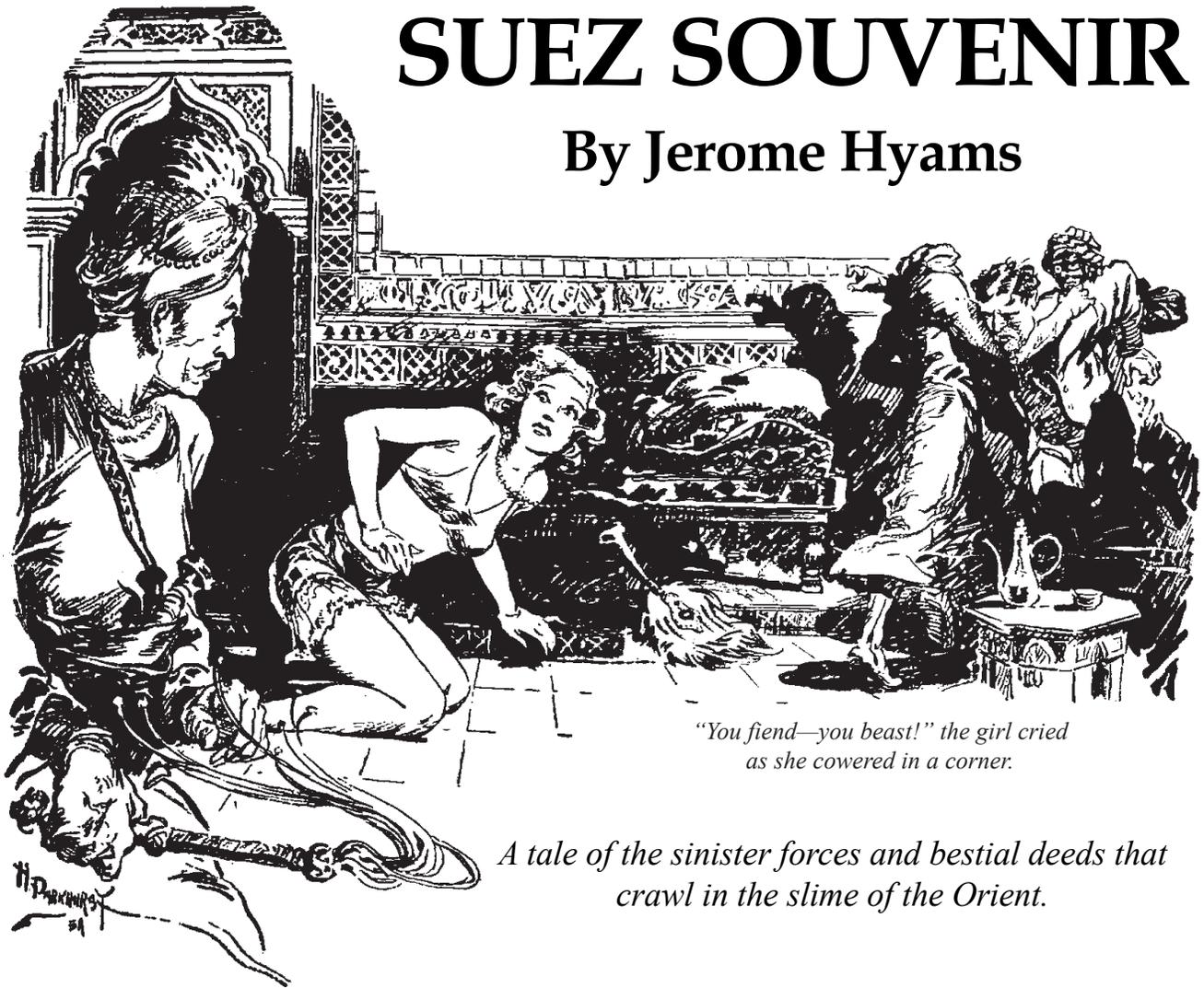


# SUEZ SOUVENIR

By Jerome Hyams



*"You fiend—you beast!" the girl cried  
as she cowered in a corner.*

*A tale of the sinister forces and bestial deeds that  
crawl in the slime of the Orient.*

**B**LACK midnight lay like a noxious blanket over the stifling, unlighted and stinking streets of Port Said. From out in the harbor a P. & O. steamer hooted through the lifeless August air like a tortured owl.

