

# The BLACK BOY

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Novelized from the Photo Play of the Same Name, Produced by the Universal Film Manufacturing Company.

(Continued)

"Will you?" The interruption was so unexpected that Craig lost his nerve, although an opening in the trees, only a few feet away, Lenora had suddenly appeared. She, too, held a revolver, her hand as steady as a rock.

"Drop your knife," she ordered Craig. He obeyed without hesitation.

"Now, tie the cash around the girl."

He obeyed mechanically. Quest took Craig by the collar and led him to the spot where the others were waiting.

They hoisted him on to a horse. Already behind them they could see the flare of the torches from the returning Mongars.

"You know the way to Port Said," Quest whispered. "See that you lead us there. There will be trouble, mind, if you don't."

Craig made no reply. He rode off in front of the little troop covered all the time by Quest's revolver. Very soon they were out of the jungle and in the open desert. Quest looked behind him uneasily.

"To judge by the row those fellows are making," he remarked, "I should think that they've found Feerda already."

"In that case," the professor said gravely, "let me recommend you to push on as fast as possible. We have had one escapee from those fellows, but nothing in the world can save us now that you have laid hands upon Feerda. The chief would never forgive that."

They galloped steadily on. The moon rose higher and higher until it became as light as day.

Quest fell a little behind the professor's side, although he never left off watching Craig.

"Look behind you, professor," he whispered.

In the far distance were a number of little black specks, growing every moment larger. Even at that moment they heard the low, long call of the Mongars.

"They are gaining on us," Quest muttered.

They raced on for another mile or more. A bullet whistled over their heads. Quest tightened his reins.

"No good," he sighed. "We'd better stay and fight it out, professor. Stick close to me, Lenora."

They drew up and hastily dismounted. The Mongars closed in around them. A cloud had drifted in front of the moon, and in the darkness it was almost impossible to see their whereabouts. They heard the chief's voice.

"Shoot first that dog of a Craig!" There was a shriek. Suddenly Feerda, breaking loose from the others, raced across the little division. She flung herself from her horse.

"Tell my father that you were not faithless," she pleaded. "You shall not kill my son!"

She clung to Craig's neck. The bullets were beginning to whistle around

them now. All of a sudden she threw up her arms. Craig, in a fury, turned around and fired into the darkness.

Then suddenly, as though on the bidding of some unspoken word, there was a queer silence. Everyone was distinctly conscious of an alien sound—the soft thud of many horses' feet galloping from the right; then a sharp, English voice of command.

"Hold your fire, men. Close in to the left there. Steady!"

The cloud suddenly rolled away from the moon. A long line of horsemen were immediately visible. The officer in front rode forward.

"Drop your arms and surrender," he ordered sternly.

The Mongars, who were outnumbered by twenty to one, obeyed without hesitation. Their chief seemed unconscious even of what had hap-

pened. He was on his knees, bidding over the body of Feerda, half supported in Craig's arms. The officer turned to Quest.

"Are you the party who left Port Said for the Mongar camp?" he asked. Quest nodded.

"They took us into the jungle—just escaped. They'd caught us here, though, and I'm afraid we were about finished if you hadn't come along. We are not English—we're American."

"Same thing," the officer replied, as he held out his hand.

QUEST AND LENORA

## SYNOPSIS.

Sanford Quest, master criminologist of the world, finds that in bringing to justice MacDougal, the murderer of Lord Ashleigh's daughter, he has but just begun a life-and-death struggle with a mysterious master criminal. In a hidden hut in Professor Ashleigh's garden he has seen an ape skeleton and a living creature, half monkey, half man, destroyed by fire. In his rooms have appeared black boxes containing notes, signed by a pair of armless hands. Laura and Lenora, his assistants, suspect Craig, the professor's servant, of a double murder. The black boxes continue to appear in uncanny fashion. Craig is trapped, but escapes to England, where he is captured by Mongars, among whom Craig's father, Lord Ashleigh, is murdered by the British. Quest and his party also go to England, and beyond into the desert. They are captured by Mongars, among whom Craig's father, Lord Ashleigh, is murdered by the British. Quest and his party also go to England, and beyond into the desert. They are captured by Mongars, among whom Craig's father, Lord Ashleigh, is murdered by the British.

## TWELFTH INSTALLMENT.

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### "NEATH IRON WHEELS.

Side by side they leaned over the rail of the steamer and gazed shorewards at the slowly unfolding scene before them. For some time they had all preserved an almost ecstatic silence.

