

his feet, huddled hideously on the floor. "My God!" And he stooped to the body.

The woman touched him on the shoulder. "Come," she said. "It's no good. It was a grand blow, a king's blow. You cannot help him."

"But—but—" he flustered as he rose. The emergency was beyond him. He had only half a strong man's equipment—the mere brawn. "Two men killed. I must get back to the ship."

He saw the woman smiling, and caught at his calmness. There was comprehension in her eyes, and to be understood is so often to be despised. "You must come too," he added, on an impulse, and stopped, appalled by the idea.

"To the ship?" she cried, and laughed. "Oh, la la! But no! Still, we must go from here. The police will be here any minute, and if they find you—" She left it unsaid, and the gap was ominous.

The police! To mention them was to touch all that was conventional, suburban, and second-class in Dawson. He itched to be gone. A picture of Vine-street Police Court and a curtly aloof magistrate flashed across his mind, and a reminiscence of evening paper headlines, and his mind fermented hysterically.

The woman put back her knife in some secret recess of her clothes, and opened the door cautiously. "Now!" she said, but paused, and came back. She went to the picture of the Virgin and turned its face to the wall. "One should not forget respect," she observed, apologetically. "These things are remembered. Now come."

No sooner were they in the gloomy alley outside than the neighbourhood of others was known to them. There was a sound of many feet ploughing in the mud, and a suppressed voice gave a short order. The woman stopped and caught Dawson's arm.

"Hush!" she whispered. "It is the police. They have come for the men. They will be on both sides of us. Wait and listen."

Dawson stood rigid, his heart thumping. The darkness seemed to surge around him with menaces and dangers. The splashing feet were nearer, coming up on their right, and once some metal gear clinked as its wearer scraped against the wall. He could smell men, as he remembered afterwards. The woman beside him remained motionless till it seemed that the advancing men must run into them.

"Come quietly," she whispered at length, putting warm lips to his ear. Her hand dropped along his arm till she grasped his fingers. She led him swiftly away from the place, having waited till the police should be so near that the noise of their advance would drown their own retreat.

On they went, then, as before, swishing through the foulness underfoot, and without speaking. Only at times the woman's hold on his hand would tighten, and, meeting with no response, would slacken again, and she would draw him on ever more quickly.

"Where are we going?" he ventured to ask.

"We are escaping," she answered, with a brief tinkle of laughter. "If you knew what we are escaping from, you would not care where. But hurry, always!"

Soon, however, she paused, still holding his hand. Again they heard footsteps, and this time the woman turned to him desperately.

"There is a door near by," she breathed. "We must find it, or—" again the unspoken word. "Feel always along the wall there. Farther, go farther. It should be here."

They sprang on, with hands to the rough plaster on the wall, till Dawson encountered the door, set level with the wall, for which they sought.

"Push," panted the woman, heaving at it with futile hands. "Push it in."

Dawson laid his shoulder to it, his arms folded, and shoved desperately till his head buzzed. As he eased up he heard the near feet of the menacing police again.

"You must push it in!" cried the woman. "It is the only way. If not—"

"Here, catch hold of this," said Dawson, and she found the bronze image in her hands. "Let me come," he said, and standing back a little, he flung his twelve stone of bone and muscle heavily on the door. It creaked, and some

fastening within broke and fell to the ground.

Once again, he assaulted it, and it was open. They passed rapidly within, and closed it behind them, and with the woman's hand guiding, Dawson stumbled up a long, narrow, slopely stair, that gave on to the flat roof of the building. Above them was sky again. The rain had passed, and the frosty stars of Mozambique shone faintly. He took a deep breath as he received the image from the hands of the woman.

"You hear them?" she said, and he listened with a shudder to the passing of the men below.

"But we must go on," she said. "We are not safe yet. Over the wall to the next roof. Come!"

They clambered over a low parapet, and dropped six feet to another level. Dawson helped the woman up the opposite wall, and she sat reconnoitring on the top.

