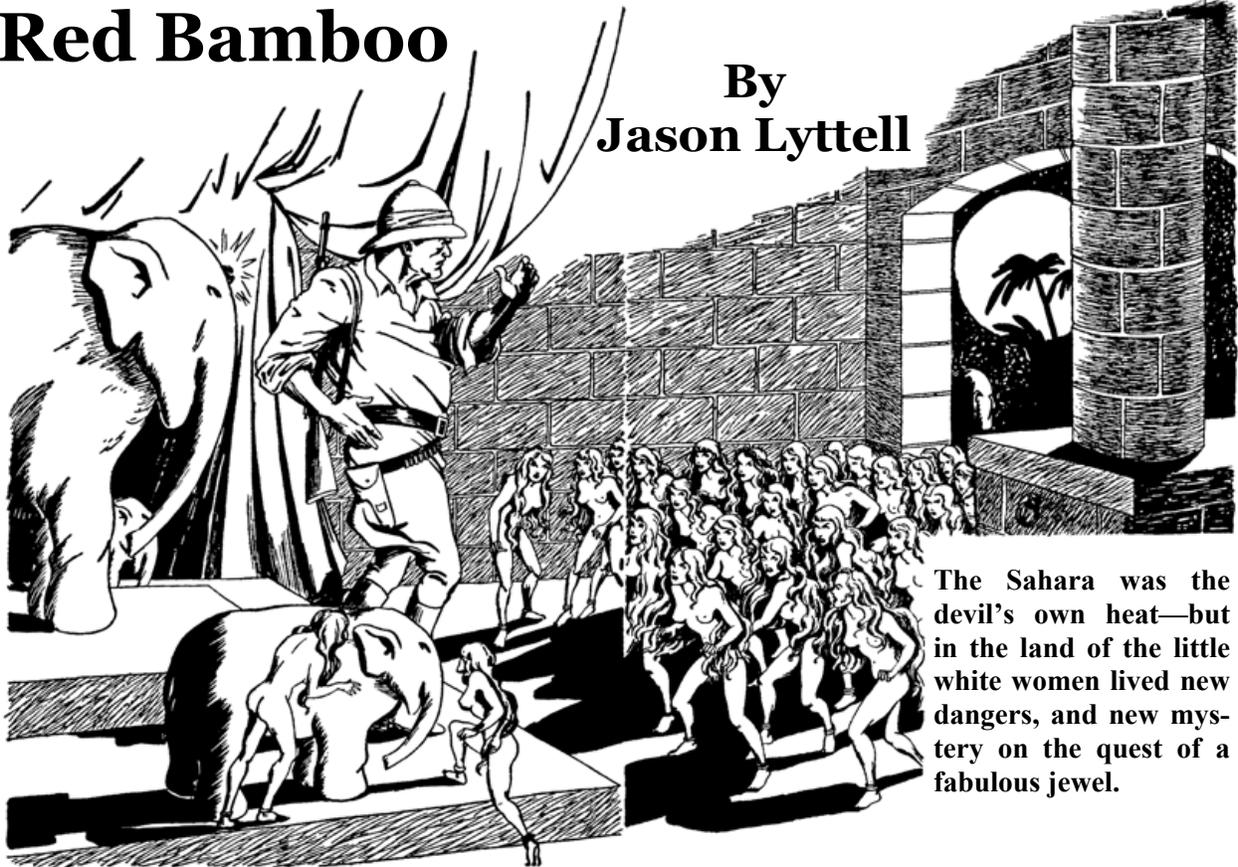


Red Bamboo

By
Jason Lyttell



The Sahara was the devil's own heat—but in the land of the little white women lived new dangers, and new mystery on the quest of a fabulous jewel.

In an instant they had surrounded him, and panic seized his brain.

A BURNISHED jet serpent of men and beasts crawled across the gleaming ocean of sand and lost itself among the dunes. At the head of the safari rode a lone white man and a girl. The man's murky white shirt lay open halfway down the front, exposing a chest matted with hair that glistened with moisture. His hat was broad and drooping, and beneath it two small boar-eyes glistened with expectation. A deep layer of tan had obliterated all traces of Caucasian skin, but there still remained the thin, cruelly curved lips of the European.