"Say, but it's good to see home again!" Laura sighed at last.

"I'm with you," Quest agreed emphatically. "It's the wrong side of the continent, perhaps, but I'm aching to set my foot on American soil again."

"This the wrong side of the continent!" she exclaimed, pointing to where in the distance the buildings of the exposition gleamed almost snow white in the dazzling sunshine. "Why, I have never seen anything so beautiful in my life."

"I guess there's one of us here," Quest observed, "who is none too pleased to see America again."

Lenora shivered a little. They were all grave.

Quest moved slowly down the deck towards Craig's side, and touched him on the arm.

"Give me your left wrist, Craig," he said quietly.

The man slunk away. There was a sudden look of horror in his white face. He started back, but Quest was too quick for him. In the darkness he saw the click of a handcuff, the mate of which was concealed under the criminologist's cuff.

They stepped along the deck towards the rest of the party. Lenora handed her glasses to Quest.

"Do look, Mr. Quest," she begged, "The inspector French is standing in the front row on the dock, with two enormous bunches of flowers—carnations for me, I expect, and polsnettias for Laura. They're the larger bunch."

Quest took the glasses and nodded. Slowly the great steamer drifted nearer and nearer to the docks, hats waving from the little line of spectators, ropes were drawn taut. The inspector was standing at the bottom of the gangway as they all passed down. He shook hands with everyone vigorously. Then he presented Lenora with her carnations and Laura with the polsnettias. Lenora was enthusiastic. Even Laura murmured a few words of thanks.

"Some flowers, those polsnettias," the inspector agreed.

Quest gripped him by the arm.

"French," he said, "I tell you I shall make your hair curl when you hear all that we've been through. Do you feel like having me start in right away, on our way to the cars?"

French withdrew his arm.

"Nothing doing," he replied. "I want to talk to Miss Laura. You can stow that criminal stuff. It will wait all right 'till you've got the fellow—that's what matters!"

Quest exchanged an amused glance with Lenora. The inspector and Laura fell a little behind. The former took off his hat for a moment and fanned himself.

"Say, Miss Laura," he began, "I'm a plain man, and a poor hand at speeches. I've been saying a few nice things over to myself on the dock here for the last hour, but everything's gone right out of my head. Look here, it sums up like this: How do you feel about quitting this bunch right away and coming with me to New York?"

"What do I want to go to New York for?" Laura demanded.

"Oh, come on, Miss Laura, you know what I mean," French replied. "We'll slip off and get married here and then take this man Craig to New York. Once get him safely in the Tombs and we'll go off on a honeymoon anywhere you say."

Laura was on the point of laughing at him. Then the unwonted seriousness of his expression appealed suddenly to her sympathy. She patted him kindly on the shoulder.

"You're a good sort, inspector, but you've picked the wrong girl. I've run along on my own hook ever since I was born, I guess, and I can't switch my ideas over to this married stuff. You better get a move on and get Craig back to New York before he

slips us again. I'm going to stay here with the bunch."

The inspector sighed. His face had grown long and his buoyancy had passed from his manner.

They found the others waiting for them at the end of the great wooden shed. Quest turned to French.

"Look here, French," he said, "you know I don't want to hurry you off, but I don't know what we're going to do with this fellow about in San Francisco. We don't want to lodge two charges, and we should have to put him in jail tonight. Why don't you take him on right away? There's a limited goes by the southern route in an hour's time."

French assented gloomily.

"That suits me," he agreed. "You'll be glad to get rid of the fellow, too," he added.

They drove straight to the depot, found two vacant seats in the train, and Quest, with a little sigh of relief, handed over his charge.

"Now for a little holiday," Quest declared, passing Lenora's arm through his. "We'll just have a look around the city and then get down to San Diego and take a look at the exposition there. No responsibilities, no one to look after, nothing to do but enjoy ourselves."

QUEST AND LENORA

## QUEST AND LENORA

QUEST AND LENORA turned away from the window of the hotel, out of which they had been gazing for the last quarter of an hour.

"It's too beautiful," Lenora sighed.

Quest stood for a moment shaking his head. The professor, with a pile of newspapers stretched out before him, was completely engrossed in their perusal. Laura, who had been sitting in an armchair at the farther end of the apartment, was apparently deep in thought.

"Say, you two are no sort of people for a holiday," Quest declared. "As for you, Laura, I can't think what's come over you. You never opened your mouth at dinner time, and you sit there now looking like nothing on earth."

