

COPY

The Man From Brodney's

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Drusilla was stroking the woman's hair in a half-conscious manner her eyes staring past his face toward the dark forest from which he had come. Mr. Britt was ordering brandy for his trembling client.

"After all," said Browne, "there is some good to be derived from our experiences, hard as it may be to believe. I have found out the means by which Rasula intends to destroy every living creature in the chateau." Chase threw off his spell of languidness and looked hard at the speaker. "Rasula easily asked me at one of our resting places if there had been any symptoms of poisoning among us. I mentioned Fong and the servants. The devil laughed gleefully in my face and told me that it was but the beginning. I tell you, Chase, we can't escape the diabolical scheme he has arranged. The water that comes to us from the springs up there in the hills is to be poisoned by those devils. I heard Rasula giving instructions to one of his lieutenants. He thought I was still unconscious from a blow I received when I tried to interfere in behalf of Lady Agnes, who was being roughly dragged along the mountain road. Day and night a detachment of men are to be employed at the springs, deliberately engaged in the attempt to change the flow of pure water into a slow, subtle, deadly poison, the effects of which will not be immediately fatal, but positively so in the course of a few days. In the end we shall sicken and die as with the scourge. They will call it the plague."

A shudder of horror swept through the crowd. Every one looked into his neighbor's face with a profound inquiring light in his eyes, seeking for the first time evidence of approaching death.

Hollingsworth Chase uttered a short, scornful laugh as he unconcernedly lifted a match to one of his precious cigarettes. The others stared at him in amazement.

"Great God, Chase," groaned Browne, "is this a joke?"

"Yes, and it's on Rasula," said the other laconically. "You say that Rasula isn't aware of the fact that you overheard what he said to his man. Then, even now, in spite of your escape, he believes that we may go on drinking the water without in the least suspecting what it has in store for us. Good! That's why I say the joke is on him. Browne, you are a doctor, a chemist. Well, we'll distill and double and triple distill the water. That's all. A schoolboy might have thought of that. It's all right, old man. You're fagged out. Your brain isn't working well. Don't look so crestfallen. Mr. Britt, you and Mr. Saunders will give immediate instructions that no more water is to be drunk or used until Mr. Browne has had a few hours' rest. He can take an alcohol bath, and we can all drink wine. It won't hurt us. At 10 o'clock sharp Dr. Browne will begin operating the distilling apparatus in the laboratory. By Jove, will you listen to the way my clients are making out there in the woods! They seem to be annoyed over something."

Outside the walls the islanders were shouting and calling to each other. Rifles were cracking far and near, voicing in their peculiarly spiteful way the rage that was fast gaining supremacy.

As Chase ascended the steps Bobby Browne and his wife came up beside him.

"Chase," said Browne in a low voice, his face turned away to hide the mortification that filled his soul, "you are a man! I want you to know that I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Never mind, old man! Say no more," interrupted Chase, suddenly embarrassed.

"I've been a fool, Chase. I don't deserve the friendship of any one—not even that of my wife. It's all over, though. You understand? I'm not a coward. I'll do anything you say, take any risk, to pay for the trouble I've caused you all. Send me out to fight!"

"Nonsense! Your wife needs you, Browne. I dare say that I wouldn't have been above the folly that got the better of you. Only—he hesitated for a minute—"only it couldn't have happened to me if I had a wife as dear and as good and as pretty as the one you have."

Browne was silent for a long time, his arm still about Drusilla's shoulder. At the end of the long hall he said, with decision in his voice:

"Chase, you may tell your clients that, so far as I am concerned, they may have the beastly island and everything 'vat goes with it. I'm through with it all. I shall discharge Britt and—"

"My dear boy, it's most magnanimous of you!" cried Chase merrily. "But I'm afraid you can't decide the question in such an offhand manner. Take good care of him, Mrs. Browne. Don't let him talk."

She held out her hand to him impulsively. "As he gallantly lifted the cold fingers to his lips she said, without taking her almost hungry gaze from his face: 'Thank you, Mr. Chase. I shall never forget you.'"

He stood there looking after them as they went up the stairway, a puzzled expression in his face.

