

THE
OBEAH
MURDERS

HULBERT
FOOTNER

THE
OBEAH
MURDERS



HULBERT
FOOTNER

* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook

*

This ebook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the ebook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the ebook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a FP administrator before proceeding.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

Title: The Obeah Murders

Date of first publication: 1937

Author: Hulbert Footner (1879–1944)

Date first posted: Mar. 31, 2018

Date last updated: Apr. 8, 2018

Faded Page eBook #20180336

This ebook was produced by: Delphine Lettau,
Mark Akrigg, Jen Haines & the online Distributed
Proofreaders Canada team at
<http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

THE OBEAH MURDERS

Books by

HULBERT FOOTNER

<<>>

THE OBEAH MURDERS

THE DARK SHIPS

THE ISLAND OF FEAR

THE MURDER OF A BAD MAN

SCARRED JUNGLE

THE MYSTERY OF THE FOLDED PAPER

EASY TO KILL

DEAD MAN'S HAT

THE RING OF EYES

MURDER RUNS IN THE FAMILY

DANGEROUS CARGO
THE WHIP-POOR-WILL MYSTERY

<<>>

Harper & Brothers

Publishers

THE OBEAH
MURDERS

BY
HULBERT FOOTNER

1937

NEW YORK AND LONDON

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

THE OBEAH MURDERS

*Copyright, 1937, by Hulbert Footner
Printed in the United States of America*

All rights in this book are reserved. It may not be used for dramatic, motion-or talking-picture purposes without written authorization from the holder of these rights. Nor may the book or part thereof be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without permission in writing. For information address: Harper & Brothers, 49 East 33rd Street, New York, N. Y.

9/7

FIRST EDITION

F-M

THE OBEAH MURDERS

Chapter 1:

Phil Nevitt was one of half a dozen assistant secretaries of Columbia Distillers, an Organization that within two or three years after repeal had quietly become one of the great corporations of the country. It was a good job for his years, which were twenty-five; he could fairly term himself an “executive.” He had worked hard, which nowadays implies something harder than work—*i.e.*, self-discipline; keeping a firm hand on his vices—but not too firm, and directing every thought and action to the end of making good; consequently he was looked upon as a rising man.

It could not be said that he was on intimate terms with the big boss, Julius Chapman; they had met a few times at some of the larger conferences of officials, that was all. Phil did not suspect that Mr. Chapman had ever singled him out as an individual; consequently, one morning at the beginning of winter it was with some apprehension that he received a summons to the president’s office.

He entered the palatial chamber smiling, to be on the safe side. Mr. Chapman, a small man, grim and white, with an odd rectangular head taller than it

was long, looked him up and down before he spoke. There was a good deal of Phil to take in, six feet two of him, and broad in proportion. Mr. Chapman grunted encouragingly, and waved him toward a chair.

“Sit down,” he said. “Smoke?”

Phil’s smile broadened in relief as he helped himself to a presidential cigar.

“Are you married?” asked Mr. Chapman.

Phil laughed at the unexpectedness of the question. “No, sir.”

“I’m not trying to probe into your personal affairs. I merely want to know if your circumstances are such that you can make a voyage on confidential business of the company.”

Phil’s heart lifted up at the thought of a voyage. “I can, sir.”

“Good. Do you know anything about rum?”

“Only the taste of it, sir.”

“Well, don’t pursue that too far. I have chosen you for this job because I have a good report of you and because you’re too new to be generally known as an official of the company. This business must be carried out in secrecy.”

“I get you, sir.”

“Well, it has to do with rum. There are two sources of rum within our country, and both of them have started to produce again since repeal. One is New England rum, which, as you know, we already control. The other is the rum made on our island of Annunziata in the West Indies. Do you know anything about Annunziata?”

“Nothing but its name, sir.”

“A smallish island, off the main routes of travel. Rarely visited by tourists. Very beautiful, I am told, and enjoys a superb climate. Only a handful of white men live there. Years ago Annunziata rum was considered the best of all rums and commanded the highest price. Manufacture had to be abandoned when prohibition went into effect, and incidentally the island was ruined because it was their only industry. Now they’re starting up again. On the face of it, it is a private enterprise promoted by a man called Randal Trantor, who is the government representative on the island. This seems a little irregular, but we need not go into that.

“This Trantor must have strong backing, because he ordered a hundred thousand dollars’ worth of machinery two years ago, and has just lately

duplicated his order. It constitutes a serious threat of competition to us and we must look into it. So far Trantor has made no attempt to market his rum. I want you to go to Annunziata in the guise of an idle tourist . . .”

“But if tourists never visit the island, sir?”

“You must be an original kind of tourist, one of those fellows that like to poke about in out-of-the-way places.”

“I get you.”

“Find out all you can about this Trantor; what sort of man he is; what kind of a plant he is putting up; how far he has got with it; what his connections are in this country; and especially *who are his backers*. Send me a detailed report of all this—you had better mail it under cover to our lawyers, and remain on the island until you hear from me.”

“Yes, sir.”

“There’s only one ship from New York that calls at Annunziata. It’s the *Cassandra* of the Bowness Line, sailing on Thursday. I’m sorry to give you only three days’ notice, but I would like you to take that ship; otherwise you will have to wait a month.”

“I’ll be ready, sir.”

“Good! You should spend these three days in getting together whatever information you can about Annunziata and about the manufacture of rum. Mr. Winberg will instruct you further about the situation and you can come to me on Thursday morning at nine”—Mr. Chapman made a note on his desk calendar—“to go over the final details.”

“Very well, sir. And thank you.”

“Not at all. Not at all.”

Chapter 2:

Phil began to feel the spell of Annunziata while the island was still thirty miles away and no more than a pale violet cloud on the horizon of the Caribbean. Two hours later, when the little *Cassandra* sailed into the harbor of Port-of-Grace, it had him fast. The shore hills clothed with dazzling greens, and the soaring mountains black by contrast; the little beige town red-roofed alongside the emerald water; he could scarcely believe in it. In order to cover his tracks Phil had engaged passage to Barbadoes. He went to the purser and said:

“I think I’ll be leaving you here.”

“What!” said the purser. “Annunziata? It’s a hole!”

“I like it,” said Phil, grinning.

“You ought to see St. Kitts or Martinique. Plenty of winter visitors in those islands. Port-of-Grace is the most dead-and-alive town in the Indies!”

“I like it!”

The young purser shrugged. “Well, dine on board,” he said, “and I’ll go ashore with you afterwards and introduce you at the club.”

This suited Phil very well.

The swift tropical darkness had fallen when they were rowed ashore, and a wave of some strange perfume was coming off the land. It was Phil's first sniff of the tropics and it had a powerful emotional effect on him. He didn't speak of it to the bored purser. The shore of the harbor was hung with sparkling jewels of light that were reflected in the black water.

"This island is a great place for magic," remarked the purser.

"Magic?" said Phil.

"Nigger magic. Witches and conjure men and all that. Obeah, they call it. I don't know what the special attraction is, but there's something here that attracts the nigger Obeahs from all the other islands. Of course, they're quiet enough aboard ship, but you can always spot them by their crazy eyes. Gives you the creeps."