"I am beginning to suspect her," Lenora chimed in. "Too bad he had to hurry away, dear!"

Laura's indignation was not altogether convincing. Quest and Lenora exchanged amused glances. The former picked up the newspaper from the floor and calmly turned out the professor's lamp.

"Look here," he explained, "this is the first night of my holiday. I'm going to run the party and I'm going to make the rules. No more newspapers tonight or for a fortnight. You understand? No reading, nothing but frivolity. And no loveliness, Miss Laura."

"Loveliness, indeed!" she repeated scornfully.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

QUEST TOOK THE DISPATCH which the hotel clerk handed to him one afternoon a fortnight later, and read it through without change of expression. Lenora, however, who was by his side, knew at once that it contained something startling.

"What is it?" she asked.

He passed his arm through hers and led her down the hall to where the professor and Laura were just waiting for the lift. He beckoned them to follow him to a corner of the lounge.

"There's one thing I quite forgot, a fortnight ago," he said, slowly, "when I suggested that we should come to look at a newspaper until the time we were in California. Have you kept to our bargain, professor?"

"Absolutely!"

"And you, girls?"

"I've never even seen one," Lenora declared.

"Nor I," Laura echoed.

"I made a mistake," Quest confessed. "Something has happened which we ought to have known about. You had better read the message—or, wait, I'll read it aloud."

To Sanford Quest, 62 Field Hotel, San Diego. Injured in wreck of limited. Recovered consciousness today. Craig reported burned in wreck but think you had better come on.

SAN FRANCISCO.

Samaritan Hospital, Alhagez.

"Say, when can we start?" Laura exclaimed excitedly.

Lenora clutched at Quest's arm.

"I knew it," she declared simply. "I felt perfectly certain, when they left San Francisco, that something would happen. We haven't seen the end of Craig yet."

Quest, who had been studying a time-table, glanced once more at the dispatch.

"Look here," he said, "Alhagez isn't so far out of the way if we take the southern route to New York. Let's get a move on tonight."

Laura led the way to the lift. She was in a state of rare discomposure.

"To think that all the time we've been gliding round," she muttered, "that poor man has been lying in hospital! Makes one feel like a brute!"

"He's been unconscious all the time," Quest reminded her.

"Might have expected to find us there when he came to, anyway," Laura insisted.

Lenora smiled faintly as she caught a glance from Quest.

"Laura's got a heart somewhere," she muttered, "only it takes an awful lot of getting at!"

They found French, already convalescent, comfortably installed in the private ward of a small hospital in the picturesque New Mexico town. Laura almost at once established herself by his side.

"Can you remember anything about the wreck, French?" Quest inquired.

The inspector passed his hand wearily over his forehead.

"It seems more like a dream—rather a nightmare—than anything," he admitted. "I was sitting opposite Craig when the crash came. I was unconscious for a time. When I came to, I was simply plinned down by the side of the car. I could see a man working hard to release me, tugging and straining with all his might. Every now and then I got a glimpse of his face. It seemed queer, but I could have sworn it was Craig. Then other people passed by. I heard the shriek

of a locomotive. I could see a doctor bending over some bodies. Then it all faded away and came back again. The second time I was working so hard was just smashing the last bit of timber away, and again I saw his face and that time I was sure that it was Craig. Anyway, he finished the job. I suddenly felt I could move my limbs. The man stood up as though exhausted, looked at me, called to the doctor, and then he seemed to fade away. It might have been because I was unconscious myself, or I don't remember anything else until I found myself in bed."

"It would indeed," the professor remarked, "be an interesting circumstance—an interesting psychological circumstance, I might put it that way—if Craig, the arch-criminal, the man who has seemed to us so utterly devoid of all human feeling, should really have collapsed in this manner to see free his captor."

"Interesting or not," Quest observed, "I'd like to know whether it was Craig or not. I understand there were about a dozen unrecognizable bodies found."

The nurse, who had left the room for a few minutes, returned with a small package in her hand, which she handed to French. He looked at it in a puzzled manner.

"Say, what can that be?" he muttered, turning it over. "Addressed to me all right, but there isn't a soul knows I'm here except you folks. Will you open it, Miss Laura?"

She took it from him and untied the strings. A little breathless cry escaped from her lips as she tore open the paper. A small black box was disclosed. She opened the lid with trembling fingers and drew out a scrap of paper. They all leaned over and read together:

You have all lost again. Why not give up? You can never win.