He lolled on the camel's back in a crouching position peculiarly suggestive of the expression on his face. His body admitted fatigue, but there was determination in every muscle . . . determination to reach a goal.

He looked covertly at the girl by his side. Her once soft, white silk blouse was plastered with sweat to fit the delicious roundness of her undulating breasts. They swayed gently to the slow plod of the beast beneath her, and the man had an insane desire to crush one firm globule in his hairy

hand. He licked his lips as his eyes strayed down her body . . . down her slim waist to the lithe boyish thighs encased in tight-fitting riding breeches. Even the breeches could not hide the seductive curve of hips and legs which they covered. His eyes traveled back to the little pulse that beat in her creamy throat, and he felt his muscles swell with desire. He would have taken her long before this if John Evans hadn't been so watchful. He mentally cursed the man.

Sally Trevors, looking up caught his eye, and read his mind rightly. She shuddered fastidiously, and made a swift movement to draw her beast aside.

The man chuckled derisively as he glanced warily up the trail. He knew how to bide his time. Behind him strode seven stalwart blacks, their somber skins shining with the sweat of fourteen hours steady toil. Their bodies were naked except for breech-clouts, from each of which protruded the hilt of a modified type of kris, their only weapon.

Riding wearily behind the blacks, his head lowered against the sun, was another white man.

He was tall and gangling, but with a fine ripple of muscles showing through his opened khaki shirt. His legs swung aimlessly out and then back, with the sway of his camel.

The man in front bit viciously on his lips. "Your friend seems a bit stove up with the heat, Sally. . . ."

The girl's eyes flashed dangerously. "I always liked my name," she replied evenly, "until I heard you use it. John can look out for himself," she added succinctly, "and me too!" She smiled thinly. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have financed this expedition."

The man's big hands clenched. "You might change your mind about several things before we go back," he reminded her. She made no reply. He resumed his slouch and the cavalcade continued slowly on.

The stillness was broken only by the soft "squish-squash" of naked feet in deep sand and the dry squeak of the pack harness.

AS THE Safari gained the summit of a dune the white man raised his hand. There was a confused murmur among the blacks and one of them dropped to the rear of the line. The leader halted, dismounted, and stood gazing at the purple splotch that marked the entrance to a canyon in the line of blue-grey hills yet an hour's ride away. John Evans kicked his camel, and as the beast lumbered up beside Masterson, asked in an expressionless voice, "What are we stopping for? We've got another hour of daylight—"

Masterson ignored him. "We camp here," he said shortly.

John Evans dismounted deliberately and stood facing the squat, hairy man who gazed insolently back at him. "Listen here, Masterson, Miss Trevors and I didn't finance this trip just to take a joy ride through Africa!"

Masterson's face muscles contracted fiercely. "We camp here, I said. We'll get an early start in the morning." He turned and walked quickly toward the tent that the blacks were pitching.

"You black scum!!" Masterson's voice rose in fury, "take that tent down!" With a booted foot he kicked the black to the dust. "Don't you see those bamboo shoots? The damned things will grow right through a man's bed during the night." He planted his feet wide apart and watched them belligerently as they pitched the tent in a place indicated by him. With a grunt he went in and the tent opening

flapped behind him.

John Evans shrugged his shoulders resignedly, and walking over, helped Sally off the camel. He held her pliant body close in his arms, and gently kissed her quivering eyeballs. He dropped his mouth eagerly to hers and drank in her quick response. Her soft body became taut in his arms. "Tired, honey?" He cradled her against himself and muttered absently. "I hope Masterson really knows where this 'cache' is. His insolence is getting pretty unbearable."

Sally raised her face to his, her lips parting eagerly for a kiss. "Bother Masterson! Hold on tightly!" Evans' arms clutched her convulsively to him, and his hands slipped to her pulsating thighs and pulled them close. His breath came uneven and labored as he stepped suddenly away from her. He motioned her unsteadily toward a second tent that was being pitched. "I can't stand much of this," he warned her tenderly. "You run along and get comfortable. We move early tomorrow. I'll bring you something to eat."

Sally lifted her slim body provocatively on tiptoes, and as her still fervid lips closed in a hasty kiss over his, her hard pointed little breasts rested on his naked chest. His hands gripped her firmly, then with a smile he pushed her away.