Phil glanced up at black mountain masses silhouetted against the starry sky and pictured the hidden gorges. Something in the purser's light words stirred him. He said, "It looks like a place where you might find black magic."

Upon landing at the quay the little town

presented a strong contrast in styles. The island had been colonized by the Spanish, conquered by the French, picked up by the Danes when France was busy elsewhere, and finally sold to the United States. There was a four-square Danish custom-house on the quay, and up the street a big stucco church, pure Spanish, with the addition of a Danish bell-tower. A crowd of loitering negroes watched the lighters bringing freight ashore from the *Cassandra*.

As Phil and his bags landed on the quay a dark man in beautifully tailored white linen came up. He had an ugly flat face, but there was power in it. The purser presented him.

“Mr. Alfred Bareda, Deputy-Commissioner for Annunziata.”

“Amongst many other things, I’m the Customs,” said Bareda, with a pleasant smile. “In the case of American citizens it is purely a formality. Have you any firearms, ammunition, or spirituous liquors?” His English was as good as Phil’s own, but he had an indefinably foreign air.

“No,” said Phil. “Go ahead and look.”

“Your word is sufficient. I am also supposed to ask what your business is in Annunziata, Mr.

Nevitt?”

“No business,” said Phil carelessly. “Just traveling.”

“Ah! We don’t have many travelers here. Please call on me if I can be of service in any way. I trust that your stay may be a pleasant one.”

“Thanks.”

The bags were picked up by a couple of ragged negroes, and they went on across the street to the hotel.

“That guy has a nerve!” growled the purser.

“Why?” said Phil, surprised. “He was polite, God knows.”

“Too damn polite! Talking up to you as if he was a white man!”

“I thought he was a white man. Of course, his complexion was dark . . .”

“Creole.”

“What’s a creole?”

“A native who is light enough to claim to be white.”

Phil thought this over. In Bareda he had the impression of meeting a personality. The man’s ugly

composed face and pleasant manner suggested powerful self-control.

“Bareda pretty near runs this island,” the purser added; “but he’s got a flick of mud in his eye. They all have. They claim Spanish or French descent.”

“Runs the island?” said Phil. “How about Randal Trantor, the Commissioner?”

“He’s a sot.”

Phil laughed. “I am certainly getting the lowdown.”

The hotel was an ancient wooden building in the French style, with galleries and jalousies, all unpainted and silvery with age. Inside it smelled like a second-rate hotel anywhere in the world.

“The chow here will be terrible,” said the purser.

“Maybe I’ll find a boarding-house,” said Phil.

“You can’t do that. Nobody keeps boarders but creoles.”

“Well, why not?”

“We don’t run with them.”

The hotel-keeper, Pernisson, was a swarthy creole with a cast in one eye. He gave Phil a hard look and shouted for a servant to show him upstairs. Phil judged from the register that he was the only

roomer, but the bar was doing a good business. A barefooted young girl appeared from the back. She had shining black eyes and hair like a raven's wing, hanging in soft curls to her neck. Her slender bare legs were like two golden poems. To Phil her beauty was of a piece with the delicious perfume on the night air—wicked and alluring.

The purser murmured under his breath, "You better watch your step, young fellow."

"Why?"

"The climate of this island is said to be bad for white men."

Phil grinned.

Her name was Nina Obeida. With a shake of her curls, she took a key off a rack in the hall and led them upstairs to one of the rooms off the gallery. Phil looked at her beautiful golden legs.

The room was bleak, but appeared to be fairly clean. Phil merely dropped his bags there and went on out again with the purser.

From the quay the curving main street of the town ran east to the hills. It was lined by shabby stores with fixed iron awnings extending over the sidewalks as a protection from the sun. The store windows were but meagerly furnished with goods,

and already at eight o'clock the street was deserted.

"Business doesn't seem to be very good in Port-of-Grace," remarked Phil.

"Good!" said the purser. "It's practically non-existent."

The club was reached through an alley running off to the left between two stores. It was a wide-spreading wooden pavilion standing amongst tennis-courts and croquet-lawns at the edge of the harbor. They entered a bare assembly-room with a dance floor set about with empty tables and chairs; the balance of the building was divided between bar and smoking-room. What life there was centered in the bar, and Phil headed in that direction. The purser pulled him the other way.

"You'll find the Americans in the smoking-room," he said, meaningly.

"How come?" asked Phil.

"There are not enough Americans to support the club, so they have to take in the well-to-do creoles, but they're not allowed in the smoking-room."

"If I was a creole, damned if I'd stand for it," said Phil.

"If you were a creole you'd damned well have

to,” retorted the purser. “We’re tops in this part of the world and we’re not going to let them forget it.”

The half-dozen Americans in the smoking-room were listless and anæmic specimens. Obviously they had been too long in the tropics. It occurred to Phil that the vitality of the island was confined to the despised creoles. He was introduced to Dr. Ramseur, to Inspector Fielding of the police, to the Reverend Oran Knowles, rector of St. Mary’s, a couple of bank men, and so on.

“This guy has fallen for your lousy island, God knows why,” said the purser, jocosely. “He’s going to stay awhile.”

They welcomed Phil in friendly enough fashion, but their unconscious glances suggested that they rather resented his physique and conspicuous vigor.

The purser remained for one drink only, and went off to check up his manifests. The others made an attempt to include Phil in the conversation but it languished. They were not interested in the outside world and soon relapsed into the gossip of the island. So Phil drank his highball and listened. It was not long before the name of the man who had brought him to Annunziata cropped up.

“Randy Trantor was drunk again today,”

remarked the doctor. Ramseur was a tall, stooped, embittered man who looked as if the tropics had sucked him dry.

The mild little clergyman shook his head. "How disgraceful!"

"I went down to the distillery to see him about a field hand who has developed beri-beri. He was plastered and told me to go to hell in his usual style."

"What did you do?" asked Inspector Fielding, a personable man, still youngish, but discontented-looking.

"I fixed it up with Bareda to pitch a tent in the hospital yard so that we could isolate the patient."

"Trantor's been hitting the bottle for twenty years," said Fielding. "He can't keep it up forever in this climate. How long do you give him, Doc?"

"He will outlive all of us," said Ramseur, dryly. "He has a Constitution of iron!"

"I don't mind his drinking," said Fielding. "It's his damned arrogance that gripes me. . . . You fellows in the bank are lucky," he went on to Coulson, the manager. "You're responsible to your head office and not to Trantor."

“Nothing in it,” said Coulson, with a wry grin. “We have to dance when Trantor calls the tune, just like the rest of you. He’s the source of practically all our business in Annunziata. He could have me recalled any day with a word.”

“Aye, it’s his arrogance,” growled Ramseur. “I was hard put to it not to knock him down today.”

“Why didn’t you?” asked Phil.

They looked at him pityingly. “You don’t know Trantor.”

“Well, what about him?”

“He’s our Governor, so to speak. He’s the biggest landowner on Annunziata. He has all the money there is hereabouts and we live off the crumbs that fall from his table.”

