go out to look. Still, the doctor had plenty on his hands at the moment. After all, Father Anselmo came first.

The doctor was right, of course. What was it? "*Z affaires nègres, pas 'z affaires blancs*"? And he had gone rushing out there in the dark, taken that girl with him. He must have been crazy!

He climbed the stairs, groping through the dark. Lord, if he could just get Amalia out of this place.

A warm breath across the forest brought the faint, throbbing pulse of the drums.

White sunlight on white walls woke him from a restless doze. For a while he lay still. He was in the starlit garden with Amalia. He was staring at that wet red blotch in the yellow flare. There was a druggy heaviness on him in spite of a blue-and-gold morning, clean with a salt freshness. Some indefinite depression seemed to hang over the house.

Even so, he was not prepared for the doctor's face when he came down and found him alone at breakfast. It was not his expression; that was molded, controlled into a grave cordiality. But something under it—a gray, haggard look—was so startlingly apparent that Lane stopped short.

"Good Lord! What's happened?" The words jerked out of him.

The doctor's lean face tightened. "Sit down, my dear boy," he said unhappily. "I had not meant to spoil your breakfast. But since you already know—Father Anselmo died last night. Early this morning, rather."

Lane sank into his chair. "Oh, my God, it wasn't——"

"No-no-no! A heart attack. He has



had them before. Oh, I have told him, more times than I can count. But no; never would he spare himself."

The wave of relief that passed over Lane was like a benediction. "I didn't have the chance to know him well, but something about him—"

The doctor inclined his head. "I wish it might have been your privilege to know him better. Such souls go straight to Paradise, I think." He paused, while Lane waited, overcome by the terrible sincerity of his grief. "He was my friend," he went on, after a moment. "Such friends are rare." He took a deep breath and seemed to pull himself together with an effort. "For the arrangements—this afternoon, I think. Such things are best done as speedily as decency permits."

"You won't send the body back to Santo Domingo, then?"

"I think not. Sad, is it not? But the weather—no, I think not. And after all, what difference? Shall not such a man consecrate whatever ground he lies in? A man infinitely kind, stainless, of high courage? You have noticed, perhaps, his thumbs?"

"The scars, you mean? I wondered—"

"Indian torture; the hot pipe. He has been a missionary on the upper Amazon. For hours he stood, unshaken, blessing them even while they—but that is a long tale. At the moment, we must consider how this changes our plans. Your marriage."

Lane said slowly, "Why, yes—yes, it does, of course. But please don't bother to think about that right now."

The doctor smiled wanly. "I appreciate that, dear boy, but I fear we must. The situation—we have once a month a priest from the Church of the Concepción in Santiago. I had arranged that your visit might fall in with Father Anselmo's, but—" He shrugged helplessly. "I have sent the yacht back in the hope that they can send someone at once. But I fear it may be two weeks, three. I hope this does not derange you too seriously?"

"Of course not. Don't think about it. But the way things are, wouldn't it be better for Amalia and me to go over to Santo Domingo? We could be married as soon as we got there."

The doctor smiled indulgently. "Your impatience flatters my niece. But I fear—impossible. See," he went on, "we have our tradition. Perhaps absurd, but—our tradition. A woman of the Perezes must be married from the house of her kinsman. After all, one owes something to a nine-hundred-year-old name. Come, you will humor my prejudices a little, will you not, sir?"

"Why, naturally. And you know best, of course. But—"

The doctor's lean face was thoughtful. "There is some danger, yes. Always we of the island live over a volcano. But I do not look for anything immediate. Then, too, Amalia would not go. She would suspect such an arrangement."

Lane gave in. "Well, I just felt that after that business last night—oh, say, I hope my keeping you from Father Anselmo didn't—"

"My dear boy! There was really nothing I could have done—nothing. But such things as last night—you must not allow them to disturb you. Some quarrel between the blacks; shocking, but one hardens oneself. Unfortunate, of course, that it came just after our talk, in which, I fear, I put the situation too strongly. But I was anxious for your agreement, you understand."

"You haven't had a chance to find out about it, I suppose?"

The doctor lowered his voice. "To be

frank, I have not. Later, of course, but at present the situation is—delicate. Things happen. He got to his feet. "And now, if you will excuse me—no, no, sit still, my dear fellow. Finish your breakfast. After that, if you can amuse yourself for a little? My library. Amalia, unfortunately, is confined to her room. The shock—he had been her confessor, you understand."

The last words came from the door. Lane turned back to his breakfast. But his appetite was gone. Presently he wandered out to the library.

For the time being the news of Father Anselmo's death had taken his mind off last night's affair, but now it came back full force. Of course, the doctor had given those vague warnings against investigating too closely. Still, it couldn't do any harm just to have a look.

As he came out into the hall, someone said, "Hello!" and he looked up to see the Armstrong girl on the stairs.

"Oh, hello!" He was glad to see somebody. Then, remembering, "You've heard about Father Anselmo, of course?"

She nodded unhappily. "It's too tragic. That lovely old man!" There was a break in her voice. She turned the subject. "Listen, what about last night?"

"The doctor says it's just some row between the hands," he said. "He takes it casually enough."

"Yes, I suppose it must be. And yet, I don't know—I sort of had the feeling that it was a white man. Didn't you?"

He hesitated. "No, I can't say I did." The next instant he remembered hearing the steps and thinking it might be the doctor. Oh, well, it wasn't important, anyway. "I was just going out to have a look at the place," he told her. "Morbid curiosity, you know."

They had come out into the colonnade. "I wonder," she mused, "why everybody adores to shudder. You'd think we'd had enough of it last night—but here we are."

He was about to make some reply when they came to the corner. And as they turned it, they stopped short, staring.

Slowly their eyes met. She drew a quick breath. "Why, it's gone, isn't it? It was right there. And now it's gone!"

He stepped over hastily, examined the ground. "Not even the mark of a rake! If I hadn't seen it myself, last night— Still, it isn't so surprising after all. I mean, if I'd murdered anybody I'd be likely to come out and fix the place so it wouldn't be suspected."

"Would you?" She was staring at the path. "Well, yes. I would too, I guess. Any intelligent person. But this is supposed to be a couple of ordinary Haitian field hands."

"It was pretty carefully planned out, though," he persisted. "I heard the steps and I'll swear the poor devil was just walking along, taking it easy, when they laid for him. I thought it might be the doctor."

"I thought you said you didn't have the feeling that it was a white man. You did say so!"

The remark caught him off his guard. He floundered. "Well, I'd forgotten. I mean, I didn't think when I told you—"

Her eyes were on him, expressionless. "Oh!" she said.

His face hardened. "You mean, 'Oh, yeah, don't you?'"

"Oh, don't be stuffy! I didn't mean that—or anyhow, if I did I'm sorry. Good enough?" She grinned so that he had to grin back.

"Good enough," he agreed. "Honestly, I don't know why I— Wait a second! Look!" His eyes had caught a trampled spot in the shrubbery, a couple of waver- ing lines in the soft dirt. "That's where

his heels dragged when they took him off," he announced excitedly. "Wait!" He dodged around behind the flowering bushes. But here he found himself in a sort of kitchen yard, where the ground, hard-packed, gave up no trace.

An old crone, shelling beans into her lap, startled him with a placid "*B'jour, blanc!*" He nodded, and remembering the doctor's warning against too close investigation, affected casualness.

"That's where they took him, all right, though," he announced as he came back. "Almost to the back door!"

"Well, they certainly took him somewhere. He isn't here now. But why did we both get the idea that it was a white man?"

He twitched one shoulder. "Well, it wasn't. But what gets me is the place. Seems like the last place, right under the windows. Unless—my Lord, I'd forgotten! Wasn't it right here the *sobrestante* was killed?"

"*Sobrestante?*" Her eyes flew open. "What are you talking about?"

It was his turn to stare. "Why, the *sobrestante!* The overseer!"

"What about him?"

"Say, am I crazy, or are you? It wasn't a month ago, the doctor told me, that they chopped the *sobrestante* up with machetes. Right here."

She looked at him. "Somebody," she said, "has been feeding you catnip. There was a *sobrestante* and he's gone now, but nobody chopped him up. He left early one morning on the yacht because the doctor found he was laboring under the delusion that the pay roll was a racket."

Lane was about to protest when the answer came to him. The doctor's insistence that Amalia shouldn't be alarmed; he'd somehow managed to keep the *sobrestante's* death a secret, too. He tried hastily to retrieve himself. "Oh, well, I must have misunderstood. I guess the doctor was telling about something that happened earlier and I got it just lately." He clung to that relievedly. "Sure, I must have got it twisted."

"Oh!" She was regarding him thoughtfully. Suddenly she turned towards the house.

"Wait! Where are you going?"

She looked at him over her shoulder, gray-green kitten eyes round and inscrutable. An instant, then: "Where am I going? I'm going in and eat toast and coffee and marmalade. Oh, yes, and sapodillas. And I'm going to quit prying into what happens in this place."

"Huh? Say, what do you mean?"

"Just that. It really doesn't matter to me what became of the *sobrestante*—or what happened last night, either."

"Say, listen, I'm not trying to put anything over—"

"Oh, shut up!" There was a break in her voice. "Let me alone. I don't care what you do. Oh, I don't mean that. I'm nervous. A murder under my window always affects me this way."

She disappeared into the house. He decided he didn't like the Armstrong girl.

For a little, Lane wandered moodily about the garden. The sun rode brassy over the palms now and the morning freshness was burned out of the air, leaving it hot and dead. He was glad when the doctor appeared.

The sight of the man reminded him to ask after Amalia. He remembered with a little shock that he hadn't thought of her since breakfast.

The doctor shook his head. "Poor child—a sad blow. And the postponement of her marriage—a delicate thing, you understand, the psychological adjustment of a young girl. Fortunately,

she has the consolation of her religion. "Hm—yes, the immature mind turns to the supernatural."

Lane's look must have shown surprise, for the doctor pulled himself out of a mild abstraction to answer it.

"Oh, myself? I see things—differently. Science—have you ever looked through a microscope into a drop of dirty water? One sees a world, eating, mating, the strong destroying the weak and growing stronger. Hunger and sex, the will to procreate. But yourself—you have managed to pass the time?"

"Pretty badly, I'm afraid." The slip about the *sobrestante* was on Lane's mind. He went on to tell the doctor about it. "She said I must be mistaken," he finished. "Said the *sobrestante* went off on the yacht. I tried to cover it up, but I'm afraid she didn't believe me. Gosh, I don't see how you ever kept it secret so long."

The doctor shrugged deprecatingly. "Oh, I simply sent the yacht off one morning and told them he was aboard."

"Well, I'm afraid I've ruined it now," Lane said unhappily.

The doctor's hand dropped on his shoulder. "My dear boy, it is really of no consequence. But you remind me—since his death I must keep an eye on things myself. I was about to make a small tour. If it will not weary you—? While I think of it," he went on, as they turned into a shaded path, "I fear that in my hurry to get to Father Anselmo last night, I may have appeared to discount the news you were thoughtful enough to bring. As a matter of fact, I consider it highly important. Would it be too much to ask you to tell again exactly what you saw—and heard?"

"Well, I was sitting at my window—" Lane began and went on, while the doctor checked each detail carefully.

"And you saw no one? To recognize, that is?"

"Nothing but a sort of movement. I couldn't even swear to that."

"Ah! And you heard nothing? No voices?"

"No, nothing but a sort of groan. And then I went out and saw the blood."

The doctor was eying him narrowly. "You are sure it was blood?"

"Well, it certainly looked like blood."

They came out from the shade of the path. The doctor squinted in a gush of white sunlight. "My dear fellow, you will pardon my manner of the Grand Inquisitor? If I take the liberty of testing what you say, it is because we must be very sure before we—take steps. In view of the situation, you understand. Please, you will forgive me when I say that I went myself later to look for this blood and found—nothing."

Lane stared. "What time was that?"

"Not more than an hour after you saw me in the hall." He laughed pleasantly. "Come—have you looked to see it this morning?"

"Yes, and it's gone. But it was there last night, all right. Oh, you probably think I'm crazy, but I tell you I saw it."

The doctor inclined his head. "Of course," he agreed. "Since you say it."

They walked on in a silence that had suddenly become strained. Lane would have given something to be able to say the Armstrong girl had seen it too.

"Look here!" he burst out at length. "I can see how you feel. I hate to have you think I'm going off halfcocked."

The doctor stopped short, dismay in his face. "My dear fellow! You mistake me—indeed you do. My dear boy, I am a medical man; my specialty is the human mind. It is my passion, this—psychology. Constantly I read, study, experiment. Also, I am uncle to Amalia

and anxious above all things to be your friend. Therefore, you will take what I am to say without offense, is it not so?"

"Why, of course. I just don't want you to think I'm crying 'wolf,' that's all."

"But I do not think so; have not. And what I say, I do not state it as a fact—please! A hypothesis, merely. See, then—a tiring journey, a strange place, a climate which plays games on those who are new to it. And on the first night, I fill your head full of strange fears. I fill your mind with the terror, the mystery of this place, so that in those drums you hear a present menace. You conceive yourself surrounded by a malign power. Do I overstate it?"

Lane felt a shiver run over him. "Well, something like that."

"Ah! And then, as if that were not enough, the excitement of the sudden plan for your marriage. Oh, I have managed badly, I see that now! See, then—you cannot sleep. You sit in your window, breathing in the strangeness of our tropic night. You hear the drums. Ah, those drums, my dear fellow. Have you ever studied the effect of rhythms on the nerve centers? Now, is it not possible that you fall into one of those curious waking dreams in which a series of fantasies—?"

Lane shook his head. At the moment he was thinking of his promise to the Armstrong girl with considerable irritation. He said, "No, sir, I'm certain. I—well, I've got reasons," he added in a sort of desperation.

The doctor glanced at him sharply, but to Lane's relief he didn't ask what the reasons were. He shrugged. "Very well; I am convinced. For my skepticism, I apologize." To Lane, watching, he seemed suddenly old and worn. He sighed wearily. "I fear I have let wish run away with judgment. I did not want to believe."

"Ah, well, I must go into it, of course. Simple enough—the black has no subtlety—but at a time like this it must be done with discretion. That is why I preferred not to seem to investigate. Frighten the black and he is capable of anything . . . But we come to the plantings."

As he spoke they stepped through the screening fringe of bamboo out into a blazing field. The sun beat on row after shimmering row of green. The doctor's face lighted with eagerness.

"One of my hobbies," he was explaining. "A tobacco without nicotine. So far an experiment, but in time we hope to produce in quantity."

Lane answered vaguely. His attention had strayed to a gang of workers—Negro women, for the most part, in bright dresses that were soft color spots against the hard green. Bending, swinging from the hips, rhythmic clop and flick of machetes.

"Amazing, eh?" The doctor was a changed man. "And yet simple. You know the law of Mendel? No? Then a brief explanation . . ."

The sun blazed down. The machetes flashed and fell, machinelike. And these were the people who had run mad through the streets of Port-au-Prince, torn President Guillaume Sam to bloody shreds! Hard to make that picture. Sunlight, lazy laughter. And yet there was something—the way their bare black feet gripped the ground; the ceaseless swing and recover—something powerful. A sense of soft, enveloping strength, as patient, as primitive, as savage as the earth itself.

Lane jerked his thoughts back to the doctor, who was off on his hobby now, face alight with eagerness. The man who held the strings, made things happen. He was indicating the boss of the

workers now, a little wizened old man with the face of a malignant gray ape.

"You spoke last night of the *rada*—the voodoo. That one is Tiste Duval, a *papaloi*. The high priest, you would say. The cult has its organization, much on the plan of your Christian churches. Their Maitresse Ezilée—she is, of course, identified with the Virgin Mary. Old Duval himself wears a crucifix."

"The dickens! You mean upside down? The Black Mass business?"

"No, no. Not at all. *Rada*, you know, is a religion. It is not *brujeria*—black magic—although that plays a part in it."

"But is it true that they have sacrifices? Human sacrifices?"

"The goat without horns?" The doctor smiled. "Oh, the mystery of the atonement, the scapegoat—that is fundamental in every primitive faith. Also the eating of the flesh, the drinking of the blood of the sacrifice. Oh, yes, the human sacrifice exists with them. But those are things we do not inquire into too closely."

Lane glanced uncomfortably at the group toiling contentedly in the sun glare. "I swear they look peaceable enough," he protested.

"Oh, peaceable, quite. Docile, placid. And yet, the more one sees of the black, the less one feels that one knows him."

Dinner, that endless, unreal ceremony in the candlelighted dusk, had been over for hours. Now, the stars swung liquid gold above the square of warm dark over the patio. Lane lay back in a cane chair, trying to realize that he had been ten days on San Cristóbal.

As the doctor had feared, the yacht had brought back word that no priest could be spared for nearly a month. The doctor had shrugged resignedly, but the crease between his eyes had deepened.

Lane had found the waiting easier than he had expected. There were riding and swimming. He was becoming familiar with the island, too. The strangeness had worn off. Even the dark menace over them was becoming something vague, except at moments when the drums thudded in the night. Time slipped unheeded over the shining curve of the sea.

Across from him the doctor's cigaret glowed for a moment, lighting the lean, strong angle of his jaw. Somewhere in the shadows Gale Armstrong (their almost immediate use of each other's given name had seemed to startle the doctor) uncrossed her legs with a silken swish and crossed them the other way.

The sound made Lane restless. He moved uneasily and felt his shirt stick to his ribs. Why couldn't the girl learn to keep still—like Amalia?

His glance went to her gratefully, a silvery wraith in the starlight. She was leaning back in her chair and her hands were quiet in her lap. Made him feel cool just to look at her.

The heat had shut down heavier today. Hottest day since he had landed. And that was ten days ago.

He closed his eyes and saw the days between as an endless snake, a slow slither of time, continuous, unhurried, meaningless. Meaningless because he got no nearer to Amalia. She was poised, sweet, cool—and the days slid by.

It was a thing that troubled him. He put his mind back, hastily, over the interval. The mornings, when he went swimming with Gale. Amalia seldom appeared before lunch. And then the siesta. Later, perhaps, a decorous stroll in the garden with her two gigantic black maids always in the offing. And by evening she was tired.

Lane had asked the doctor, tentatively, one day if he thought she was quite

well. He had been humorously reassured. Amalia was a Spanish girl, the doctor reminded him, with the coquetry, the tradition of a lover held at arm's length that came with her blood and upbringing. The explanation had been thoroughly satisfying at the time—not so satisfying when he thought it over later.

He frowned. There was something more than coquetry in her untouchableness. He had thought of her as enclosed in a dome of crystal. If he could only shatter it once! But the days had slid by.

She stirred in her chair. He heard the cool silver of her voice as she answered some question of the doctor's: "As you prefer, *tio mio*." And there you were. "Yes," she said, and "No," she said, and sat poised, her flawless profile serene, her lovely body molded to lines as clean as flowing water.

Lane drew a quick, impatient breath. This had gone on long enough. Tonight was the night to find out where he stood. By themselves in the warm, starlit garden—but she'd try to put him off, of course; she always had before, and got away with it. Well, this time it was going to be a show-down.

His mouth tightened as he schooled himself to lie quiet while the doctor's voice purred out of the dark. Lord, weren't those two ever going to bed?

Gale stirred at length, got to her feet with a frank yawn. "Sleepy! If you don't mind, good night, everybody." She was gone. He heard her whistling as she ran upstairs.

The doctor had risen at the same time. "And I have a little work to finish," he told them smoothly. "You will not object, I am sure." His step in the hall; the click of his study door.

Then Lane was on his feet, the night singing in his veins. He moved towards Amalia.

Somehow, she seemed to melt away from him. "I—Steve, dear, if you will kiss me good night—a little tired."

"Ah, wait! It's going to be cooler. Just a little—please!"

She smiled, patted a not very convincing yawn with slim fingers. "But it is so late! And I am so sleepy, my dear."

"Ah, you've slept all day." He caught her hand. "Aren't we ever going to get a chance to be alone?"

Her hand lay in his, cool, quiescent. "But we shall be alone so much—after." She laughed softly. "And all day I am working so hard, all the little preparations. Oh, Steve, so much to do!"

Almost, he melted at that. She did look tired. But—that crystal dome—break it now or never. He took her gently by the shoulders. "Please, dear. Just for a minute or two."

Something stirred in the shadowy hall—the dim forms of her two black maids. Always! Every time he tried to get her alone!

He jerked his head irritably. "Listen, send them away!"

"Ah, why?"—silvery, a little amused. "They speak no English, and one does not mind for the blacks." She leaned forward; her lips brushed his, cool and soft. "See, my Steve, tomorrow."

Something fluid about her, as though she were melting out of his grasp. All right, if he had to have this out before her servants! His hands tightened on her shoulders. "See here, dear, you've told me that pretty often. Now, if you don't want to be with me—"

"My dear! You are absurd! And—please, you hurt me a little."

His fingers relaxed. "Ah, darling, if you'd only tell me what troubles you."

"Nothing; it is nothing." Her eyes avoided his.

"Then why—oh, no you don't!"

He had had a flash of warning—the merest flicker of her glance towards the stairs—enough to forestall that quick, desperate twist. She stood there, suddenly rigid, her breast heaving.

"Take your hands from me! It is I who choose."

"Not much; not till you—hey, quit it!"

Amalia had suddenly become a madwoman under his hands, twisting, writhing with a wiry, frantic strength that startled him. "Quit it!" he gasped. "Quiet—quiet, dear! Amalia!"

She spat out a Spanish phrase. He didn't understand it, but the import was unmistakable. The whole thing was so breath-taking that he simply hung on instinctively while she fought him.

"Choucouné! 'Ti Marie!"

He had a glimpse of the two maids gliding out of the doorway, quick and silent as a couple of black snakes. A hot anger exploded in him. All right; if that was the way . . .

One of them had slipped around behind him; a stiff, angry pride kept him from turning his head. And then Amalia was suddenly still, rigid, her mouth round, eyes wide and staring.

"Non, Choucouné! Non—non, pas ça!"

It was a long, shuddering gasp. There was a sharp clatter behind him. His head jerked around in spite of him.

One of the black girls was stooping. She caught up something, quickly, but not so quickly that he missed the star-glint on a knife blade.

Something cold whirled in his throat. He let his arms drop, limp. "All right; all right!" It wasn't what he meant to say, but his brain was sick with anger, humiliation, relief. He put his hands in his pockets to show how calm he was. They'd have done it, too! A knife!

Amalia was staring at him, wide-eyed. She swayed against him with a little inarticulate sound, caught his coat. For a moment he hesitated, hard, angry. Then his arms closed around her.

A moment later he said, "Don't, dear! Don't be so—so still!" And then, suddenly terrified and shaken, "Don't! What is it, dear? Oh, darling, it was my fault. I was a fool!" That rigidity, the slow shudder of her breathing! For Amalia to lose her poise, go to pieces like this! "Please say something, dear."

His hand found her chin, tilted her head back. She looked up at him, eyes burning with a steady flare. Like that night at the opera.

"Please, let's get out where we can talk! Amalia!"

Down the hall a door opened. He felt her stiffen against him as the doctor's voice came smooth from the darkness.

"Ah, a lovely night! And you prepare to walk in the garden?"

"Yes, *tio mio*." He felt the taut quiver of her shoulders. But her voice was sweetly submissive.

A quick, entirely unreasonable impatience surged up in him. The doctor must have heard everything from the study—and now he was out here, smoothing it over, managing, pulling strings.

"Amalia, my love," he was saying, "there is something you must show our guest. The night-blooming cereus. You know the spot?"

"Yes, *tio mio*." A captive princess answering Cæsar.

A hot stubbornness took hold of Lane. The fixer, stepping in smoothly at the right moment. He said abruptly, "I think not tonight, thanks. Amalia's a little tired. I was just suggesting that she'd better turn in. Tomorrow, perhaps." Now, why had he said that, just when she—but damn it, he didn't like being managed! And she didn't, either.

There was a moment when he could

feel himself being scrutinized from the shadow where the doctor was half hidden. Then: "As you prefer, my dear fellow!"—suave, courteous, vague. "In that case, Amalia, my love, a moment of your time."

She touched Lane's hand, a soft, fugitive pressure that somehow seemed to link them together in a subtle league against a common enemy. It left him startled and curiously thrilled as she moved towards the study, her head high in proud submission. A door closed. Then the sudden muffled clash of their voices, instantly hushed.

He had started forward at the sound. By God, if he was trying to coerce her into anything! But he couldn't butt in on a family row. He shrugged his shoulders and went up to bed.

It seemed to him as he undressed that somehow tonight had definitely broken the polished surface of his relations with the doctor. That was absurd, of course, but the feeling persisted. The truth was, he decided, he didn't like being managed—and he was beginning to have an uncomfortable suspicion that he had been managed from the moment of his landing.

No—before he had landed. That letter with its postscript. Doctor Perez, the psychologist. He had known that postscript would bring him.

He'd been managed, he could see that now. Brought down here, got into a state of mind where immediate marriage, with the priest already on the ground, didn't seem so fantastic. And now the doctor was pushing it again. But why?

To get Amalia away, of course. But that didn't seem quite so reasonable, now. There were other ways of getting a girl, even Amalia, away from a place besides marrying her off. He frowned, considering his own possibilities as a nephew-in-law. A little money, but no great fortune. Family and social position as good as anybody's, but nothing to shoot off fireworks about. Why?

He gave that up. Anyway, the doctor wanted it; he wanted it; Amalia wanted it. Or she said so, anyway. So what was wrong with that? Well, nothing—except that he didn't like being managed.

He blew out the light and got into bed. One thing was certain, anyway. There was a definite break over something between Amalia and her uncle. Whether it was the marriage—well, he'd see her tomorrow and find out where he stood. A sweet mess of it he'd made tonight. Those black maids of hers—my Lord, he'd come pretty near being stabbed!

That brought him up with a jerk. But a moment later his thoughts went back to their disconnected wandering, and presently he fell into a half-doze from which he awoke suddenly with one of those sick starts that sometimes come when a man sleeps uneasily in the heat.

Through the high, arched windows the moon was shining full on his face, filling the room with an eerie white light. He glanced at his watch. It was a little after three. He lay back and shut his eyes again.

