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ST. JOHN

THE CALL OF THE JUNGLE

By Honore Willsie

The girl, Agatha, stood idly leaning against the ticket seller's stand...

She was very young, not more than twenty. In the week that he had watched her she had seemed very much sinner; had seemed to love her work...

The puma lay quietly at the bottom of his cage, though his narrowed eyes were restless. The monkeys were asleep; so were the lions, snoring like puppies...

Agatha stepped back among the panthers and herded them into the lion's cage, despite striking paws and sinister growls...

The barker leaned on his pike stick and advanced with sweating face and tight-cupped hands. The air was unendurable with the hot, rank smell of the beasts...

"God! how they hate her!" growled a man in the crowd. No one heeded him but Agatha, who caught his words and glanced at him with a flash of interest...

"Down, Rea, down!" she said. The tiger stood solemnly watching her, with white fangs and scarlet tongue. Then she half crouched and took a step toward the girl.

"The tiger was motionless, with yellow eyes fixed on the blue ones. 'Don't use the whip, Agatha!' said the barker. 'The quiet, John!' answered Agatha. 'Down, Rea, down!' repeated Agatha."

"How they hate me!" she screamed. "How they hate me!" The tiger sprang, but even quicker—the barker—sprang to open the cage door. A woman in the audience screamed, "I told you they'd get her! Let me out of this!"



WITH HER FIRST MOVEMENT, THE TIGER SPRANG, BUT EVEN QUICKER—WAS THE BARKER—PIPED.

man in the audience screamed, "I told you they'd get her! Let me out of this!" Then a boy's voice arose above the frightened roar. "That tiger'll be out in a minute!" and before Freeman had reached the barker and his helper...

"The quiet, John!" answered Agatha. "Down, Rea, down!" repeated Agatha. The tiger advanced another heavy paw. Agatha reached forward and cut her hand across the face with the whip. Rea drew back and crouched.

"The girl tapped one of the wall seats. 'Up, Rea, up, I say!' Rea lashed the edge with her tail. 'Will you up, you brute?' Agatha cracked the whip. Still the animal eyed with all the savagery of utmost hatred. The girl, while brutes eyed at her, struck, then, slightly, Agatha lowered her arm. The animal was hat perforce, now, to her eyes. The ears drawn back, the teeth laid bare, the panting throat wide open, she looked eyes that never left her own. For tally a minute, the girl and tiger eyed each other. Suddenly the girl swayed slightly and threw up both her arms.

until I can get some one else. Freeman stood looking down at the girl, now scarlet-cheeked with delirium. The great build had loosened, and soft tendrils of hair touched her forehead.

"I'll take charge of her," he said briefly. The barker snuffed and turned on his heel. The days that followed were days of sharp battle. Dr. Freeman's little mother fought side by side with her son until, at last, one dawn, the blue eyes looked up with intelligence.

"Where am I?" she whispered. "At the home of Dr. Freeman, in Clintonville," answered Mrs. Freeman. "Now, you mustn't talk." Agatha turned her head weakly and looked out the open window. Half-awakened birds piped in the orchard. The last soft droning of crickets resounded in the air.

"From then on, the girl convalesced rapidly. One afternoon the doctor threw himself from his horse and walked up the path to the porch of his cottage, to find Agatha there. She was wearing a white gown which Mrs. Freeman had bought for her from one of her own. The girl lay back in the rocking-chair

looking idly out at the sun flickering across the lawn. The wonderful hair lay in a great, loose, graid across her shoulder. The heavy-lashed, blue eyes and the mouth with its tired droop had grown very dear to the young doctor. He sank down on the porch steps and fanned himself with his hat.

"Well, Miss Agatha, how goes it?" "So well," replied the girl, "that I want to go back again."

"The crimson that suffused Agatha's face was worth watching, but for a moment she gave no other sign that she heard. Then she turned on him blue eyes that were very young in their unusual beauty, very old in the sadness that now, as always, caught the young man's breast.

