

Perils of Thunder Mountain

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NOVELIZED FROM VITAGRAPH PHOTO PLAY

SYNOPSIS.

John Davis and Hawk Morgan, executors of the estate of John Carr, miser, disagree over the disposition of the profits of the mine. Morgan seeking the gold and Ethel, Carr's adopted daughter, for himself and unsuspected by Davis, whom Ethel really loves, makes several sensational attempts upon the life of Davis. Suspicion is directed to a mysterious hermit. They all go to San Francisco to get machinery for the mine. There Davis miraculously escapes more attempts upon his life. Morgan conspires with a dock foreman to imprison Davis in a diving bell, from which he escapes. Davis, Ethel, Morgan and Spider are kidnapped by vengeful Hindus.

EPISODE 11.

IN THE OCEAN'S GRIP.

The Spider, John, Ethel and Morgan, awakened by the heat and smoke fumes from the blazing brush without the woodland temple of Silva, opened their eyes to see the grim visage of that god glaring down upon them and seeming to grin as he watched their, impotent writhings beneath the increasing heat blasts. Outside, the incantations of the Hindus grew louder.

Rising above the tree tops, the smoke of the consuming temple rose to the heavens as the outpourings of a living volcano. Far in the distance the trailing Rainface, seeing this evil sign and instinctively knowing that it was the place for which he was in search, glanced about with despairing eyes. His own feet would never bear him there in time.

He had left the city far behind him and was passing a country house. Standing before it, hitched to the fence paling, was a saddled horse, and with a grunt of satisfaction he leaped upon the animal and went speeding upon his way to the clatter of hoofs and the protesting yells of the steed's owner, who had emerged from the building just in time to witness the seeming larceny. Riding as he seldom had before, the Indian arrived upon the scene just as the flames were approaching their zenith. Absorbed in their incantations, and with the roar of the blaze in their ears, the Hindus remained unconscious of the hoof beats of the steed that was charging madly upon them.

As a bomb bursts upon its mark, so did Rainface burst upon his unsuspecting audience. Without the waste of a second he opened fire upon the group before him.

Shallum, throwing up his hands, reeled back into the arms of two of his companions, who lifting him bodily went speeding through the trees with their burden. Again the great revolver roared and a second Hindu with a yell leaped into the air and fell, a moment later, however, regaining his feet and disappearing in the wake of his fellows.

Having got rid of his enemies, the Indian ran swiftly around the burning building. The fiercely blazing fire before the door made any attempt to enter by that means unthinkable, and his eyes flew upward. Instantly they lighted upon the strong limb that overhung the doomed structure, and with a leap he secured the lariat that hung at the saddle of his purloined beast. To throw it over the limb and mount it was but the work of a dozen seconds.

From the branch he peered down through an opening in the roof upon the four tortured victims of the altar. A glance told him that not a second was to be lost. Binding the handkerchief he had found about his nose and mouth he drew up the rope and dropped it into the interior of the now blazing building.

He slid down the rope until his feet rested upon the stone altar. In the terrible heat the quickest action was necessary, and slashing Ethel's bonds apart he raised her to her feet. As he did the same for John, the girl tore strips from her petticoat which she wet in a jar of perfumed water which stood upon the altar, then bound it over her face as the Indian had protected his own.

As John arose giddily and covered his nose and mouth in the same manner he saw Rainface standing knife in hand over the still twisting forms of Morgan and the Spider. Plainly the ancient one was debating whether he should release them or leave them to the mercy of the flames, and with a commanding motion of his hand Davis bade him set them free. Plainly acting against his will the red man obeyed, and the last of the four victims struggled to his feet. In the atmosphere of the place speech was impossible. As Morgan and Bellas were masking themselves, John pointed first to the girl and then to the opening in the roof. Nodding his understanding, the Indian swarmed the length of the jasso until he gained the limb. At another motion from John the Spider followed, and a loop was swiftly made in which the girl could sit. Before the strength of the four arms above she was hoisted clear of the inferno and seated in safety. At once the rope was dropped to the remaining two.