But he was too thoroughly awake now. Tangled thoughts crowded his mind. He got up at length and went over to sit in the window as he had that first night. The moon, a golden shield, flooded the lawn with light. A white night. A night for satyrs and bacchantes and strange mysteries done in the black shadows beneath twisted olive groves.

He realized suddenly that the drums had stopped. And their stopping left the stillness taut, vibrant with expectation. He was curiously unstartled when

his eye caught a gleam of white at the far edge of the lawn. He nodded sagely. Quite right—probably a dryad or something.

A wry humor suggested that it was probably a black boy from the *cailles* waiting for one of the maids. But even that couldn't dispel the magic. A black faun and a black dryad, then—why not, on San Cristóbal?

He tapped a cigaret on his thumb nail, keeping his eyes on the white figure, clearer now as it came out of the shadow. He found his matches, pushed the box open with his thumb.

Then a cold hand closed on his throat. The match box fell to the floor with a little click that was as loud as an explosion. For the white figure moving through a sea of liquid silver was Amalia.

His fingers gripped the window ledge, suddenly cold to his touch. The moon was fingering her hair now, bright with a cold light, glinting on the silver sequins of her dress. He was remembering, idiotically, that he had tangled one of those sequins in his sleeve button tonight when he put his arms around her. In a kind of sick daze he watched the light, swaying walk he knew so well.

"Why shouldn't she?" He heard himself whispering that. "Why shouldn't she walk if she wants to?" But the words died in his mouth. She was coming closer, moving languidly, and yet with something in her walk, in the slow swing of her body, that was flaming—an invitation and a provocation. Once, while he caught his breath, she flung out her arms and whirled in a slow little dance step, as though something in the night was gripping her, compelling her.

Then she reached the colonnade. Lane, entranced, saw her relax an instant against one of the columns. He tried to call out, but a stubborn angry unhappiness held the words in his throat.

The moon was full on her now. It showed her hair disheveled, her dress torn off one white shoulder, her breast rising and falling. Her head came up slowly, her face white in the moonlight, her eyes half closed, lips drawn back in a queer look of animal exhaustion.

A little laugh floated up. Not Amalia's cool, clear ripple; another laugh—lazy, sensuous, golden.

White-hot sunlight, a Sunday stillness over everything. Lane stared into the mirror as he brushed his hair, startled at the brown, unlined face that stared back at him. He had half expected it to be haggard—old.

There was no one in the dining room when he came down. The doctor had evidently breakfasted; his place had been cleared away. Lane was glad of that. He didn't want to face him yet. He drank a little coffee, threw his napkin down and wandered into the hall.

The sun beyond the door was a white blaze that hurt his eyes. He heard the doctor moving behind the closed door of his study. He wondered what would happen if he should open that door and say, "Your niece was out until three last night. What about it?" Well, he wasn't going to. This was going to be between Amalia and himself. There'd been a lot too much Doctor Perez and a lot too little Amalia about everything so far.

Queer—if it had been Gale, he wouldn't have given it a second thought. But—Amalia! And her laugh, and that dress torn—

He wandered into the library, picked a book at random and threw himself into a leather chair. Somewhere in the back of his mind, coiling like a black, sluggish snake, was a thing he didn't want to think about.

The book was titled "Studies in Adolescent Psychology." He read three pages before he realized he didn't have the faintest idea what it was about.

She couldn't have been going to meet anybody, he was thinking. He and the doctor and Ramon, the Dominican, were the only white men, the only white . . .

Slowly, loathsomely, the black snake in his mind uncoiled.

He was on his feet, sweating. Then, for no reason at all, he was thinking of Gale. Gale, face to the wind, head up, short hair fluttering. Those meaningless, exasperating wise-cracks that suddenly meant so much. Gale!

The study door opened as he came through the hall. The doctor appeared in riding clothes. "Ah, good morning, my dear boy. You were looking for me?"

Incredible that the man didn't read his mind, that he didn't slash him across the face with the riding crop in his hand. Lane heard himself saying something about looking for Gale and marveled that his voice was steady.

"Miss Armstrong? You will find her, I think, in the breakfast room. You will swim this morning? Delightful! I wish I might, but—affairs of the plantation." The doctor glanced down ruefully at his riding clothes. "I shall be away all the morning."

Lane said something about wishing he could come. The doctor bowed. Then he was gone, and Lane was hurrying down the long hall.

Gale looked up, her spoon poised above an avocado. "Hello! What's the matter? You look kind of shot."

"Nothing. Guess I didn't sleep very well." He laughed nervously. "Say, let's go swimming." He hadn't thought of that until the doctor suggested it, but now it was a sudden craving.

"It's pretty early," she said. "Besides, the doctor may want me. A secretary's supposed to do some work, you know."

"He's going to be away all morning," he urged. "He told me so."

"But if we waited till later, maybe Amalia'd come, too."

Amalia! He had an insane desire to laugh. But he only said, "She never does. Oh, for cat's sake, come on!"

She got to her feet. "All right. Heaven knows what'll happen to me so soon after breakfast, though. If I get a cramp you'll have to tow me in."

"I'll tow you. Come on, let's get going."

He changed into his bathing suit with nervous haste and was ready before she came down, striding about the patio in beach robe and sandals, seething with impatience. Suddenly he stopped short, startled at the realization that he had stopped thinking about Amalia. It jolted him to discover that she could be out of his mind for a moment this morning.

Then Gale appeared, brown legs straight and slim below her short beach robe. They crossed the lawn and struck off down the narrow path. He was feeling a queer exhilaration now, as though a physical weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He thought, "I've been a fool. There's some perfectly simple explanation; all I've got to do is ask her. And if there isn't—" But he couldn't think about that any more.

He watched Gale step out ahead of him, quick, clean-cut. The best hour of the day. At least it would be the best, he amended hastily, if Amalia would only come. He pictured her, a slim, white arrow, cutting through the surf, or rising, a silvery sea goddess, out of a green wave. Sure there was some explanation. He'd been a fool.

They came through the last of the scrub palm and twisted, wind-whipped

mangoes. Together they broke into a run, raced out onto the shining sand. A salt wind snapped the ends of Gale's green silk robe. She looked *good!* It came to him all at once, he didn't know why. Short hair fluttering—brown and hard and *good!*

"What're you staring at?" She dropped the robe, kicked off her slippers. "Come on!" She held out a hand, small, muscular. They went in together, bracing each other with gasps and yells against the glass-green surges.

There was a stiff wind this morning and the ridged, towering seas roared up to topple and crash in a glitter of flying spray. He battled them with a joyous relief at having something physical to fight instead of restless half thoughts, until, tired at length, they hauled out through the backwash to lie gasping on the warm, damp sand.

Head pillowed on his arms, Lane stared at the piled clouds above the horizon. He'd have to ask Amalia, of course; couldn't just let a thing like that go. But it wasn't going to be easy. With anybody else—Gale, for instance—he'd just ask, and she'd tell him. But these Spanish—

That startled him. He realized for the first time that he was considering Amalia as something—different. Different from himself, from Gale. Well, she was different, of course, but it was her poise, not because she was Spanish. She was just like any other girl underneath. Maybe she'd talk to another girl.

At that moment Gale raised her eyes. He plunged.

"Look here, I want to ask you something! It's about Amalia. I wonder—oh, I know it sounds crazy, but—well, I wonder if you could tell me how she feels about me." Lord, it did sound crazy.

"You want—say, that's a funny thing to ask me. Why not ask her?"

"Oh, sure—think I'm crazy. But there's something about this whole business— You know, I never see her alone. How would you feel about a man who had to—well, make love to you—through your uncle?"

"He swings a mean line, anyhow," Gale observed.

"Huh? Oh, sure; be funny about it. I don't blame you."

"It's funny, all right," she assured him. "You don't know how funny. But seriously, what makes you think there's anything—unusual?"

He bit his lip unhappily. "Well, first place I never see anything of her. Then, have you ever noticed—I can't describe it exactly—it's like a feeling of strain, between her and her uncle?"

"Listen, young fella," she reminded him, "I'm not a guest here; I work here. It isn't up to me to dig up the dirt on the family. But since you mention strain, I'll say the house reeks of it."

"You've seen it, then? You know, I've wondered if he could be forcing—well, not forcing, exactly, but kind of making up her mind for her. About this marriage."

"It's an old Spanish custom," she agreed flippantly. "Still, I don't see—" She broke off and her brows drew down into a little thoughtful crease. She looked up. "Honestly, I'd be glad to help you, but I'm afraid I'm not much good. Amalia doesn't exactly confide in me." She frowned. Then, "You've been frank. I wonder if I could ask you something—something queer. You won't like it, either."

"Huh? Why, sure. Of course, Gale."

"I want to go on the boat. When you and Amalia go."

"You—" He checked, startled. He had naturally supposed she would. Of



course the doctor would want to get her away to safety, too.

She misread his surprise. "Oh, of course it's queer. Nobody wants an extra girl on his honeymoon. Amalia'll hate it; any girl would and she doesn't like me, anyhow. The idea of my being a companion for her hasn't been so good. And neither," she added, "has being the doctor's secretary."

He seized on that as a stupid dodging of the point. "Why? What do you mean?"

"Too darn personal, that's all. Oh, look here, I don't want to go into all this with you. Forget it!"

Lane said, "Forget it, nothing. You mean he's been annoying you?"

She jerked a slim shoulder. "Oh, be twentieth century. Do you suppose any girl was ever annoyed by having a man make love to her? Oh, don't look so startled. Men have made love to me, even if you don't see why."

Lane's mouth tightened. "Anyhow, he might have the decency—"

"Oh, he's been decent enough. It isn't what you seem to imply. He wants to marry me. This seems to be a day of curious confidences, doesn't it?"

"The hell!" Lane's righteous indignation collapsed.

"Yes, and people have wanted to marry me, too. Odd taste, isn't it? But seriously, I've got to get away. And I can't. I've been trying to for over a month now."

"Why not? You mean he's been keeping you here? Against your will?"

"Oh, nothing as melodramatic as that. It's just that every time I'm ready to go something happens, that's all. And I've got the jitters."

"How do you mean, something happens?"

"Well, once I was all set, but my trunk didn't get down in time, and the yacht went off without me. Had to catch the tide, the doctor said. Next time I was going, trunk or no trunk. And that time I overslept."

Lane said judicially, "But you can't blame him for that."

"N-o-o. But I woke up four hours after my usual time with a splitting headache and the boat gone. He was awfully sorry, but he hadn't wanted to be discourteous enough to wake me. Sounds all right, but my coffee tasted funny the night before. And I never oversleep and I never have headaches."

"Huh?" Lane sat bolt upright. "You mean he drugged you?"

"Oh, it sounds like something out of the movies, I know. And he was desolated and promised to make a special trip for me when the yacht came back. That was the time they went for you and poor Father Anselmo—when I missed it, I mean. But the next morning it rushed off early again to see about getting another priest. I came in all primed to speak my mind about that and found the doctor sitting with his head in his hands. Father Anselmo was his oldest friend. I couldn't say anything."

Lane was staring. The thing was fantastic. "It couldn't have been just a series of coincidences?" he suggested weakly.

She frowned. "I don't know. Oh, another thing! I reminded him a week ago about the special trip. Well, he was desolated again, but the yacht was laid up for repairs." She hesitated, looked up at him, her green eyes hard with certainty. "I asked Lunch McLaren, the engineer—he's an American ducky, you know—and Lunch said there wasn't a darn thing wrong. Well, I oughtn't to kick, I guess. I was asking for it when I came down the way I did."

"What do you mean?"

"Asking for it—just that." An edge of hard recklessness crept into her tone. "I've told you this much; you might as well know the rest. I meant to marry him. He didn't know it, but I did. I played it every way I knew. And now I'm running out on it."

Lane felt an entirely unreasonable wave of anger. "Don't talk like a fool! A man old enough to be your father."

"Bunk! Not over forty-five—that isn't old. And he's got more brains than any five men I know. Let me tell you, young-fella-me-lad, Doctor Perez is somebody down here. And money—"

"Somebody ought to lick some sense into you. Maybe you think it's cute to talk that gold-digger stuff."

"Cute!" There was a weary scorn in her tone. "Listen, little rich boy! I'm the daughter of a poor school-teacher in a little town, brought up on nice moral cracks about the joys of being poor—how it builds character, all the hooey that people kid themselves with when they haven't anything else. I've been hungry—and I mean hungry! And cold. Oh, I'm not pitying myself. I've done that, too, and got it over with. But I want to know just for once how it feels to have nice things, be somebody. And I don't care how any more—wedding bells or a love nest."

"Shut up!" Lane was standing over her, his eyes burning. "Why don't you marry him, then?" he challenged.

She was on her feet, too. "Because—it's none of your damn business! Well, I'll tell you why, then. It's because I'm afraid of him. He—he gets what he wants, makes you like it. I can't stand it, having him know what I think—everything! He gives me the creeps. And I'm scared and—and you're American, and I thought maybe you'd help me." Suddenly, her head went down into her hands.

"Gale—good Lord, don't do that. Gale!"

"S-shut up! Let me alo-o-ne!"—shaky words, muffled.

"Gale!" If he could have got his hands on the doctor in that second he would have broken his neck. He patted her shoulder clumsily, slid an impulsive, friendly arm about her.

With a swift wrench she flung it off. "Don't touch me!"

For an instant he stared, while the blood rushed up to the roots of his hair. Then his mouth hardened. "If you can't tell the difference between friendliness and—"

"Oh!" Her face was stricken with dismay. "Please—oh, it wasn't that. I swear. It's—it's the doctor! He'll see."

"He'll what?" Lane glanced about him swiftly. There was no one.

"He will. He's watching us. He does it every day. Field glasses—wait, don't look—field glasses from the tower."

"Field—Gale, you're crazy!"

"Don't look round, I tell you!" Instinctively she lowered her voice. "Listen—every day when we've been down here. I've seen the sun flash on them. I didn't know till yesterday when I saw the dust on his sleeves at lunch—from leaning on the parapet. I wasn't going to say anything, but when you did that—You know what he'd think!"

Lane drew a quick breath. "I know what I think. I'll tell him—"

"No! Oh, please, no! Don't you see what a position it would put me in? Having told you and everything? Oh, don't say a word, just let me get out of this place. Please! Listen, I won't spoil anything for you and Amalia. I'll get my suitcase aboard somehow. Lunch'll help—and I'll stay in my cabin. You won't even see me—I swear you won't! Please!"

"Oh, for God's sake, of course you're coming. Don't worry about that any more. Here's a handkerchief; fix up your eyes and come on back to the house."

Slim heels moving ahead of him on the narrow path. And the doctor, damn him, if he ever got the chance to tell him, spying on that girl, trying to force her. Lane's shoulders tightened. For some reason the idea of her marrying him made him hot all over. That girl—

He stopped short, almost stepping on Gale's heels as she stared down at something at the side of the path.

He moved up and looked over her shoulder. It seemed to be nothing but a coconut shell, bottom up, with five little pegs driven into the ground at careful intervals around the rim. "Huh? What's that?"

"A *ouanga*. At least, I think so."

"Wonga?"

"*O-u-a-n-g-a*—a sort of bad-luck charm. If you've got a hate on somebody you have the *papaloi* cook up a *ouanga* and put it where he'll pass. He promptly shrivels up and dies or something."

"Sweet idea." He bent over it curiously. "What's in it?"

"Oh, rags and goat hair, dried eels' gizzards or something. This is only the second I've seen, but the—the doctor says you often find them around the *cailles*."

"Wonder whom this is for." He reached a curious hand towards it.

"Don't do that!" she said sharply.

"Why not? Superstitious?"

"Don't be a fool. But these people do believe in it. Let it alone and come on."

"Wait a second. I'll put it back. They'll never know the difference." He stooped to it again.

She said, "I wish you wouldn't. Honestly, it's better to leave things like that alone down here."

"*Z affaires nègres, pas 'z affaires blancs*, huh? Well, I've got my fingers crossed." She made a half movement to stop him as he lifted the shell, then stood back.

"Well, I hope you're satisfied."

They were staring down at a collection of little sticks, arranged roughly in a five-pointed star. Or—not sticks. Very much undersized bananas, maybe. Or yams.

"Put it back!" He felt a little shiver go over her where her bare shoulder touched his arm. "Put it back and come on!"

"Wait a second, can't you?" He stirred the little heap curiously. "It's just—"

The words caught in his throat. His heart lurched against his ribs. In that second he knew—not sticks, not bananas or yams. He knew! Fingers—and along one of them ran a whitish scar!

There was a little sound from Gale. "Oh!" she said. "Oh!" Her eyes were closed and one hand, outflung, caught his wrist.

The soles of his straw sandals crawled against his feet. That scar—Father Anselmo!

"Put it back!"—a gasp. "Oh, I told you to let it alone."

He stooped. With numb, meticulous care he replaced the shell exactly as it had been. He rubbed his hands together, an involuntary gesture as though he were cleansing them.

"We'll have to tell the doctor. We'll have to—" The words came out of his mouth but they didn't mean anything. Somehow, he got his feet into action. "Come on; let's get out of here!"

The secret of Amalia's strange behavior is revealed in Clements Ripley's Next Installment

H. P. BURTON  
Editor

*Hearst's International*  
combined with  
**Cosmopolitan**

(Trademark Registered in U. S. Patent Office)

Contents for  
APRIL, 1933



Agatha Christie

*News! Another*  
**PARKER PYNE**  
Mystery-adventure

**SHORT NOVEL**  
by **Agatha Christie**  
*Complete in this issue*

*A Scoop!*

Only *one man* knew these things about Calvin Coolidge and *Cosmopolitan* got him to write them for this issue in

**The CALVIN COOLIDGE  
NOBODY KNEW**

*Also:*  
**6 SHORT STORIES**  
**2 GREAT SERIALS**  
*and many*  
**TIMELY ARTICLES**

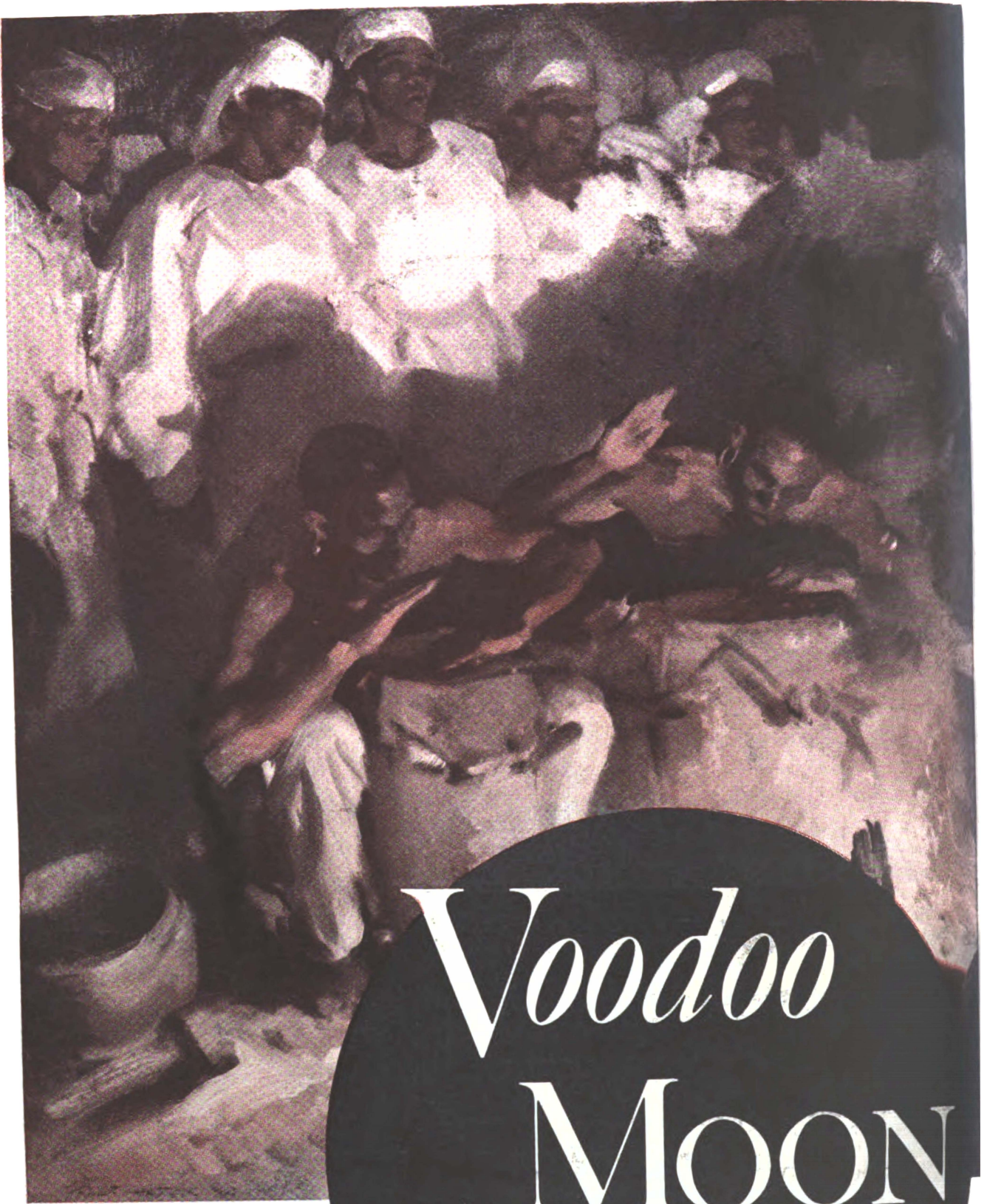
Cosmopolitan Almanack for April	F. P. A.	15
The Calvin Coolidge Nobody Knew	Herman Beaty	16
Dolly and the Colleagues	Fannie Hurst	18
Men of Straw	Henry F. Pringle	22
Have You Got Everything You Want? If Not, Consult Mr. Parker Pyne	Agatha Christie	26
A Life of Her Own	Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt	32
The Eyes Had It	Faith Baldwin	34
What's Brewing in America?	Floyd Gibbons	38
"Bad Debts"	Bruno Lessing	42
Enchanted Ground (Part III)	Temple Bailey	44
The Age of Innocence—and I (Part II)	Cora Brown Potter	48
The Moon Treasure	Hugh Wiley	52
Luck and Mr. Lunt	Alexander Woolcott	56
Voodoo Moon (Part II)	Clements Ripley	58
Revolt!	Robert W. Chambers	62
I've Always Felt Out of the Parade	O. O. McIntyre	66
The American Plan: Training	Ida M. Tarbell	68
The Square Peg	Dorothy Cottrell	70
The Dark City	Joseph Hergesheimer	74

Cover Design by Harrison Fisher

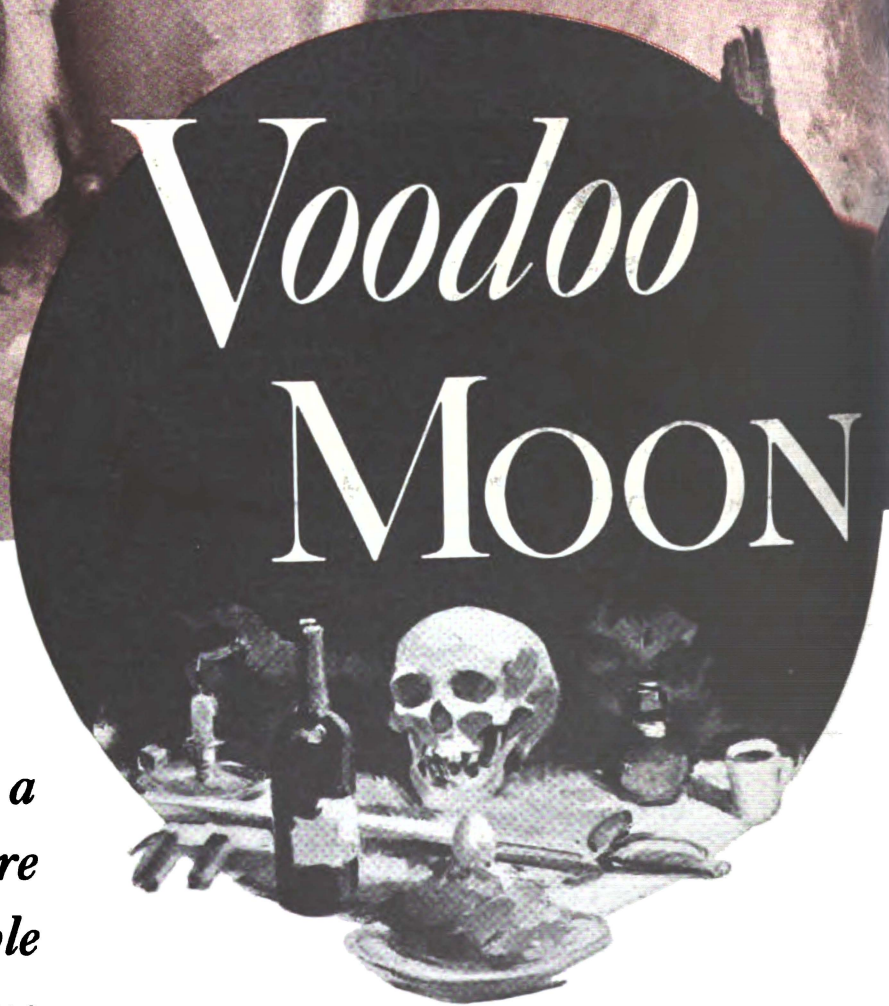
**See page 4 for news of next month's big feature**

Published monthly by INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY, INC., 57th St. at Eighth Avenue, New York City.  
WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, RICHARD E. BERLIN, JOHN RANDOLPH HEARST, AUSTIN W. CLARK, ARTHUR S. MOORE,  
President, Vice-President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary

Copyright, 1933, by International Magazine Company, Inc. All rights reserved under terms of the Fourth American International Convention of Artistic and Literary Copyright, 25 cents a copy; subscription price, United States and possessions, \$2.50 a year; Canada, \$3.50; Foreign, \$4.50. All subscriptions are payable in advance. Unless otherwise directed we begin all subscriptions with the current issue. When sending in your renewal, please give us four weeks' notice. When changing an address give the old address as well as the new and allow five weeks for the first copy to reach you. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, New York, under the act of March 3, 1879; additional entry at Atlanta, Ga.; Chicago, Ill.; Los Angeles, Cal.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Philadelphia, Pa.; San Francisco, Cal.; Seattle, Wash. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office Department, Canada. Manuscripts must be typewritten and accompanied by return postage. They will be handled with care, but this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety.