“But surely a man of that sort isn’t fit to govern the island. Why don’t you go over his head?”

“We might get worse,” said Ramseur. “After all, Trantor is drunk most of the time and doesn’t trouble us. Bareda does the work. He’s a good enough administrator.”

“But you don’t associate with him.”

Ramseur shrugged. “He’s a creole.”

“What’s Trantor’s history?” asked Phil.

“He comes of a wealthy family in Massachusetts. He came here twenty years ago when the United States took over the islands. The story is that his family shipped him down here. At that time most of the Danes wanted to go back to Denmark, and Trantor bought them out for a song; cane-lands in the flats, and all the pasture on the uplands. Immediately afterwards the United States entered the war, and Trantor cleaned up. Sugar soared and cattle and horses rose to fantastic prices. After the war when sugar faded Trantor concentrated on cattle and went on making money. He ships cattle all over the Indies. Now he’s built a big distillery to make rum and I suppose he’ll die as rich as Henry Ford.”

“Has he any family?” asked Phil.

“Not officially. He lives with a creole woman. He’s had three children by her, not to speak of others around the island.”

“What a man!” said Phil, dryly.

In the doorway of the smoking-room appeared a battered white man. He was dressed in a clean, ragged white suit with the jacket pinned across at the neck to hide the absence of a shirt, and broken canvas shoes. On the beach obviously. He had been

a fine figure of a man and there was still fire in his drunken eyes.

“Good evening, gentlemen,” he said, glancing around with inimitable derision.

“Get out!” said Fielding, turning red. “Or I’ll have you thrown out by the blacks.”

The intruder coolly met his eye. “I didn’t come to see you, Inspector. I heard that we had a white visitor and I wanted to pay him my respects.” His eye fixed on Phil. “Will you drink with me, sir? I can promise you better entertainment than this.”

Phil would have liked to go with him. “Sorry,” he said, “but I’m a guest here at the moment.”

“Some other time, then. Some other time.” The intruder glanced from one to another with his provoking grin. Phil thought he had the look of a molting eagle among neat barnyard fowls.

“Isn’t anybody going to offer me a drink?” he asked.

“I’ll give you just thirty seconds to get out of here,” said the red-faced Fielding.

The other paid no attention. His derisive eye dwelt on the Reverend Mr. Knowles, sitting nearest the door with a freshly filled whisky-and-soda on

the arm of his chair. “Padre, you’re a charitable man,” he said, grinning. “I can depend on you.”

Without waiting for the parson to speak, he whipped up his glass and tossed off the contents as it seemed in a single gulp. As Fielding sprang up in a rage, he dropped the glass and slipped out of the room, laughing.

Fielding dropped back, cursing. They all glanced covertly at Phil to see how he was taking it. Phil suppressed the desire to laugh. Inwardly he was tickled by the old beach-comber’s impudence.

“This is intolerable!” cried the little parson. “In our own club!”

“What can we do?” growled Ramseur. “A man can’t mix it up with a bum.”

“He ought to be arrested!”

“I’m sick of arresting him,” said Fielding, scowling.

“Then he ought to be deported from the island.”

“Where can I deport him to?”

“Who is he?” asked Phil.

“Buckra Bart.”

Gradually they smoothed down their feathers and returned to their gossiping. Sugar had dropped a

fraction of a cent. It was reported that chain stores in the United States were selling it at three cents a pound. "How do they expect the planters to live?" Cacao was still falling and some men were threatening to cut down their trees. Why not try avocados? Randy Trantor was urging everybody to put more acreage into sugar. Next year he would be prepared to take the entire crop for his distillery. Yes, but at what price? And so on. And so on.

Phil wearied of it. Outside, the breathing tropic night was beckoning him like a presence. He had only had two drinks, but he was greatly uplifted. As there seemed to be no chance that Trantor would turn up now, he rose and said good-night.

"Consider yourself a member here as long as you're on the island," said Ramseur.

Phil thanked him and left.

The main street was entirely uninteresting. Parallel with it ran a street of low-spreading bungalows almost hidden in a wealth of flowering hedges, shrubs, and creepers. Under the electric lights gleamed enormous and incredible flowers. On the air hung that unknown fragrance now strong, now faint. He finally located the source of it in a low tree with stubby twigs naked of leaves and flushed

with pinkish blossoms. A negro boy was passing and Phil asked:

“What kind of tree is that?”

“Frangipanni, sah.”

Frangipanni! The word was music to the ears.

There was not a breath of air stirring; the sky was crowded with stars. The people who passed him, girls and boys mostly in couples, were of a race new to Phil, with complexions graduating from magnolia white to golden; a beautiful race with features of classic regularity and velvety dark eyes. From the leaf-screened porches he heard the voices of women with a slow, caressing quality as disturbing as the fragrance of frangipanni.

He sauntered through to the end of the street and came back on the other side. From within a larger bungalow at the corner of a side street came the sounds of a woman singing to herself while she touched the strings of a guitar. The song would break off while the singer drew at a cigarette, then resume. Phil paused at the gate to listen.

There was an electric light over his head, and presently a woman, not the singer, spoke startingly from the dark veranda. “Won’t you come in, Phil Nevitt?”

He grinned and obeyed.

There were lights inside the house—the singer was in there somewhere, but bamboo blinds had been lowered over doors and windows and the veranda was in darkness. Off to the right of the front door he perceived a shadowy figure slowly rocking in a chair.

“Here I am,” she said. “Come and sit beside me.”

He dropped in a chair. He could see that she was neither young nor slender, but her slow voice charmed his spirit. It was the sort of voice that accepts all. It lapped him in peace.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“Coralie. . . . I know who you are. It’s a small place and the word has gone around. How do you like Annunziata?”

“Annunziata? When you say it, how beautiful it sounds! Say it again.”

Very slowly: “Annunziata, *caro mio*.”

“How do I like it? Don’t ask! It has stood me on my head. It all seems a little unreal. Or perhaps I ought to say I have become unreal here. I have lost myself.”

She laughed again. “It’s the sun. Until you came here you were a stranger to the sun.”

“I can’t get the hang of things at all,” Phil went on. “From the moment I landed I felt something in the air. Elemental. Yet this is supposed to be an American island. Here’s a handful of peevish Americans trying to hold down the lid. They don’t know what it’s all about. Why do you people allow us Americans to run you?”

“Oh, it’s your game,” she said, laughing. “What do we care about such child’s games? We live.”

Four slim young men wearing voluminous capes and broad-brimmed, flat-crowned hats mounted the steps of Coralie’s house and disappeared inside. Phil had a glimpse of a dark, tormented face that aroused his curiosity. This was evidently the leader; the others merely his admirers and imitators.

“Who’s the slim guy?” he asked.

“John D’Acosta, a landowner on the south side.”

“He looks wild.”

“Ah, poor fellow! he’s crossed in love!” murmured Coralie.

“And the others?”

“His pals, the sons of landowners—Warner

Figuerola, Frank Alvarez, Verne Cardenas.”