"I guess he'll be a good boy from now on." But he wondered what it was that he had seen or felt in her amber gaze.

In fifteen minutes he was sound asleep in his room, his long frame reposed, his hands wide open in utter unconsciousness.

of the vague, greenish features that haunt the vision with their subtle mysticism.

He was awakened at noon by Selim, who obeyed his instructions to the minute. The eager Arab rubbed the soreness and stiffness out of his master's body with copious applications of alcohol.

"I'm sorry you awoke me, Selim," said the master enigmatically. Selim drew back, dismayed. "You drove her away." Selim's eyes blinked with bewilderment. "I'm afraid she'll never come back."

"Excellency?" trembled on the lips of the mystified servant.

"Ah, me!" sighed the master resignedly. "She smiled so divinely. Hinner girls never smile, do they, Selim? Have you noticed that they are always pensive? Perhaps you haven't. It doesn't matter. But this one smiled. I say, coming back to earth, 'have they begun to distill the water? I've got a frightful thirst!'"

"Yes, excellency. The Sahib Browne is at work. One of the servants became sick today. Now no one is drinking the water. Ballo is bringing in ice from the storehouses and melting it, but the supply is not large. Excellency, you will take Selim to live with you in Paris?" he said after awhile wistfully. "I will be your slave."

"Paris? Who the dickens said anything about Paris?" demanded Chase, startled.

"Neeeah says you will go there to live, sahib. Does not the most glorious princess live in Paris?"

"Selim, you've been listening to gossip. It's a frightful habit to get into. Put cotton in your ears. But if I were to take you, what would become of little Neeeah?"

"Oh, Neeeah?" said Selim easily. "If she would be a trouble to you, excellency, I can sell her to a man I know."

Chase looked blackly at the eager Arab, who quailed.

"You miserable dog!" Selim gasped. "Excellency!"

"Don't you love her?"

"Yes, yes, sahib—yes! But if she would be a trouble to you—no!" protested the Arab anxiously. Chase laughed as he came to appreciate the sacrifice his servant would make for him.

"I'll take you with me, Selim, wherever I go—and if I go—but, my lad, we'll take Neeeah along, too, to save trouble. She's not for-sale, my good Selim." The husband of Neeeah radiated joy.

"Then she may yet be the slave of the most glorious princess! Allah is great! The most glorious one has asked her if she will not come with her."

"Selim," commanded the master ominously, "don't repeat the gossip you pick up when I'm not around."

CHAPTER XXX. THE TWO WORLDS.

TWO days and nights crept slowly into the past, and now the white people of the chateau had come to the eve of their last day's stay on the island of Japat. The probationary period would expire with the sun on the following day, the anniversary of the death of Taswell Skaggs. The six months set aside by the testator as sufficient for all the requirements of Cupid were to come to an inglorious end at 7 o'clock on March 23. According to the will, if Agnes Ruthven and Robert Browne were not married to each other before the close of that day all of their rights in the estate were lost to them.

Tomorrow would be the last day of residence required. But, alack, was it to be the last that they were to spend in the world forsaken land?

No later than that morning a steamer—a small Dutch freighter—had come to a stop off the harbor, but it turned tail and fled within an hour. No one came ashore. The malevolent tug went out and turned back the landing party which was ready to leave the ship's side. The watchers in the chateau knew what it was that the tug's captain shouted through his trumpet at a safe distance from the steamer. The black and yellow flags at the end of the company's pier lent color to a gruesome story. The hopeless look deepened in the eyes of the watchers.

Hollingsworth Chase alone maintained a stubborn air of confidence and unconcern.

"Don't be downhearted, Bowles," he said to the moping British agent. "You'll soon be managing the bank again and patronizing the American bar with the same old regularity."

There had been several vicious assaults upon the gates by the infuriated islanders during the day following the rescue of the heirs. Some powerful influence suddenly exerted itself to restore them to a state of calmness. They withdrew to the town, apparently defeated. The cause was obvious—Rasula had convinced them that death already was lifting his hand to blot out the lives of those who opposed them.