*Illustrations by Pruet Carter*



*Beneath which, on a  
mystery isle, there  
is evoked the terrible  
black laughter no  
man understands*

by **CLEMENTS RIPLEY**



*Amalia's face was a mask, set, horrible—the face of the high priestess at the blood-rite.*

*In the First Installment:*

STEPHEN LANE was apprehensive as he journeyed to San Cristóbal in response to an invitation from Doctor Perez—uncle of Amalia, that lovely blond Spaniard with whom he had fallen in love in New York. Skimming over the water in Perez' yacht, he pondered on the doctor's amazing note, which had ended: "If you love her, I beseech you, for God Almighty's sake, come!" What was behind that urgent plea he could not guess, but his encounter with Lunch, the yellow boy from Georgia, engineer on the yacht, had in no way lessened his uneasiness. For Lunch hinted at something amiss in that tropical paradise for which they were bound. On the evening of Lane's arrival the doctor made him listen to the throbbing of the *rada* drums: that meant trouble among the blacks, he explained, and he suggested that his guest marry Amalia at once. Lane agreed to let Father Anselmo marry them. But next

morning he learned that the kind old priest with the scarred thumbs—souvenirs of his torture by Amazon savages—had died during the night.

Ten days went by quietly, and then one night Steve took Amalia in his arms, only to have one of her black attendants leap toward him with upraised knife; and later, just before dawn, he saw the girl in the garden, disheveled, her dress torn. Lane spoke of his perplexity to Perez' secretary, Gale Armstrong, an American girl. In return, she told him of her fear of the doctor. And then they found a bad-luck charm, made of five fingers—and on one of them they saw a whitish scar!

LANE WALKED the path to the house. He climbed the stairs. He watched his hands take off his bathing suit, hang it on the edge of the tub, button buttons, tie shoes. It wasn't until he was brushing his hair that the familiar routine brought back his

thoughts to a semblance of order. He'd have to tell the doctor right away, of course. This was a thing that affected all of them. No time for quarrels or strained relations now. They had to stick together.

Gale passed his door while he was still struggling with his tie. He hurried with some vague idea of getting there before she could be alone with the man. But that was nonsense; they had to stick together.

Neither of them was in the patio when he finally came down. He hurried through the library, the dining room, knocked at the study door. No answer. He thought they might have gone down to look at the *ouanga*, but when he went down the path to a point where he could see the place, there was nobody.

He hesitated. Try the tower? Gale had seen him there this morning. But to go out there now would be an admission that he knew the man had been spying on them. He had to keep away from that—carefully.

Amalia wasn't down yet, evidently. He was glad of that. He wanted to get this business of Father Anselmo's fingers off his mind before he talked to her. If he could only find Gale or the doctor.

As a matter of fact, it was nearly lunch time before he heard a quick step in the hall and started up to see the doctor, still in riding clothes, in the doorway.

**"I** HAVE SEEN Miss Armstrong," the doctor announced without preamble. "She has told me of the *ouanga*. A horrible business, that. She is—ah—ill, by the way. I have thought best to send her up to her room."

"Sick?" Lane stared at him feverishly. "You mean she's—sick? Why, she can't be. I was swimming with her not two hours ago."

Doctor Perez inclined his head. He switched the polished instep of his riding boot. "I much regret—oh, nothing to be alarmed about, but the swimming so soon after breakfast was, perhaps, a trifle ill-advised. Plus the shock of finding the *ouanga*. She was in a condition bordering on hysteria. Nothing serious, but she must have quiet—absolute quiet."

"But—Gale? Hysteria? She certainly didn't seem——"

"The eye of the medical man often recognizes symptoms that are concealed from the layman, my dear fellow." The doctor's tone held a hint of impatience. He switched back to the *ouanga* abruptly. "But you—you are certain you recognized the good father's—ah—fingers?"

"Absolutely, there was that scar. But what does it mean?"

The harassed lines of the doctor's face seemed to deepen. "Mean? God knows! The Haitian makes a *ouanga* for love, hate, anything. But the fingers! He was my friend."

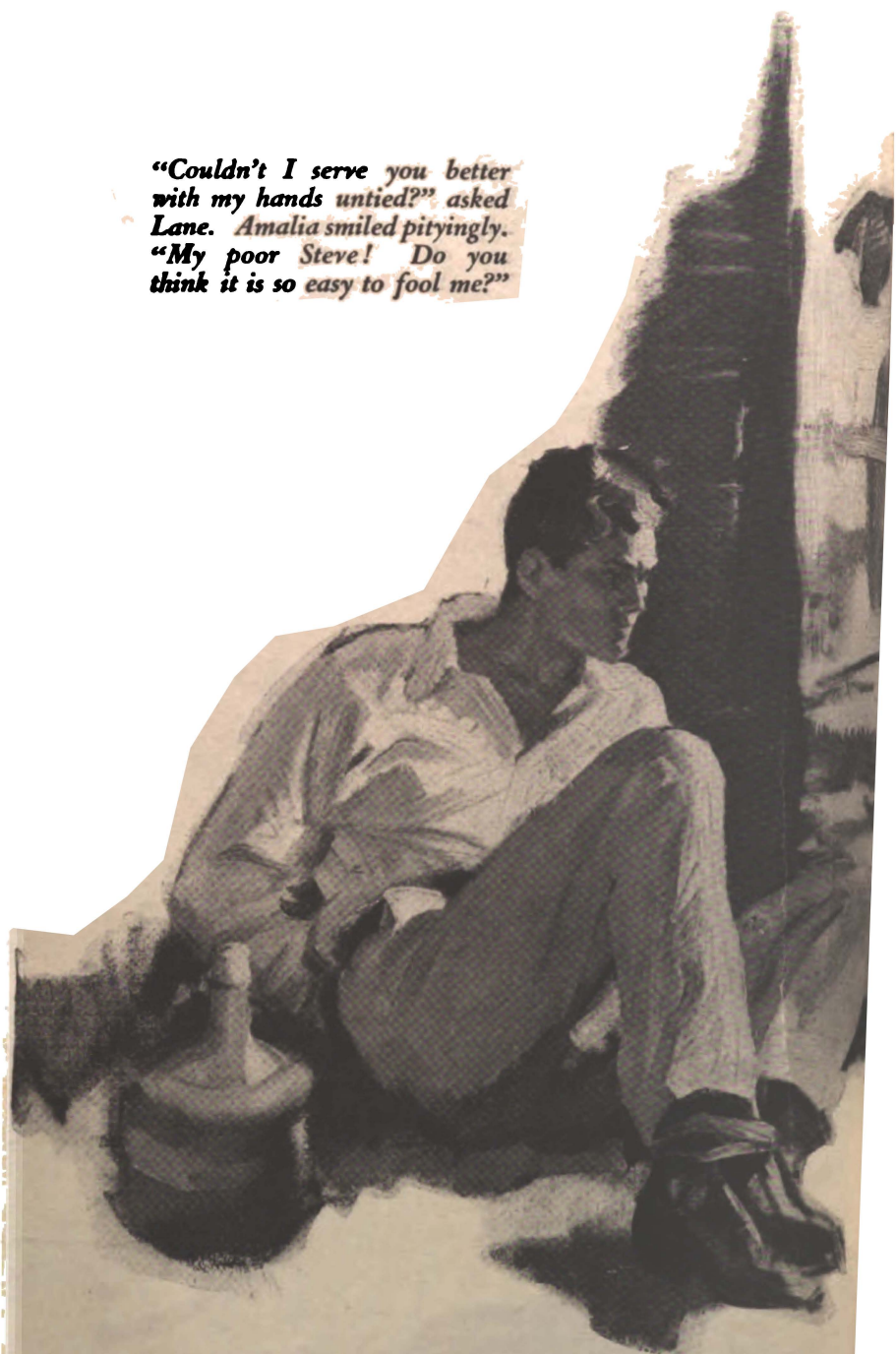
"I know; it's horrible. But what are we going to do?"

"What can we do? It was, of course, old Tiste Duval, the *papaloi*. But any attempt to prove, or to punish, at this time——"

"Oh, I don't mean that!" Lane protested. "But it strikes me we've played with fire long enough. Oh, I know how you feel about leaving San Cristóbal, but after a thing like this——"

"But why, my dear fellow? Why? This—this horror changes the situation in no way. One realizes, it is

*"Couldn't I serve you better with my hands untied?" asked Lane. Amalia smiled pityingly. "My poor Steve! Do you think it is so easy to fool me?"*



true, the savagery of the black, but—one knew that before. So—unless one fears the power of the *ouanga* itself——" His brows arched delicately.

"Naturally, I'm not afraid of a *ouanga*," Lane was trying hard to keep the edge out of his tone. "But I think it shows things have gone pretty far. And I want to get out before something worse happens."

The doctor frowned. "But my dear fellow! If I give you my word that nothing immediate is to be feared?"

"I'm not doubting your word, sir," Lane persisted stubbornly. "But you might be mistaken, and it would be a pretty bad mistake for all of us. No; I'm for getting out while the getting's good."

For an instant the doctor looked puzzled. Then he inclined his head slowly. "So! Well, doubtless you are sensible. Of course I cannot leave; Amalia, I can assure you, will not. She is a Perez—and a Perez does not run away. But you—well, there is nothing to keep you, of course. The yacht," he added smoothly, "is at your convenience—now or when you please."

Lane was staring, conscious of the dull flush that crept from his collar to the roots of his hair. "Look here," he began, "I don't know what your idea is. But either you misunderstood me, or you're being damned offensive."

There was a taut instant. Suddenly the doctor's rigidity seemed to melt out of him. "My dear boy! I did misunderstand; it was unpardonable! It—it is hard to know what to say. Please—my deepest apologies."



He put out his hand impulsively. "You will forgive something to a man under strain, will you not?"

"See!" he went on before Lane could interrupt. "Let me make a little more clear my position. This matter of the *ouanga*—a horror, of course—but it indicates nothing. Nothing, I assure you. I can show you a dozen near the *cailles*. If you had found it in the house now—ah, that would be different. Then it would have been meant for one of us. But this—some jealousy among the blacks, some quarrel."

"Well, but using Father Anselmo's fingers—"

"Nothing; no significance whatever. Oh, naturally, a shock at the mutilation. But a portion of the body of a holy priest—the fingers with which he blesses—that is strong magic. But it means nothing more. Now, please! I watch, I read the signs—and I assure you, my dear boy, that nothing immediate will happen.

**T**HERE IS unrest, yes. Some danger—but nothing to make us pack and run. So you will trust to my experience, will you not?"

"Well," a bit grudgingly, "you do know your blacks, of course."

The doctor's hand dropped on his shoulder. "You will forget my lapse, and we shall go in to luncheon like two sensible men, eh?"

There was a warmth in his smile that was irresistible. All the same, as Lane sat down and unfolded his napkin,

he couldn't help feeling that he had been trapped. Neatly, pleasantly, but—trapped. However, it was done now; he couldn't very well reopen the subject of leaving without reopening the breach that had so nearly come between them. They had to stick together, that was all there was to it.

As the meal progressed he was finding it harder and harder to believe that this was the man who was keeping Gale here by methods that were, to say the least, questionable; the man who had been spying on them from the tower. Somehow, none of it seemed to fit in with the agreeable, capable gentleman opposite him. He wondered if Gale could be mistaken.

He decided to lay a little trap of his own.

"I was just thinking," he suggested casually; "you know, we all wander around a good deal. I was wondering if it was safe. I mean, Gale and I go swimming down there."

He waited. Now, if the man took the opportunity to discourage their going . . . He watched the amber fingers playing with a cigaret.

The doctor was frowning a little. "Safe?" A queer, mirthless laugh. "No, it is not safe. But what would you? One cannot remain cooped up in the heat. And frankly, you are in no more danger there than here. See, if a chance were all they wanted—one slash of a machete in a dark hallway—but I become dramatic; there is no danger of that. No, what we must reckon with is a—a stampede, you (Continued on page 92)

## Voodoo Moon by Clements Ripley (Continued from page 61)

would say. Unplanned, unreasoning—and of that it should be simple to detect the signs in advance. My dear boy, swim as you please, you and Miss Armstrong. By the by," he added, as they got up from the table, "may I ask you to be quiet on her account as you go upstairs? I have taken certain precautions against her being disturbed. Absolute quiet is indicated—absolute."

Well, the trap had been sprung, empty. No hesitation; not a hint of jealousy. Lane wondered. Girls did get fool ideas sometimes, imagined things. He wished he could talk it over with Gale. It might help clear things up.

If her door should be open and she should be awake, it certainly wouldn't do any harm just to ask how she was. But her door was shut. Further, there was a big black in front of it.

Lane stared. So this was the "certain precaution." He wondered for an instant if it was specifically on his account. Oh, probably not; just the doctor's way of doing things.

Well, that ended the chance of seeing Gale. He debated an impulse to knock at Amalia's door and have it out with her about last night. But somehow he wasn't in the mood for that.

He threw himself on his bed, read for a little, slept a little. Later, as he dozed, it seemed to him that he heard voices from the other wing—the doctor's with the snap and crackle of expostulation, Amalia's smooth, but raised above her usual tone.

It was a little before the dinner hour when the doctor came in. His face was worn, tired, but his tone was as smooth as ever. "You have managed to amuse yourself, my dear fellow? My niece—"

Lane said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I haven't seen her. She hasn't been downstairs all day. But I've managed."

"So? But you have inquired, perhaps?"

"I couldn't. I can't talk to these servants, you know."

"Ah, I forget! And so you have been left without companionship. I must apologize. But perhaps it would be well for me to inquire."

He bowed abruptly and stepped into the hall. When he came back, the harassed look about his eyes had deepened.

"My niece," he announced briefly, "will join us. She has been a little—indisposed. Oh, nothing serious. I thought it would be better for her to appear at dinner. I think she spends too much time shut up in her room."

Lane said, "I'm glad she's coming." Actually, he was startled to realize that he didn't much care. But something was going on here, something edged with strain. The hot air quivered with it.

He was aware that the doctor was speaking. "A little mental diversion—but come! I was about to have a glass of *aguardiente*. You will join me?"

Lane watched the thin fingers close on the neck of the decanter, pour precisely. "Your very good health, sir!" They drank; then the doctor set his glass down with a little click.

"Miss Armstrong, you will be glad to learn, is better. A matter of two or three days only, I think. But she must have complete quiet. No visitors." He shot the younger man a keen glance.

"I saw your watchdog by her door. You're not taking any chances!"

"Oh"—the doctor shrugged—"one gives orders, but it is necessary to see that they are carried out. I wish sometimes," he added thoughtfully, "that I knew Christophe's secret in handling the blacks.

The Haitian emperor, you remember? To test the loyalty of a courtier, he ordered the man to leap from the battlements. The man jumped, unhesitatingly, and by a miracle was not killed. He crawled back to Christophe, broken and bleeding. 'Jump!' said the emperor again. This time, I understand, the experiment was successful. Christophe understood the handling of his men."

Something about the speech irritated Lane. Without knowing why, he sensed a vague threat in it. He rose to it. "Christophe," he remarked artlessly, "was eventually murdered by his loyal subjects, wasn't he?"

"Oh, yes." The doctor nodded idly. "But in the meantime, how he must have lived life to the full! There is a very compelling joy, I assure you, in power. But my niece descends!"

**T**HERE WAS a step in the hall. She came in, her head high, her face the face on a silver coin. Lane stared. She was the same—no coarsening of her loveliness. It seemed incredible. Last night must have been an insane dream.

She had stopped just inside the doorway. "I am here, my uncle!"—low, clear. But her eyes were the eyes of a sleep-walker.

"You honor us, my love!" The doctor was drawing out her chair.

She moved across, thanked him in a set phrase.

Lane breathed again. For a moment he had had some wild idea that she might be drugged, or hypnotized. He saw now that it was something else—some deep, tangled clash of wills. She had refused to come down, he supposed, and the doctor had won the first round by forcing her. She was showing him now that she was still unconquered.

The candle flames stood straight—pools of amber on the polished tabletop. And the struggle went on. Amalia was a Dresden shepherdess, eyes serene, making the expected answers to banal remarks with a terrible, soft docility. The doctor's thin face, molded, controlled. Only his hands played continually with the silver at his plate. Low voices.

To Lane the room rang with the clash of steel. Their two wills were blades, slithering, snarling in an atmosphere as tense as an electric spark. He wanted to leap to his feet, smash something, yell. And he went on putting food into his mouth, sipping wine, meeting the doctor's remarks with polite smiles.

He had reached a point now where his mind rejected speculation. Doctor Perez might be a fiend or a whimsical, kindly gentleman devoted to his niece's happiness. Amalia might be as virginal as a nun, or she might have a dozen black lovers. He didn't care.

The doctor was pushing back his chair. Amalia was on her feet. An interchange of courtesies. Then he was gone.

Four candle flames, dead still in the dead air. The drugged sweetness of the night, pressing in through the long, open windows. It had come; for his self-respect he had to go through with it.

He glanced at her, elbows on the table, firm, slender chin on her hands. She had dropped the Dresden mask now—all cool loveliness with the candlelight soft in her hair. He braced himself.

"Amalia, we've got to have a talk. Straighten things out."

"But what is it, my dear?"

He fingered his wineglass unhappily. "Look here. You don't want to marry

me. Now, wait! You haven't said so, but you've shown it pretty clearly."

"But—my Steve! I was foolish, I know, last night."

"It isn't that. But you don't want to be with me. You're only here now because your uncle made you come down. He's forcing you—I can see it. And you act as if you were handcuffed or something."

She admitted that with a little laugh. She put her hand over his. "But—oh, my uncle and I, we have these troubles sometimes. Always I must do his way. But you, my Steve, is it not that I fought against you when you would take me in your arms? But I would not do it now." She leaned nearer, her eyes inviting him.

A pleasant languor weighed him down. He stared at her hand, white against the brown of his wrist. The touch of it was stirring him, shaking him. He knew it—was mildly amused. And yet that didn't keep his heart from pounding.

Two parts of him, now. One that wanted her in his arms, the soft loveliness of her body against him, the touch of her mouth. And the other—cool, humorous—sitting back watching. Cynically admitting the terrible power of the flesh, knowing it was only the flesh.

The candle flames were yellow spear points, unmoving. Green dark beyond the windows. And he sat watching her hand fondle his, softly, torturingly. And the craving to crush her in his arms was a keen, delicious ache.

"Steve"—a breath. The shadows at the far end of the room were closing in.

He straightened. "Yes, and that's all right, dear. But I've got to ask you something. Where did you go last night—until three in the morning?"

She didn't move. She didn't breathe. "I saw you come in," he said. "Your dress was all torn, too."

"Ah! And you thought—?" Her voice was suddenly cold as stone. And far back in her eyes that flare of yellow light . . .

He fumbled unhappily. "You were too tired to walk with me."

Her eyes were agates. "Sometimes, my Steve, you are too absurd."

**S**HE WAS making him feel absurd, too. But he clung to it. "Yes, but that doesn't explain where you were. I wouldn't be asking," he added, "if there weren't—other things."

"Ah! And shall I explain all my comings and goings to you?" Her eyes narrowed thoughtfully an instant. "And yet—why not? Yes, I think I shall tell you and make you ashamed. Perhaps it would be amusing. But not here," she added quickly, with a glance at the door. "Here it might be that my uncle—or your Gale that swims with you so pleasantly—might listen. Wait. I will get my mantilla." She stilled his protest with a gesture and moved to the door.

He heard her feet on the stairs, in the upper hall. He finished the wine in his glass, ate a couple of walnuts, smoked a cigaret. Presently he went out into the hall, called "Amalia!" softly. Again, louder. No answer. He went upstairs.

A bracket lamp in the upper hall burned with a yellow flame. He picked a door with a crack of light under it and rapped. The noise was a thin echo in the heavy stillness. His mouth hardened. He laid his hand on the latch.

The touch of it gave him pause. The doctor had rigid ideas about things like this. Then an angry stifening surged up in him. He had had enough of this



sort of thing. He threw the door open.

He had braced himself for an indignant protest, but the room was empty. Puzzled, he glanced around him. It was Amalia's room, all right—there was her mantilla over the back of a chair. A narrow bed, spotlessly white, a couple of straight chairs, a dressing table with heavy silver brush and comb and mirror. That was all the furniture. No pictures or decorations on the white walls.

The light came from two candles in a little shrine at the far end of the room. He thought suddenly of Amalia on her knees, the candlelight golden in her hair. He moved nearer, caught by some impulse. The Christ . . . Other things, too—a great silver cup, an egg, a queer, conical black stone. And a curious, wavy black thing that looked like a snake. Odd things to have on an altar.

Subdued, troubled, he let himself out and closed the door behind him carefully. The drums were thudding again. He wanted to get outside into the starlight. Maybe Amalia had come down the other way and would be waiting in the patio. He called softly as he came out.

Under the shadow of the colonnade, a darker shadow stirred. He walked towards it—carefully. "Anybody there?"

A thin whisper out of the gloom: "Mist' Lane, suh!"

He stopped short. Lunch! But he had lost the power to be very much surprised by anything tonight. He said, "What're you doing here? Want to see the doctor?"

"Easy, suh—easy!"—a taut, agonized appeal. "Listen, I got to see you, suh. Please, suh, walk down to 'at bush with all them white flowers. Walk like you wasn't going nowhere special. Please!"

There was a desperate urgency in the tone. Casually, his heart beating more quickly, Lane strolled down the path. Maybe Lunch knew something.

The bush with white blossoms gleamed through the dark ahead. Then a faint rustle, a whisper: "Mist' Lane, I been tryin' to see you fo' two days now. Does the doctor catch me hangin' round the house, he gonna kill me." The voice shook.

Lane glanced over his shoulder involuntarily, but he said, "Don't be a fool, Lunch. The doctor doesn't kill people."

"He kill me awright!" Lunch was shakily positive. "Not white-folks maybe, but he kill a black boy jes' like you'd swat a fly."

Lane felt an uncomfortable crawling sensation between his shoulders.

"LISTEN, SUH! I got sup'm I got to show you. Mist' Lane, you jes' nachelly got to come with me tonight!"

"Come? Come where? What is it?"

"Out yonnuh. 'Cross the swamp an' over 'bout the mountain. I can't tell you—I got to show you. Listen, suh, you jes' boun' to come. Honest, you don't come, you gonna be sorry all yo' life."

"Say, what is it you've got on your mind, anyhow?"

There was a scraping sound as Lunch shifted his feet. "I—why, suh, I couldn't say, hardly. Seem like you got to see it. Kin'a goin's-on."

"Look here, are the people here cooking up something? Some danger to the doctor—or Miss Amalia?"

"Danger? Well, sometime it seem like the' is, an' then again, sometime it seem like the' ain'. But it ain' no danger to come with me, suh—not so long you don't make no noise."

Lane drew a quick, impatient breath. He tried a random shot. "Look here, is it something to do with Miss Amalia?"

"Miss Malia? Well, look like it's somethin' to do with her awright. Yesso"—with sudden relief—"it somethin' to do

with her. Listen, Mist' Lane, suh, I got me a gun heah. You take it an' walk behin' me. An' if it ain' like I say, you take an' blow a hole th'oo me. Yesso, you do that. Heah 'tis!" Something touched Lane's arm. The next instant a big automatic pistol slid into his palm. "You boun' to come, suh—absolutely!"

Lane slid the pistol into his pocket. "All right; let's go!"

Night, the smells of the night in his nostrils, beat of the drums in his ears. They moved off under the quiet stars.

The moon was not up yet, but the stars hung low and brilliant in a purple sky. They had crossed the lawn, and now they were traveling inland on a narrow trail, while in the heavy growth around them things stirred and rustled to their passing. Once something chattered angrily, and once a great bird flapped up and blundered off among the trees. And he was hurrying through the dark on some vague quest of a silver girl. No, the thing was too mad!

But he could feel the sweat trickle down his neck; could rub his thumb along the reassuring roughness of the pistol grip. They were real. Another thing—the faint, constant pulsing of the drums was stronger now. It wasn't imagination. They no longer seemed to beat inside his own brain, but came in a steady, rhythmic rolling that filled the forest around them with a low thunder.

It was only by their stronger beat that he knew he was going towards them. The night shivered—and now, under their steady rolling, he caught a faint tapping that was almost a tune.

A sudden opening in the trail, a burst of starlight. Starlight above, starlight in the still, black waters of the swamp. Great, gaunt trees—skeletons against the sky—gaunt snags upthrust on both sides of the narrow footway that wound precariously above sluggish pools.

"How much farther?" he whispered. "Ain' so fur now. Hol' yo' patience, suh. Mos' there."

The tapping that underlay the roll of the drums beat in Lane's head now. One-two-three-four-five; one-two-three-four-five—pistol in his pocket, God knew what in front—one-two-three-four-five.

They were out of the swamp now. The path had begun to climb sharply. They must be on the mountainside, he thought. The drums were more distinct.

It might have been twenty minutes later when Lunch stopped short and stood tense, listening for something down the trail behind them. An instant later, Lane felt himself caught by the shoulder and pulled into the screening underbrush at the side of the trail.

Almost immediately a dark form loomed up on the path, passed on noiseless bare feet. Another, and another—a dark stream of them. Somebody spoke, a low, guttural string of Creole. Somebody laughed. And then they were gone and the drums boomed on.

With a breath of relief Lane turned to follow Lunch again. The latter was leaving the trail now and heading straight up through the brush. For perhaps ten minutes Lane scrambled through the dark. Then a touch on his arm, a whisper:

"We mos' there now. Got to go easy. Look yonnuh!"

Lane glanced up and saw what he had been too busy with the climb to notice before. The sky above the ridge was red with a flickering light.

They moved on again, easing forward quietly until at last they reached the top of the ridge and came full on it.