Cliff Downey, ace operative of the Consolidated Detective Agency of Chicago, U. S. A., turned an unlighted corner and found himself in a narrow street in the heart of the native quarter. Blank-walled houses crowded ominously on either side, windowless and menacing, their overhanging second stories frowning down upon the cobblestones below.

Before one such structure, larger than its neighbors and painted in bilious pinks and greens, Cliff Downey hesitated. And even as he inspected the house, out of the tail of his eye he noticed two shadowy figures further along the filth-littered street—two loitering *fellahins* or natives of the working class, skulking in the blackness. They were watching him.

The detective's hairy right fist closed over the cold

butt of the automatic in his coat pocket. His heavy jaw shot forward. The short red hairs at the nape of his neck bristled warningly.

He waited.

Cliff Downey had landed in Port Said that same afternoon. He had gone at once to the American consulate. He had found the consul away on vacation leave, and the consulate in charge of the vice-consul, Leo Sumner, a young, blonde, pleasant-faced American not ten months from the States.

To Sumner, Cliff Downey had presented his credentials. Vice-Consul Sumner had looked at Downey interrogatively. "Here on pleasure or business, Mr. Downey?" he had inquired in his pleasant Kentucky voice.

"Business. I'm searching for Wilda Rhodes, the young American girl who disappeared here in Port Said last month." Downey drew a snapshot from his pocket "Here's a picture of her."

The photograph revealed a slender, virginal, black-

haired young woman clad in a scanty bathing suit. Her eyes were dark and mysterious, and her mouth seemed warm, passionate. Her breasts were firm and pointed, her hips slimly feminine, her legs tapered and intriguing.

Downey said, "Her folks have plenty of money. They think she may have been kidnaped for ransom. They hired me to find her."

Sumner widened his forthright blue eyes. "I'm afraid that's rather a hopeless undertaking. Many people vanish here in Port Said, but few ever return." He lighted a cigarette. "Unescorted women have no business in a place like this. It's the sink-hole of the world."

"You mean other women have disappeared here recently?"

Sumner shrugged. "Wilda Rhodes is the first American girl to drop out of sight in Port Said since I've been here; but several nationals of other countries have mysteriously vanished during the past several months—two French girls, a Brazilian, a German girl——"

"Wilda Rhodes is the one I'm interested in," Downey interrupted brusquely. "And I intend to find her!" The detective leaned forward. "What about the white-slave traffic here? Who's the big gun?"

Sumner shrugged. "All that is supposed to have been wiped out. The Egyptian government, with the co-operation of the British, have made a fairly clean sweep. Of course," he added confidentially, "it's whispered that the flesh trade still goes on, underground. There's a wealthy native named Azhar ibn Barakah who's rumored to be at the head of it—but obviously that's only hearsay. One never sees the man personally. He leads a totally sequestered life in his palatial house in the native section."

"Where is this house of his!" Cliff Downey shot the query abruptly.

"It's a pink-and-green affair on the Harah Takiyyah—the Street of the Monastery," Sumner had answered.

"Thanks," Cliff Downey had said. "That'll be my starting point."

And now, at midnight, the Consolidated operative walked slowly past the pink-and-green walls of Azhar ibn Barakah's house— while two burly, shadowy native *fellahin* moved silently toward him.

They were husky brutes. One was tall, broad-shouldered, slightly stooping. The other was shorter, barrel-chested. The barrel-chested man moved with a slight limp.

Cliff Downey debated. He intended to get inside that pink-and-green house of Azhar ibn Barakah; but he didn't want to be seen doing it. He had two courses open. He could turn and stroll away, to come back when the two loitering *fellahin* had gone about their business; or he could go forward, meet them face to face, and pass them.

Cliff Downey went forward.

Stench of camel dung and stale donkey sweat assailed his nostrils in the dead midnight air. The *fellahin* were within a few paces of him now. Downey's hard muscles tightened under his coat.

And then the natives leaped.

A knife flashed in a deadly, descending arc. The American lunged sidewise like a cat, his broad back punching against the blank wall of Azhar ibn Barakah's house. The detective's right hand whipped out of his coat pocket, knuckles whitened around the automatic's butt as he parried the blow of the knife in the brown hand of the barrel-chested *fellahin*. Steel clashed against steel as the blue barrel of Downey's weapon met the sharp, descending blade. The knife went skittering into the filthy gutter.

