

enough to take care of myself. You look honest, and I trust you. My principal reason for engaging your services is the safety of my saddle. I want you to guard it as you would your life, and you'll find in the end that you never before came across a better paid billet. Now fetch it out.'

I hauled the saddle from under the bed.

'The pocket in the lap is full of banknotes. Those wallets on each side of the pommel are full of sovereigns. You are surprised? Yes, there is in all £5000 there. I drew the money at Barberton for the purpose of paying concession fees to the King of Swaziland, from whom I have received valuable mining properties. You've heard, I suppose, that he will accept nothing but good gold coin—no paper money for him. But as nobody but myself can transact this business with King Umbandine, the money must lie here until I am up and about again. 'Tis just the sort of swag that some of the shady characters about here would like to decamp with. You understand?'

I nodded confidently, although an uneasy feeling of responsibility crept over me. Dupont seemed satisfied, and dozed off to sleep shortly after taking the doctor's composing draught, and soon fell into a heavy, trance-like condition.

Presently Granger brought in supper, and began fitting and hovering about the bed in a manner which got up my nerves. I told him that the doctor had given orders that the patient must be kept quiet, and he departed, casting a decidedly evil glance at me as he closed the door. This did not increase my comfort, but I ate my supper heartily notwithstanding, and then went outside for a breath of fresh air, taking the precaution of locking the door after me.

As I stood under the shade of the thatched roof, smoking and taking stock of my surroundings by the pale moonlight, which now threw a dreamy radiance over the squalid place, I heard voices proceeding from the hut next to mine. The voices were clear and distinct as contrasted with the muffled uproar in the bar. I had no wish to play the eaves-dropper, but Granger's sinister face made me apprehensive and I listened with little scruple. One was a woman's voice, sweet and musical; the other was Granger's, smooth and suave.

'Fathen,' the woman was saying, 'I cannot imagine why you brought me to this dreadful place. I was so happy and peaceful at the Grahamstown Convent. I thought I should also be happy here with you, but those brutal men, and the wretched sights of this place terrify me. Pray, send me away again—anywhere, anywhere, out of this!'

'I brought you here, my dear, because it was necessary,' answered Granger's voice. 'If it suits my purpose to have you here with me it is your duty to obey. Did they not teach you obedience at the Convent?'

'Oh, father, I know I must obey you, but surely you do not intend to remain long in this wild place?'

'I do not—if fortune favors me. If I succeed in a certain enterprise which I have set my mind upon I shall have made enough to call my savings a 'modest pile'; meanwhile, take things easy. I hope to sell this place in few days' time, and then, my girl you and I shall travel, and you will have enough excitement to banish all recollections of Staysndorp and its ways. We will ship at Durban, and that is why I removed you from the convent. Have patience a little longer; take a book, or go to sleep—I have important business to see to this night, but I'll be back again shortly.'

This scrap of conversation, especially its allusion to the business of the night, did not impress me favorably, and I felt in a state of ner-

vous tension to which I was accustomed. As I heard Granger unlatch his door I instinctively drew farther back into the shade. I noted that his face wore a strange, drawn look, while his small eyes seemed to sparkle like diamonds in the moonlight. He closed his hut door, and then crept on tip-toe to the window of the Captain's hut, and peered in. He seemed surprised to find me absent, but after a little hesitation drew a key from his pocket, unlocked the door and entered.

'So,' thought I, 'there are two keys for that door. I wonder what his game is?' I also crept silently forward, and peeped through the window. Granger placed a bottle of whisky on the table, approached the bed, and bent over the Captain's face, closely scrutinising it. This inspection was a brief one, and as he moved towards the door I again took shelter in the shade. He came out, relocked the door, and went off in the direction of the bar-room.

I pondered over the situation, and the more I thought over the large amount of ready cash lying in the room, and our host's evident excitement, the less I liked the position of affairs. The man's stealthy, cat-like movements filled me with forebodings. I resolved to keep watchful guard, and was about to re-enter my hut when a female form emerged from Granger's abode. As she stood, glancing upward, in the full rays of the moon, I mentally confessed that I had never before beheld a fairer vision of loveliness, etherealised as it was by the radiance enveloping her. She was tall, with dark hair loosely coiled on top of her head; her face was as pale as marble, and the features as perfect in outline as the chiselled lineaments of a classic sculpture. As she glanced timidly around I noticed that her full dark eyes glistened with tears. I waited until she entered her hut again, which she did after a few minutes' apparent meditation, and then sought my own. My mind was occupied with the beauty I had just gazed on, and somewhat bewildered by its conjunction with the suspicious looks and doubtful actions of the beauty's father. This latter reflection reminded me of the whisky bottle, which I promptly emptied by pouring its contents into the slop-pail, suspecting the spirit to be drugged, after which I threw myself upon my bed to think over the events of the day.