"Your father was a sea captain, and you took long voyages to India with him when you were a boy, so your mother says," said Agatha.

Duncan nodded wonderingly. "I know some parts of India pretty well." Agatha pushed back her sleeve. "I don't suppose that you have noticed this as it was not the wounded arm. Do you know what this means?"

"Close to the shoulder were two small symmetrical white scars that resembled a cuneiform character. The doctor looked from the arm to the girl's face.

"In India," he said, slowly, "that means of royal blood." The girl nodded. "My father was a native of India. He too had this scar on his arm. There was trouble over there, and the English brought him to London when he was a boy. He always planned to go back, but he died soon after I was born. My mother was an Irish girl!"

The doctor looked at the sensitive, high-bred features and the slender, olive tingers. Then he nodded understandingly. "Mother had nothing but me, and after she drifted to America she found I could train animals. Mother always travelled with me—she died a few months ago."

"There was silence for a moment then. "I ask you again," said the man, "will you stay with me?"

"Oh, I can't," said the girl. "I can't! I must go back. I hate it, yet—yet—Dr. Freeman, were you ever homesick?" "Yes," briefly. "Well," with a pitiful little catch of her breath, "I've been homesick for something all my life. For something I never saw, and never can see. Perhaps it's the big Indian woods, or the temples, and the moonlight on the rice fields, that father used to talk about. Perhaps it's—Oh, I'm sick of fighting the poor brutes, but I must go back! I should go mad, here!" She looked at the peaceful beauty of the valley. The man's eyes did not leave her face. "My mother would have liked it, here," she said.

"Agatha," said Duncan, softly. "The tired, wistful eyes looked down into his. 'Agatha, do you love me?'" "Yes, but oh," wildly, "I can't marry you. I can't stay here. You must not ask it of me!"

For a long time the doctor looked at her, reading each line of the beautiful face with the understanding that only love could have given. Then into his own face came new lines—lines of remorse and quiet grief that by some subtle force added to his age in a single minute. "I will not ask it, Agatha," he said. "It was late that night that the door of the cottage opened and Agatha stole out into the moonlight. She carried a little bundle in her hand and wore the white gown and hat given her by Mrs. Freeman. She did not go down the path, but hurried around the house and out across the fields. Once away from the house and its environments she paused as if to look back, then she shook her head and went on. "I must not stop," she said aloud, "or my courage will fall me. He'll be out all night with that case, and it's best that I should go, now. I—I could not bear to say good-bye."

She plodded on wearily, more frequent and longer pauses as her scanty strength was more and more taxed. The animal show was still stranded just outside Clintonville, where the barker was waiting, reinforcing the shape of a new animal trainer and a partner with enough money to enable him to move.

It was midnight when Agatha reached the tent, dim and ghostlike in the moonlight. She was completely exhausted. She hastened as best she could past the smaller tent where the men slept, and entered, with the det-

ness of familiarity, the larger and animal tent. As the flap fell behind her, she stood in the darkness, breathing fast, the familiar smell of the animals, the touch of the sawdust to her feet, bringing the warmth of excitement to her cheeks.

"Isn't it good! Isn't it good!" she said to herself. Little growlings and scratchings told her that she had wakened the animals by her entrance. Her eyes were now accustomed to the dimness, and she could discern the different cages. She walked slowly about the ring, whispering the names of the animals, scarcely above her breath. They seemed to recognize her, for though there was no sign of greeting they sank back again to sleep, quietly enough.

"At last, the first gladness of her return past, Agatha dropped into one of the audience chairs."

"I wonder if the doctor is back again?" For many moments she sat in silence, her outward sense acute to catch each sound made in the cages, her inner sense wrestling with a new homesickness. Suddenly, the rough life of the circus seemed abhorrent to her. The picture of isolation and danger since her mother's death, returned to her with overwhelming force. But this was least of all. The young doctor's face, his tenderness, his understanding and sympathy, his—

Agatha rocked back and forth in misery of mind.