With a low, "Come and kiss me good night," she sped across the cleared space to her tent.

Very shortly, silence dominated the desert. One lone black, the guard, sat dozing by the vivid embers of the fire; the others, rolled in their blankets, were sleeping heavily. The soft munching of the beasts of burden was carried away by the steady breeze. On the windward side, avoiding the musty redolence of the animals, crouched Masterson's pudgy brown tent. And in it he lay sleepless. Anxiety and desire clamored for supremacy, driving slumber from his mind. He *had* to get away from camp without being suspected of anything!

A LOOSE corner of the tent flapped incessantly, and as it lifted he saw the naked silhouette of the white girl as she undressed. He left his cot and crept a bit closer to the side. He lifted the flap of the tent and made it secure with a camp chair in front of it. As he watched, her blouse came off, the two arrow-tipped prominences of her small breasts jumped into relief. His throat contracted and he swallowed hard, as she bent and slipped out of her

breeches.

Her thighs and legs made straight slim columns as she moved about the tent, and the flat expanse of her abdomen slowly rose and fell with her relaxed breathing. She bent over her cot, and her breasts swung forward gently, provocatively, with her gesture.



“God!” cried Evans. “What’s that?” And then the black broke in on them in an agony of fright.

Sweat broke out on Masterson’s face as she snuffed the candle, and he sat straighter in order to breathe. He ran a shaking hand over his saliva-flecked lips, and then, with remarkable agility for a heavy man, slithered like an obscene serpent, inch by inch, across the few feet of ground separating the tents. As he reached the opening of Sally’s, he glanced hastily over his shoulder. Evans’ tent, on the opposite side of his own, was dark and silent.

As he slipped through the opening Sally raised herself, whispering softly, “That you, John? Wait, I’ll make a light.”

A match flared in the darkness, the candle ate up the flame, and as the tent glowed in the subdued light, Sally flicked the match and turning eagerly, stretched out her arms.

Masterson stifled her terrified scream of recognition with his thick lips over hers. He raised her struggling body. His hot breath poured into her mouth as he forced her trembling lips apart. His lungs expelled the air with a torrid hiss, as with one

huge paw he pressed her closer and still closer to his heaving chest. He passed his moist palm down the long slenderness of her ivory limbs. Finally he lowered her to the bed, nearly spent with struggling, and clapped a swift hand over her mouth, while his greedy eyes, bloodshot with passion, roved over her quivering body.

Her flat stomach with its dimpled center jerked spasmodically, and her blue eyes fixed wildly on the bestial face of the man as he gloated on her exposed beauty. His hand left her legs and slowly traveled upward, while his lips parted in a covetous smile. She kicked out quickly, and as one tiny, high-arched foot met its mark, Masterson momentarily retreated with a surprised grunt. She opened her mouth and shrieked—once—twice—before his huge hands closed the sounds from her throat; then, with a soft moan, she crumpled, an inert thing on the cot.

Masterson regarded her prone figure with a mad delight. His whole body trembled with anticipation.

A loose corner of the tent canvas flapped incessantly. Masterson, with a muttered oath, sat up and weighted it down with a few handfuls of sand.

He turned and leaned over the girl again, but before he could place his lips to the pulsating hollow of her throat, the impact of another body knocked him sideways.

With a mighty roar he turned, his long arms swinging menacingly at his sides, his huge fists doubled into death-dealing hammers, and faced John Evans.

“You filthy—” John frothed at the mouth. His eyes were slitted to pinpoints of hate as he rushed head on at Masterson. A haymaker floored Masterson, but before advantage could be taken of the slighter man’s position, Masterson lumbered to his feet like an enraged bull and flew at Evans, his arms flailing like pistons.

FOR many minutes nothing was heard but flesh smacking flesh and the labored breathing of the two men. Evans was protecting something he loved, and his rage gave him added strength. He crowded Masterson into a comer, then sticking out a quick foot, tripped him. As he fell to the ground John landed on him with all fours and began to pummel him systematically. Not a word was spoken.

