

THE TRIO

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"This is only the modern cosmopolitan town of Port Said, commonly known as 'Hell.' In Cleopatra's time there was only clean desert hereabouts."

"Is it a very wicked place?" asked Mrs. Jones, with undisguised interest.

"It's not so very terrible nowadays," Robin replied. "But a few years ago . . ." He ended the sentence with a significant expression.

"Dear, dear!" said Blake.

"Do tell me: what did they do?" asked Mrs. Jones, looking up at her new friend with innocent eyes.

"The inhabitants did the travellers," said Robin.

"How?" she questioned.

"Generally by the exploitation of the wiles of your sex," he answered.

"Oh, but I'm sure they didn't mean any harm," she murmured.

"Of course not," he laughed. "It was just their playfulness."

Blake winked at him. "She's just a little fairy, isn't she?" he whispered.

Mrs. Jones drew nearer to Robin. "Used they to have terrible orgies in the middle of the night?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "For five bob they'd show you in five minutes more than you'd learn in fifty years of respectable life. And for ten bob . . ."

"Let's leave it at five bob," said Blake, eyeing his new friend with mistrust.

Mrs. Jones pressed Robin's arm. "What about seven-and-sixpence?" she asked, with a sweet smile.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of one of Cook's agents, to whom Mrs. Jones decided to entrust their baggage. Colonel Winterbottom had insisted on proceeding to Cairo by the train at noon;