“Why the Spanish get-up?”

“That’s to annoy the Americans.” Phil could hear the smile in her voice.

“Well, the heck with them. Teach me how to live in the sun, Coralie.”

“You have to be born in it.”

It was late when Phil got back to the hotel. The street door was not locked. Up in his own room, when he threw back the cover of his largest valise, he saw that somebody had been through it while he was out. There had been an effort to put everything in straight, but the searcher had been in a hurry. On the bottom lay the briefcase which contained his private papers. So far as he could tell, nothing was missing from among his things.

He strode to the door in a rage, to call Pernisson. But with his hand on the knob he thought better of it and came back. After all, nothing had been stolen and to raise a row would only make him look foolish. It was his own fault for not locking his bags. The hotel door had stood unlocked all evening, and the key to his room had been hanging on the rack in

the hall. Phil made up his mind to find another lodging. Meanwhile he would carry his private papers on him. He went to bed with an uneasy mind.

Chapter 3:

Phil hired a saddle horse next morning intending to spend the day in exploring. Mounting the hill at the head of the harbor, he looked down the other side into the great central valley of the island with its lofty black mountains on either hand. The mountains appeared black because of the mists of water vapor clinging around their summits. It was the end of the rainy season. The lower slopes were everywhere covered with the pale green of sugar cane.

He rode through the valley to the sea, twenty miles away, and lunched on a fried bonito in a fisherman's shack on the easterly point of the island.

Returning in the late afternoon, his interest was aroused by a romantic-looking dwelling which clung part-way up the side of the mountain on his left, like a swallow's nest. It was clear that that house must enjoy one of the great views of earth and he wondered what kind of people lived there. He came to a rough track that dipped down to the stream crossed by an ancient stone bridge and started back up the face of the mountain towards the high-perched house. He ought to have kept on for his

dinner, but he turned his horse into the track. The climbing road wound in and out of the bays in the mountain-side, marking a division between cultivated land and forest. On his left the cane-fields swept down to the stream, and on his right rose a well of trees.

Halfway up he began to hear the sounds of a commotion in the woods above. It drew nearer—the yelping of dogs and excited human cries, a plunging and tearing through the brush that made his heart beat faster. They burst out into the cart track not a hundred feet in advance of him—a wild pig running for its life, a pair of nondescript dogs almost on the pig's haunches, a half-grown white boy and three negroes mounted on wiry ponies. The pig headed down the track straight for Phil.

Not a white boy, he soon saw, but a tall, slim girl of astonishing beauty, hair flying, eyes flashing, teeth gleaming in her excitement. She was wearing rough, soiled breeches, boots, and shirt, and carried a lance. There was a pure savagery in her glance that struck delight into Phil.

He drew as far as possible to the side of the track. Pigs have not good sight and the hunted one was almost on top of Phil's horse before he scented

the new danger. The beast whirled around with a squeal of mortal terror, and charged straight back for the other horses. The dogs were carried beyond Phil. The girl jerked her pony back on its haunches and lowered her lance. The pig evaded the point and ran in and out among the legs of the stamping horses like quicksilver. The girl, wheeling her horse, collided violently with another horse. The pig sprang up the bank and was lost in the woods, the dogs tearing after him.

Instantly the girl was in a white passion. Dropping her lance and snatching a whip from her boot, she furiously lashed the back of the negro who had accidentally blocked her. It was no dainty switch, but a heavy plaited thong with loaded handle. The other two negroes turned ashy with fear.

“You fool! You fool!” she cried. “How many times have I told you to keep out of my way! Now you’ve let him escape!”

The negro, a powerful young fellow, took the lashing all hunched in his saddle. His face was twisted, and low cries of pain were forced from him, but he made no attempt to resist her, nor to get away. Phil could not bear to see a human creature used like that. He spurred his horse forward crying:

“Hey! Cut that out!”

The girl’s whip arm dropped to her side, and she turned a face of pure astonishment. Up to that moment it is doubtful if she had seen Phil. “Who are you?” she cried. Her face flamed red and turned very white again. “How dare you speak to me so! This is my servant. I shall whip him if I choose!”

“Not while I’m here,” said Phil, grimly.

“You! . . . You! . . .” she cried, almost speechless with rage. Spurring the horse forward, she raised the whip. Phil leaned forward and, wrenching it from her, sent it spinning over her horse’s head and down into the field of growing cane. She reined her horse back, glaring at him. Phil laughed.

Then there was trouble. The negro she had whipped slipped out of the saddle and advanced towards Phil with his head sunk between his shoulders, showing his teeth. There was a red cast under his dark skin that made him look more animal than human. Phil saw that he was well able to drag him out of the saddle. Moreover, there were two others to back him up. Phil was unarmed, but he would not run from negroes. He waited for them.

The girl spoke sharply, “Let him alone, Simon.”

The negro turned, scowling and protesting. "Aw, Missee, let me . . . let me . . ."

"Let him alone, I tell you! He is nothing! Give me my lance. Mount your horse and find that pig!"

Simon obeyed her sullenly. The girl put her horse to the bank. Over her shoulder she cried, "You, Jas, find my whip and come after us." With two of her men she disappeared in the woods. The third negro leaped his horse down into the cane-field.

It was all over in a minute. But what a minute! Phil felt as confused as if he had received a blow on the skull. He urged his horse forward in the hope that motion might restore some sense to him. All the aimless torment that had filled him since he landed on Annunziata suddenly focussed on the girl. She was scent of frangipanni; she was the starry sky and the music of guitars. She was life in the sun. This tomboy, this savage young huntress. There it was!

Meanwhile the wraiths of mist around the mountain tops had thickened and drawn together in heavy gray clouds that now obscured half the sky. He took no notice of it. In twenty minutes or so he heard horses behind him in the trail and his heart jumped. She was coming back. He pulled up his

horse to wait for her.

They appeared trotting their horses around a shoulder of the mountain, all in a high good humor. The dead pig lay across the pommel of Simon's saddle, still bleeding. The girl was smiling and serene, the negroes grinning from ear to ear. They took their cue from the face of their mistress. Even the dogs with their tongues hanging out appeared to be laughing.

Phil started his horse forward, and she fell in beside him as a matter of course. "What's your name?" she asked, as one boy of another.

"Phil Nevitt."

"Mine's Eve Brinsley." She blandly ignored the violent scene of half an hour before. "What's your business? Strangers around here are as scarce as hen's teeth."

"I have no business," said Phil, smiling. He couldn't get his fill of looking at her.

"Were you on your way to see us? Ours is the only house on this trail."

Phil bent the truth a little. "No. Just riding blind."

"Well, you'll have to stop at our house now,"

she said, glancing at the sky, “because it’s going to rain like blazes directly.”

Phil felt most unreasonably delighted.

“You mustn’t mind if my mother is rather highy-tighty.” Eve went on. “She hates strangers. She’ll do her duty by you, though. She’ll feed you.”

“Who else is in your family?” he asked.