Below lay a bowl-like depression, perhaps two hundred feet across, and cleared of undergrowth. At the bottom a fire burned, flames leaping in the still

air, filling the place with a queer, uncertain light. Behind the fire stood a low, palm-thatched shed with open sides. That was the first thing that caught Lane's eye. It was not until a moment later that he noticed that the sides of the amphitheater were filled with squatting blacks, knees drawn up and backs bowed, their eyes intent on the drums.

He made out three of these, a little to one side of the shed-like structure—tall, cylindrical affairs of varying heights with projecting pegs around the sides to which the heads were fastened. Each was held between the knees of a half-naked black who beat it with the heel of his hand or the tips of his fingers.

IT WAS HARD to believe that the rolling avalanche of sound that shivered and boomed through the night could all come from these three instruments. Not that it was loud—in a sense it was not as thunderous as it had been farther down the trail. The big drum, in fact, was more a vibration than a sound—a thin-drawn tremor that shivered against teeth and under finger nails. It underlaid the intricate rhythm of the smaller ones, a rattle and spray of noise, maddening in its drugged iteration.

In the midst of it, Lane remembered suddenly why he had come. "What about Miss Amalia?" he demanded in a whisper. "What's it got to do with her?"

"Hol' yo' patience, suh!"—breathlessly. "They gonna start."

The eyes of all the blacks were intent on the drummers. These rocked and rolled in an ecstasy of rhythm, black bodies glistening, drums gripped between lean knees, while their hands flew, playing over the taut drumheads like heat lightning over a pond.

And now, here and there, the hearers were beginning to sway to the beat—a slow, unconscious ripple of motion that ran along the serried rows like foam along the top of a breaking comber. Somewhere a woman's voice broke out in an eerie, moaning chant. Others took it up, while the drums rolled and pounded and the men's voices boomed a heavy cadence below the shriller keening of the women.

Lane felt the hair lift at the back of his neck. The chant was a wailing frenzy rising to beat against the quiet stars until it seemed that Something must hear. Something ancient and dark and terrible, blackened by the smoke of fires, smeared with the blood of he-goats.

A wizened old man came out from behind the fire and took his place in front of a sort of altar before the shed. He was decked out in a red surplice and carried a gourd rattle festooned with snake skins. That face like a malignant gray ape's—Tiste Duval, the papaloi whom Lane had seen once with Doctor Perez in the tobacco plantings.

"At's him!" Lunch's whisper came shakily. "They gonna start!"

The red figure raised its arms. The rattle shrilled. The drums rolled out a furious crescendo and stopped with a crash. The chanting died to a moan stilled. In the straining quiet, Lane heard the terrified bleating of goats tethered in the darkness beyond.

The papaloi was bowing—east, west, north and south. A little gray monkey in red cloth, Lane told himself, and yet somehow, the old figure had a certain uncanny dignity, a disturbing sense of familiarity with mystery. He turned at length to face them.

"Ogoun Badagris attend!" Even Lane's French was equal to that. He remembered Ogoun Badagris, too—the bloody one, lord of battle, famine.

pestilence. The worshipers were stirring. A man came forward on hands and knees, prostrated himself, put a question.

The *papaloi's* head went back. A choked muttering came from his throat. The man backed to his place again. A woman next, another man—others.

Occasionally Lunch translated. "He wan' fin' who stole his money" . . . "She askin' fo' a chase-away *ouanga*" . . . Once Lane caught the name Perez in a petition—a petition which Lunch conveniently failed to understand.

And now, above the trees, the somber mass of the mountain began to stand out against a chill, pale light that etched every ragged pinnacle against a greenish sky. And presently a white moon rose, filling the place with a cold light.

**T**HEN THE drums rolled, softly at first, growing as the white, eyeless face crawled up the sky, a sort of savage processional, while from the shadows behind the fire came a band of women robed in white, with white turbans around their heads. To the dragging cadence of a chant they came forward and formed two groups beside the *papaloi*.

Lane scanned them impatiently. "Say, what about Miss Amalia?"

"Hol' up, suh. You gon' see."

As he spoke, an old woman appeared, dragging behind her a frightened, bleating he-goat blanketed in red, its horns tied with streamers of red cloth. With proddings and haulings she brought it to the altar and made it fast to a stake, while the drums beat a slow roll and the chant took on a new note of fear.

The *papaloi* laid aside his gourd rattle and took from the altar a wooden bowl and a machete. The old woman broke a leafy twig from a near-by bush and offered it to the goat.

The drums hushed. The chanting died. The worshipers were leaning forward with little moans of anxiety.

The goat had stopped its plungings and bleatings. Its eyes seemed to bulge and swell, frightened and staring. Only once or twice, as the *papaloi* stood taut, machete raised, it seemed to come to itself and rear back, shaking its head and struggling with almost human cries. When that happened, the *papaloi* spoke to it, low, soothing, earnest, and the brief effort ended in a pitiful, sobbing bleat and a convulsive shudder.

It might have lasted five minutes, while the moon climbed higher, paling the flickering glow of the fire, and everything became so still that Lane was vaguely conscious of the low murmur of a waterfall, miles away. And presently, while they waited, tense and straining, the little goat stretched its neck and nibbled at the branch.

A soft sigh of relief from the circle. The *papaloi* nodded as if in satisfaction. The heavy blade flicked in a glittering arc in the moonlight and the little goat strained back with a terrified, bubbling cry and plunged forward to its knees.

The old woman seized its horns, bent its head back while it struggled feebly, and allowed the *papaloi* to catch the warm gush of blood in the wooden bowl.

The drums crashed. He raised the bowl and drank. At the same instant the white-robed choristers broke into a queer, rigid dance, whirling like grotesque moths in the dancing light.

The *papaloi* dipped his hand and sprinkled them with the still-hot blood. And now, the crowd surged towards the altar, while the blood-smeared hand of the high priest swung and swung again, and the red gouts flew and spattered.

A woman screamed shrilly and went into a frenzied convulsion, while the

drums hammered out a nightmare of sound. Leaping firelight splashed and reddened black faces and straining, twisting forms—milling, swaying, filling the night with a dark madness.

For the moment as he crouched in the dark, Lane had forgotten Amalia, forgotten everything except the gaunt shadows whirling and swinging against the quiet trees, the inexorable rhythm of the drum-roll. Beside him the yellow boy was breathing in quick, sobbing gasps. Somewhere at the base of his being, too, there was stirring a strange, newly awakened emotion.

It was not fear, although fear was in it. Not fear, at least, of the blacks themselves, even in their blood-madness. He felt, in fact, a curious kinship with them. Something age-old, buried so deep under the subtleties of civilization that most men go through life and never know it is there—the old undying Thing that, since the beginning of time, has cried for a blood-sacrifice to a blood-smeared, terrible god.

Boom of drums—heavy, maddening, restless. Black bodies splashed with leaping firelight, thud of bare feet keeping time—keeping time. Ten thousand years rolling back to make a civilized man one with the crazed forms leaping and whirling under the quiet moon.

Boom! . . . Man—naked, weak, afraid!

Boom! . . . Fear—stark fear, crawling in the brain!

Boom—br-r-r! . . . Something old and dark, rising with an eyeless face to call on dreadful gods to save against hurricane and lightning, against tooth and claw, against the terror of the engulfing dark!

It passed. Slowly the fury of the dancers spent itself. The sweating drummers tired. Even the fire died to a glow. One after another, the panting blacks threw themselves on the ground. Lane relaxed, his head still whirling.

Now the drums had lifted into a new rhythm—swinging, flowing, soft with little blurring runs. The old *papaloi* threw a handful of something on the dying fire. A heavy column of smoke towered above the trees. Lane felt Lunch's hand on his arm—a nervous grip.

"Look! Look yonnuh! Oh, Lawd!"

The smoke thinned. Something white behind it, something wraith-like that seemed to be part of the smoke itself.

Then Lane's heart jumped, and the blood rushed and pounded in his ears. For the wraith, wrapped in the dying smoke, was Amalia.

**S**HE WAS white—naked except for a girdle of some silver, shimmering stuff. She moved forward slowly, a swaying, fluid step that kept time to the intricate tapping of the drumbeat. Before the altar she poised, her arms curved up, head back. Lane caught his breath, for the moonlight was tangled in her hair, gleaming on her shoulders, turning all the white loveliness of her body to flowing silver.

"No—no, suh!" He realized suddenly that Lunch was dragging at him with frantic whisperings; that he had been on the point of plunging out into the magic circle. Torn rags of thought were whirling through his head. Amalia, the cool, poised statue—virginal, un-touchable, unawakened.

She began to dance, line flowing into lovely line, every turn stark beauty. Her eyes, cast down, veiling their mystery behind long lashes. Delicate features, clear-cut, expressionless—a silver Artemis dancing before the moon.

His muscles tightened. He ought to throw something around her, take her

away. All those gaping blacks. Amalia! The impulse died. Something in the carven quiet of her face was holding him tranced.

She danced. Smoothly, light as cloud shadows over grassland, pose melting into pose, swaying, whirling, head thrown back in a sort of grave ecstasy. And the pale moon hung poised in a purple sky, and the rows of blacks were carved ebony, touched with burnt-orange by the glow of the dying fire.

The drums quickened. White, flying feet kept the measures; white arms and shoulders, silver in the wan light. All woman—all sex, and yet as sexless as flowing water, clean-cut as new-minted coin. The drums holding her bound to their beat, as though their rolling had called her up and created her; as though the beauty of her would go out like a wisp of white smoke when they stopped. And then, as they crashed out in one desperate, importunate burst of sound, she whirled, arms wide, and sank slowly before the altar.

The *papaloi* stepped forward as she rose, and covered her with a red robe, while the choristers set up a chant in which Lane caught the name "Ezilee."

For an instant it puzzled him. Then something clicked in his brain. *Maitresse Ezilee!* Identified, according to the doctor, with the Virgin Mary.

But something was happening. The old woman who had dragged in the sacrificial goat appeared again, this time leading a girl.

She was a light mulatto, fifteen or sixteen, at a guess. Her dress was a single garment of white cotton, falling from shoulder to knee, leaving her throat and arms bare. She came docilely but hanging back a little against the hand that half led, half pulled her along. But it was her eyes that caught Lane's gaze. They were wide, staring like a sleep-walker's in a kind of unseeing terror.

She made a frightened protest as the old woman turned her around in front of the altar, but the words were lost in the chanting and the pounding of the drums. Someone threw fresh fuel on the fire and the flames rushed up with showers of sparks. In the leaping light, Lane saw that the girl's hair was wound with red streamers, as the horns of the goat had been wound in red.

The significance of it went through him like a breath of cold wind, but something had hold of him now, strangling the protest in his throat. In a sort of horrified fascination he watched the old woman tilt the girl's head up, and lay her throat bare.

The girl seemed to have no volition of her own. "Drugged!" flashed through Lane's mind. "Or hypnotized."

"Do something!" A voice inside him was whispering. "My God—do something!" But he could only stare. He realized suddenly that the chanting had stopped, and he hadn't known when it stopped. The drums, too—just one steadily pulsing beat.

The girl, her head still tilted back, began to sing. She was so still that if he hadn't seen the flutter of her throat he would have thought the sound came from somewhere else—a thing of queer minors, barbaric and yet infinitely moving, that held no protest or fear, but a world of helpless sorrow.

It died at length on a final note of heartbreak; a low murmur swept the circle, like the sigh of a strain relaxed. And as if that had been a signal, somewhere outside the firelight a woman screamed.

The thing was as startling, as hideously unexpected, as a striking snake. Scream after scream—long jagged

shrieks that ripped red gashes through the dark. There was a quick rush of feet, a scuffle.

With a sudden commotion the wall of blacks burst. Something plunged through into the circle. Lane had a swift glimpse of waving, skinny arms—an old woman with a frantic, pleading face, who flung herself at Amalia's feet, gripped her knees. For one moment, while everything seemed to stand still, the scene stamped itself on his brain—the terrified, half-mad desperation of the suppliant, the cold fury that masked Amalia's loveliness. He saw her hand draw back, saw it smash savagely across the wrinkled face—twice. Then a dozen black forms closed in to hide them. An instant of struggle, then the old woman, still shrieking and clawing, was dragged beyond the rim of firelight. The screams were suddenly muffled. Silence . . .

The whole thing had been so quick that Lane had hardly time to realize what was happening. He heard Lunch's terrified gasp: "Oh, Gawd—her mothuh!" and felt the yellow boy's flesh shudder against his arm, but his eyes were riveted on the three before the altar.

The girl had not moved a muscle. Her gaze, wide and staring, was fixed on the *papaloi*, who held the bloodstained knife poised like a scepter. With a sort of horrible fascination Lane saw Amalia take the wooden bowl, dip a slim forefinger, and mark the girl's forehead.

She had been a little in the shadow, but now, as she turned, the firelight was full on her face.

He caught his breath. There was nothing there of the Amalia he knew. He was staring at a mask, set, terrible—the face of the high priestess at the blood-rite. There was cruelty in the drawing back of her lips, in the pinched curve of her nostrils, in the eyes, narrowed, vulpine, bright with a horrible beauty.

For the fraction of a second they held the pose. Then the *papaloi* raised the machete. And as he did this, something seemed to snap in Lane's brain.

He felt the pistol butt in his hand. Almost without volition, his arm jerked up. "God!" he said, aloud. "There's been enough of this!" and fired.

**T**HERE WAS a part of his brain that stood aghast. He heard the crack of the pistol, saw the flash. He couldn't believe it!

But the *papaloi* whirled half round and clutched at the altar. For a sick second he clung there. Then, slowly, the altar tilted—bottles, cups, thunderstones, slid and toppled. His knees sagged and he collapsed.

For what seemed an endless time, nobody moved. The *papaloi* lay as he had fallen, his red turban awry. Amalia still held the bowl, frozen into a deadly rigidity. The girl stood with her head back.

Then a moan swept the circle. A rustling, a quick clatter of tongues, a terrified roar as they surged up, panic-stricken, jamming the narrow path. Milling black bodies, writhing in the firelight, arms waving. A black tide, rising, filling the hillside with clamor, surging up the ridge.

Lane had time to see that much before something yanked his feet from under him and he crashed forward.

In a swift panic he tried to scramble to his feet. Something heavy smashed down on him, knocking him flat again. Hands gripped his neck, pushed his head down. Then the brush crashed and a human avalanche poured over him. He fought, tried to get his feet under him.

From somewhere a frantic whisper penetrated his brain: "Lay still! Oh, Gawd, lay still!" Somehow, he collected wit enough to obey. And presently, as the crashings and flounderings died in the distance, he felt the grip on him relax.

Lunch helped him to his feet. "You—you'll have to kin'a 'scuse me, suh. Some mighty bad boys yonnuh. Oh, Lawd, suh, what you wanna go shoot the *papaloi* fo'?"

The words brought Lane to himself with a jerk. He stared at the deserted clearing. The firelight played on the thatched shed, the altar. But the *papaloi* himself was gone.

"Did—was he able to walk away?"

Lunch scratched his head. "Well, I wouldn't hardly like to say was he able. Nosuh, I couldn't tell 'bout that. But two of 'em done drug him."

"I've killed him, then!"

"No, suh. Ain't no such luck as 'at."

A quick hope! "How do you know? Did you see him move or anything?"

"Why, seem like I couldn't rightly say I seen him move. An' then again, I ain't say he ain't move. But he ain't daid. You cain't kill no *papaloi* less'n you git you a silver bullet. 'At what it take to kill 'em *papaloi*s."

"Oh, Lord! I probably did kill him, then." Lane had a frantic vision of himself in court—facing a jury.

But "No, suh!" Lunch was saying. "Take a silver bullet, like I say. An' you never had no silver bullet in 'at gun—leas'ways, I never put none in. But you shootin' him thataway li'ble to make him pow'ful mad. An' it's gonna make Miss 'Malia mad, too, you ast me."

Amalia! For a moment he had forgotten. Now, that last vision of her came back full force—the narrow, heavy-lidded eyes, the set cruelty of her mouth.

Lunch was saying, "She done put one *ouanga* on you an' Miss Gale, an' it ain't work. But she ain't gonna be satisfy with no *ouanga* this time."

"*Ouanga*?" Lane repeated the word dully. For the moment it didn't mean anything to him. Then the picture came. "Good God! You mean that thing on the path? The—the fingers?"

Lunch nodded vigorously. "Yesso; she get the *papaloi* to make it. Hoo-ee! I coulda tol' him ol' *ouanga* wouldn't work with no white folks. But I tell you what's so—does she come up with us now, sup'm gonna happen."

Lane nodded, but already his mind refused to be startled any more. He passed his hand across his eyes as though to brush away his thoughts. It wasn't what she had done—might do. It was Amalia herself.

He was seeing her as something less than human now—and more. The lovely, unawakened girl was gone. The silver Artemis who had woven the white magic of her dance to the pale chastity of the moon was gone. He saw her now—as he would always see her—walking the cold spaces beyond the stars, among the lost souls, aloof, unswerving, terribly alone.

But Lunch was demanding: "What we gon' do now, suh?"

"Do? Why . . ." His voice trailed off. His mind seemed empty, drained.

"Listen, suh; you cain't go back whe' she's at. She know who done 'at shoot-in'; she got ways. Us got to do *sup'm*!"

A plan of action exploded in his brain. "Listen, show me the way back to the house. Then you get the yacht ready. I'll get Miss Armstrong."

He heard Lunch's startled gulp. "You means jes' go? Onna yacht?"

"Sure! Unless you have a better way."

"Why, nosuh. Not no better way, hardly. But the doctuh, he mighty

partic'lar 'bout 'at yacht. Seem like he gonna be pow'ful mad."

"We can't help that. I'll find some way to get it back to him, but we've got to get out of here—tonight!"

"Y-yesso! But what about Gros Jean, suh? He the cap'n on 'at yacht, an' he mos' gen'ly sleep abo'ad."

"We'll take care of him some way. We've got your gun. You just get those engines ready to turn over." Lane was speaking with cool assurance.

It seemed to melt Lunch's doubts. He nodded. "Yesso, I get 'em ready. Doan' you fret; they be ready awright! Come on, suh, le's we go."

There was no question in Lane's mind as to how he was going to do it, as he hurried down the trail behind the yellow boy. Things like that were minor matters now—to be met when the time came. His mind had leaped ahead to clean, blue water—miles of it between himself and San Cristóbal.

**S**EEM LIKE we better go kipa roundabout," Lunch was explaining. "Miss 'Malia, she li'ble to be lookin' fo' us by now, seem like."

"Well, but hustle, then. We haven't any time to waste."

"No, suh!" The words came jerkily over Lunch's shoulder. "Ain't wastin' no time 'is trip."

Scattered tags of thought whirled through Lane's head as they hurried through the darkness. The yacht—suppose something went wrong, so they couldn't get it? Oh, to hell with that; they had to get it. And Gale—she was sick; couldn't walk so far, maybe. Well, he'd carry her; manage somehow. Up over ridges; down into hot, steamy dips.

He was dripping, as much from nerves as from the heat, when they pushed at last through a fringe of bamboo and saw the house ahead, pale in the rays of the setting moon. And already the stars were losing their luster. Faint streaks of gray were beginning to show in the east. He shut his teeth on his taut impatience.

"Light in an hour, now! Get the engines ready and leave a boat at the wharf for us to come out in. Hustle!"

"Yesso; I fix ev'rything nice. Here, suh, you bet' take my gun. You might need it." Lunch held it out.

Lane shook his head. "You'll need it more, especially if Gros Jean's aboard."

For an instant he watched the boy slip from shadow to shadow. Then he turned towards the house, his heart pounding.

For the first time, its square bulk seemed to hold an eyeless, sinister menace. For the first time, too, the practical difficulties of the undertaking were coming home to him. Suppose the doctor should be awake? Or if Gale were too sick to move? And Amalia might be expecting something of this sort.

There was a cold fingering at his spine as he thought of the darkness just inside the front door. A proper place for one of that gang to be waiting with a machete. Well, get on with it! It had to be done.

Then, as he reached the concealing shadow of the colonnade, he remembered that the doctor might—probably would—still have his guard in front of Gale's door. That would ruin everything.

He hesitated, measured the lattice at the end of the colonnade with his eye. Not much of a climb, if it would hold him. He gave it a tentative pull, then cramped his toes between the slats, hooked his fingers into whatever cranny he could find, and started up.

The thing creaked agonizingly, but it

held and there was no sound from the house. Presently he reached the balcony and drew himself up.

He was right outside his own room now. It should be simple enough to climb across to Gale's window along the ledges. He edged across cautiously in the stillness, pulled himself over onto the sill of her room.

The window was screened, and the screen, like all those in the house, opened inward at the bottom. Crouching there on six inches of masonry, he inched around until he could get one hand free to push on it.

Easy now! It wouldn't do to have Gale wake up and scream. Gently he increased the pressure. It gave a fraction of an inch, then stuck. He pushed again, shoved at it. It held fast.

His heart sank. He had worried about everything else, but it had never occurred to him that the screen would be bolted. If he had a knife, he could cut the wire—but he didn't have any knife.

**W**HAT NOW? Go back? He stared out over the garden. The tops of the palms were beginning to show against a graying sky. No time to lose!

Then, inside the room a board creaked. He strained to catch the sound. "Gale!"—a breath. "Listen, Gale, it's me—Steve! Don't speak. If you hear me, tap on the bedpost or something."

A tense interval. Then he heard a faint tap.

"Listen, come to the window and undo this screen. Easy! The boy outside'll hear you."

Another interval. Then there was a rustle, the faint creak of a floor board. Something fumbled at the bolt.

"Atta girl—you darling!" He hardly knew what he was saying. "Easy, dear."

A tiny snap as the bolt went back, and the screen swung inward. Dizzy with relief, he put one foot over the sill, slid inside, stood up in the blackness.

"Gale!" He couldn't see her, but he could hear her breathing. "Listen, Gale, I've seen—say, come closer, can't you?" He took a groping step. "Can you hear me? Say, I've found out—" Something—the stillness—caught at his throat.

"Gale, I say—" There was a movement, the blue spurtle of a match. "My God! Don't—"

The protest died in a startled gasp. He was staring at a hand cupped around the little flame—a hand with long, muscular fingers, red and translucent now in the light behind them. Slowly they uncurled and the light leaped up, touching the thin, tight-lipped mouth, the arched nose, the heavy brows, with an effect quizzically satanic.

"My dear fellow," said Doctor Perez, "good evening!"

Before Lane could gather words to answer, he had touched the flame to a candle. The glow sprang out, showing the bed smooth and untouched.

Lane found his voice. "Wha-what have you done with her?"

The doctor was regarding him impassively. "Hardly the point, do you think, sir? It is your being here, is it not, that needs explanation?" Before Lane could shift his startled thoughts to meet this attack, he went on, "I find you at"—he glanced delicately at his watch—"at four in the morning, entering stealthily the bedroom of a young lady who is under my protection. You, my guest, betrothed to my niece."

"To hell with that!" Lane burst out desperately. "I want to know what you've done with her!"

"Ah, so you did expect to find her here! Waiting for you."

Lane took a step forward. "Say, if you're trying—I mean, if—"

"My dear fellow, I hardly expected this of you—in your position."

A red mist was swirling in Lane's head. "Damn you, if you've harmed her—"

"Your tone, my dear fellow, your tone! May I remind you that you are one gentleman speaking to another? As to Miss Armstrong, I have merely put her in—a place of safety. Your zeal need no longer trouble itself about her. But there are more important matters between us, are there not? Doubtless you can offer some explanation."

"Look here! I don't want any trouble with you. But I want to know where Gale is. *Now!*"

"That can wait, I think. As Amalia's uncle—"

"*Amalia!*" An insane desire to laugh shook Lane. "Listen, I was there tonight. On the mountain. I saw Amalia—"

"Ah!" It was a breath. One hand went to the doctor's mouth—slowly. For just the fraction of a second there was a new Doctor Perez, a stricken man. Then the ivory mask slipped into place again. "I begin to understand. We have, it seems, matters to discuss. Will you come to my study, please?"

"I don't think talking will get us anywhere. I'm sorry and all that, but—well, I want to find Gale and get out of here. I ask you to let us have the yacht."

"Ah! And if I refuse?"

Lane laughed uneasily. "Why, you'd hardly do that, sir. But"—his mouth hardened—"if you did, we'd just have to take it and go, anyhow."

The doctor's eyes narrowed. "I think that there is something, perhaps, to be gained by talking. So if you will step down to my study, sir—"

Lane shook his head. "I don't see any sense in that. Just be unpleasant for both of us. No, I won't."

The doctor hesitated, shrugged. With catlike quickness he stepped over and flung the door open. "Polynice! Pachecho!"

There was a movement in the gloom outside. Two big Negroes appeared. "In the study we shall be more comfortable. Do you not agree, sir?"

Lane stared at the blacks—at the doctor, suave, with just a hint of triumphant malice in the curve of his lips. "In other words, if I won't go, you'll have me dragged. Well, all right."

"Excellent!" The doctor bowed smoothly and picked up the candle.

The blacks melted aside from the door, closed in again as he passed through. The doctor followed with the candle. Shadows mingling and dancing down the hall before him, grotesque heralds of a mad procession. Lunch would be waiting! Might run for it, but he hadn't located Gale yet. Better temporize.

He stopped in front of the study door. The two blacks had melted into the darkness again. Then the doctor opened the door and they passed through.

"Sit there, my dear fellow." The doctor was rummaging in the cupboard, whence he produced a decanter and two glasses. "So, for the moment we shall forget our little differences, eh? Your health, sir! The time has come, I believe, for the—the show-down, is it not?" he went on, as Lane set his glass down. "Hm—unfortunate that you saw what you saw tonight. But since you did—"

"Honestly," Lane interrupted, "there's no sense in going into it. If you'll just tell me where Gale is, and let us get out of here—"

"I am afraid you must listen," the doctor said quietly. "In justice to Amalia, to myself. I need not bore you with the

medical side, except to say that Amalia is by no means insane. She has a mental—shall we say, maladjustment?"

"You can call it anything you please. She was going to kill that girl. Oh, what's the use of talking about it?"