"What shall I do?" she whispered. "Oh, what shall I do?" For a long time there was silence in the tent, save for the uneasy noises of the animals. Then a shadowy white figure stole to the flap, lifted it, and again began its weary trip across the fields.

The moon was low in the sky when Agatha turned in at the garden gate. Exhausted and trembling, she totted up the path to the porch. As she paused before the screen door she noticed a dark figure in the hammock which was swung across the porch. In it lay the doctor, fast asleep, his sun-iron case on the floor beside him. Evidently too weary to climb the stairs, he had dropped into the hammock to rest. As if aware of the girl's presence, he sat erect.

"Agatha," he said, "what is it? Where are you going?" Agatha moved slowly toward him. "I have been across to the animal tents," she said. "I—I thought I wanted that, most of all."

The doctor looked down at the face that was weary, even in the dimming light.

"Oh, Agatha," he said, "you were not strong enough for that."

"I know it," replied Agatha, simply, "and so I have come home."

"Home?" repeated Freeman, wistfully. "Yes," answered Agatha, "if you still want me!"

"There is nothing else in life that I do want," said the doctor, his voice trembling with sudden joy. And Agatha's homesick face found a sudden resting place.

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A YEAR AT THE SPRING - From The Delineator.

If any of the neighboring farmers' wives had happened into Alice Landon's kitchen that bright May morning, they would have remarked with amiable suggestion, "Rather late with your breakfast dishes, ain't you?" And Alice would have laughed before she answered. She usually laughed first and spoke afterwards. The young girl of life touched so radiantly, she responded like a child to the thrill of the untranslated emotion, and interpreted it later.

But the white farmhouse at the end of the line of arching maple trees was half a mile from the road, and no one was likely to discover her house-keeping vagaries. It had been such a good morning! She smiled a dimpling smile as she poured the scalding water from one milk can to another with a deaf turn, while the rising cloud of steam dampened the tendrils of blonde hair blown about her forehead by the breeze from the open door.

Robert had done the churning out on the broad barn porch before he went to the field. He would never let her do it, though she was quite sure she was strong enough. A year ago, when she had first entered upon her new existence as a farmer's wife, the metamorphosis of a crumpling yellow butter had been interesting to the point of excitement. Robert had wanted to sell two of the cows, but she had begged to keep them. Why could she not learn to make butter? He could take it to Milburn, and the money would buy—the would show him what the money would buy.

A regular little farmer, Robert had laughingly called her, saying that he believed she might always live in the better for having the country all her own. Of course she did; she had known it would be that way. She had Africa or Alaska—but he had not let her finish the sentence. So this morning she had chosen to work her butter out on the porch, and she had packed it in the little brown jars, while the morning coolness was still in the air. As she patted and squeezed the golden mass,

stopped to watch the wrens again. She was not unlike them small and slight, with quick ways and bright brown eyes. She gave a little nod of satisfaction when she saw that the birds were investigating the possibilities of the starch box. One of them perched on the top and thrilled his brief burst of melody with tremulous wings. Alice regarded him with soft eyes. He knew what hope was, and companionship. She and the making of home together. She and the pump, with a wisp of cloth trailing from its spout, as if a vanquished destroyer of domestic felicity, and went back to her dishes. When they were finished she glanced at the clock; the mail carrier must have passed by this time.

It made one of the events of her day to go down the long lane under the maples and unlock the mail-box on the post of the big red gate. She ran part of the way; her pink dress fluttered about her ankles; but she came back slowly, her head bent over a letter, the swiftly alternating sun and shadow passing like ripples over her bright hair.

As she slipped the letter back into its envelope, she stood still a moment, looking out over the plowed fields where the warm brown earth lay mellowing in the sun. Then she gave a little derisive skip, and, running along the lane, she had nailed the box to a limb of the old apple tree, she thought it looked quite homelike. A branch of blossoms drooping across the front hid all defects. Robert would laugh when he saw it.