QUEST AND LENORA

## QUEST AND LENORA

QUEST AND LENORA were perhaps the calmest. She simply nodded with the melancholy air of satisfaction of one who finds her preconceived ideas confirmed.

"I knew it!" she exclaimed softly. "I knew it at the depot. Craig's time has not come yet. He may be somewhere near us, even now."

She glanced unevenly around the ward. Quest, who had been examining

up all right," he remarked. "Come on with the grub, cookie."

Silently the man filled each dish with the stew and laid it in its place. Then he retired to the background and the cowboys commenced their meal. Long Jim winked at the others as he picked up a biscuit.

"Cookie, you're no good," he called out. "The stew's rotten. Here, take this!"

He flicked the biscuit, which caught the cook on the side of the head. For a moment the man started. With his hand upon his temple he flashed a look of hatred towards his assailant. Long Jim laughed carelessly.

"Say, cookie," the latter went on, "where did you get them eyes? Guess we'll have to tame you a bit."

The meal was soon over, and Jim strolled across to where the others were saddling up. He passed his left arm through the reins of his horse and turned once more to look at Craig.

"Say, you mind you do better to-night, young fellow. . . Eh!"

He stopped short with a cry of pain. The horse had suddenly started, wrenching at the reins. Jim's arm hung helplessly down from the shoulder.

"Gee, boys, he's broken it!" he groaned. "Say, this is a trick!"

The cook suddenly pushed his way through the little crowd. He took Jim's shoulder firmly in one hand and his arm in the other. The cowboy howled with pain.

"Let go my arm!" he shouted. "Kill him, boys! My God, I'll make holes in you for this!"

He snatched at his gun with his other hand and the cowboys scattered a little. The cook stepped back, the gun flashed out, only to be suddenly lowered. Jim looked incredulously towards his left arm, which hung no longer helplessly by his side. He swung it backwards and forwards, and a broad grin slowly lit up his lean, brown face. He thrust the gun in his holster and held out his hand.

"Cookie, you're all right!" he exclaimed. "You've done the trick this time. Say, you're a miracle!"

The cook smiled.

"Your arm was just out of joint," he remarked. "It was rather a hard pull, but it's all right now."

Jim looked around at the others.

"And to think that I might have killed him!" he exclaimed. "Cookie, you're a white boy. You'll do. We're going to like you here."

Craig watched them ride off. The bitterness had passed from his face. Evening came and with it a repetition of his labors. When everything was ready to serve, he stepped from behind the wagon and looked across the rolling stretch of open country.

There was no one in sight. Softly, almost stealthily, he crept up to the wagon, fetched out from its wooden case a small violin, sat down with his back to the wheel and began to play. Suddenly the bow rested motionless. A look of fear came into his face. He sprang up. The cowboys were all stealing from the other side of the wagon. They had arrived and dismounted without his hearing them. He sprang to his feet and began to stammer apologies. Long Jim's hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Say, cookie, you don't need to look so scared. You ain't doing nothing wrong. Me and the boys, we like your music. Sing us another tune to that fiddle!"

The cook looked at him for a moment incredulously. Then he realized that the cowboy was in earnest. He picked up the bow and commenced to play again. They sat around him, wondering, absolutely absorbed. No one even made a move towards the professor and the cowboys were all there at last himself, still playing. Long Jim threw his arm almost carelessly around his shoulder.

"Say, cookie," he began, "there ain't never no questions asked concerning the cook looking at the man who finds their way out here, just so long as they don't play the game wrong. Maybe you've fitted up a nice little bell for yourself somewhere, but we ain't none of us hankering to know the address. You're white and you're one of us and any time any guy wants to charge you rent for the little bell where you got the furniture of your conscience stored, why, you just let us settle with him, that's all."

The interruption which came was from outside.

"More of these d—n tourists," Long Jim muttered. "Women, too!"

Craig turned his head slowly. Quest was in the act of dismounting from his horse. By his side was the professor, just behind Lenora and Laura. Long Jim greeted them with rough cordiality.

"Say, what are you folks looking for?" he demanded.

Quest pointed to Craig.

"We want that man," he announced. "The inspector French from New York. I am Sanford Quest."

There was a tense silence. Craig covered his face with his hands, and suddenly looked up.

"I won't come," he cried fiercely. "You've hounded me all around this world, I am innocent. I won't come."

Quest shrugged his shoulders. He took a step forward, but Long Jim as though by accident, sauntered in the way.