With the fire roaring on all sides and their clothing beginning to smoke, it would be but the matter of a minute

or two more before life within the place was impossible. Yet there were two men to make the ascent. Knowing that the chances were against the last one's ability to withstand the furnace heat until his turn came, John signaled Morgan to go ahead. Without waiting any second invitation, that party seized the rope and climbed and was hauled from the fiery pit to the breathable air above.

Leaving the two other men upon the limb to haul up Davis, Rainface assisted the girl to the ground, where she stood wringing her hands as she implored them to hasten and draw her lover forth. Morgan, flattening out upon the branch, dropped the rope to the remaining one and bade him climb, at the same time slipping an open knife from his wrist and holding it concealed in the palm of his hand. As the lariat fell uncurling before him, Davis seized it and began hauling himself upward hand over hand, red tongues of flame caressing his limbs as he mounted foot by foot. Crouching above him upon the limb like a panther above his victim, the traitor Morgan glued his eyes upon the slowly ascending figure.

Weakened by the terrible heat and his hands hot and dry, it required every ounce of Davis' strength to raise his body from out the roaring mass. Yet little by little he fought his way upward until his head and shoulders appeared above the opening. Upon the ground below Ethel was standing with outstretched arms, and at his appearance a glad cry burst from her lips.

Morgan, eyes still fastened upon him and hoping every second to see him succumb to the heat and go tumbling back to his death, uttered a savage curse beneath his breath as he saw that the other, despite his terrible handicap, was about to gain the limb. Already the climbing one was but two yards beneath the bough and in a moment more would reach safety. Were the Hawk to send him back into that roaring hell he must act both quickly and skillfully, and with a cry of encouragement to the man he hated he extended his arm down the rope as though to lend a helping hand. And as John with a look of gratitude raised one arm to grasp the proffered palm Morgan pressed the edge of the keen blade to the rope. With a cry of despair the betrayed one plunged straight down into the heart of the furnace.

Paralyzed by horror at the sight, Ethel covered her face with her hands and stood swaying but unable to move. Released from the weight of John's body by his fall, the limb containing the Spider and Morgan whipped itself sharply upward. The Spider was thrown headlong to the ground and Morgan, also dislodged, only saved himself from following his victim into the fire by a fortunate clutch of the limb.

The knife in its release twisted in his hand, cutting a gash in his palm; then disappeared into the flames below. Regaining the branch by a desperate effort, Morgan crawled its length with his limbs trembling beneath him until he reached the trunk, from which he dropped to the ground. At the same time the rafters gave way before the gnawing of the fire and fell into the seething pit below with a crash that sent the sparks flying upward in a spout of flame.

Morning found the girl still prostrated and the red man sitting beside her with a face as impressive as though carved from stone. The Hawk got upon his feet and thrust one hand into his coat pocket.

"He's gone and we can do nothing more. We must get Ethel away from here as quickly as possible. Rainface and I will take her back to the hotel. Bellas, you stay around until the fire is out and see that nothing else catches. Keep the Indian's horse until everything is safe, then come and report what you find."

"All right," returned the Spider, and Rainface acquiescing by a nod they endeavored to lead the girl away. Struggling and protesting that she would never leave the place until her lover's body had been recovered, she at last broke down and permitted herself to be supported to the van.

When John was cut loose by the villainous Hawk he dropped like a plummet, striking one corner of the big center stone of the altar. Instinctively throwing out his hand he clutched one arm of the figure, and at that wrench the idol, which was pivoted in the middle, swung on its balancing point, thus revealing a hole into which the body of the man dropped. In his fall he dragged after him the image of Silva, which burst into pieces, some of the fragments wedging the pivoted stone so that it could not spring back and close the opening.

John, stunned for the moment by the fall, presently aroused himself. Inspection showed that he was in a rude cellar, the roof of which was upheld by big columns formed of logs. Boxes were scattered about and an ordinary lantern hung from a peg. This he took down, lighted and began an exploration of the place. A few moments' search revealed a rough, punched door at a far corner, and

raising its latch he held his lantern high and gazed ahead. An earthen tunnel, sloping down, lay before him.