“Nobody. Just mother and me. We raise cacao. It grows best on this island at a thousand feet elevation. But the price has dropped and we’re poor as Job’s turkey. We raise coffee, too, but nobody will buy it. It’s too good. So we drink it ourselves!” Her laugh rang out.

She was bareheaded, her dark hair hopelessly snarled. Hands and face, too, were smeared with earth. Evidently she had been right down in the dirt after that pig. But she was beautiful; she was beauty itself, which no disguise can cover. And she was no boy, either, but slim and shapely as young Diana.

“Do you hunt?” she asked in her odd, direct manner.

“No,” he confessed.

He could see that he fell in her estimation. “I expect you’re city-bred,” she hazarded.

“Yes.”

“Then you couldn’t be expected to ride well enough to go pig-sticking,” she said, coolly.

“There are other things beside pig-sticking,” he suggested, with a grin.

“Not for me!” she answered, promptly. “Pig-sticking is the best fun in the world!”

By this time they had climbed high above the cane-fields. Out from behind a clump of palmetto in front of them stepped a good-looking young negress with a little girl clinging to her skirt. Mother and child wore freshly washed dresses and had bandannas knotted about their heads. The woman was carrying a dressed fowl wrapped in a clean napkin, and a little basket of eggs. These she mutely offered to Eve with an imploring expression.

“Why, Jem, you mustn’t give me this,” protested Eve. “Eat it yourselves! Eat it yourselves!”

The woman dropped on her knees in the dirt, holding her offerings up, and began to pour out a pitiful plea for help of some sort. The little girl started to cry. Phil’s ears had not yet become accustomed to the jargon spoken by the negroes of Annunziata, and he couldn’t get the hang of it. It had to do with somebody called duppies. They had

thrown stones at her and her little girl. They had caused her baby to fall sick.

Eve, like a boy, was impatient with all this, half sympathetic, half afraid of being made to appear ridiculous. With a side glance at Phil to see how he was taking it, she burst out, “This is all nonsense, Jem. I haven’t got any power over the duppies. I don’t believe there *are* any duppies. It’s just foolishness!”

The woman paid no attention to Eve’s protests; merely waited until Eve had finished, and began her plea all over.

“You should get the doctor to see your sick baby, and pray to God to deliver you from evil spirits, not me!”

“Work for me, Misse! Work for me!” murmured the woman.

Finally Eve spurred her horse on, without taking the gifts. “I’ll ride down to see your baby in the morning,” she said over her shoulder. “But I can’t do it any good.”

The woman, satisfied, took her child by the hand and struck straight down the mountain-side.

“They think I’ve got some sort of magical powers,” Eve said, crossly, to Phil; “and I can’t

knock it out of their fool heads.” That was all the explanation she would make. Magical powers! Phil was full of wonder.

The first drops of rain began to fall as they rode into a flat yard shaded by a gigantic mimosa tree. The back of the house was on one side; stables and other outbuildings on the other. The whole outfit had a picturesque and dilapidated air—tangled creepers; broken rails; slack and grinning negroes. Handing their horses to the servants, they raced for the shelter of the encircling veranda.

“Hope you don’t mind going up the back steps,” said Eve. “There used to be front steps, but they foundered.”

The rain came down in earnest then, crashing on the iron roof like musketry, and falling from the eaves in sheets. As they walked around the veranda, Phil glimpsed various rooms through the open French windows, all bare and cheerless.

“Not much like a civilized house, eh?” remarked Eve, reading his thought. “Ants ate up the rugs, curtains, and the stuffing of the chairs long ago.”

As they turned the front corner she whispered, swiftly: “Don’t mention that you met me out pig-sticking. It’s forbidden.”

It created a bond between them. Phil grinned.

The front of the house overhung the mountain-side and the view pulled Phil up short. He saw one of those unique effects of nature that are never reproduced. It was raining only on their mountain. They looked out through a curtain of rain on the opposite mountains, peak after peak, gloriously gilded by the sinking sun. So bright was the reflection that the rain itself seemed to be golden.

While Phil looked at it, Eve looked at Phil. “It’s fine, isn’t it?” she said, with a boyish nod. “I’m so used to it I can’t see it any more. But sometimes—in the morning, or during a shower like this, it gets you hard!”

A soft, rolling sound caused Phil to turn quickly. He saw an elderly lady wheeling herself out through a French window in a chair, an odd-looking lady with square shoulders and grim visage like a man, and legs presumably useless since they were covered with a light rug. Her gray hair was drawn tightly back, her lips had disappeared in a thin line. She wore an old-fashioned cap pinned to her top hair, and had a stout stick tucked in alongside her.

The chair thudded over the window sill and mother and daughter exchanged a strange look—

affection masked with animosity. Phil could see no resemblance between them. The girl spoke casually:

“Mother, this is Mr. Nevitt. He was caught on the road by the rain.”

Mrs. Brinsley looked Phil over and turned her eyes away. In that one swift appraisal he felt that she had made up her mind about him forever. “How do you do,” she said, coldly. “Please be seated. You will remain for supper, of course, and all night if necessary. If the rain continues the track will be too slippery to venture down at night.”

“Thank you very much,” said Phil.

“Not at all,” she retorted, in a manner that suggested, as plainly as if the words had been spoken, God knows I don’t want you here, but it seems I have no choice.

Eve was biting her lip to restrain a grin, and her mother turned on her angrily. “Go make yourself tidy, Miss! You look worse than usual.”

The girl ran into the house, where she no doubt had her laugh out. Phil was not so lucky. He put in a bad quarter of an hour. Mrs. Brinsley only asked him one question:

“Are you settling in Annunziata, Mr. Nevitt?”

“No, Mrs. Brinsley. Just a brief visit.”

She lost interest in him. She felt no necessity for making conversation, and sat in her chair, staring grimly at nothing, her mouth working ceaselessly in pain or bitterness—or perhaps merely from habit. Phil said politely:

“You have a wonderful view from here.”

“I dare say,” she said, bitterly, “but one can’t exist on a view. Everything is falling into ruin about our heads.”

Phil thought, I wish I could be your overseer.

Meanwhile the rain continued to crash on the iron roof. The shower crept across the valley and all its loveliness was gradually blotted out in a fog of rain. He was thankful when a clock somewhere inside the house struck six and created a diversion. Mrs. Brinsley pounded imperiously on the floor with her stick, and after an interval a comic little black maid came trundling out on the porch.

“Take the gentleman to the guest-room and see that he is provided with everything necessary.”

When Phil returned, Mrs. Brinsley was still sitting alone. “I don’t know what can be keeping Eve,” she said, crossly. “She is not usually so attentive to her appearance. We won’t wait for her.”

As Phil moved to the back of her chair to guide it she said, sharply: "Don't touch it. I am accustomed to helping myself."

She rolled herself to the head of the dining table, and the little bow-legged maid kicked the guide wheel sideways to fix the chair in place. The black dining-room was full of incongruities; dishes and cutlery were cracked, broken, and mismated, but the silver service from which the old lady poured tea was solid and magnificent, and the battered sconces holding candles around the walls, antique Sheffield.