"Come quietly," she warned him, and he clambered up beside her and looked down at the roof before them. In a kind of tent persons appeared to be sleeping; their breath was plainly to be heard.

"You must walk like a rat," she whispered, smiling, and lowered herself. He followed. She was crouching in the shadow of the wall, and drew him down beside her. Somebody had ceased to sleep in the tent, and was gabbling drowsily, in a monotonous sing-song.

Out of the tent crawled a man, lean and black and bearded, with a sheet wrapped around him. He stood up and looked around, yawning. The woman nestled closer to Dawson, who gripped instinctively on the bronze image. The man walked to the parapet on their left and looked over, and then walked back to the tent and stood irresolutely, muttering to himself. Squatted under the wall, Dawson found room amid the race of his disordered thoughts to wonder that he did not instantly see them.

He was coming towards them, and Dawson felt the shoulder that pressed against his arm shrug slightly. The man was ten paces away, walking right on to them, and looking to the sky, when, with throbbing temples and tense lips, Dawson rose, ran at him, and gripped him. He had the throat in the clutch of his right hand, and strained the man's yell as it was convulsed. They went down together, writhing and clutching, Dawson uppermost, the man under him scratching and slapping at him with open hands. He drew up a knee, and found a lean chest under it, drove it in, and choked his man to silence and unconsciousness.

"Take this, take this," urged the woman, bending beside him. She pressed her slender-bladed knife on him. "Just a prick, and he is still for ever."

Dawson rose. "No," he said. "He's still enough now. No need to kill him." He looked at the body and from it to the woman. "Didn't I get him to rights?" he asked exultingly.

She raised her face to his. "With only the bare hands to take an armed man—"

"Armed!" repeated Dawson.

"Surely," she answered. "That at least, is always sure. See," she pulled the man's sheet wide. Girt into a loin-cloth below was an ugly broad blade. "Yes, it was magnificent. You are a man, my friend."

"And you," he said, thrilled by her adulation, are a woman."

"Then," she began spiritedly; but in a heat of cordial impulse he took her to him and kissed her on the lips.

"I was wondering when it would be," he said, slowly, as he released her. "When you spoke to the German about the bad word, I began to wonder. I knew it would come. Kiss me again, my friend, and we will go on."

"Are we getting towards the landing-stage?" he asked her, as the next roof was crossed. "I mustn't miss my boat, you know."

"Oh, that!" she answered. "You want to go back?"

"Well, of course," he replied, in some surprise. "That's what I was trying to do when I knocked at your door. I've missed my dinner as it is."

"Missed your dinner!" she repeated, with a bubble of mirth. "Ye-es; you have lost that, but"—she came to him and laid a hand on his shoulder, speaking softly—"but you have seen me. Is it nothing, friend, to have saved me?"

He had stopped, and she was looking up to him, half-smiling, half-entreatingly, wholly alluring. He looked down into her dark face with a sudden quickening about the heart.

"And all this fighting," she continued, as though he were to be convinced of something. "You conquer men as though you were bred on the roofs of Mozambique. You fight like—a hero. It is a rush, a blow, a tumble, and you have them huddled at your feet. And when you remember all this, will you not be glad, friend—will you not be glad that it was for me?"

He nodded, clearing his throat huckily. Her hand on his shoulder was a thing to charm him to fire.

"I'd fight—I'd fight for you," he replied uneasily, "as long as—as long as there was any one to fight."

He was feeling his way in speech, as best he could, past conventionalities. There had dawned on him, dully and half-seen, the unfitness of little proprieties and verbose frills while he went to war across the roofs with this woman.

"You would," she said fervently, with half-closed eyes. "I know you would."

She dropped her hand, and stood beside him in silence. There was a long pause. He guessed she was waiting for the next move from him, and he nerved himself to be adequate to her unspoken demand.

"You lead on," he said at last, unsteadily.

"Where?" she asked breathlessly.