Masterson’s mouth began to run blood under the persistent punishment, and Evans had an iron-

knotted fist poised in midair, when a weird pulsating wail broke the stillness. It was borne through the night by the returning breeze, from a distance. John Evans froze and his face slowly drained of its color. He had heard such a cry once before!

Still holding Masterson, who was spent, he slowly rose to a sitting position. Another wail, that drew itself out into a screech of agony pounded against their eardrums. It seemed to bring Masterson to life. His big body shuddered. Outside they could hear the blacks stirring uneasily. Evans felt his hair prickle on his neck as the sound was repeated for a third time, a bit fainter, as if the beast or person was nearing the end of its endurance.

"My God! I wonder . . ." but Evans didn't get to finish.

Outside, the dozing guard had jerked himself erect, and with his eyes rolling in a panic of fear and his body glistening with sudden sweat, he rushed into the tent, and groveled before the white men in an agony of fright.

Again that piercing wail broke the tense stillness; longer, more pitiful, it rose and fell on the wind like the death wail of a terrorized child.

"What is it, Lubu?" Evans touched the black swiftly on the shoulder. "Is it . . .?"

"Ah, Bwana. *Walu urtua rahro kan.*" The black remained on his knees, swaying back and forth as if in prayer.

John Evans' face blanched as the native mumbled these words. He turned suddenly from Masterson and dropped on his knees by Sally's cot. She was lying there, the sheet pulled up to her chin, and her eyes big and frightened asked John for assurance. He quickly kissed her. "You all right, honey?" She nodded silently. He patted her head reassuringly. "I'll come back in a minute. Keep a stiff upper lip. Masterson won't bother you again." She nodded her head bravely. "I'm not afraid when you're with me."

"Don't worry. I'll get us both out of this."

He turned threateningly to Masterson. "Get out! I want to talk to you!"

Masterson sprang through the opening of the tent, his eyes staring; chills played havoc with his spine as he hurried to the fire which was blazing from the sudden efforts of the trembling blacks. The absence of the moon, which would not rise till early morning, intensified the darkness and increased the eeriness of the strange cry.

EVANS' sinewy hand on his shoulder stopped Masterson just this side of the fire. As he turned John thrust his face close to that of the squat man. "I warned you not to try anything funny, Masterson, before we left the veldt." He nodded over his shoulder towards Sally's tent. "It will be more *healthy* for you if you remember that."

Masterson grunted.

Evans' eyes narrowed and he asked softly, "Have you ever seen a man impaled?"

Masterson's beady eyes dilated. He looked swiftly at Evans. "No. Why?"

"You heard what Lubu said, didn't you?" And his voice cracked like a pistol, "*Walu urtua rahro kan?* 'The Valley of Little Pale Women?'"

Masterson shrugged his heavy shoulders. "No such thing," he countered, "just another nigger story." But he edged closer to the brightly burning fire, which was already circled by shivering blacks.

Evans' hands tightened on Masterson's shoulder. "You *knew* this valley was 'Taboo,' and you said you'd skirt it."

Masterson shook off his hands. "You're talking tommyrot," he said roughly. He drew away from him and faced the circle of natives. Each had his hand near, or clutching, his kris. The head Blackamoore, Lubu, who spoke the white man's language, turned to him and said, "Bwana Evans right. We must return. The cry is that of Torzo the wicked one, who kills with the gleam of his eyes! He protects the Valley of Little Pale Women!"

"Return, Hell!" roared Masterson, who had by this time regained a small amount of his courage. "Return! . . . after a three weeks trip through the devil's own heat. . . . Return without getting my—my—" And then he calmed himself, his mind cunningly forming a plan. He knew the superstitious natives, and he realized that persuasion would succeed better than curses. Also he had felt John Evans' strength. He didn't want to feel it again until he could contrive to get the other white man at a disadvantage. He promised himself he would deal with the girl then.

"No, we stay," he insisted eagerly; "and I will double the pay of all the men from now on, and when the moon rises I will go and bring back your wicked one! Hah! Torzo is a panther! Is it well?"

Lubu hesitated, and finally talked hurriedly and convincingly to the others and when all had reluctantly agreed he answered, "It is well."