Bobby Browne was accomplishing wonders in the laboratory. He seldom was seen outside the distilling room. His assiduity was marked, if not commented upon. Hour after hour he stood watch over the water that went up in vapor and returned to the crystal liquid that was more precious than rubies and sapphires.

Drusilla kept close to his side during these operations. She seemed afraid or ashamed to join the others. She avoided Lady Deppingham as completely as possible. Her effort to be friendly when they were thrown together was almost pitiable.

As for Lady Agnes, she seemed stricken by an unconquerable lassitude. The spirits that had controlled her voice, her look, her movements, were sadly missing. More than once Geneva had caught her watching Dep-

pingham, though they were mute and wistful.

From time to time the sentinels brought to Lord Deppingham and Chase missives that had been tossed over the walls by the emissaries of Rasula. They were written by the leader himself and in every instance expressed deepest sympathy for the plague-ridden chateau.

"There's a paucity of real news in these gentle messages that annoys me," Chase said after reading aloud the last of the epistles to the princess and the Deppinghams. "I rejoice in my heart that he isn't aware of the true state of affairs. He doesn't appreciate the real calamity that confronts us. The plague? Poison? More piffle. If he only knew that I am now smoking my last—last cigarette on the place!"

"I believe you would die more certainly from lack of cigarettes than from an overabundance of poison," said Geneva. She was thinking of the stock she had hoarded up for him in her dressing-table drawer, under lock and key.

"I say, Chase, can't you just see Rasula's face when he learns that we've been drinking the water all along and haven't passed away?" cried Deppingham.

"At least, Mr. Chase, we once called you 'the enemy,'" said Lady Agnes in a low, dreamy voice.

"I appear to have outlived my usefulness in that respect," he said. He tossed the stub of his cigarette over the balcony rail. "Goodbye," he said, with melancholy emphasis. Then he bent an inquiring look upon the face of the princess.

"Yes," she said, as if he had asked the question aloud. "You shall have three a day, that's all."

"You'll leave the entire fortune to me when you sail away, I trust," he said. The Deppinghams were puzzled.

"But you also will be sailing away," she argued.

"I? You forget that I have had no orders to return. Sir John expects me to stay. At least, so I've heard in a roundabout way."

"You don't mean to say, Chase, that you'll stay on this damned island if the chance comes to get away?" demanded Lord Deppingham earnestly. The two women were looking at him in amazement.

"Why not? I'm an ally, not a deserter."

"You are a madman!" cried Lady Agnes. "Stay here! They would kill you in a jiffy! Absurd!"

"Not after they've had another good long look at my warships, Lady Deppingham," he replied, with a most reassuring smile. "I think I'll take a stroll along the wall before turning in."

He arose and leisurely started to go indoors. The princess called to him, and he paused.

"Wait," she said, coming up to him. They walked down the hallway together. "I will run upstairs and unlock the treasure chest. I do not trust even my maid. You shall have two tonight. No more."

"You've really saved them for me," he queried, a note of eagerness in his voice. "All these days?"

"I have been your miser," she said lightly and then ran up the stairs.

He looked after her until she disappeared at the top with a quick, shy glance over her shoulder. An expression of utter dejection came into his face. A haggard look replaced the buoyant smile.

"God, how I love her—how I love her!" he groaned, half aloud.

She was coming down the stairs now, eager, flushed, more abashed than she would have had him know. Without a word she placed the two cigarettes in his outstretched palm. Her eyes were shining.

In silence he clasped her hand and led her unresisting through the window and out upon the broad gallery. She was returning the fervid pressure of his fingers, warm and electric. They crossed slowly to the rail. Two chairs stood close together. They sat down side by side. The power of speech seemed to have left them altogether.

He laid the two cigarettes on the broad stone rail. She followed the movement with perturbed eyes and then leaned forward and placed her elbows on the rail.

"If the ship should come tomorrow you would go out of my life—you would

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"I cannot bear the thought of leaving you behind."

He laid the two cigarettes on the broad stone rail. She followed the movement with perturbed eyes and then leaned forward and placed her elbows on the rail.

"If the ship should come tomorrow you would go out of my life—you would

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