"Maladjustment is the correct word," the doctor said imperturbably. "We all have such maladjustments, you understand, in varying degrees. In Amalia's case, it began with a strong religious trend, almost fanatic. Her mother and father were drowned when she was less than a year old. She never knew either. She is of a sensitive temperament, quick to receive impressions. Brought up here on San Cristóbal, surrounded by the atmosphere of mystery and superstition of the Negro, seeing no white people except myself—and I, you understand, was busy . . ." His voice trailed off.

Lane was seeing it now in spite of himself. The little girl, alone except for her black nurse, big-eyed as she listened to the dark lore that colored everything she did or saw or felt. Drinking it in.

"I did not realize what was happening until she was nearly fifteen years old. I took immediate steps, naturally. I thought, of course, of a convent; tried it. But the convent proved to be out of the question. I took her away barely in time to avert a scandal." His voice sank on the word. "You understand, do you not, that not—one syllable of this must ever be breathed outside?" His eyes on Lane were suddenly twin points of steel.

Lane nodded. "Yes, naturally!"

"On account of the name, you understand. The Perezes—but I will not go into that. So then, I need not weary you with the efforts I have made. The last one was to send her abroad in charge of an excellent person—a distant relative. You remember her, perhaps? In New York? . . . Well, no matter. For a time, then, it was successful. Complete disassociation of ideas. It was at this time that she met you. I had hopes—and then one night in New York, I do not know what happened, but—the work was all undone. She came back at once."

Lane started. Something had clicked in his mind. The Metropolitan Opera House—a tunnel of darkness with the stage a sea of amber at the end. The crash of kettledrums, a wild rhythm.

"Good Lord!" he breathed. "That thing—we heard it together! It was at the opera, you know; the drums!"

**"D**RUMS, EH?" The doctor was leaning forward, quick with a tense interest. "The drums. Now, why have I not thought of that? Of course—complete association of sounds, rhythms." He frowned a little as though searching for just the right words. "Understand, Amalia is not insane. The point of proof is this—that for over two years, while she was traveling, seeing new things, receiving new impressions, there was no recurrence. Well, then, more of the same treatment, should you not think so? Change! But a more complete change this time. Something that would shake her, reorganize her psychologically and physically. In short, marriage."

"Huh!" Lane's eyes flew open. "And you picked on me?"

"Hardly that. Amalia had written, spoken, of you. Never before had she shown the slightest interest in any man. In fact—she has told me so herself—she loves you." He stopped.

There was an uncomfortable moment. But before Lane could think of anything to say, the doctor was going on.

"It was not—you will pardon me—precisely the marriage I should have arranged. And yet, change—as complete

and disorganizing as possible. A man of different religion, different traditions, a total change of atmosphere." He spread his hands apologetically. "You must pardon, a little, my manner of bringing it about. The opportunity—"

"Oh, I can see it, all right!" Lane's face hardened a trifle. "And all that stuff about the danger, the blacks—?"

"Oh, there was a certain amount of truth, much more than you imagine. Always there is danger, and—I will not deceive you—rather more now that Amalia has the blacks in control. She is direct in her methods. The story of the death of the *sobrestante*—that I could not resist. An artistic effect. As a matter of fact, I sent him away because he was beginning to suspect about Amalia."

"Well, it sucked me in, all right," Lane admitted bitterly.

"Oh, hardly to be wondered at, my dear fellow! I had prepared my effects most carefully. But the best of plans—ah, well, if Father Anselmo had lived." He sighed wearily. "But there is a speed, a directness sometimes about a woman's mind—" He broke off with a shrug.

A slow coldness was seeping through Lane's veins. He was seeing again that pool of blood on the walk. The doctor's face was a carved mask.

"You must have suspected that Father Anselmo did not die a natural death?" The voice was slowly, inexorably pounding the words into Lane's brain.

"Amalia? You mean she— You're lying again, damn you!"

"Unfortunately, no. Whether she struck the blow, I do not know. But—he was in her way. I should have foreseen something of the sort when she told me she was determined to delay until after the full moon. The Petro sacrifice, which you tell me you saw tonight."

For an instant, while he stared, it seemed to Lane that the soul of the man looked out through eyes bleak with pain. "My oldest friend!" he was saying. "Almost my only friend. But—that is past. You may set your mind at rest. There will be no failure next time."

"Next—say, what are you talking about?" cried Lane. "You don't have any idea that I'm still going to marry her?"

The doctor's eyes widened a trifle—only that, but there was an impression of a steel spring tightening. "I think," he said quietly, "that you will decide to do so. Upon reflection."

"But—why, the thing's out of the question. You must see that!"

"At first glance—yes. At the moment you could hardly be expected to view the matter—normally. You have had a painful experience. But such things pass."

"Pass?" Lane stared at him feverishly. "My God, man, the girl's a—murderer. That won't pass. Nothing can change that."

"I admit the—fact," the doctor agreed, "although I deprecate your use of the term. There is, after all, a difference between a murderer and a priestess serving her gods. Not unnatural, however—your feeling. But there is another—ah—angle. Your betrothal to Amalia—the intimacy allowed you—would make it unlikely that she should find another husband among her own people. Had you thought of that?"

"Look here, there's no sense going on with this. Can't you see that it's out of the question?" Lane rose.

The doctor motioned him to sit down again. "One moment, my dear fellow; I have not finished. There is a reason still more urgent. I hesitate to bring it up, but since you force me . . . Frankly, it is a pity you took things into your own hands tonight and saw—what you saw. But since you did, you must realize that

it is impossible that you should leave San Cristóbal except as Amalia's husband."

"Because I saw her naked, you mean?"

"Oh, that!" The doctor waved a careless hand. "That is of slight importance. Your betrothal is a more compelling reason. To be blunt—you know too much."

For an instant Lane was startled, puzzled. Then he shrugged. "Oh, if that's all! Don't worry; this whole business is something I want to forget. I certainly shan't tell anybody."

"My dear fellow!" The doctor smiled wearily. "If it were as simple as that. Understand, I would rely on your sense of honor—oh, absolutely. But on your discretion, no. However, once you are married to her, it is different. Whatever the temptation, you will hardly let slip such a story about your wife. You see?"

Lane stared at the man's hands. "I'm sorry—" he began.

"Oh, come, my dear boy! You have had a moment to collect yourself. Think! Is my niece any less—ah—physically desirable than before? Is her portion any less? And an alliance—I say it in all humility—with an old name is something. And once away from San Cristóbal, her maladjustment will correct itself. Come, now, is your attitude reasonable, my dear fellow? Consider!"

Lane took a long breath. He seemed to be enmeshed in a soft web of words. What could you say to a man who couldn't see the mad impossibility of a thing like this? He made a quick effort to put it on some grounds that would settle it. "Look here, it's more than just what I found out tonight, although that would be enough. It's simply that I don't love her, that's all. And she doesn't love me, either. I've told you that before, you know." There—that ought to do it. He got to his feet. "Now, if you'll tell me where to find Gale—"

"One moment!" There was a snap of authority in the tone. "Will you, of your courtesy, be seated again? I had not expected," he went on, as Lane perched impatiently on the arm of his chair, "to have to put it this way. But since you make it necessary—" He smiled. "Very well, then, I am to offer you my niece in marriage. Her youth, her beauty, her accomplishments. Her fortune, which is not inconsiderable. There is my offer. And the alternative—for there is, of course, an alternative."

Lane drew a slow breath. "There would be," he agreed.

"I had hoped not to have to mention it," the doctor said slowly. "I regret—but you must see, in view of what I have told you, that in the event of your—ah—refusal I could hardly permit you to leave San Cristóbal alive."

"You *what*?" The words beat on Lane's ears but they seemed meaningless. "I guess you don't mean that seriously."

"Quite seriously, my dear fellow. I beg you will believe that."

"You—you'd try to murder me?"

"Not *try*," corrected the doctor. "I should succeed. I should meet such an eventuality with the deepest—distaste. But—" He twitched his shoulders. "Your promise?" he suggested, an instant later. "Come—not so difficult, is it?"

Lane stirred. Fantastic—the thing was fantastic. "What makes you think I'd keep any promise like that?"

"Oh, you would keep it. While I believe you to be a man of honor, I should, of course, take a certain precaution. A document which you would sign."

"Document? Say, do you think you could enforce any contract like that?"

"Oh, hardly a contract. Say, a confession. You came here, let us say, to marry my niece. I found you one night in my secretary's room. Certain details

—oh, something of that nature—” He broke off sharply at Lane's abrupt move.

“That would be a mistake,” he remarked imperturbably, and touched his side pocket with a significant gesture. “I have taken the precaution—so! that is better. Now, as to my course, I do not defend it. But the matter admits of no possibility of error. The confession—a safeguard, merely. Enough to discredit any story you might be tempted to tell, that is all. It would never be used unless you made it necessary.”

“And you'd mix up Gale—the girl you asked to marry you—in a thing like that?” Lane said slowly.

“She told you!” For an instant Lane was startled at the cold anger in his eyes. “So! Doubtless you and she—but no matter. Ah, well, she has not yet done me the honor to accept the protection of my name.”

“Protection! And you'd mix her up in a mess like this!”

“Ah! But it would be you who would force the thing to become public, would it not?” He leaned forward, eyes hard. “My dear fellow, perhaps you do not yet understand. This is an affair which touches the honor of my family. Will you believe when I say that there is no one, not one living person—yourself, Miss Armstrong, Amalia, myself—no one whom I would not sacrifice in connection with it. No one! You—but you North Americans, barbarians, how shall one make you understand the honor of an old name?”

Lane said, “It's possibly true that I don't understand the kind of honor that would bring Gale into a thing like this. But you can believe one thing, I'm not going to sign any such mess as that, and that goes. And I'm not going to marry Amalia, either!”

Doctor Perez raised his brows. “Ah, well, you are young, and youth must have its—melodramatics, do you say? But do not forget the alternative. Perhaps a little reflection—”

“Bunk!” A sudden confident thought had come to Lane. “Listen, you're bluffing, and I'll tell you why. Oh, you might kill me, all right, but you won't. Plenty of people knew I was coming to San Cristóbal, and don't forget that if I don't come back, plenty of people will want to know why. You'd be crazy about having a bunch of investigators tramping over the place, wouldn't you?”

He sank back with a feeling of triumph. But it was a little disconcerting to note that the mask of carved ivory across the table had not changed by the flicker of an eyelash.

“There will be no investigation,” the doctor told him evenly. “My dear fellow, do you underestimate me as badly as that? See, then; let me make it clear. Today, tomorrow, you shall be walking in the garden, or lying on your bed in the dark. A sudden machete slash; you would hardly know what happened. After,” he added reflectively, “I should send your body to Port-au-Prince—oh, with the deepest regret—”

“And a machete cut to be explained,” Lane interrupted. “Laugh that off!”

“A machete cut to be explained,” the doctor repeated. “Oh, quite simple. I shall merely send the black who did the murder at the same time. In irons.”

Lane wet his lips. A cold tide was creeping up from his feet, reaching for his heart. “You would do that? Double-cross your own man?”

“Certainly, under the circumstances.” “And I suppose you think he won't talk, huh?”

The doctor's smile became almost merry. “Talk? Oh, to be sure! But consider: here is an ignorant black accused of murder. (All Americans in

Haiti know that when a black kills it is for pure love of killing—no motive at all.) He comes with a fantastic tale—you can see for yourself how fantastic—against a gentleman of property and reputation. Crazy—another crazy black! Hell, swing him up and let's get back to our cocktails!”

Lane stared at the wine in his glass. He was trying to think. The man could probably do it; it was horribly, fascinatingly simple. If he promised—he'd have to sign that confession. But it wouldn't be used; no one would know. And he would walk down the gangplank with Amalia. Stone and towering steel; ferries sliding back and forth; people yelling and hurrying.

And Amalia would get over this—this bad dream. They'd forget it. A year, two years, it would crumble and fade—but Amalia's loveliness would go on.

“Not so hard, is it?” The doctor was speaking softly, reading his thoughts. “And you could, of course, divorce her—in time—if you desired. Although I do not think you would desire, once you have—had her.”

The voice brought Lane back to an abrupt sense of the present. He lifted his head. “Look here! Gale—she'd go with us, of course? On the yacht?”

“Yes,” the doctor agreed, after a moment's hesitation. “It would, I admit, have given me a certain pleasure to—take her from you. But in the circumstances—yes, if she wishes. Is there anything else?”

Lane was staring at the table-top. He was seeing a quick, restless body, short black hair whipped by the wind. Gray-green kitten eyes, steady, unafraid.

He glanced up, looked at the window. Outside, it was already day. And Lurch would be waiting; and somewhere—Gale . . .

He knew now what he was going to do, what he wanted. He said slowly, “No, I won't do it!” It came to him with surprise that he wasn't afraid as he said it.

The doctor's mouth tightened. He shrugged. “Well, as you please. I regret, but—as you will.” He got to his feet, a bit heavily. “Of course, if you should change your mind, my offer still stands. Any time before the—but let us not consider so unpleasant a possibility . . . I wish you good morning.”

Lane was already at the door. As he threw the latch the doctor spoke again.

“I wonder if you have considered the question of your Miss Armstrong? Who will become her—champion, when you have passed from the scene?”

The two blacks, squatting beside the door, made no move to intercept Lane as he walked out into the freshness of the morning. He noted that almost subconsciously—evidently he wasn't to be restricted, then. His mind was fixed now on finding Gale.

He stopped, blinking a little in the gush of white sunlight beyond the patio. And then he caught a glimpse through the trees of the top of the square tower.

“A place of safety,” the doctor had said. Besides, she certainly wasn't in the house. It was a hunch—no, a good deal more than a hunch.

He checked an impulse to start for it on the run. The doctor or one of the blacks would probably be watching. A moment later, he strolled off along the colonnade, trying to give the impression of a man harassed by doubts. He kept it up, stopping, moving on again vaguely, until he was hidden from the house by the shrubbery.

There was still no sound. The sun was well up now, and there should have been the click and swish of machetes and the low, lazy laughter of the work

gangs. But everything was still. That troubled him a little.

He had never been as far as the tower, but he was fairly sure he knew which path led to it. He took up a half trot, stopping now and then to listen for anybody who might be following.

There was no sound of anyone, and he found that worrying, too. The fact that the doctor wasn't keeping a close eye on him seemed to indicate that he felt pretty secure.

Lane had been traveling for perhaps fifteen minutes when he saw blue sky ahead. A moment later, he saw the tower a hundred yards in front.

Cautiously, so as not to be seen from the windows, he worked his way up and surveyed it from a screening thicket. The doctor had been right when he said it was an excellent position for defense. It rose, square and solid, its white coquina walls glistening in the sunshine, to a height of about four stories. Small, slitted windows. And then Lane's heart skipped a beat, for Ramon, the doctor's Dominican boy was squatting beside the half-open door with a rifle across his knees. Lane drew a quick breath. One thing was sure—that was where Gale was. The boy with the rifle proved it.

He understood the doctor's feeling of security, too, as his eye traveled up the solid white wall. It was smooth, unclimbable. And the chance of getting up to that door, near enough to rush a man with a rifle, was—just nothing.

Well, only one thing to do now. He'd have to find Lurch and get his pistol. He turned his back on the tower and broke into a hurried stride. The yacht—that was the most likely place. One of them could try to hold Ramon's attention while the other crept up.

He stopped short, with a sudden emptiness in his chest, for a man stood in the path ahead.

Lane did some swift and panicky thinking. "A sudden machete slash; you would hardly know what happened." He could see the doctor's carven smile. Then he remembered that what the doctor wanted was a husband for Amalia, not a corpse. The killing would be a last resort.

The blood flowed back around his heart, a quick relief that was succeeded by another dismaying thought. The man must have been sent to follow him. He'd have to shake him off, somehow.

And all the time, his feet were taking him forward. And the man was standing there, waiting. Pure black. Big, clumsy, powerful.

He was looking up expectantly. "*B'jour, blanc!*"

Lane said, "*Bon jour!*" and stopped, his heart pounding. The black was eyeing him uncertainly, teeth showing in an embarrassed grin. That didn't look like a killer. Lane stepped aside and tried to pass.

But the black stepped, too. He began talking, a queer jumble of Creole.

"What? *Quoi? Que voulez-vous? Listen—parlez lentement.*"

The black moved nearer, gesticulating. He produced a cigaret, tapped one end, made a gesture of striking a match.

A great surge of relief, dizzying. All he wanted was a light. Lane said, "Sure—*oui!*" and produced a match box. "*Oui; un moment!*" He lighted one and held it to the cigaret. The black put his hands up, cupped, to shield the flame.

Something—some sixth sense—warned him, an instant too late. As he jerked back, the black hands whipped around his wrists like steel.

He wrenched, tore at them. The two swayed and stumbled. Something rustled in the brush behind him. He kicked out at the black shins. There was a yell of

pain. In the same second something soft and smothering dropped over his head and blotted the world into darkness.

For a horrible, age-long instant he thought this must be death. Then he fought as a man fights in a dream, struggling against the enveloping folds that clogged him. Hands gripped him. They caught his wrists, bent his arms behind him. He smashed out viciously with his heel—heard a smothered yelp.

Then both feet flew up, seemingly of their own volition. For an appreciable time he seemed to hang unsupported in space. Something crashed against him. He was on the ground, gasping. The hands were holding him down. A cord slipped around his ankles, tightened. Another licked around his wrists, bit as unseen hands pulled it taut. He strained against it, doubled his knees and kicked without hitting anything.

Somebody laughed. He made one more futile effort and lay still.

A quick gabble of Creole, instantly shut off at a sharp word from someone. The hands seized him again, lifted him.

They seemed to be half dragging, half carrying him. Sometimes he seemed to be head up and sometimes head down until he lost all sense of balance. Green-and-gold spots swam before his eyes in sickening waves.

It ended at last. His bearers stopped. He was laid down; hands fumbled at his back. The smothering blanket was whipped off.

Lane's head was still spinning from the fight and from his journey. It was a moment before his eyes could steady themselves to take in the details of the place. He seemed to be lying in half-darkness on a dirt-floored cabin, still bound hand and foot.

He managed to hunch himself up on his elbows a little. The hut was evidently one of the poorer *cailles*—one room with a palm-thatched roof. There was a door, partly open, and one small window high up under the eaves. Of his captors there was no sign.

He tried his bonds—gingerly at first, then with increasing pressure. They seemed to be entirely efficient.

A sound from outside the half-open door made him pause in the experiment. He rolled over onto his face and managed, by wriggling his shoulders and knees, to drag himself across the floor, cautiously, until he could look out.

Just beyond the door, in a little patch of shade made by the low eaves, he saw the broad back of a huge Negro, and when he craned his neck he saw another.

They squatted patiently. One held a machete. It occurred to Lane that if he could only get his hands and feet loose, it might be possible to make one spring from the door, topple them both over, and run for it. Involuntarily he strained at his cords again.

The effort threw him off balance. He rolled over slightly, almost to the threshold.

Instantly the two swung around. The one with the machete (he seemed to be in charge) broke into a stream of Creole and motioned him back. But Lane pretended to misunderstand. He said, "*Quoi?*" stupidly, and rolled nearer.

The black growled a warning. Still, Lane persisted. His head and shoulders were outside the door now. A sudden lightning movement, a glittering arc. The machete struck the ground not two inches before his face.

He jerked back with a sick gasp. There wasn't any doubt in his mind now. In fact, there was nothing at all in his mind except a dismayed sense of the uncanny speed and precision of the blow.

The black grunted and turned away

again. Lane lay back weakly. Later, he had another idea.

"Hey!" he called to the guards. "*Soif! J'ai grand' soif. Eau!*"

He had to repeat it a couple of times before the men understood. Then a shadow filled the doorway and one of them appeared with a gourd of water. He held the gourd to Lane's lips. Before he went out, he put the container with what was left of the water in a corner where Lane could reach it.

Evidently they didn't intend to let him die of neglect, then. He settled back to make what he could of the situation.

First, it was plain that the doctor didn't mean to kill him out of hand. If he did, why take so much trouble about imprisoning him? Probably, then, he wasn't in any immediate danger. Damned uncomfortable, though.

He frowned, thoughtfully. That might very well be a part of it. What the doctor wanted was a husband for his niece, not a corpse. He was calculating on a few hours of discomfort, plus the strain of not knowing what was to happen, to bring him to terms.

Lane smiled with grim enjoyment. All right, let's see who'd give in first. For once Perez, the psychologist, had overplayed himself. Bound and helpless as he was, he held the whip hand. And wouldn't he use it when the time came!

In the meantime, what about these cords? It would be an added triumph to work himself out of them before the doctor came. He twisted around and examined his ankles. The cord seemed to be a linen rope of some kind, hard, and with very little give to it. Probably shark line. He'd remembered seeing some hung out to dry near the *cailles*.

If he could only find a nail, anything rough that he could fray the cord on! His eyes searched the floor, the walls. But the walls were solid coquina—not a projection of any kind. And the floor was bare.

He remembered that he had dropped his matches when the black had jumped him, back there on the path. And he didn't have his knife; he hadn't had it when he had wanted it outside of Gale's window. He'd left it on his bureau when he changed his clothes—Lord! was that only last night?

He stared about him, his teeth set with impatience. Then, suddenly, his head jerked up. He stared incredulously at the little window. A sound—something was scratching at the sill!

It came again, hardly louder than the scrape of an insect's wing. But—he caught his breath—this wasn't any insect. Something was moving against the square of light. It became a hand, groping. Another hand followed it, then, slowly, the upper part of a face.

Hope exploded inside Lane in a shower of colored lights. The face was Lunch's.

The yellow boy's forehead was creased. His eyes roved helplessly in the unaccustomed gloom. Then Lane moved, and they focused on him in a frantic stare.

Desperately, Lane made motions with his mouth for silence. He jerked his head towards the open door, frowned.

"Knife!" He was making the word with his lips. He twisted around to show his bound hands. "Knife—*knife!*"

An instant of bewilderment. Then a look of swift comprehension. Lunch nodded. One hand disappeared. There was an endless wait, while Lunch's eyes bulged and the sweat started out on his face. A tiny jingle—metal against metal. Lane was rigid in an agony of suspense. But the watchers out in front made no sign of having heard.

The hand came up again, clutching a knife. The two hands shifted, writhed, clung, struggling to open it and hold to the sill at the same time. While Lane watched, the blade began to lift out of the handle.

At that instant, from the path in front, there came the sound of voices.

Lane flashed a frantic glance at the door, back at the window, motioned with his eyes. The boy was still intent, struggling with the knife blade. The voices came nearer. An exclamation from one of the pair at the door; a quick rustle and scrape as they heaved themselves to their feet.

Lunch heard that. His eyes flew wide. He made one last effort and the blade snapped open. They were right outside the door now. He dropped the knife inside and let go his hold on the sill.

The knife flashed down the wall and stuck in the dirt floor. Lane rolled over and managed to hide it under him just as Lunch struck the ground outside with a soft thump.

It was the thump that did it. There was an electric second. Then—excited orders, a rush of feet around the hut, a frantic dodging, a struggle.

"Oh, God!" Lane thought tensely. "They've got him!"

At the same instant there was a light step, a shadow in the doorway. He swung around and saw—Amalia.

She was smiling, her eyes cool beneath their arched brows. The breath went out of him, slowly. He swallowed. "You—"

"But my dear! Whom else did you expect?" Her voice was silver, but there was a light in her eyes that he knew—and dreaded. She called an order to the men outside, and then, in response to his look of question: "Oh, yes, they have caught him—your friend."

There was a movement outside the door. Lunch appeared, helpless between the guards, who half led, half dragged him into the *caille*. There was a purplish welt over his right eye. He stood with his head bowed, breathing heavily.

Amalia smiled an edged, terrible smile. "So! You were curious to see what is here. You shall see—everything." She gave the guards a command in Creole.

One of them held him, while the other turned out his pockets. One of the first finds was the pistol. Her eyes lighted at the sight of it. With an exclamation she pounced on it, made sure it was loaded.

"And that is the pistol with which you have shot the *papaloi*," she commented. "And it returns to me, of course."

Lane made no answer. He was watching miserably as they tied Lunch's hands behind him. Only when one of them drew the cords up until the yellow boy made a hissing sound between his teeth, he ventured a protest.

"They're hurting him. There's no sense in that."

"It is not for long," Amalia reassured him. "Until tonight only."

"Tonight?" He was puzzled, hopeful. "The Petro sacrifice"—calmly. "It is three days. Last night was the first."

He was staring at her. He was staring at Lunch; at the curious, ridged V that had suddenly come on the yellow boy's forehead. The Petro . . . Lunch!

She spoke again to the guards. They laid hold of Lunch and hauled him out. Lane was alone with Amalia—and the Petro was tonight. Here! Buck up!

"So now, we may talk." She had sat down in front of him, knees drawn up, hands clasping slender ankles. "My dear, why did you shoot my *papaloi*?"

Lane felt the knife under his leg. It gave him confidence. "Is he dead?"

"Dead?" She laughed. "My poor

Steve, did you think you could kill my *papaloi* so? No, he is not dead."

A warm wave of relief went over him. But he said, "That's too bad. I never saw anybody that needed killing more." "Ah!" She smiled mysteriously. "That is because you have not learned. There are things—see, the *papaloi* himself, he is nothing. It is because I use him—a tool to my hand, you know. Ah, but you do not know—yet."

The sunlight from the door in her hair. The soft delicacy of her. He said, "Good God, Amalia, how can you do it? Can't you see—"

Her brows bent. "I? But it is you who cannot see. Because you are blind, stupid. Like my poor people sometimes; they can see nothing. They cry out now for your death; did you know that? Because of the crime you have done."

THERE WAS concern in her tone. It reassured him, troubled him, too. He said, "A crime? To shoot that ape when he was all set for murder?"

"But to destroy what is beautiful, what is holy—that is always a crime, is it not?" A reasoning tone, patient.

"Beautiful!" The word leaped out of him. "Say, if there's anything beautiful about a cold-blooded murder—and Father Anselmo—"

"Murder!" she flamed at him. "Murder? I cannot murder. I cannot sin. Whatever I do—but how should you understand? See, I am—oh, how do you say it? I am consecrated, above sin, beyond it. The Power of Life, it works through me. And what I do—anything—it is a thing not of sin but of glory!" Her eyes were burning now. "Oh, you must understand—but you cannot. Not yet; not ever, perhaps, fully. But you can believe and serve me."