There was an immense silver bowl of camellias in the middle of the table. Mrs. Brinsley looked at it and sniffed scornfully. Phil guessed that Eve had placed it there and took it as a favorable omen. She had arranged it for him!

Eve appeared in a doorway at the lower end of the room and paused. Phil sprang to his feet, amazed. An incredible transformation had taken place. The black hair was now braided coronet-wise around her sleek head; enframing the pale, perfect oval of her face with dark eyes grave and a little heavy. Her springtime figure was set off by a high-waisted white dress, cut square around the neck and with little puffs on the shoulders. The dress in itself

was a miracle. Where had she got it? She was a dream-girl in that shabby room.

The old woman, following the direction of Phil's stricken gaze, turned red and almost rose to her helpless legs in rage. "How dare you get yourself up like that!" she cried. "You know that that dress is not to be worn now! Go take it off, Miss! Go take it off, I say!"

Eve curtsied gravely to Phil and vanished. Phil continued to gaze at the empty doorway, wondering if he had really seen what he thought had been there.

In a few minutes she came back wearing a print dress faded after many washings. But her head was as beautiful as ever, and Phil saw that he had not fooled himself. Eve, he suspected, was destined to become famous. Annunziata would never hold her. Mother and daughter—strange pair!—did not address each other. Eve for the most part kept her eyes down. Her expression was demure.

After dinner, as it was still raining, they sat in another stark room. A sinister chill emanated from the grim old woman in her wheel chair. Phil understood that he would not be allowed to have a word with Eve alone, but he sat on, hoping against hope, and making what conversation he could. He

suspected the demure-faced Eve of secretly laughing at his efforts and it did not help any.

While it was still early Eve arose in her abrupt fashion, saying, "I'm going to bed." She bestowed a kiss on her mother's stony brow, curtsied a good-night to Phil, and went away. The touch of irony in her performance made him sore.

When Eve was out of the way the old lady said: "I, too, shall retire now. We keep early hours here. . . . In case I should not see you in the morning," she went on, meaningly, "allow me to say that while I recognize a stranger's right to hospitality, I reserve the privilege of choosing my friends."

Phil reddened with anger. "You mean I am not to come here again?"

"Not unless invited by me," she said, with a stony stare.

He controlled himself with an effort. "But, Mrs. Brinsley," he protested, "if I give you the opportunity of learning something about me; if I can show you that I am a decent sort of fellow. . . ."

She cut him short. "I require no such assurances. It wouldn't make any difference. I do not suppose that you came to see *me*, and as for my daughter, I

have other plans. Good-night, Mr. Nevitt.”

She wheeled out, and the comic servant came back to show him to his room.

Chapter 4:

The rain had ceased. It was impossible for Phil to sleep. He made no attempt to do so, but threw himself down on his bed, fully dressed, and tried to formulate a plan of action. Old people were entitled to consideration—up to a point; but when dealing with an old fanatic like Mrs. Brinsley, a young man had to act for himself. Moreover, something in the girl's demure manner had suggested that she expected him to act for himself.

His room opened on the veranda on that side of the house which looked in the direction of Port-of-Grace. His ears had told him that the old lady slept around on the other side. The middle part of the house was of two stories, and he knew that Eve was somewhere above, because he had heard her run upstairs.

After waiting awhile to allow the house to quiet down, he went out on the veranda. The night was as black as your hat. The ground here was only about three feet below, and he dropped noiselessly from the rail. Backing away until he could look over the veranda roof, sure enough he saw a lighted window

above, and presently Eve's shadow passed within. Searching on the ground with his hands until he found a bit of twig heavy enough to carry, he tossed it through her window.

She immediately appeared within the window, dressed in shirt and breeches as he had first seen her. "Who is it?" she whispered.

"Phil."

"All right. There's a ladder hidden under the bread-fruit tree fifteen feet behind you. Place it against the edge of the veranda roof without making any noise and I'll come down."

When he brought the ladder back, she was already snaking her body over the iron roof with infinite care to make no sound. When she set foot on the ground, he longed to take her in his arms, but her matter-of-fact air warned him not to. She said:

"Lay the ladder on the ground in case she should take it into her head to wheel around the veranda. Luckily, she can't get off the veranda."

When he had put the ladder down, she took his hand like a child, and led him away with sure steps in the dark.

"I don't see how you got over the corrugated iron without making it sound off," said Phil.

“I take care to keep one of the rafters under me.”

“Then you’ve had long practice,” he said, sorely.

“Surely. I often come out at night. Night tells you things you’d never know if you stayed in bed.”

“Who puts the ladder up for you?”

“Simon.”

“Isn’t it dangerous?”

“Oh, Simon always follows after,” she said, carelessly. “He’s better than a dog because he’s got more sense . . . but not much more.”

Phil was troubled by her innocence. “Suppose Simon were to forget himself some night?”

“Forget himself?” she echoed, in a voice of surprise. “You don’t know Simon. He would die for me. . . . If he did forget himself, I’d kill him. Just as you would a dog that turned against you.”

The ground on this side of the house sloped down gently. They came out from under the dripping trees on an open space with a concrete basin that received the water of a spring. There was a little pump-house alongside, and a wooden bench facing the basin. All this Phil barely sensed in the dark.

“Let’s sit here,” said Eve. “It’s as dry a spot as

we could find tonight. . . . Have you got any cigarettes?”

Phil produced his case and they lighted up companionably.

“Well, here we are,” said Eve.

“Your mother is the limit!” he said.

“I don’t allow anybody to speak against my mother,” she said, coolly.

He grinned in the dark. “Right! I’m sorry. . . . But indeed she did try my temper.”

“I could see that,” said Eve, laughing, too. “But what’s the use of complaining? You have to take mothers as you find them.”

“I don’t see how you stand it.”

“I don’t stand it. I get around it. . . . Change the subject. . . . I like you, Phil.”

“Same here, Eve.” He moved closer to her; she edged away. “You didn’t like me at first sight this afternoon.”

“You made me angry with your interference.”

“You’re not angry now?”

“Certainly not, or I shouldn’t be here. Don’t be silly.”

“Say you’re sorry you struck at me with the whip.”

“I won’t say it. If you made me angry I should hit you again. Or try to. That’s natural, isn’t it?”

He laughed. “You’re a caution, Eve!”

“I don’t know what a caution is, and neither do you. For Goodness’ sake, never mind me! Tell me about New York. You don’t know how fine it is for me to have somebody to talk to who has seen the world. I nearly go out of my mind cooped up on this place, seeing nobody, learning nothing. And time always passing. It’s no wonder they call me a wild girl and a white witch.”

“Witch!” said Phil, startled.

“Oh, that’s just negro talk. Senseless. . . . Have you heard anything about Obeah?”

“No.”

“Well, you will hear. Plenty. But not from me. I hate it! . . . Tell me about your real life in New York. The things you didn’t tell my mother.”

Phil grinned and started in. In Eve he found the listener that every man dreams of. She had to have each point made clear before allowing him to proceed, giving him the feeling that everything he

told her was being laid away in her mind in orderly fashion.