"So, this is how the fakirs got away with the valuable offerings given Silva by the god's dupes," he murmured. Closing the door behind him he stepped into the passageway. A short distance farther on the tunnel broadened into a shallow cave, with broken walls and boulders scattered about. Here John halted. Seeing nothing suspicious and becoming aware that a subdued light was entering the place from the opposite side, he again stepped forward. Before him was an entrance well screened by vines, and parting these he peered out. At that instant from behind him four Hindus, rising from their places of concealment where they had dropped as they saw his light coming down the passageway, threw themselves upon him. Hearing their swiftly approaching steps he whirled to meet this new danger, but was an instant too late. A club in the hand of a herculean oriental fell upon his head with a crash and he fell senseless upon the ground.

Quickly he was bound, and this done the giant who had felled him, and who was addressed by his companions as "Shere-Khan," motioned with one hand. Instantly two of the smaller men disappeared, returning a moment later with the body of Shellum. This they deposited at the side of the fallen one.

From a corner of the cave a rude litter was brought and upon this the senseless body of Davis was placed. Shellum's turban was fitted upon his head and the pointed native shoes of the dead Hindu drawn upon his feet. Then draping his body with the tunic so that only the head and feet protruded at either end, they left him and devoted their attentions to their former companion who had perished before the Indian's big gun. Placing John's coat over Shellum, they carried the corpse to a niche in the wall and there left it.

Returning to the unconscious one, two seized the front of the improvised litter, two the rear and gravely left the cave, not noticing that their bare feet left more or less distinct imprints upon the soft ground.

Left alone in his vigil beside the now smoldering fire, the Spider sat under a tree smoking lazily. Presently his eyes wandered upward to the limb, and as they did so a thought seemed to strike him, for putting his pipe aside he arose. Shinning up the tree he worked his way out on the limb until he came to where the remnant of the rope still dangled, there pausing and looking down. Followed a moment's reflection, whereafter he pulled up the fragment of rope and inspected it.

Extending half way through it he saw a cut such as could only have been made by a sharp-edged instrument. A frown crossed his face.

"He's lower down than even I thought him," he muttered as he let the rope end fall.

Next he looked down into the ruins of the temple. The blaze was dying

and the top of the altar, ashes covered, was plainly revealed. A second glance showed him the pivoted stone still partly open, and he uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Well, I'll be hanged if he ain't got away again!"

Marveling over his discovery he descended to the ground, cut down a few saplings and began making a sort of bridge which started upward from the ground and ran to the altar top, over which the still hot debris was smoking. This done, he began mounting it cautiously. Gaining the top of the altar he saw how a part of the arm of the god had wedged the pivot, and began kicking into the ashes, at the same time saying:

"Well, you were some good after all, old man."

Next he tested the pivot and found it firm, and being satisfied that it would not close upon him and make him a prisoner, he dropped into the cellar as John had done.

The place was still dimly lighted by the glow from above, and a short search discovered to him a fragment of candle. This he lighted and proceeded down the passageway, following in the tracks of Davis. He arrived at the cave and proceeded to search the same, soon later running across the dead body of Shellum which was covered by John's coat. The coat he at once recognized. Looking at the torn and footprint-marked floor, he saw the heavy imprints of John's shoes mingled with the tracks of the bare feet of the natives; further exploration revealing where the Hindus had cut poles and made a litter. He began soliloquizing.

"Davis fell through the altar and came here. He was attacked by the Hindus and put up a big fight, but they made him a prisoner, put some of the dead man's clothes on him and took him away. Now I wonder why?"

Not being able to solve the proposition further, he retraced his steps, climbed out of the altar and rode away. Meeting a man upon the road the Spider stopped him.

"Seen any Hindus passing this way, partner?" he asked as he reined in his horse. The man nodded.

"Yep. I seen four heathens carrying another man on some poles about a mile ahead where the big cluster of trees grows by the cross roads."

On rode the Spider to the Mackenzie hotel, throwing open the door of the apartment and looking in. Ethel, still nearly prostrated by grief, was lying on a couch, with Morgan roughly trying to console her and Rainface sitting silently in a corner. At the Spider's entrance all started to their feet, the girl first of all. Bellas approached her with a smile.