He did not speak, but waved an open hand that gave her the freedom of choice. It was his surrender to the wild spirit of the Coast, and he grasped the head of the brass image the tighter when he had done it. She and Fate must guide now: it rested with him only to break opposite heads.

She smiled and shivered. "Come on, then," she said, and started before him.

They traversed perhaps a score of roofs enclosed with high parapets, on to each of which he lifted her, hands in her armpits, swinging her cleanly to the level of his face and planting her easily and—partly on the coping. He welcomed each opportunity to take hold of her and put out the strength of his muscles, and she sat where he placed her, smiling and silent, while he clambered up and dropped down on the other side.

At length a creaking wooden stair that hung precariously on the sheer side of a house brought them again to the ground level. It was another gloomy alley into which they descended, and the darkness about him and the mud underfoot struck Dawson with a sense of being again in familiar surroundings. The woman's hand slid into his as he stood, and they started along again together.

The alley seemed to be better frequented than that of which he already had experience. More than once dark, sheeted figures passed them by, noiseless save for the underfoot swish in the mud, and presently the alley widened into a little square, at one side of which there was a fresh rustle of green things. At the side of it a dim light showed through a big open door, from which came a musical murmur of voices, and Dawson recognised a church.

"The Little Garden of St. Sebastian," murmured the woman, and led him on to cross the square. A figure that had been hidden in the shadow now lounged forth, and revealed itself to them as a man in uniform. He stood across their way, and accosted the woman briefly in Portuguese.

Dawson stood sidgeling while she spoke with him. He seemed to be repeating a brief phrase over and over again, harshly and irritably; but she was cajoling, remonstrating, arguing as he had seen her argue in that ill-fated room an hour back.

"What's the matter with him?" demanded Dawson impatiently.

"He says he won't let me go," answered the woman, with a tone of despair in her voice.

"The devil he won't! What's he got to do with it?"

"Oh, these little policemen, they always arrest me when they can," she replied, with a smile.

"Here, you!" cried Dawson, addressing himself to the man in uniform,—"you go away. Voetsaak, me! You mind your own business, and get out."

The officer drawled something in his own tongue, which was, of course, unintelligible to Dawson, but it had the effect of annoying him strangely.

"You little beast!" he said, and knocked the man down with his fist.

"Run," hissed the woman at his elbow.—"run before he can get up. No, not that way. To the church, and out by another way!"

She caught his hand, and together they raced across the square and in through the big door.

There were a few people within, most sleeping on the benches and along the floor by the walls. In the chancel there were others, masked by the lights, busy with some office. A wave of sudden song issued from among them as Dawson and the woman entered, and gave way again to the high emaculate gibbering of a man that stood before the altar. All along the sides of the church was shadow, and the woman speedily found a little arched door.

"Come through the middle of it," she whispered urgently to Dawson, as she packed her loose skirts together in her hand—"cleanly through the middle; do not rub the wall as you come."

"It was the door of the lepers," she explained, as she let her skirts swish down again. "See, there is the light by the sea!"

The wind came cleanly up the alley, and soon they were at its mouth, where a lamp flickered in the breeze. Dawson drew a deep breath, and tucked the image under his arm. His palm was sore with the roughness of its head.

"Some one is passing," said the woman in a low tone. "Wait here till they are by."

Footsteps were approaching along the front, and very soon Dawson heard words and started.

"What is it?" whispered the woman, her breath on his neck.

"Listen!" he answered curtly.

The others came within the circle of the lamp—a girl and two men.

"I do hope he's found my idol," the girl was saying.

Dawson stepped into the light, and they turned and saw him.

"Why, here he is," exclaimed Miss Paterson shrilly.

He raised his hat to the woman, who stood at the entrance to the alley—raised it as he would have raised it to a waitress in a bun-shop, and went over to the people from the second-class saloon.

"I found it," he said, lifting the image forward, and brushing with his hand at the foulness of blood and hair upon it. "But I was almost thinking I should miss the boat."

Perceval Gibbon in "Blackwood's."

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