"My God, she is crazy!" was his startled thought. "Raving crazy!" He felt the knife under his leg. Better temporize. He said, "What do you mean—serve you? What do I have to do?"

"You shall see!"—earnestly. "There are things you must learn; trials to undergo. Oh, the way is not easy, my dear. But—you shall see."

An idea came to him. If he could humor her . . . "But look here, couldn't I serve you better with my hands untied? Lunch, too," he added incautiously, as she appeared to consider. "Lunch is a bright boy, might be pretty useful. But he's no good to anybody all tied up."

He knew the instant he had said it that it had been a mistake. She smiled pityingly. "My poor Steve! Do you think it is so easy to fool me? And that boy—I have a hundred such, thousands. He is nothing; more, he is already dedicated to the Petro. But you, my Steve, will learn, and you will not like the learning. Such things come slowly, and by suffering. You do not believe that? Shall I show you something? Look!"

She twisted around, a quick movement, and slipped the white dress she wore down over one shoulder.

Lane caught his breath. All across the upper part of her back ran thin, parallel lines—silver-white scars.

She pulled the dress up again, nodded. "To suffer, yes. That is a part of the Way to Power. The whip of the Priest of Thoth—in Paris, that was. Pain—but that was nothing, *nothing!* There are things I could tell, but how should you understand, you who have not the patience to have your hands tied for a little, little while? And yet you shall understand—a part—some day."

Lane shivered. Somehow, the sight of those scars had shaken him as nothing that had happened so far had done. If



was brought home to him suddenly that there were cold depths to Amalia as unknown, as terrifying, as the great deeps of the sea.

But she was going on. "See, my dear, can you not believe without understanding for a little? All this—the Petro, everything—it does not matter. It is I, only I, who am consecrated. And you are chosen, chosen to help me bring my revelation. Her voice rang out. "The revelation that shall set free the world!"

Her head was up, delicate nostrils quivering. Lane had a mad thought that, whatever she did, she was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

"You shall help, but it flows through me—me alone. Hear me—I can do anything, anything I want to do. Jeanne d'Arc, she knew the mysteries. Cleopatra, she knew a little. Madame Blavatsky—an impostor, but there have been others. Hypatia, Catherine of Siena, Catherine of Russia—the Power worked through them. But I—I *am* the Power!"

Crazy; stark crazy! But—the way she looked; the sinister sureness in her tone. Whatever it was, she believed it with every fiber. Careful, now; *careful!*

He said cautiously, "Well, I guess you're right."

"Ah! You do not yet believe. I am mad, you think, is it not so? Then hear me! Already in Haiti, Santo Domingo, France—as far as India—we are ready. Russia is alive with it, waiting. London, Paris, even your New York—oh, too long to tell you. But we start here, today. And San Cristóbal, I hold in my hand."

"The devil!" The rest might be pure raving, but this, at least, was desperately important. "But what about your uncle? Won't he have something to say about that?"

Her face was a cameo, exquisite, hard as stone. "He has had his warning," she told him. "With his poor little test tubes, his retorts, he has chosen to stand in the way. I shall not concern myself with what happens to him."

The recollection of Father Anselmo was a crimson streak across Lane's mind. He said, "You'd kill him? Your uncle?"

She twitched her shoulders. "Myself—no. But my poor blacks—there is much hatred. One must give way sometimes."

Lane's flesh crawled. He had a swift vision of the doctor, of Gale, in the hands of the black mob. There must be something . . .

He said cautiously, "Well, but—well, he's a pretty important man, your uncle." Careful, now! "I was just thinking, wouldn't it be better—safer, anyhow—to let 'em go? Send 'em away?"

"Them?" For an instant she eyed him questioningly. Then, suddenly: "Gale!" she spat at him, her eyes bright with hate. "So it is Gale you think of! Let me tell you a thing"—her voice sank to a dry whisper—"you think you fool me with your talk. That girl goes to the Petro—*tonight!*" For an instant she was all stark anger. "And I tell you another thing—I shall give her to Ogoun Badagris, the Bloody One, myself. And she will not die quickly or easily—your Gale!"

The cords were cutting his wrists now, but he was hardly conscious of it. Gale—and she'd do it! And he had to lie here! The knife, the knife under his leg: if he could get it between his fingers. No, better wait. Wait and play along.

He waited an instant until he could be sure of his voice, and then said, "Well, you'll suit yourself, of course."

A mocking smile touched her lips. "You take it wisely. Almost—too wisely. Ah, well, you have much to learn."

He said humbly, "Well, I guess that's right. Hard to get used to all this killing, though. You'll have to give me

time. And say, what's the use of keeping me tied up? These cords are darned uncomfortable. They hurt my wrists."

She laid her hand on his arm. "My poor Steve, do you think I do not know what is in your mind? But I would not have you hurt—too much. They shall be loosened a little. You have yet to learn the mystery, the terrible beauty of pain. My dear, can you not trust me—I who am to unveil the hidden things, to bring light to the secret places?"

Her voice was low, now—vibrant. Her eyes half closed and she swayed a little. "Mystery—terror and ecstasy—dark beauty and the terror and sweetness of death. Death and terror over the land; death and terror over the sea, in the air. A wind out of Africa and the rushing of dark wings. A baptism of blood to the sound of harps and rolling drums."

She was swaying rhythmically now, her face intense with eager light. "O Mother Hera, Isis, Freya, Astarte of the Triple Crown! O Aphrodite, Maitresse Ezilée, who are one and one with me—let this one who is bound in the flesh be unbound in the spirit, that he also may walk among the stars . . ."

Her voice dropped. Her head dropped forward a little. For a moment she sat before him, white, relaxed, very still. Then she lifted her face, serene with a sort of exalted ecstasy. She got to her feet with a little, tired sigh; leaned over and kissed him, her eyes tender.

"I must go now," she told him simply. Then, at the door, she turned. "But I am forgetting. You are to have the cords loosened. Louis!"

A black face appeared in the doorway. In a swift panic Lane remembered the knife under his leg. "It's all right," he protested. "I was just talking. The cords are all right, really."

But already she had given the black his orders. He was coming across the hut. Lane pressed against the wall, his mind a frantic whirlpool of excuses.

"No, honestly! I was just putting it on, trying to get you to let me go. They're perfectly comfortable."

The black was standing over him now, his heavy face puzzled. Lane caught the glint of suspicion in Amalia's eyes.

"But surely you will not object to having them looser. See, Louis shall wrap them with strips of cloth. So, now, turn

around and let him get at them."

"I don't want him fooling with them," was the best Lane could offer. "I swear they're okay!"

She smiled—and the smile was unpleasantly reminiscent of the doctor. "I think not. Turn around, my dear. Or shall Louis turn you around?"

Lane said desperately. "Oh, all right; all right! I'll turn around." Cautiously, he began to hunch himself away from the wall, keeping the knife under his leg.

Amalia was watching him, suspicious and puzzled. She said, "What is it? Why do you do it like that—so slow?" Then her hand shot out, pushed his shoulder.

It was hardly more than a touch, but it caught him off guard. He lost his balance, struggled to regain it, toppled over.

She pounced on the knife, catlike, her eyes lighting with a malicious triumph. "So, this is why you are content to serve me! Do you think, my dear, that I am altogether a fool?" She balanced the knife on her palm, glanced from it to him, her eyes hard. "This, then, is your love, your faith! Truly, you have much to learn, my Steve. And you shall begin learning it at the Petro—tonight!"

The trouble presaged by the rada drums bursts into full fury in Clements Ripley's Final Installment—Next Month



**H. P. BURTON**  
Editor

*Hearst's International*  
combined with  
**Cosmopolitan**

(Trademark Registered in U. S. Patent Office)

Contents for  
MAY, 1933



*Did Sue's fiancé murder the slain night-club singer? Park Avenue and crime-sters meet in this fast-moving new mystery serial—*

## PENTHOUSE

by Arthur Somers

## ROCHE

beginning in this issue

*Read about the great*

## GOLD RUSH

*going on now all over the world! A feature of this issue*

## Is Religion Dying in the World?

*You'll find FACTS in the answers by eight famous journalists, in this issue*

*Note that there are*

## 7 entertaining SHORT STORIES

*in this great issue*

Cosmopolitan Almanack for May	F. P. A.	15
Easter 1933	Pearl S. Buck	16
	<small>Copyright, 1933, by Pearl S. Buck</small>	
Penthouse (Part I)	Arthur Somers Roche	18
Keep It Holy	Edna Ferber	24
	<small>Copyright, 1928, by Edna Ferber</small>	
Gold Is Where You Find It!	Courtney Ryley Cooper	28
P.S. She Got the Job!	Faith Baldwin	30
Women in Washington?	Col. Edward Mandell House	34
The Little Wee Fellow	Rex Beach	36
Is Religion Dying in the World?	A Symposium	40
Love—in Two Lessons	Royal Brown	44
The Little Man with the Big Voice	Alexander Woolcott	48
John Gailliard Rides	Robert W. Chambers	50
That Burns Me Up!	Frazier Hunt	54
Enchanted Ground (Part IV)	Temple Bailey	56
“Problem 14”	Floyd Gibbons	60
The Frame	Morris L. Ernst	64
A Little Child Shall Lead Them	Harold Dearden	66
I'm a New Man in a New Suit!	O. O. McIntyre	70
Voodoo Moon (Conclusion)	Clements Ripley	72
The Age of Innocence—and I (Conclusion)	Cora Brown Potter	76

Cover Design by Harrison Fisher

**See page 4 for news of what readers tell us**

Published monthly by INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE COMPANY, INC., 57th St. at Eighth Avenue, New York City.

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, President. RICHARD E. BERLIN, Vice-President. JOHN RANDOLPH HEARST, Vice-President. AUSTIN W. CLARK, Treasurer. ARTHUR S. MOORE, Secretary.

Copyright, 1933, by International Magazine Company, Inc. All rights reserved under terms of the Fourth American International Convention of Artistic and Literary Copyright. 25 cents a copy; subscription price, United States and possessions, \$2.50 a year; Canada, \$3.50; Foreign, \$4.50. All subscriptions are payable in advance. Unless otherwise directed we begin all subscriptions with the current issue. When sending in your renewal, please give us four weeks' notice. When changing an address give the old address as well as the new and allow five weeks for the first copy to reach you. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office, New York, New York, under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post Office Department, Canada. Manuscripts must be typewritten and accompanied by return postage. They will be handled with care, but this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety.

by CLEMENTS  
RIPLEY

"Do not move," said the doctor. "A bad light, but even so I could hardly miss."  
"What's the idea?" gulped Lane. "Are you crazy?"  
"Not at all. Merely—our little game ends."



Illustrations by  
Pruett Carter



Conclusion

**A**MALIA HAD GONE. The two guards had reappeared, dragging Lunch. With a total lack of ceremony they tossed him on the floor and took up their stations again in the shade of the eaves outside.

Lunch grunted, leaned his shoulders against the wall. He stared down at his bound ankles. "Huh," he remarked dispiritedly. "Cer'nly look like we in a mess this time."

Lane's mind was still ringing with Amalia's words. God knew what she might be able to work these blacks up to—no way to warn Gale. He yanked at his bonds in futile desperation.

Lunch's eyes rolled. "Mighty lil good fightin' 'em. If ole sha'k cain' break 'at line, you ain' li'ble to. Say, whe' 'at knife at? She get it?"

"Uh-huh. God, I've got to get my hands loose, do something!"

The yellow boy settled back hopelessly. "Look like we into it, aw-right. Nex' to shootin' a *papaloi*. look like the wors' luck what is, it's women. Women gets you into grief an' tribulation—me, I had plenty 'sperience with 'em, an' I know." He lapsed into a despondent silence.

Lane squinted at the white, menacing shaft of sunlight in the doorway. Gale would be safe in the tower for a time—but how safe? Amalia hadn't been bluffing when she said, "That girl goes to the Petro tonight!" Ramon might be bought—or she might know of some secret entrance.

He drew a quick breath. "Look here! I've got to get out of here!"

"Me, too. But how? 'At's what puzzle me. Now, you take a white-folks jail," Lunch went on judiciously. "an' seem like if you jes' hol' yo' patience an' ack polite, white-folks'll fergit they mad an' be nice an' reasonable. But I ain' been in no nigger jail befo', an' it's got me wonderin'. 'Sides which," he added dolefully, "I ain' gon' be here long."

Lane jerked his shoulders. "Oh, buck up! We've got to do *something*. Maybe I could untie your hands."

"Well, you maybe could. Wait, suh, till I squinch over to you."

He hunched himself over, while Lane turned half around so as to bring them back to back, their fingers touching.

It was a moment before Lane could find the cork

*Can a lone man fight a winning battle  
against the power of black magic?*



and longer still before he got hold of the knot. He had never realized how clumsy his hands could be without his eyes to help them. Soon his fingers began to swell. The more he gripped, the less feeling they had.

He gave up at length. "I can't do it. You try mine awhile."

Lunch made the attempt, but presently he gave it up, too. "Seem like I cain' make ole fingers do no more," he said unhappily. "No, suh, look like we into it, an' 'at's a fac'. Miss 'Malia got a mighty mean way about her when she get in a strut like this. I ain' claimin' to know what she do about you. You white-folks—maybe she do you different. But she pointedly right in behine me. Tell you what's a fac', I ain' feel so good this mawnin'!"

With a cheerfulness that he was far from feeling Lane said, "Oh, forget it! I'll find some way yet to save both our necks."

"Look like my neck plumb gone awready. An' I had it all fixed so nice, too. I tuk 'at gun an' stuck Gros Jean inna cabin an' lock him up. Well, then I waited an' I waited, till seem like I couldn' wait no mo', so I come lookin' fo' you."

"But how did you manage to find me?"

"Well, I met up with 'Ti Lizette—which she's the lil

brown girl was gonna have her haid chopped off at the Petro las' night—"

In the rush of events Lane had almost forgotten the girl under the knife last night. The words brought the whole scene battering again at his brain. "What happened to her?" he demanded.

"Why, she kin'a hidin' in the woods—her an' Maman Celeste—at's her mothuh. You seen 'at ole woman las' night, carryin' on."

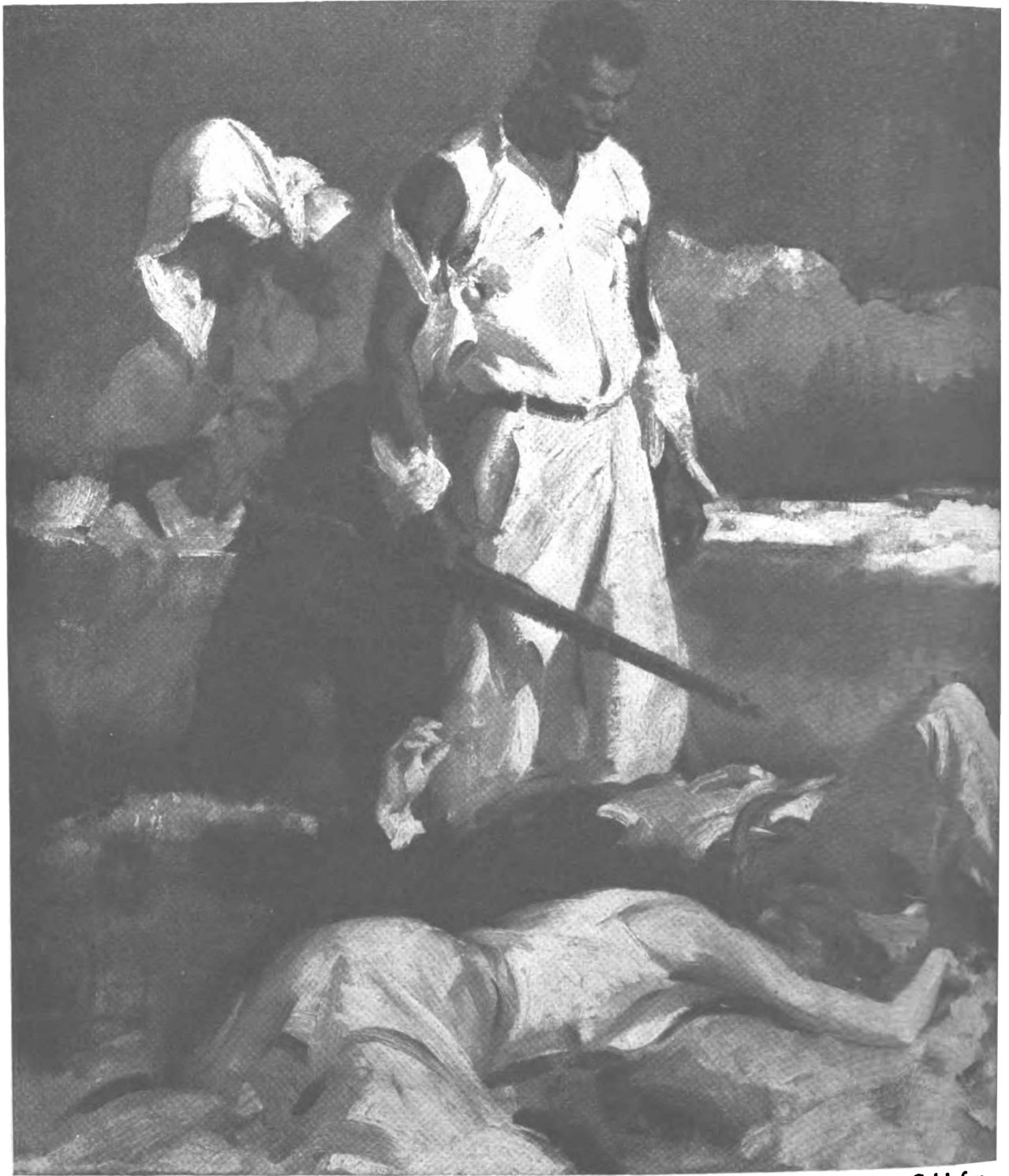
"But—how on earth did you find them?"

"Well, I kin'a knowed whe' to look. I been mighty frien'ly—"

"Wait a minute!" A light had broken on Lane. "Was that why you took me there last night? Because you thought I might save your girl?"

"Why, she ain' my girl ezac'ly." Lunch wrinkled his forehead. "Only seem like I gotta love her lil bit sometime 'cause she so de-mandin' . . . 'Bout me takin' you there—it was an' it wasn't. Seem like she mighty sweet lil girl—too bad to was'e her like that—but mostly it was to see Miss 'Malia. 'Pears like 'at's a mighty curious way fo' a white lady to behave, all 'em goin's-on."

"Cou'se I wouldn' gen'ly mix in no white-folks business, only you bein' reg'lar white-folks, like I'm used to—well, anyhow, 'Ti Lizette an' me, we mighty frien'ly."



*Disjointed pictures were stamped on Lane's brain with a terrible clearness . . . Gale's face,*

She tell me Miss Gale an' the doctuh is in the tower, an' you heah. So I come projeckin' roun', an' right there I made my mistake."

"It was darn decent of you. I won't forget."

"'At's mighty nice, suh, but look like rememberin's 'bout all I'm li'ble to get this time."

"But look here, isn't it possible that 'Tl Lizette might help us some way? Or her mother?"

"Well, ole Maman Celeste got her a big-sized knife an' she talk a heap 'bout cuttin' Miss 'Malia. But I reckon it's jes' talk."

Lunch was frankly without hope—more so as the morning wore on. Amalia, Lane learned, had made no exaggeration when she said she held San Cristóbal in her hand. True, she hadn't managed to get into the tower yet, but given a little time . . . Lane clenched his teeth helplessly. If he hadn't made such a fuss about having his hands loosened; if he hadn't done this; if he hadn't done that.

The heat lapped around him like some soft monster, sucking his strength, his courage. Slowly the shaft of sun from the open door crept across the floor and disappeared.

Lunch said wistfully, "Seem like it mus' be mighty

near dinner time. You reckon they gon' feed us?" Lane himself began to be conscious of hunger. He said, "Sure. No point in starving us." But he wasn't as sure as he sounded.

Lunch moved uneasily. "Me, I jes' heerd my stum-mick go 'slap' ag'in' my backbone," he complained. "Who-ee, I sure like to chomp down on ole beefsteak right now!" He brought his jaws together with a snap.

Lane sat upright in sudden excitement. "Gosh, I never thought of that!"

"**T**HUGHT O' WHAT? Seem like a nice, juicy steak 'bout what a man li'ble to think of." "Steak, hell! Teeth, man—teeth! How good are yours?"

There was an instant of silence—a startled sound of comprehension. "You means, kin I chaw you loose? Sure looks like I kin try, anyhow. Make me think I'm eatin' on 'at steak, maybe."

Already Lane, hope hot in him, had shifted to bring his hands nearer Lunch. It was a slow process. As the boy explained after an abortive bite or two, "I got to take it lil bit at a time. This ole sha'k line tough!"



*waxy with the moon on it. The horrible loveliness of the girl on the sand . . .*

He worried at it while Lane curved his wrists back agonizingly and stared at the sun-filled doorway. He had expected it to be a matter of seconds, but the minutes lengthened while Lunch grunted and tore at the hard cord and his heart almost stopped every time the blacks outside moved. Once, in fact, one of them put his head in at the door curiously.

Lane didn't dare speak, but he wriggled his fingers and Lunch dropped his head as though asleep. The guard, after a casual scrutiny, disappeared, and Lane let out a shaky breath.

"Got her frazzled right smart," Lunch mumbled a moment later. "Seem like my teef never be good for much of anythin' mo', though. Ole sha'k line tougher'n mule meat. Yesso, I reckon it's tougher'n buzzard meat . . . Awright. I eatin' on it."

Heat, a soft, smothering weight on eyes and chest. Grunts and tugs and mouthings. Ache in Lane's wrists, elbows.

"Frazzled right smart," the yellow boy gasped again, as he rested a moment. "Squinch roun' thisaway—'at's better. Now, lemme get a good bait of it."

Lane felt the boy's lips curve around the cord, felt his breath, hot on his hands. There was a grunt, a

grinding, a sudden tug.

Suddenly, miraculously, his hands were free.

He stared at them in a solemn, unbelieving rapture. It was as though he had never had hands before. In a sort of frenzy, he rolled over and dug his nails into the knots that bound Lunch, jerked them loose.

Lunch stretched his arms wide, took a deep breath, and then, without wasting words, began on his ankles. Lane was already at work. "What us gon' do now, suh? 'Em boys outside——" He caught his breath sharply as the agony of returning circulation caught him. "Seem like 'em things hurts mo' off than on," he said in a sort of reproachful wonderment.

**L**ANE grinned through a mist of pain. "Not so good," he agreed breathlessly. "But we've got to get out of here. Listen, now. We'll get the guards one at a time. They've got those knives," he added, remembering the deadly precision of that cut earlier that day.

"An' you ain' said it all, either," Lunch agreed. "But how we gon' get 'em sep'rate? You go to separate one of 'em, the other gon' come up behine an' separate you right slam in two pieces—at's what he gon' do."

"Listen, can't you? That's what I'm trying to tell you . . ."

Lunch listened dubiously. "Well, I ain' so sure. 'At's a pow'ful bad pair o' black boys."

"Well, if you can think of a better way——"

Lunch scratched his head. "Why, don' seem like I got no better way," he admitted without enthusiasm. "But I tell you right now, I kin hear ole Angil Gab'l hollerin', 'Get over onna colored folks' side, boy, an' fin' you a secondhan' hahp to fit you.' Still——" He shrugged and began to move reluctantly towards the door, hunching himself across the floor as though he were still bound.

"Sure you know what you're going to do?"—nervously.

The yellow boy rolled his eyes. "I knows awright. But I wish 't I knowed what he gon' do. 'At what I'm stud'in' 'bout right now."

Lane didn't answer, chiefly because he couldn't think of anything very encouraging to say. To tell the truth, he was beginning to feel dubious himself as he picked up one of the cords and ran it through his fingers. Oh, well, it was the best plan they had.

He glanced nervously at the door, then reached out and upset the water gourd. "Okay. Go ahead!"

Instantly Lunch's voice was raised, a plea in Creole of which "*Eau*" and "*gran' soif*" were the only words Lane understood.

There was a grunt from outside. Lunch repeated his request for water. There (Continued on page 123)

## Voodoo Moon

(Continued from page 75)

was a sound of the guard getting to his feet. Lane saw his shadow in the doorway and gripped the cord between sweating palms.

Then the man was inside, his eyes rolling in the sudden change from white-hot sunlight to half darkness. There was an interchange between him and Lunch, the latter evidently explaining that the gourd had been tipped over, for the guard stepped over to Lane, who lay on his side, trusting to the gloom to hide the fact that he was loose.

The black stood over him now, gigantic in the half light. He felt his muscles tense and crawl as the man stopped for an instant and gave him a slow, inquiring glance. He'd notice something wrong; couldn't help it. Better jump him now! Lane gathered himself.

But the guard turned away. Now his eye lighted on the gourd, and he stooped for it.

Instantly Lane was on him like a cat. One jerk whipped the cord around the heavy neck, yanked it tight.

The giant was up with a strangled bellow, carrying the lighter white man with him, whirling, threshing, clawing at his neck, where the cord bit deeper and deeper. Lane's feet flew up; he was flung into the air like a sack of rags, banged against the wall, slammed down again. Floor and ceiling, the golden oblong of the door swung and whirled. He was dizzy, scared, but he clung grimly to the cord, wrenched at it.

He had a flash of the other guard coming through the door with a rush, saw the yellow boy's lashing kick catch him in the stomach. There was a groan and thud. The man collapsed against the wall like wet paper. His own man had crashed into the corner, where he was trying to scrape Lane off against the rough coquina, but he braced his feet in a desperate shove that sent them out into the room, yanked the cord.

The giant stumbled, went to his knees, the heavy muscles writhing with his strangled agony. Lane's own throat ached in sympathy. He nerved himself to hang on and force him down, jerking the cord tighter. In desperation he smashed his heel against a taut, quivering elbow. The elbow jackknifed and the black pitched forward on his face, and lay there with only a convulsive heaving of his heavy shoulders.