"I've got good news for you, miss. Davis didn't die in the fire," he said. She threw up her hands, sobbing, crying hysterically.

"Oh, thank God! Thank God!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Morgan, a devil of rage in his heart at this news. The Spider began explaining.

"Finally I reached a cave and saw evidences of his having been attacked there and captured. My guess is that the Hindus jumped him, knocked him out, put Shellum's clothes on him and took him away. They may have brought him to the city for some rite. Anyway, they started in this direction, for I saw their footprints in the mud." Rainface pricked up his ears.

"Then me trail 'em," he said as he left the room. Ethel, starting to follow him, was detained by the Hawk.

"You'd only embarrass him, and we must hustle. He will travel twice as fast alone." Knowing the latter statement to be true, the girl again sank into her seat.

Once outside the Indian quickly secured a taxi and started for the scene of the fire. Arrived there, he dismissed the machine and went to where the footprints were still visible in the mud. Standing erect, he shaded his eyes with his hands and scanned the country about with the gaze of an eagle. This done he started off on an Indian trot.

Rainface gone, Morgan turned to the girl.

"Bellas and I will have to go to the depot and tell that bunch of miners that we can't start today." Leaving her with the assurance that they would soon return, they departed. Out in the corridor the Spider turned upon the Hawk.

"Did you cut that rope?" Morgan started back.

"No—" The other laughed sneeringly.

"Funny, ain't it? First, there is a cut on your hand, then another on the limb where a knife twisted and a third on the rope. Say, Morgan, I'll take off my hat to you. There are some things so damn low down that even I ain't equal to them. However, that's all over, and what next?"

"We will put the girl in safety and then find out where he is. Meanwhile go and get old Doc Fake and his pal and explain to them what we want. They'll do anything for the coin. Better rig yourself up as chauffeur and take them back to the hotel for the girl." Briefly he explained his plan as Spider listened.

In her room Ethel started as a knock sounded at her door. Opening it, she saw two professional-looking men standing at the entrance. The foremost bowed.

"You are Miss Carr?" She nodded.

"I am sorry to say that we have bad news for you. Mr. John Davis—"

"Is he dead?" she cried, falling back. The other hastened to reassure her.

"No, it is not so bad as that—at least he was not when I left. But he is at St. Luke's hospital and badly cut up. As soon as he recovered consciousness he asked for you. We had better hurry. My car is outside."

In an instant she had seized her hat and was hurrying after them. Gently assisting her into the machine, Doctor Fake turned to the disguised Spider who sat at the wheel in front.

"St. Luke's hospital—quick, James," he commanded. Touching his cap respectfully the rascally driver switched on the current.

John Davis, bound and unconscious and carried on the litter by the Hindus, came to his senses to find himself sitting in a chair in a farmhouse on a high bluff overlooking the sea. Before him, partaking of a meal of rice, were the farmer, his son, two servants and the four other Hindus who had borne him here. Seeing that they were deeply engrossed with their eating and paying no attention to him, he steadily worked away until he had freed one hand. This done he slipped it behind him, where he carried a small sheath knife concealed in the waistband of his trousers, and drawing it forth quickly severed his remaining bonds. At the table Shere-Khan was telling the farmer what had happened.

"The great master, Ram Chunder, is dead and so is Shellum. We do not know the fate of Joost-Singh. Also, the shrine of Silva is burned. What shall we do with the captive?"

"Let the foreign dog die." A slight movement on John's part drew their attention to him, and all sprang to their feet. As they did so he leaped from his chair and darted past them, and seeing stairs leading upward, bounded up them. A door confronted him, and throwing it open he entered, closing it behind him only to find that it had no lock. The next second his pursuers threw themselves against it.