"Got a warrant?" he asked tersely.

"We don't need it," Quest replied. "He's our man, right enough."

"Right this minute he's our cook," Long Jim said, "and we ain't exactly particular about going hungry. Cut it short, mister. If you ain't got a warrant, you ain't got this man."

"All right," Quest agreed. "The inspector here and I will soon see it that. We'll ride back to the town ship. With your permission, the ladies and our elderly friend will remain for a rest."

"You're welcome to anything we've got except our cook," Jim replied turning away.

Darkness came early and the little company grew closer and closer to the camp fire, where Craig had once more taken up his violin. The professor had wandered off somewhere into the darkness and the girls were seated a little apart. They had been treated hospitably but coldly.

"Don't seem to cotton to us, these boys," Laura remarked.

"They don't like us," Lenora replied, "because they think we are after Craig. I wonder what Long Jim has been whispering to him, and what that paper is he has been showing Craig. Do you know how far we are from the Mexican border?"

"Not more than five or six miles, I believe," Laura replied.

Lenora rose softly to her feet and strolled to the back of the range wagon. In a few moments she reappeared, carrying a piece of paper in her hand. She stooped down.

"Craig's saddling up," she whispered. "Look what he dropped."

She held out the paper, on which was traced a roughly drawn map.

"That line's the river that marks the Mexican border," she explained. "You see where Long Jim's put the cross? That's where the bridge is. That other cross is the camp."

She pointed away southwards.

"That's the line," she continued. "Laura, where's the professor?"

"I don't know," Laura replied. "He rode off some time ago, and he was going to meet Mr. Quest."

"If only he were here!" Lenora muttered. "I feel sure Craig means to escape. There he goes."

They saw him ride off into the darkness. Lenora ran to where her horse was tethered.

"I'm going after him," she announced. "Listen, Laura. If they arrive soon, send them after me."

She galloped off while Laura was still undecided. Almost at that moment she heard from behind the welcome sound of horses' feet in the opposite direction and Quest galloped up. Laura laid her hand upon his rein.

"Don't get off," Laura continued quickly. "Craig has escaped, riding towards the Mexican frontier. Lenora is following him. He's gone in that direction," she added pointing. "When you come to the river you'll have to hunt for the bridge."

Quest frowned as he gathered up his reins.

"I was afraid they'd try something of the sort," he muttered. "Tell the others where I've gone, Laura."

He galloped off into the darkness. Behind there were some growls from the little group of cowboys, none of whom, however, attempted to interfere with him. Long Jim stood up and gazed sullenly southwards.

"Cookie'll make the bridge all right," he remarked. "If the girl catches him, she can't do anything. And that guy'll never make it. Whoop! Here comes the rest of them."

The inspector, with the two deputies, rode suddenly into the camp. The inspector passed to speak to Laura. Long Jim's eyes sparkled as he saw them approach.

"It's old Harris and fat Andy," he whispered. "We'll have some fun with them."

The older of the two deputies approached them, frowning.

"Been at your games again, Long Jim?" he began. "I hear you declined to hand over a criminal who'd been sheltering on your ranch? You'll get into trouble before you're finished."

"Got the warrant?" Jim asked.

The deputy pointed at Long Jim. Long Jim looked at it curiously and handed it back.

"Guess the only thing you want, then, is the man."

"Better produce him quickly," the deputy advised.

Jim turned away.

"Can't do it. He's beat it."

"You mean that you've let him go?"

"Let him go?" Jim repeated. "I ain't got no right to keep him. He's got to go. He's a white man, and he's one of us. There's some of your party after him, all right."

The hunted man turned round with the pasty face of the man who had ridden through the bridge, and on the other side—freedom. Scarcely a dozen lengths away was Lenora, and close behind her came Quest. He slackened speed as he walked his horse cautiously on to the plank bridge. Suddenly he gave a little cry. The frail structure, unexpectedly insecure, seemed to sway beneath his weight. Lenora, who was riding fast, was unable to stop herself. She came on to the bridge at a half canter.

She turned disdaintfully away. "I do not want your jewelry, Jose," she declared.

He caught her suddenly by the wrist.

"Perhaps this is what you want," he cried, as he stooped down to kiss her.

She swung her right hand round and struck him on the face. He staggered back for a moment. There was a red flush which showed through the tan of his cheek. Then he drew a little nearer to her, and before she could escape had passed his long arm around her body. He drew her to the chair placed by the side of the wall. His left hand