Time passed, and the inevitable happened. Softened and absorbed by his story, she pressed close to him like a child in order to hear better. Phil took this as evidence of warmer feelings, and in the end his arms slipped around her and his lips sought her cheek.

“Eve! Beautiful child! I love you!”

Instantly she slapped his face hard and sprang away from the bench like a fury. “Ah, I wasn’t expecting that!” she stormed. “That was base of you! Because I trusted you!”

Phil was instantly in a rage, too. “Well, is it a crime to love you?” he demanded.

“Laahv!” she mimicked, hatefully. “Sickening!”

“Damn you!” cried Phil, beside himself. “I didn’t say it like that!”

“Damn *you!*” she retorted. “You’re no good! I thought you were different. I thought I could make a pal of you. You’ve washed out on me. You’re just like all the others with your laahv!”

“I’m not ashamed of it,” said Phil, furiously. “I offer you the best a man has to offer.”

“Silly romantic words! Mean nothing. I don’t want your laahv. I like hunting better. Anyhow, I’m not a child.”

“You’re acting like one.”

“You’re a liar! I hate you!”

Phil laughed, but it had not a merry sound. “You’re a savage! God made you beautiful and left out everything else!”

“Why bring God into it?”

“I suppose you get your fun in leading men on.”

“You’re a liar! I never thought of such a thing! I hate you for your lies!”

“You’re not human!”

“Why don’t you say the devil made me? That’s what’s in your mind! Well, whoever made me, I’m not for *you!*”

She disappeared in the dark. Phil attempted to follow her, but only collided with the trees and lost his sense of direction. When finally the house loomed before him, she had gone up over the veranda roof and was in her room. The light was out.

For her sake he returned the ladder to the place where he had found it. Still raging inwardly, he

made his way around back to the stable. Finding a couple of the Negro boys sleeping there, he roughly wakened them and demanded his horse.

He rode slowly down the slippery track, letting the horse pick his own way. More than once they barely escaped a spill. There was no break in the low-lying clouds and the whole world was as dark as a closed room. He could just sense the wall of trees on his left; on the other side a bottomless pit of darkness. He reckoned that it was midnight or after. Up and down the valley no spark of a human light showed anywhere. Except for the sounds made by his horse, the stillness was like something you could take hold of.

As he rode, Phil cooled down. After all, he told himself, what a woman says in a passion is not to be taken too seriously. She had said she was not responsible when she was in a rage. The very fact that she lost her temper suggested that she was not indifferent to him. If she didn't give a darn she would have laughed at him. All my fault, he thought, because I went too fast. A girl of that type is difficult to win. There was something fine in the fierce way she defended herself. That's the natural way. Eve shoots off like a rocket against the sky. It's the type best worth winning. I must study her. I must

make believe to meet her on her own ground.

Having reached this point, he lit a cigarette.

The grand difficulty was how to see her again, since he had been forbidden the house. Certainly he was not going to skulk around the place after dark like a thief. Letters would probably be intercepted. His best chance lay in Simon—Red Simon, they called him, owing to the peculiar color of his skin. Simon was completely devoted to his young mistress. Perhaps they were in the habit of sending him down to the town on their errands. He would watch for him. Meanwhile he must learn more about this strange outfit.

Suddenly Phil heard the steps of another horse above and behind him in the trail, and his heart leaped up. Was she coming after him to say she was sorry? It did not seem likely. But it was possible she might have sent Simon to fetch him back. He pulled up his horse to wait.

When he stopped the horse behind him stopped, and a chill crept through his veins. This was nobody who wanted to speak to him. Was Red Simon stealing down to beat him up on his own account? By God! I'll have a gun on me the next time I ride out of town, he thought.

He put his horse forward, letting him make his own time as before. Meanwhile he listened. The other horse started again. It was about two hundred yards behind, and the rider was making no effort to overtake Phil. It came to him that this horse had not gradually overtaken him. The footsteps had started suddenly. Horse and rider must have been concealed somewhere in the trees as he passed. It was not one of the Brinsley servants, then. Why didn't he attack me at once? Phil asked himself. Afraid of the slippery trail, maybe. Waiting till we get down on the flat.

He rode on slowly. The darkness, the strangeness, the cautious steps behind him, and the consciousness of his unarmed condition tried his nerves. Well, no man worth his salt is going to allow his courage to ooze out of him drop by drop without doing something about it. Phil with an oath suddenly wheeled his horse and urged it back up the slippery track.

The other horse immediately started to retreat. Phil with voice and heels urged on his livery nag, careless of how they slipped and staggered in the mud. He was making so much noise now he couldn't hear the other. After a time he realized that there was no other, and pulled up to listen. Not a

sound.

He rode on further for some hundreds of yards, and listened again. Still nothing. Then he realized that his unknown tracker must have concealed himself again behind the trees. Phil had passed him and must pass him again. Not an easy thing to do. He started his horse down the road again. Whatever it was, he had to go through with it.

He rode with taut nerves, listening, eyes fixed on the dark blur of the trees, momentarily expecting to be held up. Nothing happened. In the end he heard the other horse again, now *in front of him* and going forward. The headless horseman! he thought with a stiff grin.

When he reached the bottom of the long slope the man in front urged his horse to trot over the flat and presently passed out of Phil's hearing. For a few moments Phil allowed himself to think he had heard the last of him, and relaxed.

But when he rode up the approach to the old bridge his horse whickered, and was answered by a horse at the other end. So the man was waiting there. Phil steeled himself. Possibly there was a way to avoid crossing the bridge, but he couldn't look for it in the dark. He rode on.

Phil was almost on top of the man before he saw him. He was sitting his horse in the middle of the narrow bridge. "Halt!" he said, and Phil grinned. Not the usual form of hold-up; an electric torch flashed in Phil's face and was turned off again. Phil tried to ride closer, to see if the man was armed, but the other reined back. Both horses were uneasily stamping and sidling, and it was impossible to see if he had a gun. As to the man himself, Phil could tell nothing.

All the while Phil was figuring his chances. He wouldn't offer much of a mark to a bullet in the dark, but the horse would. And he couldn't escape without the horse. Moreover, there was a steep climb ahead up to the main road, and the highwayman's horse would be better than the livery hack. Phil decided to play safe.

"I only have a few dollars on me," he said, coolly. "You can have it."

"Damn your soul!" muttered the man. "I'm no robber!"

"What do you want, then?" asked Phil.

"I wanted to have a look at you. Now I know you, Yankee!" He clapped heels to his horse, wheeled, and put him to the hill at a gallop.

A laugh was startled out of Phil. So it was only a spy. The island appeared to be lousy with spies. He rode on, keeping a sharp lookout.

Chapter 5:

Phil slept late next morning. When he opened his eyes in bed the vivid, stormy face of Eve Brinsley rose before him, and he was filled with a kind of fear because in all his life nothing had ever acquired such a hold on him. This is suicidal! he told himself. You came to this island on business, and nothing must interfere with that. Forget her! Forget her! He jumped out of bed.