Bracing himself against a piece of furniture he placed his shoulder against the panel as he pitted his sole strength against their combined weight. But though for several minutes he managed to hold them at bay he well knew that the unequal contest must soon end. Already his back was bending beneath the terrific strain, and it would be but the matter of another minute before he must be bent backward as a willow withe. Realizing that his only hope was to catch them off their guard, he suddenly released the door and sprang aside. Caught off their balance they fell sprawling upon

the floor, and leaping over their prostrate forms the pursued one dashed up another flight of stairs to find himself in a garret filled with boxes and miscellaneous furniture. Quickly tossing the heaviest of these against the door he threw his weight upon his barricade and grimly waited.

His respite was brief. In the hall without sounded the patter of bare feet and the next instant there was a great heave upon the door. Again he threw all his strength in opposition to theirs, and so great was his effort, and so greatly was he assisted by the heavy furniture before him, that after a moment's futile struggle the ones outside relaxed their efforts and the pressure ceased. Taking advantage of the opportunity, John wrenched a leg from a table and laid it beside him for instant use.

Finding themselves baffled in this direction, the Hindus resorted to stratagem. Securing a ladder, one of their number placed it against the outside of the building and mounted to the roof. Then creeping along until he was over a window of the garret, he made a rope fast to a chimney and began lowering himself. At the signal of Shere-Khan, who was watching all from the ground, those in the hall again attacked the barricaded room. As the lone defender was forced to pit his strength against the assault, the Hindu on the rope swung himself to a window of the room and lifted it.

Within the room the door was slowly giving way before the combined attack. Flashing a glance over his shoulder, the defender saw the man entering the room behind him and thus found himself confronted by two evils. Either he must be attacked from behind and be unable to defend himself, or else he must leave the barricade and confront this new foe. Choosing the chance which he thought most promising, he abandoned his shoving, leaped to the window and sent the incoming flyer to the ground by a terrific blow upon the jaw. As he turned to again face the door, his barricade came tumbling down with a crash and his assailants swarmed into the room. He braced himself to meet them.

Rainface, still a considerable distance away, saw the Hindu hanging from the rope outside the window, then caught a glimpse of John as he sent the oriental flying to the ground. Knowing that his friend was in dire distress he redoubled his efforts. Throwing open the door of the house, and guided by the uproar above, he went bounding up the stairs like an enraged catamount.

Within the room John was putting up the fight of his life against hopeless odds. As his foremost antagonist leaped the barrier which had helped hold the door the lone defender met him with a blow in the face that sent him flying into a corner as though thrown from a catapult, then made a jump for the table leg which he had laid aside for close work such as this. But before he could reach it a lithe body wrapped itself serpentlike about him, and from all sides blows fell upon him like wintery rain. Protecting his head as best he could, and using his fists right and left, for a moment he beat them off. But no mortal man could long have endured such an attack single handed, and with a final heave that sent another of his foes flying against the side of the building he went down beneath the mass as a stag is dragged down by wolves. Believing that his end had come and that further resistance was futile he still fought doggedly on.

Rainface, dashing into the room, arrived there just as his friend was pulled to the floor. Gun in hand he went leaping about them, but so swiftly did the struggling mass roll and change that he dared not shoot lest the heavy bullet of his forty-five should pass through the body of an enemy and also kill the man whom he so much desired to save. Then suddenly seeing his chance he raised his weapon.

Shere-Khan, bursting into the room just at this instant, took in the scene at a glance. At the very instant the Indian was in the act of pulling the trigger, "The Tiger" swung a heavy club upon the red man's head, and old Rainface dropped like a stunned ox—going down as had his ancestors, fighting bravely and in the midst of battle. John also had been beaten into senselessness, and battered and torn the unconscious pair were dragged to a lower room and pinioned. Shere-Khan spoke:

"We'll waste no more time on these pariah dogs. Get the sacks."

From a closet the farmer brought forth two long gunny bags, and into these the senseless victims were thrust. Raising them upon their shoulders, four of the Hindus carried them to the edge of the sheer bluff which overlooked the sea. For a moment they swung them back and forth as a hammock swings in order that sufficient momentum might be attained, then released them.

End over end they hurtled in their dizzy plunge toward the sea.

(END OF ELEVENTH EPISODE.)



Peered Through an Opening in the Roof Upon the Four Tortured Victims.