"Now, you bastard!" Cliff Downey's lips drew back in a snarling grin. He lashed out with his fist. His iron-hard knuckles met the point of the native's jaw. The man shot backward, swayed, stiffened and fell like a heavy board, his head striking against the cobbled street with a sound like the splitting of a ripe cocoanut.

The American's eyes were on the taller *fellahin* now. He could see the man's hideous, pock-marked face as he closed in. "*Aie!* Death to the infidel!" the native hissed.

"Don't be too sure!" the detective grunted. He stooped suddenly and launched himself forward in a vicious flying tackle. His hard arms closed about the *fellahin's* sturdy legs. The native toppled forward, smothering the American under the stinking folds of his *burnoose*. Together the two rolled on the narrow pavement.

Downey fought savagely at the folds of the *burnoose* that engulfed and hampered him. He lashed out with his feet. His heel caught his assailant full in the mouth. The native grunted with pain, backed off and threw himself at Downey's throat, spitting blood and teeth.

The detective tried to roll free. A hard brown hand closed about his windpipe; another hand pinioned Downey's gun arm. The Consolidated operative's breath was cut off, strangled in his throat. Rivulets of sweat poured into his straining eyes. There was a throbbing roar in his ears; the overhanging jut of the house above

him swayed dizzily.

"By my beard and by Mashhad, I have thee now!" the *fellahin* hissed. Then Downey's free left hand came up, stiff-fingered. Desperately he jammed his nails into the native's staring eyes. The man gasped thickly, and his fingers lost their tenacious hold on the American's gun arm. The detective jammed the muzzle of his automatic into his attacker's ribs and pulled the trigger.

The report was muffled, indistinct. The *fellahin* quivered all over, like a felled aspen. "*Allah— il— Illaha!*" he gurgled. Then abruptly his dead weight sagged down upon the American. Downey shoved himself clear and staggered to his unsteady feet. He looked down at the still form of the dead native. He slipped his still-smoking automatic back into his pocket.

"And that," he muttered, "is that!"

He looked up and down the narrow street. There was no sign of life. His unequal struggle with the two natives had been soundless; the report of his single shot had been dampened by the gun-muzzle's close contract with the tall *fellahin's* straining body. On sudden impulse, Downey reached down and jerked the long folds of the native's turban away from the man's lolling head. He turned to the body of the barrel-chested thug and snatched that one's turban also. Then he picked up the knife that had been knocked into the gutter.

He returned to the single wooden, iron-barred door that was the only break in the shadowy pink-and-green wall of Azhar ibn Barakah's house. It was locked from the inside. Downey raised his fist and knocked softly, insistently.

He knew the native habit of keeping a servant in the winding passage-way behind the front door, day and night. He listened intently. He heard shuffling footfalls behind the thick wooden portal. A heavy bolt grated in its iron hasp. The door swung partially open.

Cliff Downey stared at a villainous-looking, one-eyed native whose single eye widened in amazement. The man's hand plunged into the folds of his dirty gray *burnoose* and flashed out again with a curved knife.

"Oh, no, you don't!" the American grunted. He raised his own knife and poised it with its point not a quarter-inch from the servant's throat. "Drop that!" Downey snarled.

The native's hand slowly dropped. His knife clattered to the flagstoned paving of the inner passageway. Downey leaped at him, bearing him backward to the paved blackness. He whipped the long folds of a turban around the man's face, gagging him. Then with the other turban he had taken from the *fellahin* who had attacked him in the street outside, he

bound the native servant's wrists and ankles.

Cliff Downey stepped over the prone form, of his prisoner and felt his way cautiously forward along the pitch-dark passage. He came to an abrupt turn. There was a closed door before him. He flashed on his electric torch for a brief instant. The door was barred from his side. He slid the bolt noiselessly and stared down a flight of precipitous stone steps leading into a black abyss below.

"Well— here goes!" the detective grunted. He drew a long breath. Then he descended the steep stone steps on soundless feet. A rank, fetid odor rose up at him like a nauseous wave; the stench of mildewed walls, of rank decay, of—*of dead human flesh!*

He reached the bottom of the precipitous stone steps. A feeling of oppression closed in about him. He snapped on his flashlight once more. He cast its rays in a wide sweeping circle. Then he went suddenly white.

"God in heaven!" the American said in a strangled whisper.