"Grab that cord and tie him, Lunch. Hustle, so I can let him breathe."

Lunch obeyed. Gingerly, Lane loosened the cord. But the man was too far gone to do anything now. He drew a long, shuddering breath and lay still.

Lane got to his feet and wiped his face on his sleeve. He was aware that Lunch was thrusting the handle of a machete at him, urging him towards the door. He took it mechanically, his eyes still on the man on the floor, who was breathing in labored gasps. The other guard, his shoulders propped against the wall, was retching weakly. Somehow, they stumbled towards the door and out into a bath of white sunlight.

Nobody stopped them. They saw nobody. From behind came the noise of tortured breathing, but that was the only sound. Lane drew a long breath of the hot, steamy air of freedom. Together, they walked away.

The sun rode high. Lane flailed at his cheek and swore. "Damn! We certainly picked the buggiest place on the island."

Lunch opened one eye. "Seem like



ole bugs gets meaner alla time," he agreed drowsily.

He dozed off again, stretched in a tangle of wild grapevine. But Lane was in no mood for sleeping. For the tenth time in an hour, he parted the leafy screen in front of them and peered through.

Across an open space of perhaps a hundred and fifty yards the tower reared itself, blocky and uncompromising. The door was still guarded by Ramon, who sat with his head slumped forward and his hat over his eyes.

"I'll bet he's asleep," Lane said, for the sake of saying something.

"Might be. But you start fo' 'at door, he wake up quick enough. 'Sides which, the doctuh, he li'ble to be watchin' from a window."

Lane drew a quick, almost hysterical breath. What was going on behind those walls that shimmered in the iron sunlight? Gale alone there with the doctor—anything might happen.

"I'll bet," he said irritably, "that if we showed ourselves he'd let us in. Worst he could do would be to warn us off."

"Ain' bettin'. If the doctuh say, 'Shoot!' he p'intedly gon' shoot. 'Sides which, you go to showin' you'self an' some 'em black apes o' Miss 'Malia's li'ble to get you."

"We haven't seen any signs of them since we've been here."

"They here jessa same. She wanna get in jes' 's bad as what we do, but she waitin' fo' da'k, like us. Nosuh, you hol' yo' patience. Ain' no other way."

It was sense, Lane knew. But sense wasn't very satisfying. He returned to the argument. "He's taking a long chance sitting out there. Anybody could knock him over from cover here. It's easy rifle range."

"Easy," Lunch agreed. "But where the rifle?" He chuckled. "Nosuh, 'at's where the doctuh he's jes' too sma't fo' 'em. Because, 'scusin' my pistol, which Miss 'Malia's got it, the' ain' no rifles outside 'at towuh. He's got 'em all."

Lane was in the mood for argument. "How do you know?"

"I knows awright. He don't 'low none —'at's why."

"How can he keep them off? With five hundred people—"

"How anybody gon' get 'em on? Ain' nothin' come here, 'scusin' the yacht, an' only two of us works reg'lar on 'at—me an' Gros Jean. Gros Jean, he dumb; don't know which end a rifle shoots out of. Me. I had me my pistol, but I hadda do a mighty lot o' stud'in' fo' I figured me a way to get it a-past him. Now, Miss 'Malia got it, an' 'at's bad luck."

Lane grinned. "Well, you've still got that *obeah* trick around your neck. Maybe that'll help. And we've got the two machetes."

Lunch's fingers strayed towards the little leather bag. "'At's a mighty good trick," he agreed dubiously. "But I'd feel a heap mo' satisfied, did I have my gun. Gun's a mighty handy thing to back up any trick."

Slowly the shadows shifted and lengthened. The flies bit and the sun beat down, and Lane wriggled and mopped at his face and neck. Occasionally he peered through the leaf screen at the tower. Once, towards sundown, his heart sank as he saw that Ramon had gone in and shut the door.

But Lunch had an explanation for that. "Gone to get him some supper," was his guess. "He be back, awright. Does he keep 'at do' shut long, they li'ble to fry inside 'at ole towuh."

Lane stared apprehensively at the unyielding walls. But presently, to his relief, the Dominican came back and took up his watch again.

The last hour before sunset was the hardest. It seemed to him that the sun would never dip that last few degrees over the horizon. And when it did, it had all the quality of unexpectedness. Once he looked and the tower was as before, shimmering in the heat. Again, and the sky behind it was soft pink, deepening into streaks of raw crimson.

He watched the crimson fade. A pale green star came out—another and another, deepening as the world turned misty purple. The hard outlines of the tower blurred and softened.

His mouth tightened. He picked up one of the machetes.

Lunch squinted dubiously at the sky. "I can still see 'at boy atta do," he warned. "An' can I see him, he can see me. Le's we wait."

The seconds ticked by. Slowly the white patch of the Dominican's shirt faded into the surrounding gray. Only the tower stood out now, hard and uncompromising against a purple sky.

Lane shifted his machete. Haste gripped him. "I've had enough of this," he announced. "Let's go."

Before Lunch could offer further protest he had slithered snake-wise out of cover into the open.

For a moment he lay flat, his heart hammering, feeling suddenly terribly exposed. Another thing—he had studied the ground in front this afternoon until he knew every bit of cover, every dip and rise and tuft of grass. And now it didn't look the same at all.

Lunch's breathing behind, quick and uneven. The sound steadied him. Lunch would be expecting him to do something.

He moved forward, blindly at first, then with a surge of confidence as he recognized his first landmark—a little clump of yucca, white in the starshine.

A sharp stone bruised his elbow—the patch of shale he had seen from cover. Too far to the right, then. He swung as nearly as he could for the little hollow he had marked as a resting place. For a moment he had lost it. Then the ground gave sharply and he slid into it and lay pressed against the earth waiting for Lunch to come up.

So far he had been too busy finding his landmarks to think of much else, but now, lying there tense, Lunch's heavy breathing, the faint rub and scrape of his body against the ground, seemed to shatter the stillness.

"Quiet!" Lane's lips formed the word soundlessly. "Quiet!"

Lunch wriggled up out of the dark. "Seem like I ain' made to crawl on my stummick," he said querulously. "Done scrape alla buttons off my britches."

"Come on!" the white man breathed.

He was steadier as he slid forward again. His sense of direction was established now, and one after another his landmarks came in sight and slid past. The tuft of tall grass; the clump of vines; the hollow beyond and the bare rise over which he worked himself with methodical caution, an inch at a time.

Things darted past him through the grass. The smell of the earth was in his nostrils. His ears, close to the ground, caught the vast hum of swarming, teeming life. And he was crawling forever through a purple darkness, adrop with golden stars. He had almost lost all sense of time and distance when abruptly, the dark bulk of the tower rose right above him, blocking out the hot sky.

At the same instant a shaft of yellow light shot from the open doorway, silhouetting the Dominican against a yellow ground. His shadow, grotesquely long-legged, swayed an instant across the path of light and was still. There was a quick word or two, vibrant inside the

sounding board of the tower. Evidently someone—the doctor, probably—had brought a lantern and set it down behind him.

Lane drew a quick breath of dismay, for the sentry had moved.

It was the one thing that had never occurred to him. All day the man had sat just outside the door. Everything they had planned was based on that—the chance of creeping up on him along the side of the building. Now, he was just inside. They'd have to cross that bar of light.

It was exactly what Ramon would be watching for, of course. And that was why the doctor had set that light just there. The thing was of a piece with the man's cleverness, of course—damn him!

Lane thought fast. They couldn't go back—bad as it looked now, they'd never have a better chance. Besides, there was Amalia. "That girl goes to the Petro tonight!" He had a sudden picture of her—the pinched curve of her nostrils, the relishing cruelty of her mouth.

The thought set him crawling forward again in a panic.

His hand touched the warm stone of the tower. Cautiously he stood up, flattening himself against the wall. A shadow slipped up out of the dark, reared itself against the wall beside him.

"What we gon' do?" It was bare movement of the lips close to his ear. "He inside there. We cain' get to him."

"Try it, anyhow. Jump him together. If one misses, the other gets him."

He could hear the faint chattering of the yellow boy's teeth. "One 'at miss gon' be daid. He shoot quick."

"Can't help that!" Lane measured the distance to the lighted doorway. Five yards, maybe. "Come on!" he whispered and slid one foot out.

An inch at a time he shifted his weight to it, slid out the other foot. The door seemed to recede before him. He was suddenly intensely conscious of the dry whisper of the night wind, the faint, far-away boom of the surf. In a swift, unreasoning panic he turned his head to locate Lunch. The yellow boy was shadow just behind him, moving as silently as a snake.

There was a trickle of sweat in the middle of Lane's back. He realized that he was gripping his machete so hard that there was no feeling in his fingers. He shifted it to the other hand and took a fresh grip. The action gave him a sense of what he was planning—to slash into live flesh, kill a man!

And then, suddenly, somebody spoke—a questioning voice out of the blackness not twenty feet away. The unexpectedness of it went through him like an arrow. He heard the startled hiss of Lunch's breath, heard the Dominican scramble to his feet, his shadow leaping in the yellow light before the door.

"*Quién es?*" the boy was calling shakily.

On the words a dark form rose up out of the gloom. There was a crash, a streak of flame. Lane saw the shadow of the Dominican whirl backwards.

Things happened then like a pack of firecrackers exploding. Lunch's form hurtled past his shoulder. He sprang instinctively and smashed into something that surged up at him with a breath-taking jolt. He hung on, straining in a tangled struggle with a slippery body that writhed and tore at him. Something tripped him and he went headlong. He twisted at a hard, wiry arm. Iron fingers found his throat. He wrenched at them, smashed his fist into an unseen face.

There was a swish, a *chug* like the

sound of meat being cut on the block. The man gave a bubbling cry and sagged away from him, limply.

Lane threw him off in a kind of horror and snapped to his feet. Lunch was a dim splotch on hands and knees, scrabbling frantically in the tough grass. "My gun—at was my gun! Fin' it!"

A kind of queer coolness came over Lane. He wasn't surprised when he stooped and put his hand directly on the pistol. "Here; got it!"

Lunch was up like a rubber ball. "You got it? Glory! Le's us—*watch yonnuh!*"

Lane whirled to a sudden yelling, a swift pounding of feet. A dark, rushing mass loomed out of the blackness.

"Hyeah they come! Oh, Lawd!" Lunch's scream, cut short by the smash of his pistol as he jerked his arm up and fired.

An answering crack from above. Lane was aware, confusedly, that somebody was shooting from the tower. He stood rigid in a kind of cold frenzy, putting bullet after bullet into the midst of the oncoming blacks.

The firing from the tower was a crackling fusillade. For an endless second the rush seemed to hang over him, formless, growing. It wavered. He put three more bullets into it.

Yells—a sudden scattering and milling in the dark. The mass swept off to one side, while he yanked at a trigger that would not move.

He realized suddenly that the gun must be empty. Lunch was clawing at him. "Oh, Lawd! Oh, le's get inside."

The rifle cracked again from the tower and something whacked the ground a few feet to Lane's right. He darted for the lighted door. An instant later, the two were inside and had slammed the door behind them.

A small, bare room with a stair leading up into blackness. On one side the Dominican lay like a heap of rags against the wall, his face greenish in the quivering lantern light. That first shot from outside must have done it, Lane thought. A sound from the stairs brought his head up with a jerk, and he saw himself covered with a rifle in the competent hands of Doctor Perez.

The anticlimax brought a surge of pure irritation. "Put that thing down, you fool!" he snapped.

For a taut moment the unwinking black hole stared down at him, while the doctor's eyes peered as steadily from behind it. Then it sank.

"So—a reasonable request, if somewhat quaintly phrased." The words came down, smooth, resonant. "My dear fellow, I should have known. I confess I have underrated your resourcefulness." He peered from one to the other. "And the good Lunch! A surprise."

A light rush of feet on the stairs above. A little cry.

"Gale!" Lane tried to make the word but something caught at his throat.

She brushed the doctor aside—a slight, whirlwind figure. Then they were standing tensely, face to face. Her eyes were steady, wide with a startled, questioning flare. He saw her head go back and her arms go up in a gesture as uncontrollable as a surge of the sea.

He never knew just how it happened. They seemed to be flung together by some force outside themselves. Her hands clutched his arms, ran suddenly to tighten about his neck. There was a pounding in his ears. A warm, glittering wave broke over him, breath-taking, dizzying.

A moment's interval. Then the doctor's voice, smooth with an edge of mockery: "Your resourcefulness and your quickness—yes, I confess I had

underrated them. You will pardon me. A mistake I shall not make again."

Between mouthfuls of a hasty supper, Lane was giving a brief account of what had happened to him since morning.

The doctor listened with brows that tightened thoughtfully. "Amalia—hm, yes. I should have known. I did know—a little. But anything so widespread, so organized—" He glanced across the table with mock ruefulness. "This seems to be my day for underrating people."

Lane glanced at Gale. Since that moment by the stairs she had hardly spoken, but her eyes had never left him—eyes round with a startled wonderment that was curiously young, a very childlike look of dependence hard to associate with her.

He felt it even more strongly later, as the two climbed the narrow stairs to the roof. Her small hand clung to his with a nervous tensity. A different Gale—shaken, bewildered.

Now, standing on the roof, feeling the night press softly around them, a sudden troubled thought swept him.

He caught her in his arms. "Look here—it isn't anything he—"

"No; he locked me up here yesterday. I was scared, of course, but—nothing. And now you've come!" She clung to him fiercely an instant. "It's just—how did we know? Down there, all of a sudden—how did we know?"

He found no answer to that. It was enough for him that he did know. But she held him off.

"Listen—if it wasn't true? If—if it's only that we're both alone. Tired and worked up and—and scared." Her arms tightened around him again. "Oh, it is true; it's got to be! I do know!" A sob shook her—and then she was relaxed against him, weeping quietly.

"It must be true," she said presently with wondering conviction. "I—I never did anything like this before. I never felt like this."

"Me too!" he said with a force that startled him.

"Let's sit down," she said unsteadily, and when they were seated on the low parapet: "Do you feel as if you'd been bumped? Shaken all up?"

"You bet. Like taking a header into champagne or something."

"That's it—that's it! Oh, I never believed it before. I never thought it could be true. I used to say you could love anybody if he had money. All sorts of fool things like that."

Somewhere below, the doctor was sorting ammunition, checking food supplies, getting ready for God knew what ghastly siege. Somewhere below, Lunch squatted at window, rifle ready. Somewhere out there in the dark were five hundred blacks—a silver girl with a mouth of hate and eyes that looked towards old, bloody gods. Lane couldn't bring his mind to it. Not while Gale was soft and firm against him.

"Steve, do you believe—oh, in God? Things like that?" she was saying.

"I don't know. I guess so. Something anyhow."

She nodded vigorously. "Yes! Something bigger than we are, and stronger, and a lot wiser. Oh, Steve, I used to tell myself there wasn't anything. You know, that all this—we—it was a sort of chemical accident or something. And then, I don't know, it was as if something picked us up and threw us together. As if it was meant that way. Oh, Steve, it's upset everything; all the trifling things I thought made up life. I used to think I could beat it—life. I used to say I could take care of myself. Well, I can't."

He kissed her. "Well, don't forget I'm here now."

"Oh, it isn't that. Those things"—she swept her hand towards the darkness—"those poor blacks out there; Amalia; the doctor, even—I'm not afraid of them. Or, yes, I am; scared to death. But that's different. It's—oh, I want to be *safe!*" She clung to him. "Oh, Steve, I want a little house and snow outside—and babies—and chicken for Sunday dinner—and—and God."

"Ah, Gale, sweetheart!"

"I want to be *good*, Steve, with a little house—and snow."

The doctor's voice, smooth, from the stairs: "Your pardon, my dear fellow. Desolated to interrupt, but if you could take the window while the good Lunch helps me move some boxes—?"

Crouched in front of the slitted window, rifle in hand, Lane found himself repeating it in a sort of rapturous daze: "A little house; snow!" He had a vague feeling that Gale had hit on something momentous. He wasn't sure just what, but the clean scent of her hair was still in his nostrils and her kiss was a cold tingle on his lips. And he had ordered her, sternly, to stay up where it was cool, and she had protested and then obeyed, almost as if she liked being ordered around. Gale!

"You find the watch tedious, eh?"

Lane jumped. The doctor had come up as quietly as a cat.

"But tedium, unfortunately, is the penalty of safety. One becomes too quickly accustomed to the obvious danger to derive any real thrill from it, does one not? At least, you will be glad to learn, everything is in order. Food, ammunition, water. We may stand siege, indefinitely. Yes, with our three rifles, we should be entirely safe. There is, in fact, only one drawback. If they cannot get in, we, equally, cannot get out."

"But how long do we have to stay here?"

"That—who knows?" There was a slight sound as the doctor seated himself. "Eventually they will tire. Or we may be able to signal some passing ship—although San Cristóbal is out of the track of ships. Oh, something will turn up. But meantime, it will be tedious."

Lane said, "If we could get to the yacht—that thoughtful ancestor who built the tower didn't provide a secret tunnel or something?"

The doctor chuckled. "Always the Anglo-Saxon, eh? The incurable romantic. My dear fellow, consider the possibility of keeping the building of a secret tunnel secret on San Cristóbal. As for reaching the yacht—consider also that this is a small island, that out there are some five hundred blacks, and that we are three men and one woman. Or shall I say, one woman and two white men? The old triangle!"

"Huh?" Lane stared. "Say, what do you mean by that?"

The doctor's laugh was a small, mirthless sound. "Must I explain, my dear fellow? Oh, I think not—to one of your penetration. Two men and a—desirable woman, shut up indefinitely together. Infinite possibilities there. One should hardly bore oneself under the circumstances, do you think so?"

Lane stiffened, half got to his feet. But the suave voice was going on:

"An interesting trial. And the stakes—a woman; one's life. A flavor to that, eh? Love, jealousy, danger—all the elements. And out there—what? The deciding factor, perhaps. Quite perfect!"

"Have you gone raving crazy?" Lane demanded. "Do you think this is a time for your games? We're in a mess. This thing is serious: four of us against that

mob. And you want to split us up."

"I? But by dear fellow, how can we be anything but split up? Would you trust me, for instance? Hardly! See, I propose nothing; I merely state a condition which exists. We are two men who want the same woman—call it what you will, there it is. Wait—I beg you will do nothing foolish. I could shoot you easily, although that would spoil everything and leave me to the tedium of a long siege. Oh, you shall live royally, I promise you. For a time."

A kind of wonder at the man and his ways overcame opposition for the moment. "Look here," Lane demanded curiously, "how do you know I won't shoot you the minute your back's turned?"

Again the doctor chuckled. "I am trusting to what I know of you for that. You may wish to do it—you probably will—but you will not be able to. A handicap, my dear fellow. Also, I shall turn my back as little as possible."

"You are crazy!"—with slow conviction. "Raving crazy! But if you think I'm going to play any such game at a time like this—"

The doctor's cigaret moved in a fluid gesture. "But we begin—excellently! As to playing my game, you can hardly help it, can you? Unless you are willing to let the prize go to me by—default."

Lane stiffened. But before he could retort, a shout from the roof broke the taut stillness.

"Mist' Lane! Mist' Lane! Miss Gale say you please to come up here right away. They doin' sup'm. Carryin's on."

Lane cleared the stairs with a rush, the doctor close behind him. Gale and Lunch stood at the west side of the low parapet, intent on the darkness beyond.

She turned at Lane's excited question. "I don't know. You'll think I'm a fool." There was a nervous tremor in her voice. "It's just that for the last fifteen minutes I've been smelling smoke."

There was a sharp sound from the doctor. Lane caught his breath. Keyed up as he was, the word "smoke" was as startling as an explosion.

He sniffed warily. "I don't smell any."

"Not all the time," she explained. "It comes every few minutes. I wouldn't have said anything, but it keeps getting stronger. There! There it is. Smell it?"

He did—unmistakably now. Gale's slender fingers gripped his.

"What is it? The tower couldn't be on fire, could it?"

"Hm!" The doctor was a shadow, alert against the night. "The tower? Hardly! It's solid coquina, but I do not see, unless—ah, look! Look there!"

At the edge of the jungle there showed a tiny point of light. It grew, while they stared, until for a moment it threw a reddish glare on foliage and tree trunk. Then it blotted out and the blackness was a soft, thick veil around them again.

Lane blinked. "Now what—?"

"They have thrown something on to smother the flame, that is all. But one would wish to know—"

"But listen. It can't hurt us at this distance, can it?"

"Hurt us—no. The tower was built against that. But when something is done that one fails to understand—"

"Well, it doesn't make any difference to us, then." Lane's tone was sharp with relief. The idea of fire had shaken him.

"No—no difference. If it were only the black we were facing."

"Look here, what's bothering you?"

There was a little pause. Then: "Only this, my dear fellow. The island black is savage—yes. And with a certain brute courage under stress of emotion. But he is predictable. He will wear himself out presently. But tonight, do not forget,

we are dealing not with the black alone, but with that savagery, that brute courage, backed by leadership—leadership of a cool, highly intelligent ferocity."

Lane felt Gale's hand tighten in his. "But—she's so lovely-looking," she was saying. "I swear—and your niece, too. It just doesn't seem possible."

Lane could almost see the dry smile that he knew so well. "All too possible, I fear. Lovely—yes; but I know Amalia. She has a certain subtlety, but above all a driving directness in getting what she wants. To this belief of hers she would sacrifice anything."

Lane said, "Well, that's true, I guess. Still, I don't see what she can do by building a fire, with all her cleverness."

"Nor I. And it is just that which troubles me. If I had even some vague idea—" He broke off with, "Does the smell of smoke seem stronger?"

Lane sniffed. Gale said, "Lots stronger. I've been noticing."

There was a troubled silence. Lane broke it with, "It couldn't be some idea of setting the jungle afire around us? We've got a clear space all around, but it might get pretty hot, just the same."

The doctor considered. "Hardly; at this time of year. The woods are green, you understand. No, if this were not Amalia I should set it down to some silly *brujeria* of the blacks and pay no more attention. But Amalia does nothing without a purpose."

"Hy-yah!" Lunch broke in from the corner, where he was staring into the dark. "There she go ag'in!"

As he spoke the light sprang up once more, higher this time. A dark form moved across it, another.

"Look!" Lane began. "There's a couple—"

The crash of a rifle shot drowned the words. He whirled angrily to see the doctor lowering his gun.

"A hit, I think!" he was remarking in a tone of pleasure, as a faint cry was borne to them down-wind.

Lane heard Gale's dismayed gasp. His own knees felt weak. Death was no novelty after these past few hours, but those things had happened in a rush of fighting—kill or be killed and no time for qualms. This cool picking out a man and putting a bullet through him went against the grain.

As he stared, there was a sudden activity around the distant fire. Forms darted and flickered across the glow. He felt Gale stiffen and heard her faint, "Oh, don't!" as the rifle cracked again.

He said, "Look here, d'you have to do that? Because—"

The doctor hushed him with an impatient hand. They listened. There was no cry this time, but the forms around the fire had vanished. "A miss, I fear." The doctor's tone was lightly regretful.

"I hope so!" Gale retorted.

"Ah! You do not care for the sport?"

"Sport!" Her voice quivered. "If that's your idea of sport! I suppose you got a kick out of hitting that poor fellow."

"Ah—so?" He considered. "There is a very compelling joy in shooting to kill." he admitted frankly. "However," he added, "this tonight is not purely amusement. You do not, may I ask, smell the smoke as strongly as a moment ago?"

She didn't answer. Lane sniffed tentatively. "Well, it doesn't seem as strong. But that's because the fire's burning brighter, of course."

"So! And the fire burns brighter because I have—ah—discouraged the last two attempts to smother it with green stuff."

Lane was puzzled. "You mean they're trying to blow smoke to us?"

"Unless I am much mistaken."

"But what good will that do 'em? Trying to smoke us out?" For an instant the thought was dismaying. Then he shrugged. "Oh, I guess they won't do much harm at that distance."

"Possibly not. But when they build a fire and smother it with green stuff they have a purpose. That being the case. I think it well"—the rifle leaped to his shoulder again. There was a crack and a flash. In the glow of the fire a little black figure leaped up like a mechanical toy and came down sprawling—"to prevent their carrying it out, whatever it is," he finished, as smoothly as though there had been no interruption.

He blew out the breech and reloaded. "They show a somewhat surprising determination," he observed. "The influence of my niece, doubtless. But even Amalia, though she is a bit—ah—ruthless in her methods, will hardly send her people out solely to give us targets."

"But what idea can she have? A fire way over there—"

"Oh, that? I should hardly care to say, as yet. But she has an idea, and an intelligent one, you may be sure. I suggest, therefore, that you and the amiable Lunch . . ."

Lane hesitated. But the doctor was right, of course. "Well, okay," he agreed, adding, "If they don't want to be shot they can keep away from the fire."

"Bravo!" the doctor applauded, as Lane picked up his rifle.

The slow minutes ticked by. Gale had sat down beside Lane, with her back to the parapet. Now and again in the darkness she laid her cheek against the hand that held the rifle, and the soft touch seemed to flow through his whole body.

Once the doctor fired, a vicious spit of flame that made them jump. But nothing moved near the fire, which was burning brighter now. The first taut excitement of waiting to shoot a man had died away, leaving Lane rather flat. With his uncanny trick of reading people's thoughts, the doctor spoke.

"You weary yourself, I fear. I warned you it would be tedious."

Lane felt Gale's cheek against his hand. Instantly the reply leaped into his mind: "Us? Not at all. We're having a swell time."

The next moment, feeling the doctor's eyes hot on him through the dark, he knew it had been a foolish thing to say.

Silence shut down again, so still that the far-away boom of surf was a heavy pulse in the hot starlight. Gale yawned presently. "I'll bet they've given it up and gone to bed," she suggested.

The doctor said, "I wish I might share your optimism. I fear that as long as my niece—" He broke off with a startled hiss of breath.

"Huh? What is it?" Lane leaned forward, eyes on the fire.

Then his heart skipped a beat, for a figure had stepped into the circle of light—tall, slender, moving with a fluid grace that could belong only to Amalia.

She was dressed as he had seen her that morning, but now the shine of fire was red on the white of her dress like sacrificial blood. And she moved, carrying something in her arms, her head high. Amalia—the white scars across her shoulders . . .