My long walk, my recent privations, and the various excitements of the evening must have thoroughly wearied me, for sleep quickly overcame me. I could not have slept long when I was suddenly aroused by loud cries. The confusion of ideas generally accompanying an abrupt call from slumber soon cleared from my brain, and I sprang to my feet. I beheld Captain Dupont half out of bed struggling with a tall and powerfully built man, who was a complete stranger to me. The Captain was shouting for help, but the big man was grimly silent. But as I jumped from my bed the stranger's eye encountered mine, and in a moment he had relinquished his hold of the captain, and was upon me. I grappled my assailant with a courage out of all proportion to my weak state, and soon discovered, under his masculine grip, that I was but a child in his hands. Together we struggled, desperately and silently, back and forward, from one side of the hut to the other, until the crazy walls shook again, and the plaster flew off them in clouds. I could see from the tail of my eye that the Captain was lying exhausted on his pillow and groaning with pain. My breath began to fail me, and I speedily discovered that I stood no chance against my powerful enemy; he gradually forced me back, inch by inch, until he had me on the bed, with one knee on my chest and one hand grasping my throat. The other hand I saw raised over me with a formidable knife in its grip. The blow fell, and my senses reeled

as a burning pain shot through my left side. When I again opened my laden eyes and saw, as if in a dream, that a woman in white, with long black hair flowing, stood in the open doorway. The stranger had again rushed to the Captain's bed, knife in hand. Then the girl, whom I recognised as Granger's daughter, uttered a piercing scream, and rushing from the door seized the murderous arm with both her own, and clung to it with all her weight and strength. The Captain was weakly fumbling under the pillow. The man turned, with a savage growl, to wrest himself free from the unexpected encumbrance; he fiercely tore away the brave girl's clasp, and then flung her from him towards the wall. His violence tore open the bosom of her night-gown, and as he threw her from him his knife became entangled in the silver chain of a large silver locket which she wore suspended from her neck. The force with which she fell severed the chain upon the knife's edge, and the locket—or reliquary, as it afterwards proved to be—fell to the floor with a musical ring. At the same instant a flash of fire sprang from Dupont's hand, a loud report shook the hut, and the ruffian tumbled down in a heap beside the brave girl who had so gallantly risked her life to defend the helpless invalid. From the moment when I received my wound to the moment of the fall of my assailant only an infinitesimal fraction of time elapsed, far shorter indeed than it takes to write the description of it. I saw the struggle much as a preoccupied man would gaze on a cinematograph picture; I remember trying to struggle to my feet as a crowd of excited faces gazed from the doorway upon the battlefield, and then I remembered no more.

When I came to myself I felt very weak and feverish. Granger's daughter was attending me under the direction of the Irish doctor. As my mind became clearer I resolved that my recovery should, if sure, be certainly slow if my convalescence would banish my fair nurse from my side. I learned that I had passed through a comparatively mild phase of brain-fever, and had been delirious for days.

It was not until I was well advanced on the road to recovery that I was allowed to receive a visit from Captain Dupont, who, though by no means robust, was now well able to move about. Sitting by my bed, he regarded me with a pleasant smile.

'Well, my lad,' he began, 'we've both had a narrow shave of it, and for my own part I am not sorry for what has happened. Nay! lad, I am the happiest man in South Africa through the attack on the gold.'

'I looked at him with undisguised surprise and remarked, 'It hardly seems the best thing for a man to have his life threatened, but in your case it seems to have had a wonderfully curative effect.'

He laughed. 'We both got a dig in the ribs, and my puncture has flooded me with happiness. I see you want to know all about it, so I won't keep you in suspense any longer. To start from the beginning. I am the principal director out here of the Auriferous Areas Company, and have for some time past been negotiating a big deal with the Swaziland king. Affairs have at last been satisfactorily settled, and the money lying there is the first instalment of the purchase price; a big mining venture will be the result. With my aid Granger was admitted to large holdings in my company, and will make a big profit on his speculation. Of course he knew of my trip with the money from Barberton, and my business journeys frequently brought me to his hotel, and consequently his interest in the safety of the cash was as deep as my own. My arrival on this occasion was rather earlier than I had intended, and when he found I should be domiciled with