Chained to a torture-wheel in the center of this subterranean chamber of horrors was the lovely, naked, dead figure of a girl—a while girl!

Her slender legs and arms were stretched sickeningly on the rack. Her fair yellow hair, like spun gold, hung in cascades over the diabolic machinery of the torture-wheel. Her sightless eyes were wide with the terror that had visited her before merciful death had at long last ended her excruciating agonies. Buried to the hilt in the firm white flesh, of her young, virginal, rounded left breast was a short Oriental scimitar. Coagulated blood formed a dark, viscid gout that marred the perfect symmetry of her molded bosom.

"The damned torturing fiends!" Cliff Downey whispered harshly. He could visualize the entire, sickening scene— this fair, beautiful creature being striped of her clothing; her slender wrists and ankles gyved with cruel irons; her warm young form flung ruthlessly upon the torture-rack; the first slow, relentless turn of the wheel that was to tear her rounded limb from their sockets; and then ... the scimitar...

Downey could almost imagine he heard the ghostly echo of the girl's last, despairing, agonized moan as the sharp blade sliced horribly through the tender flesh of her pouting white breast....

But that moan wasn't a ghostly echo! It was real—and it sounded faintly from the far corner of this dank underground torture-room!

"What the hell—?" the American cursed. He flashed his light at the corner from which the sound had emanated. And then his lean jaw shot forward



*He flashed his light toward the wall.  
"Wilda Rhodes!" he gasped.*

grimly. "Wilda Rhodes!" he gasped as he gazed on the form of the girl for whom he had come to Port Said!

Save for a gauze-thin step-in she was completely unclothed. She was chained to an iron ring in the dank

wall—a ring placed two feet over her head. Ropes had been fastened cruelly to her wrists and then run through

the high rings, drawing her bare arms upward until she was almost completely suspended from the floor. In the glare of the detective's electric torch, she was like a delectable statue, her satiny, pink-tipped breasts jutting forward from the strain of her uplifted arms.

Her eyes fluttered open as the light struck her. She moaned again. Cliff Downey leaped to her side. With a flick of the sharp knife he had retrieved from the dead body of the *fellahin* who had attacked him in the narrow street outside, he sliced through the ropes that held Wilda Rhodes suspended against the damp, fetid wall. She slumped forward into his arms.

He held her trembling form close to him. And somehow, the thrill of the contact with her bare, sweet girl-flesh sent odd tremors of pleasure through his veins.

She opened her eyes and looked at him wildly. "Who—who are you?" she gasped painfully.

He stroked her shoulder gently. "I'm Cliff Downey—American. I've come here to get you. You're all right now."

She clung to him in sheer relief. "Thank God!" she breathed. She held her face up to his. Without knowing why, a sudden impulse made him lean over and kiss her on the trembling, red lips. His hand enclosed one of her firm young breasts and pressed it tenderly. She sighed deeply.

"What happened to you?" he asked her in a whisper.

"I was — kidnaped — by Azhar ibn Barakah — and brought here——" she moaned weakly. "He tried to make love to me. I — I repulsed him. He—he had me brought down to this terrible place and chained up. He—he made me watch while he — tortured that poor girl to death on the rack——" She closed her eyes, to shut out the gruesome vision.

Cliff Downey lifted her light figure into his arms and strode with her toward the steep stone steps that lead to the upper passageway. Her rounded arms went thrillingly about his neck. "You — won't let them— get me—again——?" she whispered fearfully.

He was carrying her up the precipitous stairs. "Not if I can help it!" he answered grimly. He kicked open the door at the head of the steps—and walked straight into the waiting arms of four evil-visaged native servants!

There was a brief, fierce struggle, hopeless from the outset. Downey felt Wilda Rhodes being torn from his arms. He was borne to the flagstone paving of the passageway by sheer force of over-powering numbers. Among his attackers he saw the one-eyed servant whom he had bound and gagged just inside the street door. Too late the American remembered leaving the man's

knife on the dark flagstones where he could roll to it, saw himself loose from his fetters and summon help.

Swiftly, Cliff Downey felt himself being pushed forward to an ornate, carved wooden staircase that led gracefully to an upper floor. Along the second-story hallway, he was shoved rudely, his feet stumbling in the thick-piled velvet carpet

Light emanated from behind a latticed, teakwood door carved with intricate native scrollwork. Footsteps sounded through the close-meshed interstices of the filigreed portal. The door swung open.