There was a shocked cry from Gale. Lane jerked his head around in time to see the doctor, his head low over his rifle sights . . . There was no time to argue. Lane knocked the muzzle up just as the man fired.

A moment that was taut, heavy. The crash of the rifle was still in Lane's ears and he was staring incredulously at the man beside him.

"Steve!"—a sick, wondering gasp from

Gale. "Steve, he'd have done it!" He felt the shudder of her body against him and glanced toward the jungle again. The firelight flickered on leaf and tree trunk, but Amalia was gone.

The doctor's voice out of the dark, smooth with an iron smoothness, reading his thought. "Oh, yes, she succeeded—thanks to you. She led the way, threw her armload of green stuff on the fire, walked off." A clack as he threw the lever. The empty shell tinkled on the parapet. "That, my dear fellow," he added, "was a mistake, you will find."

Lane found his voice. "You'd have shot Amalia! Like an—animal or something. Amalia!"

"Ah! Yes, I should have shot her. The chance," he went on relentlessly—"the chance I had hardly dared hope for. That I had waited—"

A yell from Lunch with the simultaneous crash of his rifle. The two whirled to see the firelit circle instantly alive with leaping forms. The doctor's rifle flashed in the same second.

Lane's gun leaped to his shoulder. There was a crash and a jar. He settled to it, rapidly, carefully. Bullet after bullet—a steady spit and crackle, while the air shivered to it and the black forms around the fire swirled and eddied.

He jerked the gun down empty, crammed a handful of shells from his pocket into the magazine; snapped it up again. But before he could press the trigger, the circle of firelight had narrowed, drawn in as swiftly and completely as a stage effect. For a moment there was a glow, an uprushing of sparks; then a pinpoint of light; then nothing.

He knew the answer, of course. They had succeeded in throwing enough green stuff on it to smother it. He glanced at the others. Lunch still crouched by the parapet. The doctor had got to his feet, facing the spot where a moment ago the black forms had whirled in the leaping light. He raised his rifle as though to try a blind shot, lowered it again.

"Ah, well, what use? It is over."

Lane was on his feet, too, apprehensive. "What do you mean—it's over?"

"I mean that it is over—with us. We had our chance and we lost it."

The words banged in Lane's ears like hammers. "What're you talking about? We're no worse off than before, are we?"

"No worse off—no. But now we know their plan. Look!"

Bewildered, Lane's eyes followed the sweep of his arm. Out of the edge of the jungle was rising a heavy column of smoke, like some monstrous genie, amorphous, threatening.

"And so the game moves towards its end," the doctor was saying, almost merrily. "I played, I think, well—up to a point. I failed when I did not take into account the romantic temperament of the Anglo-Saxon. The shot you spoiled would have saved us. But from the moment Amalia walked into the firelight—and out again—we were doomed."

Lane stared at the top of the twisting smoke column, saw it spread, a rolling cloud, blotting out the quiet stars.

"You're trying to scare us!" Gale protested, and Lane added, "They can't throw smoke enough to hurt us at that distance. We can wet some blankets, put 'em over our heads." But his words lacked conviction.

"Ah!" The doctor made a little sucking sound. "For an hour, perhaps. But a week? A month?" The first faint wisps of the rolling cloud were beginning to reach them now. He coughed delicately, meaningly. "My dear fellow, have you considered the effect of even a small quantity of smoke over an indefinite time? On lungs, eyes?"

Already the stuff was beginning to sting Lane's eyes and nostrils. But: "I don't believe it," he insisted stubbornly. "For one thing, how are they going to keep it coming steadily? The wind—"

"—is the trade," the doctor finished inexorably. "Steady, dependable. All that is needed is to keep the fire smothered with green stuff. Cane, for instance. Have you ever seen green cane burning? No, we had our chance. If I know my niece, we shall hardly have another such."

His voice was a net, drawing around them. "See how I planned! While the fire burned bright and we could see to shoot, we could prevent their smothering it. The black lacks steadiness; a very little long-range killing discourages him. Very well; I thought—sooner or later Amalia must lead the way herself. One cannot drive the black into danger, but he will follow. She knows that."

There was a shocked gasp from Gale. "You—you meant her to come out? So you could shoot her?"

"I planned so. I knew she must show herself. And when she did—"

"Nawsuh!" It was an interruption as positive as it was unexpected. "She know you couldn't hit her, not less'n you got you a silver bullet. Ain' you see how don'-care-like she walk? Ain' I tell old Maman Celeste 'at ve'y same thing this mawnin' when she wanna to borrow my gun to shoot Miss 'Malia?'"

"What?" The doctor stared at him through the thickening smoke. "What's that? Who is this Maman Celeste?"

"She the ole woman which she's aimin to kill Miss 'Malia—yesso. She take an' conju' her knife—she rub it in the blood o' the goat which cried in the da'k. She put a wish on it—yesso! She hidin' out yonnuh—" He broke off with a strangled cough, as the smoke cloud swept around them, stinging, acrid.

Lane threw a protective arm about Gale. "Better get inside. Come on!" Already he was groping for the trapdoor.

Below, it was pitch black. He set Gale down by the wall and told her to keep low and cover her face with her skirt. Lunch, appearing a moment later, found a lantern and lighted it.

Lane's throat ached, and his eyes were live coals in his head, but he was finding that by keeping low to the floor he could breathe easier. He said, "Look here, we've got to do something!"

"My dear fellow, what is there to do? We have lost the game. I tell you, they can keep this up indefinitely. They will keep it up until the end. We can wait or we can—ah—anticipate it."

"You mean, try a rush?"

"Hardly! Do you imagine that Amalia will not be looking for just that? I shouldn't care to play into her hands."

"What of it?" Lane was beginning to feel a sort of madness. Anything would be better than crouching in the stinging fog that eddied around them. "What of it? We've got the rifles. Four of us—Gale can shoot in a pinch—ought to make it."

"Believe me," Gale agreed chokingly. "I'll shoot anybody before I'll stay here much longer. This place certainly changes your ideas."

Lane caught the strain under her hard lightness and it steadied him. "Chances are they'll keep away from the rifles," he urged. "It's a wonder none of us thought of that before."

"My dear fellow!" The doctor's tone was smoothly protesting. "Do you think I have not thought of it? But—here are four of us; yonder, five hundred."

"Sure, but we can put a bullet through the first one that tries—"

"First one? But you have never seen the black mob in a frenzy. There will be five hundred first ones—all at once. A black wave, a sea that will overwhelm you before you have fired three shots. Please to believe me when I say that there is not the slightest possible chance."

Lane's muscles tensed. "Well, maybe! But I swear, if I've got to go under, I'd rather do it out there than smother in a place like this."

There was a weary sigh from the doctor. "The Anglo-Saxon again! The bulldog fighter always too late, when fighting is silly. What children you are! Listen, do you think for one minute you are to die cleanly, fighting in the open? Do you think that is the plan? No—you are to be smoked out, a rat out of a hole. Your rifle—tchk, they'll smother you. And then—the Petro."

A moan from Lunch. Lane felt the words close in a cold clutch around his heart. Amalia as he had seen her last night; that curve of her mouth this morning when she spoke of Gale!

Through the mist he heard the doctor: "At least one may keep a decent dignity. One dies, but one does not scramble. A whim, perhaps, but to me the idea of one clean shot is more attractive than the mauling of our blacks yonder, or a knife in the hands of old Baptiste Duval."

Lane drew a quick breath. The idea had a certain fascination. It might be better. "We-ell—" he began slowly.

"Oh, shut up!" came Gale's protest.

"A very simple matter," the doctor reassured her. "One merely ceases to exist. As a medical man, I think I can promise you that the pain is nothing."

Lane rubbed his aching eyes. But Gale's words had brought out a certain hard grain in him. He said, "No. Damned if I will!"

"Oh, come, my dear fellow, face the facts. The game is done; we have lost. The age of miracles is past. One quick touch of the trigger now. I assure you I can do it properly."

"Wait!" Gale gasped suddenly. "I've been thinking!"

Lane sat up. The doctor said, "Ah—so?" with that tolerant amusement with which he always treated women's ideas.

It reached her. "Yes—so!" she retorted. "All the time you've been so busy being dramatic and heroic, I've been finding a way to get out of here. Oh, of course they'll be watching for us, but did you ever stop to think that if this smoke is so thick we can't see them, they can't see us, either?"

"My God!" Lane stared at her in a sort of holy wonder. "Of course they can't!" And Lunch let out a subdued whoop. "Who-ee! Ole smoke gon' cover us like in a blanket."

"And all we've got to do is to keep in it!" Lane took him up jubilantly. "They've overplayed it. We can get across the clearing, work around to the yacht." Hope was flooding through him.

"Lawd of Hosts, He with us!" Lunch was chanting. "Goin' lead us out'n the wilderness in a pilluh of smoke by night."

"Three days from now we'll be sitting on a hotel veranda in Port-au-Prince, wondering if it ever happened."

The doctor coughed dryly. "So? But you advance over-fast, I think."

"What do you want to object to?" Lane demanded. "What's wrong with it? Got anything better?"

"From your point of view, no. But from mine—I dislike to be a spoilsport, but frankly, I do not care for your plan."

It brought Lane bolt upright. "But all we've got to do is stay in the thickest of the smoke till we're across the open."

"Oh, doubtless. You might even reach the yacht, although that is not so simple



as you seem to think. But unfortunately, there are reasons——"

"Say, why don't you say what you mean? If you think we're going to—hey, what's the idea?"

Beyond the dim light of the lantern the doctor had shifted his position to bring his rifle suddenly to bear on them. "So! Do not move. A bad light, but even so I could hardly miss."

Lane was rigid, staring at the small, black hole. He gulped. "Say, what's the idea? Are you crazy?"

"Not at all. Merely—our little game ends. You did not imagine it would be like this, eh? But you will allow me the advantage at the last."

Lane wet his lips, measured the distance. Not a chance.

"You could hardly reach me," the doctor confirmed, reading his thought. "No, my dear fellow, you have not so soon forgotten what I said last night? The family, you understand; the name. I regret exceedingly, but as I said then, you know too much."

"What's he talking about?" Gale was demanding.

"Some crazy idea he's got." Lane spoke out of the side of his mouth. He didn't dare take his eyes off the rifle. "Look here!" he said. "Don't you ever get tired of managing things? Of playing God?"

"But what play could be more amusing to a man of imagination?"

"What is it?" Gale demanded again. "Don't you want to get out of here?"

"Frankly—no. The Petro appeals, I may say, very little to me. The chance of escape, with this story being told to the world, even less. Oh, you would tell it—it would be beyond human power not to. And after all, this is as good a way to die as any. And as good a time."

"But—but there's us! You haven't any right——"

Lane heard the words dimly. He was gathering himself. Not a chance, of course, but it would be better than taking it lying down.

"Right?" the doctor was repeating thoughtfully. "No, perhaps not. But it's hardly a question of right, since, after all, it is I who control the situation."

"Nawsuh—it's me!"

The thing had been so swift the eye could hardly follow it. Lunch's hand had shot out in gloom and gripped the rifle barrel—that was all. Lane sprang on the instant, but there was no need. Already the doctor had seen the odds against him and relaxed.

"Your point!" he admitted before Lane could recover from his stunned relief. "My error—to think I could watch three people at once."

"For God's sake, this isn't any game!" A swirl of smoke caught Lane's lungs. He coughed.

"You have not, I regret, the temperament to enjoy the full flavor of it," the doctor agreed a trifle sadly. "But you play, nevertheless. You cannot help it. So then, you have the next move."

Gale was on her feet. "The next move is to get out of here," she gasped. "If I can just breathe again I don't care what happens. Come on!" She was already groping for the door in the murk.

Lane said, "All right, doctor—unless you'd rather strangle."

"Oh, since things have taken this turn!" He shrugged, then followed Gale, with Lane close behind and Lunch with the two rifles.

They gathered in front of the iron door. "You take this gun." Lane told Gale. "Don't shoot unless you have to. One shot will bring the whole gang on our necks. All right; who's first?"

The doctor spoke, chokingly. "Allow me—know the ground. And since you

will hardly permit me to be last——"

"Well, if you lead us into any trouble, you'll die just as messily as anybody. Anyhow, we'll all keep close together. If we get separated, move down-wind and meet at the edge of the jungle." He threw the heavy bolt and opened the door a crack.

A whirling chaos, black, impenetrable. For an instant he shrank from it, feeling the others crowding up at his back. Then the doctor slipped past him into the murk. Lane caught Gale in the crook of his arm and followed.

Instantly the door and the tower were blotted out. They were stumbling in a stifling blackness, too desperately intent on their footing and direction to speculate on what might be ahead.

Behind him he heard Lunch cough. The doctor was lost in a murk. Gale stumbled. He tightened his arm about her, half carrying her. His eyes were streaming, and a spiked ball tore at his throat when he swallowed.

Easy to say "move down-wind" back there when they weren't moving anywhere, but now, with the smothering, blinding cloud about them, it was as much as he could do to move in any direction at all. The wind, which he had expected to keep at his back, blew from everywhere. Twice he glimpsed some form through the smother, but whether it was Lunch or the doctor or an enemy he never knew.

Then a wall rose up against them, thorns and branches tore at them and he laughed crazily because he knew they were across the open and had reached the sheltering edge of the jungle.

The smoke thinned a trifle. He saw Lunch behind them, and a moment later, the doctor.

The latter moved off. They followed through a screen of foliage, came out into a tiny cleared space. Lane stopped; gulped a heady lungful of fresh air.

It hit him like a hot, green wave. Sparks from a thousand grinding emery wheels sang before his eyes. He was aware, dimly, that Gale had dropped to the ground, her head in her hands. Lunch reeled past him, drunk with it.

Lane straightened, said unsteadily, "Well, we got away with it."

Instantly something surged up at him with a yell. There was no time to think. He swung his rifle blindly, felt it jar sickeningly on flesh. The man seemed to hang in mid-air. In the same second Lunch sprang on him; they went down together.

The whole thing was so swift, so savage, that before he or the doctor could lend a hand the yellow boy was getting to his feet again, wiping his hands on his trousers, while the other lay, a formless splotch in the shadow of the thicket. "Black boy," he explained briefly. "Watch-in' fo' us. Done done all the watchin' he's goin' do."

A vague shout came down-wind. Gale scrambled to her feet. Without a word the doctor led off to the right and they followed. Lane wished he dared ask Lunch if he'd killed the man. If he were still alive, he might get up and give the alarm. No stopping to speak now, though. Any movement, any crackle of a twig might give them away.

Then they were on a narrow path. Gale was in front of him; the doctor in front of her. Hot, damp smells of swarming life—and death. Soft pad of feet on moist earth. Hurry! Dim form: slinking through the gloom, seen vague: for a moment and blotted up by the fluid darkness. Hurry—quiet!

At last a glint through the trees like burnished metal. It vanished: showed again; widened. Abruptly, they came

out on the edge of the sea and saw the moon, a great red disk, cut by the shining curve of water.

The shouting behind had died now. There was nothing but the rush and hiss of surf and a pale light that gleamed on the heaving surface and glittered on the silver ribbon of wet sand.

The blue-black shadow of the jungle edge covered their whispered conference. "Something over a mile to the cove where the yacht lies," the doctor was explaining. "With darkness we might . . . but this moon!"

Lane stared narrow-eyed up the beach that was as light as day. Every drift log stood out sharp black against its silver. You could have seen a man at half a mile. He drew a quick breath. "We couldn't go by the woods?"

"Nawsuh!"—emphatically. "Em twisty paths li'ble to be crawlin' with 'em."

"Quite true," the doctor corroborated. "Even if we could find the right one in this darkness. No, we shall have to go by the beach. Say a hundred yards apart, keeping in the shadow where we can."

"You're a lot more interested in getting out than you were." Lane eyed him suspiciously.

The doctor shrugged. "Oh, given a fair chance of life, one's ideas are prone to change. However, a suggestion merely. Please yourself."

After all, it seemed sensible. "Okay," Lane agreed.

The doctor pointed up the beach. "That driftwood pile first, then. I start; you cover me with your rifles. Then the next one—so on. When the last arrives, we move on to next place. Understood?"

Lane found the sudden resumption of authority unreasonably irritating. But the doctor had not waited for his agreement. Already he was moving forward, slipping in and out of the white moonlight. Lane watched, finger on trigger, until the doctor reached the dark mass of driftwood and vanished against it.

He drew a long breath and caught Gale to him. "You—I guess you better go next. But listen—watch him. If he does anything suspicious—*anything*—"

"But what could he do? Without any gun?"

"I don't know, but—oh, I guess it's all right. Anyhow, I'll be right behind you. Now, ready?"

"As ready as I'll ever be." Her voice was small against the rush of surf. She kissed him, took a deep breath, and started.

Ten yards—twenty. The shadow hid her. She was out again, a pathetically small figure against the shining sand. He was kneeling now, his rifle resting on his forearm. Lunch's breathing at his ear—long, slow breaths, tense with strain. Agonizing moments when she showed clear in the chill moonlight. Worse ones when he couldn't see her and anything might be happening.

Then she had reached the driftwood pile.

He was up and slipping forward, keeping close to the jungle edge, gripping his rifle with stiff fingers. Moonlight and shadow like opening and shutting bars of black and white. Then the driftwood pile loomed right at hand. He breathed again as he found the two crouching there.

A moment later Lunch joined them. For a few seconds they lingered, breathless with the success of it so far. Then the doctor slipped forward again.

Once more Lane watched Gale thread her way through the tricky moonlight, saw her vanish in the blackness of an overhanging edge of shore line, followed. Hasty, whispered conferences in the

dark; single forms stealing forward in the checker of black and white. The moon was well up now, chill, eyeless, malignant. It glittered wanly on the wet sand, paling the white-fire phosphorescence of the breakers.

There came a moment, as they watched the wiry figure of the doctor grow smaller down the glinting ribbon of sand, when Gale gripped Lane's arm in a quick excitement. "Look—isn't that clump of trees he's making for the point where the cove starts? Oh, it is! And the yacht's just around the bend!"

There was a tremor in her voice, but it was eager relief now. His own pulses were pounding. "We're going to make it!" he promised with exultant conviction.

She squeezed his arm. "Didn't you think we were?"

"Yes; but I didn't dare say it."

They giggled—small children with a delicious sense of having outwitted some higher power.

"All set? Ready?" he said, then.

He watched her go with a tightening in his chest that was all excitement. The thing was done! One more traverse beyond the point—two at the most—then, the boat. Might be guarded, of course, but they had the rifles.

Gale had reached the stopping place now—a thicket of twisted trees along the sandy point. Lane threw his rifle over his arm, nodded to Lunch, and started.

Ten steps to the first shadow; a careful creeping around the base of a small dune; out into the moonlight again. This was going to be easy! Black patches of seaweed, the rush of surf, the glint of sea, heaving like molten metal. And there'd be a good cold wind as they came up the harbor. White plumes of steam on the tops of the buildings.

It was Lunch's yell that brought him up standing. He whirled with a sick start. The yellow boy was racing towards him, pointing frantically. He spun around, stared. Something—some struggle was going on in the blackness under those trees where Gale had disappeared.

He was running without realizing that he had started. He had taken half a dozen steps when a form shot out of the shadow, a form curiously bent under a burden, darting up the beach.

Lunch was pounding up behind him. "He done got her. Oh, Gawd!"

The figure ahead flashed out stark against the white, moonlit sands—the doctor! He was carrying Gale over his shoulder, by some surgeon's trick, her rifle in his free hand. She hung limp.

Lane's legs were like the legs of a man running in a dream. He seemed to stand horribly still. The sand pulled at his shoes, clogged him.

Lunch was almost alongside now. Lane's lungs were bursting—no drive to his legs. If Gale was hurt—she was hurt or she'd be struggling. A hundred yards; hundred and fifty. And the boat was just beyond the point. If the doctor got to it first!

He put on a terrified burst of speed at the thought. As if in deliberate mockery, the doctor slowed, turned.

Lunch's yell banged his ears. He saw the cold gleam of moonlight on the doctor's rifle as it came up. It startled him, dully, when it spat fire and a bullet whined overhead. He plunged forward. A second one struck twenty feet to one side. The doctor was shooting from the hip, still holding the girl.

A spurt of sand flew up just ahead of him. He stopped short. It had come to him, suddenly, that dying here on the gleaming beach was not the thing to help Gale. He flung himself flat before the man could fire again.

The doctor half turned, watching.

Then he sidled off down the beach, glancing back as he went.

Lane half scrambled to his feet, flattened himself again as the other stopped threateningly. His eyes traveled desperately toward the wharf. No distance—even if he ran straight, careless of bullets, he could hardly make it in time.

He brought his rifle up, lowered it again helplessly. The man was shielded by Gale's body, bent under it like some evil gnome. He didn't dare shoot.

Still watching him, the doctor began to move down the beach again. Lane's whole body went rigid with the strain of it. Moving, getting nearer the boat every second, while he lay there.

And then, a shaft of white light, the plan shot into his mind.

He was on his feet almost before the idea was fully formed. "Lie still!" he yelled at Lunch. "Get him when he drops her!" Then he was running.

No fear in him, only a cold flame of judgment that controlled every nerve and muscle without conscious thought. The doctor had stopped. He saw the rifle come up again; the bullet whined past his ear.

The doctor had thrown the stock up under his arm and was working the breech bolt with one hand. The gun spat again. Lane threw himself to one side, plunged on again. If it worked; if he could only tempt him!

He threw his own rifle aside and ran straight at him, a clear target.

An endless moment. Then he saw that slight, doubtful movement of the doctor, that instant of hesitation, that told him he had won.

The man half turned. He let the girl slip to the sand, and brought up the rifle for an unhampered shot.

The blood sang through Lane's veins. Even as he dodged frantically he was thinking, "He's done it; he's done it! I knew he'd do it!" He dodged again as the rifle swerved to cover him. "Shoot!" he yelled. "Why don't you—"

*Twang!* A thin, bodiless sound, vicious in the moonlight.

For an instant he didn't know whether it was the doctor or Lunch who had fired. Even when he saw the doctor recoil a step—saw his gun jerk, he wasn't sure. Then the muzzle steadied, came down in a short arc, inexorable as doom. Everything seemed to stand still.

*Twang!*

A wind out of nowhere hit the doctor, whirled him backward. An endless moment he seemed to hang there, unsupported, black against the shining sea. Then, abruptly, he went down.

The gleaming beach, the white-fire lines of breakers, the hot stars, tilted and swung in a slow half circle. Lane drew a sobbing breath as he raced on towards the limp huddle that was Gale.

And then, when he had covered half the distance between them, the thing happened. There was a yell from Lunch. A white form flashed out from the jungle.

Amalia!

Even in that desperate second when he recognized her and saw the cold glint of the knife, he knew he could never reach Gale in time.

He heard the crack of Lunch's rifle, the slam as the breech jammed. Thought shattered on the blade of that knife. She was stooping over the unconscious girl now. He plunged at the space between them with a sick, frantic cry:

"Amalia! Wait! Don't!"

The words froze in his throat. Out of the shadow behind her something came with a whirlwind rush. A frenzied vision of flying rags—dark, waving, skinny arms. A snarl like an animal's. Old Maman Celeste, swinging the knife

rubbed with the blood of the goat that rubbed in the night.

At the snarl Amalia had whirled, straightened with a lithe, uncanny swiftness, crouched like a leopard. But there was no sparring. Rags flying, teeth bared, the old woman went in with a rush. For a moment the two swayed, whirled, locked in a mad dance. Then a black arm swung free; there was a scream—a wide glitter . . .

Amalia stepped back, sank in a sort of deep curtsy, sank . . .

The next few minutes were never very clear to Lane afterward, although fragments, disjointed pictures, were stamped on his brain with a terrible clearness. Gale's face, waxy with the moon on it. The horrible loveliness of the dead girl on the sand; the dark stain soaking the white of her dress. Of the doctor he remembered only a white hand sticking out of a dark huddle, palm up.

He remembered a boat, and holding Gale tight, feeling her breath through his thin shirt, warm, dizzying.

Lunch was babbling something as he bent to the oars. "Jes' like ole wile cat. Yesso, Miss 'Malia sure meet her come-uppance when she go crosswise with Maman Celeste. 'At's a pow'ful bad ole woman when she get started—an' she mighty partic'lar 'bout lil 'Ti Lizette."

Lane roused himself to say, "Maybe we ought to take them along."

"Naw, *suh!* I ain' aim to go foolin' with 'at old woman. 'At 'Ti Lizette, she a mighty sweet lil girl, but I right glad to get shut of 'em jessa same." He shivered. "Might jes' as well have been me. Nawsuh," he added, "they awright. An' nigger business ain't white-folks business. Miss 'Malia she fin' 'at out."

There was more of it. Lane answered "Yes" and "No" at the right places and felt Gale stir in his arms, so that he was weak with relief.

A ladder; a white deck under his feet. She said, "Steve," faintly, and nestled against him without opening her eyes. A humming tremor shook them and he realized that Lunch had started the engines.

The red edge of the sun looked over the curve of the sea as she came into the wheelhouse—a little white, big-eyed and shaken still, but moving with a happy sureness. She put her hands over Lane's where they rested on the wheel. "Let me take it. You get some sleep."

There was an interval while their hands touched and their bodies swayed together, as the yacht slid from one green hollow to another.

"Do you feel as if none of it had ever happened?" she asked at length. "Parts of it that you can't even remember?"

"Uh-huh!" He had been puzzling over that for the last hour—the queer gaps and uncertainties in his mind. It seemed something beyond belief that she should be thinking of it too. He said so.

"There's a blue mark on my chin, though." She turned it towards him. "Where he hit me last night, I guess. Everything just went black."

He did the proper thing by the blue mark.

"You get some sleep," she told him. "Where are we heading?"

He grinned. "I wouldn't know about that. But I'm holding by the *N* on this compass thing. We're bound to bring up somewhere, I guess."

Her finger traced the line. "Any direction, so long as it's north. Steve, d'you suppose it'll be snowing?"

The bow lifted, hesitated, plunged in a shower of spray. For no reason at all they looked at each other and laughed.

THE END