Masterson sighed with relief. His keen, greedy

mind having already done its work, he turned placatingly to Evans. "In the morning if you and Miss Trevor wish to go back, you can take some of the blacks. You'll make it, all right." And as he swaggered away, "*I'm* not afraid of the bamboo that grows overnight, or the Pale Little Women or any other lies these niggers tell." His tent flap dropped behind him.

John Evans studied a minute, then decided to wait till morning before he did anything else.

The camp settled down. The strange cry was heard no more, and within the hour the moon had risen and with the rising of the moon came the stealthy departure of the white man Masterson on foot, armed with rifle, revolver, and knife, toward the purple blotch in the distance.

"Panther," he muttered irritably. "No, it can't be. I know the cry of a panther when I hear one, but, it will serve my purpose." His eyes glittered greedily in the dark. "They'll never know why I really came, or that I've been here before." His eyeballs glowed with the same fire they had shown in the afternoon. The gleam of desire, backed by a barbarous nature that would stop at nothing to attain its ends. As he walked his mind played on the white girl back in the tent, and his hands clenched themselves tightly against his sides. "If only Evans hadn't come in. . . ." He smothered another curse.

TWO hours of steady walking brought him to the hills and, under cover of the dry brush that clung to the slopes, he gained the summit of a crag upon which a gigantic boulder marked the beginning of a narrow path.

He stood in the shadow of the rock and stared into the tiny canyon below, its sides were covered with a dense growth of the fast-growing bamboo. In the gully at the bottom a silver rivulet trickled down toward the desert. On the opposite side of the canyon, where the bamboo was thickest, were several cleared spots that shone in the moonlight. In one there was a fair-sized hut, its circular top thatched with bamboo and palms; and in another was a tiny stone building. It was upon this that his gaze riveted. "There's the temple," he gloated. "I'd never forget it."

He watched carefully for a long minute. Nothing moved. "Don't see anyone," he opined, and the sound of his voice in the stillness gave him comfort. He pulled a heavy silver watch nervously

from his pocket and ran a moist, thick, red tongue over his parched lips. He cupped his hands around the timepiece to prevent a reflection. "Ain't long till dawn."

He slunk carefully and noiselessly down the narrow trail between the huge stalks of bamboo, drawing nervously away from them as they closed behind him. Now and then he lost his footing and stumbled over rocks when in the darker shadows. A pebble rolled down the embankment and he stopped suddenly, his heart in his mouth. He strained his ears for other sounds. None came, and reassured, he moved on.

Once he fell, striking his hand against a needle-like point and tearing a bad gash. He mouthed an oath under his breath and examined the object of his distress. It was a bamboo shoot about two inches in diameter, with a needle-like top. He turned his eyes hastily away. He imagined he could see it growing in the darkness.

"Damn' stuff grows so fast you can't keep a trail cleared," he complained to himself.

After he had crossed the stream at the bottom he was more careful than ever, and proceeded with greater stealth. He came to a branch in the trail and, with a grunt of satisfaction, turned to the right. The undergrowth became so dense that he could hardly see and he had to creep along half-crouching.

His heart pumped with excitement. He had forgotten the eerie wail; he had forgotten the gash on his hand; he was quaking with a feverish desire that transcended all other emotions. He finally reached the clearing and the sight of the small stone temple steadied his nerves.

On a stone slab in front of the portal lay a swarthy native; a guard, he guessed, asleep, his long black robe of cult flapping in the breeze.

The white man drew his knife, a thin double-edge blade, grasped his revolver in the other hand, and with his rifle slung by a strap over his shoulder, he crept cautiously forward. He gained the sleeping black's side and raised his hand to strike . . . but on hearing his regular breathing he decided against it, and instead crept through the stone portal.

That it was a temple of religious worship was evidenced by the huge elephant on the estrade. It gleamed white and grotesque in the darkness. On either side were two smaller images, replicas of the larger one. The walls of the temple were lined with the same white stone.

But for these things the man had no eyes; his

gaze was intent upon the forehead of the central image.

THERE it was! Just as he had remembered it! No other white eyes had ever rested on it! His, only by chance. Sacred and worshiped, it had gleamed like an incandescent bulb through the carmine stain of human sacrifice for decades. He drew in his breath with a gust of sound! Its reign was about to end! It would soon decorate the crown of a queen or burn scarlet against the neck of an heiress. His mind reeled with his luck! All for himself! The others didn't know.