"Azhar ibn Barakah!" Wilda Rhodes quavered in deadly fear.

A man, tall, slender, dark-skinned and turbaned, stood there staring at them. His brows rose. "*Haie!* A new fly has walked into the spider's trap!" he said in English. Then to the servants, "Bind the man with ropes and put him in this room. I will attend to the girl. Now, begone!"

Cliff Downey's wrists and ankles were knotted in lengths of strong cord. He was carried into the room behind the carved teak-wood door and dumped roughly in a corner. He looked about him. He was in a vast, high-ceilinged chamber furnished with lavish Eastern splendor. Moorish bay windows, latticed and shuttered, were piled high with soft silken cushions. Thick rugs covered the mosaic floor. Flickering lamps hung smokily from intricate gilded chains overhead. The walls were hung with tapestries and with trophies — scimitars and daggers, ancient guns and pistols, odd-looking fragments of Oriental armor.

The servants vanished. Azhar ibn Barakah entered the room with Wilda Rhodes in his grasp. He closed the door and locked it. He faced the girl and drew her savagely into his arms.

Her coal-black hair cascaded about her bare shoulders in wild disorder. She struggled in his grasp as his brown hands clawed at the tender, palpitating flesh of her delicate breasts.

Azhar ibn Barakah panted hoarsely. "It will avail you nothing to struggle, little white flower!" he gritted. "You are helpless — at my mercy! And you have seen what happens to those who refuse me! You recall the yellow-haired German girl — and the torture-wheel. You remember your night of horror, chained to the wall of the dungeon with her dead body for company!"

Wilda Rhodes broke free of his embrace and backed toward a corner. Her dark eyes blazed. "Torture me— kill me—do what you will to me—I won't consent to——"

"To submit to my caresses? You are still untamed!"

the dark, skinned man purred silkily. "But is Azhar ibn Barakah so hideous in your sweet eyes, little dove of delight?"

"You fiend—you beast—!" the girl sobbed. Bound and helpless Cliff Downey struggled futilely against his fetters as he watched, with grim eyes.

"By Allah and Allah, you are beautiful when you are aroused!" the dark-skinned Azhar ibn Barakah breathed unsteadily, his bright blue eyes glowing with passionate desire. He leaped at her again. "When I have drunk my fill of your sweet charms, there are those who will pay me a goodly price for you!" He caught her and bent her slender body backward, his dark face close to hers. He kissed her on the mouth, his hands caressing her throbbing young breasts as she fought to shake him off.

Suddenly her hand flashed up to his face. Her clawing fingernails raked downward diagonally across his dark cheek, drawing blood. He released her with a savage curse "Thou infidel daughter of a thousand and one obscene camels!" he roared. "For that I shall slice out your heart!" His eyes flamed "But before I kill you I shall possess you—I swear by Allah and the Prophet I shall possess your charms——"

"Never!" Wilda Rhodes panted, her nude breasts rising and falling tumultuously. Her eyes darted frantically about her, seeking escape. And then her gaze fell upon something hanging to the tapestried wall—a queerly-shaped metal contrivance of silver and gold, arabesqued and chased in designs of intricate Oriental workmanship.

Azhar ibn Barakah saw her glance, and laughed. "*La ceinture de chastite*—a chastity belt, little white flower, such as my revered ancestors locked upon the women of their *hareems* when they left them behind and went forth to war upon the infidels. Once locked on a fair feminine form, a man could be sure that no interloping lover might pluck passionate fruit from the forbidden garden of delights!"

Wilda Rhodes' dark eyes flared with a new purpose. Backing away from the advancing Azhar ibn Barakah, she turned suddenly and snatched the metal contrivance from the wall. With, one sure motion, she tore away her sole remaining garment—the sheer silk step-in. Completely, gloriously nude, she snapped open the filigreed metal chastity belt and stepped into its harness-like silver-and-gold straps. She drew it up over her thighs until the cold, arabesqued metal encased her waist. Its form-fitting filigreed straps fitted snugly about her carving hips, encasing her intimate femininity in a shining metal prison. She snapped the

belt shut and turned the tiny key in the lock. Then she ran to the latticed Moorish window with the key in her hand. She snatched aside the heavy screen and threw.

She turned to Azhar ibn Barakah. "Now!" she panted "You can torture me—kill me—but you shan't ... possess me!" She ran to slender fingers through her coal black hair.