The wrens were still sitting in the out of the pump with misdirected zeal; so she stuffed a cloth into the seductive spout, while the birds chattered madly, as weak little creatures sometimes will, when a higher intelligence is steering them away from danger. And then the apple blossoms had been so pink and white and dewy, that she had broken off a great armful and crowded them into a jar in a corner of the dining-room. Just where Robert could see them while he ate his dinner.

All this had made the dishwashing late. As she set the milk cans on the porch, a shining row in the sun she stopped to watch the wrens again. She was not unlike them small and slight, with quick ways and bright brown eyes. She gave a little nod of satisfaction when she saw that the birds were investigating the possibilities of the starch box. One of them perched on the top and thrilled his brief burst of melody with tremulous wings. Alice regarded him with soft eyes. He knew what hope was, and companionship. She and the making of home together. She and the pump, with a wisp of cloth trailing from its spout, as if a vanquished destroyer of domestic felicity, and went back to her dishes. When they were finished she glanced at the clock; the mail carrier must have passed by this time.

"Of course you are." "No, I'm not—I mean I know I am; but there are more nice things. Oh, look at my bird house!"

Robert stopped short in the path and surveyed it critically. Sticks projected from the opening at all angles; they whirled in and out; they had already proved their title.

"Birds seem to like it; I guess that's all that's necessary," remarked Robert. "But as for it's being the nicest thing in his gray eyes were teasing.

"You shan't know about it until you're ready for dinner; it's all settled, anyway," and the small pink figure ran ahead of him and disappeared through the dining-room door. When Robert came in she was pouring the coffee.

"What do you remind you of?" Alice asked as she gave him his coffee. "Apple pie," he answered sententiously, with just the hint of a quiver at the corner of his mouth.

"Robert!" Alice tried to look severe. "Have you forgotten what day it is next Thursday? It's our anniversary. I have been wondering what we could do. I want it to be different from any other day—altogether different."

Still Robert looked perplexed; his wife waited; at last he said: "Honestly, I don't see how we can, Alice."

He got the night before and came back the morning after. It makes it just right, since they put on that early train. You can get Joe Davis to do the chores. You'll never know you've been away."

"It 'twas any other time of year, Alice!"—Robert stopped a minute—"No, I don't see how we can. I've got to get that south piece of corn in. I'll have the ground ready Wednesday noon if you're ready for dinner; it's all settled, anyway."

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patience. She had never cared much for this room; it had not the homely feeling that the other had. She knew why, though she hardly admitted the thought; she missed the piano. As a girl, she had gone to the piano as to an interpreter of all her moods. She played only the simplest music, often her own, and often the simplest of her own; much of the time she played by ear; or, when any feeling, deep or joy or unmet need, needed expression, she played. When she married, the piano had been left for the married sister. It almost vexed her that she thought of it so often. It was not good for her to be in the house on a day like this. She put up her duster, took her sewing, and went out under the apple trees.

The afternoon was long; Robert was harvesting the south field and the sun was setting before he followed the horses up to the watering-trough. When he brought in the milk, frothing to the top of the pails, he said, "Guess I won't eat supper till I get chores all done. I'm tired tonight." They ate in the dusk, the soft, damp air coming in at the open windows; after a while Robert said: "Makes me think of the evening's I used to go to see you that summer you was visiting at the Tolman place. The parlor windows was always open and you'd slip in and play while the Tolman kept right on tellin' his stories, but I never heard of you."

Alice laughed. "Yes, and isn't it funny when you think about it, that if I hadn't happened to visit Grace Tolman, and she hadn't happened to be engaged to Tom Gray, and you hadn't been Tom's best friend—"

"Don't!" "This time it was Alice who went around the table. "Why, Rob?" Robert laughed, but he put his arms about her. "Nothing but at all, only it didn't happen that way; it happened this way." The content in his voice was good to hear. Alice recalled that night, and smiled happily to herself in the dark.

The following day was palpitant with the first real heat of the summer. "All ready for plants," Robert announced when he came home to dinner. "Never

(See Also Page Six.)