He licked his lips thoughtfully, and approached the jewel. His gaze was transfixed, and he automatically put the revolver in his hip pocket. The jewel gleamed and winked at him like an angry red eye. Almost afraid of soiling its translucent beauty with his hands, he began to dig away the setting with his knife. His hands shook as if with palsy, and beads of moisture formed on his brow and dropped unnoticed to his bared chest as he dug furiously at the gem.

He was intent on his work; the guard was forgotten.

Then a queer sensation came over him!

He was being watched; he felt eyes invading his sanctum, and his backbone crinkled with an unreasoning fear. With a lightning movement he reached for his revolver. It was gone! His stomach did queer things in its cavity.

Something hard struck his wrist and his knife clattered to the floor. He swung slowly around, his back to the idol, and his mouth dropped open with astonishment. For a split second he forgot his fright, and his eyes bulged in disbelief at what they beheld.

The temple was literally swarming with little white women! They couldn't come more than halfway to his waist! They were entirely naked excepting for hair like spun gold which billowed and waved about their knees as they swayed rhythmically closer and closer to him. His eyes fastened themselves on the tiny curves of their perfectly formed breasts as they peeped through the gently waving hair, and then passed hungrily down the whole small perfection of their ivory-colored bodies. Heavy gold bracelets encircled their little ankles.

For the moment he forgot the jewel and his own danger. He was certain he could circle a waist with

the thumb and forefinger of his big hand. He raised it automatically toward the nearest of the little creatures, and with this movement he felt the strap holding his rifle snap, and instantly on the alert, he whirled!



He leered at her delicious figure outlined against the moonlight.

In the twinkling of an eye he was surrounded. Panic raced to his brain and he struck blindly outward. He felt the blood spurt under the impact of his hairy fist. He constricted his arms around a wriggling naked body and heard the bones snap! Then he fought! Fought as only a man who is fighting for his life-blood can fight.

He felt myriad little bodies swarming over his. They were in his hair, on his shoulders, all over him. He flailed his big arms right and left. Momentarily he expected the slash of a kris across his throat, or the thud of a hilt against his body as it sank to his heart, but death did not come . . . his arms seemed suddenly to lose their power . . . he couldn't see the softly glowing bodies as they writhed and wrapped themselves around him . . . slowly he ceased all movement . . . he felt a sudden peace, as if the nerve of his resistance had been severed by a magic touch.

Limply he dropped to the floor conscious of the sweat of human bodies, a viscid odor that seemed to cling in his nostrils. He thought of the silver stream flowing peacefully at the bottom of the gully. It would wash away that smell if only . . .

He felt himself lifted by gentle hands. Were they gentle? Or was he deadened to touch? His

hand felt a twinge of pain, something rough moved beneath it, wearing away the skin. He tried to look, but his head would not obey. A sudden turn and the lurch threw his head to the side. His hand was dragging on the ground across rocks and bamboo shoots. He felt a sharper pain and tried again to lift his hand. It would not move. Realization came to his numbing senses! His body was paralyzed! Somehow they had worked magic on him! His mind raced feverishly, but he couldn't move a muscle, or open his eyes. With a mighty effort he forced his parched lips open and shrieked once—the long, agonized wail of a soul in hell—

THE blacks around the campfire shuddered slightly and drew closer to the flame as the cry died away.

John Evans jumped from his cot and ran swiftly to Sally's tent. Her candle was nearly guttered, but by its dim flame he could see her terror-struck face in the semi-dark.

"Wha—what was that?" Her teeth chattered as John, wrapping the sheet around her clinging body, lifted her, and sitting on the side of the cot, rocked her gently in his arms. His own face became pasty as the scream died away.

"I don't know," he answered soberly, "but you needn't be frightened. Masterson's gone to shoot a panther, and when he returns in the morning, we're turning back."

Sally buried her face in his neck and her smooth lips formed a kiss on his throat. His muscles jerked with the contact and he felt his blood quicken. He lowered his mouth and kissed her. They clung for a long minute, then John quietly disengaged himself. "Masterson's got something on his mind besides the ivory cache we're supposed to be looking for," he told her quietly. "I don't like this country. Nigger's tale or not, it's got a queer history, and we don't want to be marked as 'Taboo.'" He patted her smooth shoulders reassuringly. "I'll spend the rest of the night by the fire. You try to get some sleep."