The dark-skinned man scowled savagely. "For that you shall die horribly!" he snarled. "And with you, your blundering countryman!" he gestured contemptuously toward the bound figure of Cliff Downey. He clapped his hands sharply. The filigreed door opened and the four evil-visaged native servants entered.

Azhar ibn Barakah grinned satirically. "By the beard of Muhamet, but there will be a pleasant performance in our torture-dungeon this night!" he announced. "Two of you take this offensive son of a camel down into the underground room. The other two do likewise with the black-haired infidel girl!"

Downey felt himself being hauled roughly to his feet and pushed toward the broad staircase that led to the lower floor. Behind him he could hear the faint scuffling of Wilda Rhodes being borne down after him. They reached the lower passage and came to the door opening upon the precipitous stone steps leading down to the underground torture room.

One of the natives flung open the door. The other lighted a flaring torch. Grimly the silent cortege stumbled down into that nauseous, fetid pit of terror.

The native thrust his torch into a niche in the dank wall, where it smoked and flickered eerily, casting weird shadows that danced like evil, black-veiled ghosts. The American watched helplessly as they carried Wilda Rhodes to one corner and chained her by wrists and ankles to a low iron ring in the wall of the subterranean chamber. She sank to the ground, covering her bare breasts with her manacled hands. Her eyes were wide with fright and despair.

Cliff Downey was yanked to another iron ring. Heavy chains were looped about his arms and legs, then ran through the anchored circle and locked with a huge, old-fashioned padlock. Azhar ibn Barakah chuckled fiendishly as he went to an iron brazier where lighted coals of charcoal gleamed beneath the rusty tripod. He thrust a metal banding-iron into the glowing fire.

He turned to Wilda Rhodes. "First, you shall have the pleasure. Of watching your would-be rescuer being blinded by the hot iron!" he said tensely. "And then — it will be your turn! And do not think you have foiled me with that chastity belt! I shall melt it off with glowing irons—frying your white flesh in the process— and then



*He flung the burnoose over Wilda. "This is better than nothing," he grinned.*

I shall permit my four servants to slake their lust in your helpless arms before I put you on the torture rack!"

He turned to his native servants. "Take the German

girl's body from the wheel!" He commanded sharply. "We will carry it upstairs to the courtyard and dispose of it before we begin our pleasures with these infidel dogs!"

Grimly, Cliff Downey watched as they unstrapped

the stiffened, naked figure of the golden-haired girl from the rack. With Azhar ibn Barakah in the lead, they carried the lifeless form up the stone steps that led from the underground room.

The American operative tensed. "Listen!" he whispered across the chamber to Wilda Rhodes. "I have a scheme—one desperate last chance. Don't make a sound!"

She nodded back at him, her eyes suddenly brave.

Cliff Downey reached far forward. There was a heavy stone lying on the floor. He reached it with the tips of his fingers and hauled it toward him. He picked it up and hefted it in his brawny fist. Then silently he hauled at his chains until he had brought the padlock within reach. He laid the padlock on the paved floor before him. He raised the heavy stone and brought it down with, crushing force against the ancient lock.

The lock shattered under the impact.

Downey wrenched its jaws apart and tossed it aside. He smothered the rattle of his chains as he freed himself of their linked coils. He stood up. He started toward Wilda Rhodes. Then he stiffened and froze into immobility. Someone was coming back down the stone steps!

He sank back into a crouch against the walls, his hands behind him, the chains dangling in a way that made it appear that he was still bound. He shot a cautioning glance at Wilda Rhodes.

Azhar ibn Barakah strode down into the subterranean vault. He was alone. He bowed mockingly at his prisoners. "I could not bear to think of my guests being here without their host," he said ironically. "So while my servants are burying the body of the foolish German girl, I shall endeavor to entertain you." he went to the charcoal brazier and drew forth the white-hot branding iron. He approached Cliff Downey.

Wilda Rhodes screamed, "Don't —oh, God, don't!"

Azhar ibn Barakan turned to her. "A taste of the whip will quiet such unseemly noise!" he snarled. He thrust the branding iron back into the glowing coals and picked up a heavy, leaded, many-tailed knout. He raised it over Wilda Rhodes' cowering, naked body.

Cliff Downey leaped to his feet. He grasped one end of the chain that had bound him. He whirled it in a circle over his head like a lasso. It whistled savagely through the air. Azhar ibn Barakah whirled—and caught the flying end of the heavy chain full in the face. The clanking links smashed against his features with sickening force, smearing eyes and nose and

mouth into gory jelly. The dark-skinned man shrieked horribly and raised his hand to the bleeding, shattered pulp that had been his face. He swayed.

Cliff Downey leaped forward and battered the man down with his knotted fists. His knuckles ached with the fierce pleasure of the blows as he hammered his fists against Azhar ibn Barakah's blood-smeared jaw. Azhar ibn Barakah toppled and fell forward.

Downey clawed at the man's brocaded silken native costume, tearing it apart in his frantic search. Then he grinned savagely as his hand came up with an automatic. "I figured he had one!" he breathed unsteadily. "Now, let them come!"

He faced the stone stairs. He heard running feet overhead as the native servants, aroused by their master's shriek of agony, tumbled against the door and leaped down into the underground torture vault. Downey raised the automatic and took steady aim. He squeezed the trigger.

His wrist leaped upward under the kick of the weapon as it belched fire. The first native swayed on the stairs, half-turned, and fell lifelessly down the remaining steps like a rolling sandbag.

Downey fired again. And again. And once more.

Then he turned to Wilda Rhodes. "Four bull's-eyes!" he said casually.

But she did not hear him. She had fainted.

The Consolidated Agency operative leaped to her side. He rattled with futile anger at her chains. Then he dashed to the prone form of Azhar ibn Barakah and delved into the soft silken folds of the man's garments. He found the key he sought. He returned to the unconscious girl and thrust the key into the lock that held her chains. It opened. Downey unbound her and drew her to her feet. She opened her eyes and looked at him. "You—killed them all?"

He nodded shortly. "And now let's get out of here."

She clung to him. And then her wide, staring eyes came to rest on the body of Azhar ibn Karakah. Her hand went to her mouth. She pointed. "Look — where you've torn away his clothes—he's white —*his body is white—!*"

Cliff Downey smiled grimly and leaned over that still form. He switched at the dark hair. It came away in his hands. It was a wig. Beneath it, yellow hair gleamed dully. He ripped aside the torn brocaded robe, disclosing the fallen man's white chest.

He looked at Wilda Rhodes. "Our friend Azhar ibn Barakah was really—*Lee Sumner of the American consulate!*" he said softly. "I first suspected it when I was attacked by those two *fellahin* outside this house at

midnight tonight. Nobody knew I was coming here except Sumner—and he himself had sent me! It was a trap on his part. He feared me. So he took a bold course. He deliberately put me on the trail of the mythical Azhar ibn Barakah—and then he planted two of his knife-men to kill me when I got here.”

“You mean—Sumner was—a white-slaver?”

“Exactly. He was leading a double life. By day he was American vice-consul. By night, with stain on his face and hands and a black wig on his head, he was Azhar ibn Burakah. He made it a business of kidnaping white women, satisfying his own lusts on them and then selling them as slaves to native chieftains. Those who refused to capitulate to him were tortured on the rack. And to-night when I first saw Azhar ibn Barakah and noticed his bright blue eyes, I knew it was Sumner. No native has blue eyes like that. And no native, when speaking English, forgets himself and occasionally lapses into Kentucky drawl. Now—let’s go!”

He picked her up in his strong arms and carried her up the stairs. Her arms clung to him, and again he experienced that tingling thrill of pleasure at the intimate contact with her naked flesh.

Out on the narrow street, he leaned over one of the *fellahin* still lying in the gutter and ripped away the man’s *burnoose*. He flung it over Wilda Rhodes’ unclad body, covering her. “Sorry it smells,” he smiled wryly. Then, “We’ll catch the steamer tomorrow.”

She smiled and snuggled closer to him. “The burnoose does smell terrible,” she said shyly.

“You can take a bath in my hotel room,” Downey answered. Then he gasped. “My God!”

“What!”

“That—that chastity belt you’re wearing! How are you going to get it off? You threw away the key——”

She smiled and shook her head. Her slim hands went to her black hair. “I didn’t really throw it away,” she confided. “I—I just pretended to. I—I hid it in my hair. Here it is.” She handed it to him.

He looked at her, puzzled. “But —why give it to me?”

“Because I—I want you to have it—always——” she answered.

And as he grasped her meaning, he swept her into his arms And kissed her.