But her arms tightened convulsively, "No-no, don't leave me, I'm afraid!"

Evans felt his resistance weaken. He automatically strained her to him, as her hot, moist mouth closed clingingly over his.

The candle flickered and went out...

AS MASTERSON'S shriek died in his throat, he made a tremendous effort to repeat it, but

his vocal cords refused to respond to his desire. His mind froze with fright!

He was conscious of dense overgrowth on either side, overhanging the procession that carried him. A dull *bom, bom* sounded in his ears like a death knell. He thought of tom-toms, and of the unearthly scream he had heard earlier in the evening. His body was wet with sweat. He also recalled ugly tales he'd heard of how superstitious blacks tormented a temple despoiler! Suddenly his mind told him that his captors were little pale *white* women! This did not seem to bring any comfort.

He was seized with a desire to resist, to struggle and tear himself away from this horde of little beings that carried him on and on. . . . His mind struggled frantically and cursed and swore, but all that moved was his mouth; his body sagged limply between his bearers. He was paralyzed! His body was dead! They had worked some sort of magic on him! Only his mind remained alive! He could will, but he could not act! He could feel, but he could not touch!

The ground came up under him and he moved no longer. A circle of pale-limbed women, interspersed with black-robed priests, stood around him. He opened his eyes wider.

A sharp stone dug at his back, but he could not move a muscle.

Suddenly his eyelids refused to close again and his eyes felt cold . . . ice cold. Two hands reached down and turned his head to one side. For what purpose? He felt cold sweat break out again on his body, and his brain cringed and cowered with an unknown fear.

Across the clearing he could see in the dusk of dawn a dark object, a protuberance rearing its ugly head from its center, immobile as a tiger crouched waiting for its prey. Could it be a beast, a slinking, starved creature that fed upon human sacrifices? He tried, unsuccessfully, to turn his head to the other side.

His eyes bulged from their sockets. The circle of women was widening. They were leaving him to . . . that! He pleaded in shouts, but the sound of his voice was indistinct and sounded like gibberish to his ears. He offered money, more money than he'd ever thought of having, but the figures faded away in the growing light . . . and that stone was painning his back! The weirdness of it! To be unshackled and free, and still unable to move!

He wanted to close his eyes or turn his head or

move his body . . . anything to distract his mind from that indistinct ‘thing’ across the clearing. The coming dawn seemed to bring it nearer. He could almost feel its carnal breath upon his face, its teeth at his throat, and he . . . unable to move!

He strained his eyes as daylight gathered, toward the thing that was crouching there. A sharp pain shot through his back and moved through his entrails. Like a tremendous needle pushing its way through his body? What a relief it would be just to lift himself a little to relieve that gnawing pain at his back . . . but not a nerve, not a tendon or a muscle would obey his commands.

The tropic dawn came suddenly and he forgot for a moment the agony of his back in what he saw!

‘That thing’ was not a *beast!* It was a man! And—he had not moved. He was dead! His tongue, blackened and swollen three times its normal size, lolled out of his mouth and trickles of blood had dried on his chin. The eyes stared straight into the heavens, unseeing, and on his face seemed still to writhe the agony of his death!

Masterson felt a violent nausea at his stomach and his voice made itself heard in a crescendo of screeches. His eyes rolled back to his ghastly companion, and fastened themselves on the protuberance that had pushed its way through the abdomen.

“God!” he moaned in a torment of despair, “it’s a bamboo shoot! Red with blood! And I’ll soon be . . . like . . . that . . .”

The pain in his back was unbearable. He knew now it was no stone! He was crazed with terror. His demented scream soared in the air. And such a soul-rendering scream; the death wail! It was borne on the returning breeze to a camp not far away from the foothills.

JOHNS EVANS was crouched at the fire with the quivering blacks. They looked in stricken appeal toward their leader as the weird shriek died away.

Lubu gazed somberly at John Evans’ colorless face. “Yes, Bwana,” he said, “better we pack. Big white man not come back!”