Down in the dining-room breakfast was over hours ago. The golden-skinned Nina smiled at him and shook her black curls, but he ignored her. Only one girl in the world had the power to attract him now. Nina disappeared into the kitchen in a huff.

Later, when he went up the street, he saw the deputy commissioner coming out of a door lettered *Annunziata Recorder*. Bareda, as before, was wearing spotless whites and a fine Panama hat. In all that dawdling town he was the only man who appeared to be busy. He greeted Phil with marked politeness, but, as with most busy men, his face gave little away. He made to pass on to his motor-car at the curb.

Phil detained him. "Will you have a drink with

me?”

Bareda looked at him oddly. “Do you mean that, Mr. Nevitt?”

“Certainly I mean it. There is something in the air here that promotes thirst.”

Bareda lowered his voice. “Don’t you know that if you are seen drinking with me the other Americans will ostracize you?”

“The heck with them,” said Phil. “Come on.”

“No,” said Bareda. “I appreciate it, but it would make me uncomfortable. But if you care to come down to the distillery with me we can have a drink without anybody seeing us. I’ll give you some of our rum. I’d be glad to show you over the plant, too, if it would interest you. There is not much else to see in Port-of-Grace.”

Phil lost no time in accepting the invitation. As they drove away he studied Bareda’s profile with interest. The man was younger than he had supposed, about thirty-five. His heavy face expressed nothing but a desire to be polite to the stranger, yet Phil felt there was something there. He said:

“I saw you coming out of the newspaper office. Is that another of your jobs?”

“Mr. Trantor owns the paper,” said Bareda. “I edit it more or less. Of course it’s not such a paper as you are accustomed to in the States, Mr. Nevitt. But we do our best.”

“Trantor seems to have a finger in every pie,” said Phil.

“Mr. Trantor *is* the pie,” said Bareda.

Phil glanced at him, grinning, but Bareda’s face was smooth. “And pie eyed to boot,” suggested Phil.

“Very good. Very good indeed!” said Bareda, still without cracking a smile. Apparently he never smiled. “But you mustn’t believe all the gossip you hear. Mr. Trantor has extraordinary business acumen.”

“They say most of the business falls on you.”

“That’s nonsense. I merely carry out the orders he gives me. I am familiar with only a part of his affairs.”

They headed west along the harbor. Beyond the town the road climbed a hill amongst a huddle of wattle-and-daub shacks through which Bareda drove with complete disregard of the swarming children, pigs, and chickens. There was a wild scramble to get out of the way and more than one curse was hurled

after the car. Bareda seemed not to hear it.

On the other side of the hill the road came down to the shore again and the buildings of the distillery rose in front of them. Phil was surprised at their extent; new structures of stone with iron roofs and a solid pier running out into the harbor. "Hurricane-proof," remarked Bareda. The establishment had an animated air strange to find in the sleepy tropics; smoke was pouring from the chimney; trucks were being trundled across the yard; a small tramp steamship lay at the pier, discharging coal.

Bareda led Phil into a small office adjoining the entrance to the main building, and closing the door, took two bottles of rum from a cupboard and set them on the table. For himself he produced a bottle of Coca-Cola from a refrigerator.

"No rum?" said Phil.

"I never partake," said Bareda.

"Why?"

"We of Spanish blood have strong passions and the climate is not conducive to self-control. I'm a busy man. I have to leave it alone."

A queer Dick! thought Phil; with his slightly bookish speech and unvarying gravity; American, yet not American; unpredictable.

Bareda poured a drink for Phil from the first bottle. “This is three years old,” he said.

Phil tasted it. “In two years more it will be first rate.”

Bareda poured from the second bottle. “This is old Annunziata rum. This is what we have to match.”

Phil let the smooth spirit run under his tongue and trickle down his throat. “Milk for lions,” he said, grinning.

Bareda conducted him through the entire establishment. From the style of his answers to questions it was clear that he had every detail of the operations at his finger tips.

“This plant represents an investment of more than a million dollars,” he said.

“Who are Trantor’s backers?” asked Phil.

“He has no backers. It was his own money.”

As they went on, Phil asked: “How did you learn so much about making rum? You couldn’t have been more than a lad when prohibition went into effect.”

“When Mr. Trantor first projected this plant he sent me to Cuba, where I worked for Bacardi and

learned everything they could teach me. I also went to Jamaica.”

The tour of the plant consumed most of the afternoon. Afterwards, Bareda took Phil back to the office and gave him another drink of old rum.

“What is ‘Obeah’?” asked Phil, suddenly.

Bareda was startled. “Nigger magic,” he said. “Whatever put that into your head?”

“Oh, I hear talk of it around the island. . . . Do white people ever fall for it?”

“They would never admit that they did,” said Bareda, “but the white children are brought up by negroes and they get it fed to them when young. It may linger.”

“Do you think there is anything in it?”

Bareda turned away. “I don’t think about it one way or the other. I’m too busy.”

“Do white people ever practice it?”

“Certainly not. What a strange idea!”

“The reason I ask,” said Phil, very carelessly, “I overheard snatches of talk between two men at the club. They referred to somebody they called ‘the little white priestess’; a name was mentioned—let me see—Eve Burnsley or Brinsley; something like

that.”

Bareda was shaken out of his gravity; he stared at Phil, and a greenish tint crept under his cinnamon-colored skin. “What a wicked thing to say!” he murmured. “I didn’t know that Americans talked like that; negroes, yes. . . . I beg that you will not repeat this, Mr. Nevitt. It would injure a young girl—scarcely more than a child; a wild, free, young creature. Of course there’s nothing in it.”

“Do you know these Brinsleys?” asked Phil.

“I could not presume to say that I know them,” said Bareda, deprecatingly. “They are Americans, but of course I meet them in the way of my work.”

Phil was curious about this man’s private life. “Are you a member of the club?” he asked.

“I’m a member, but I rarely go there,” said Bareda.

“Why is that?”

“My position is a peculiar one. The Americans don’t wish to mix with us creoles socially; well, that’s their privilege; I accept it. But I am not popular with my own people, either.”

“Why?”

“They regard me as having sold out to the

Americans because I am Mr. Trantor's lieutenant.”

“That's a darn shame!” said Phil.

Bareda shrugged. “I went into it with my eyes open. My own people are proud and lazy. To me America stands for order, progress, accomplishment, the future, and I am very happy to cast in my lot with Mr. Trantor's. I've got sense enough to realize that my place is to carry out orders and his to issue them. He is unpopular with all classes, too; if he can stand it, I can.”

“But surely Trantor himself treats you as a human being,” said Phil. “After all you have done for him.”

“My relations with Mr. Trantor are on a purely business basis,” said Bareda, in a dry voice.

“Well, I'm damned!” said Phil. The more Bareda undertook to explain himself the less he understood him. “Are you married?” he asked.

“No,” said Bareda. “I live alone. . . . But my life is very full. I have no time for moping.”

“You have relatives,” said Phil. “Parents, brothers and sisters.”

Bareda shook his head. “Not that I know of. My first recollections as a child are of playing about the

streets of Port-of-Grace in rags and being fed by charity.”

“How can you stand such a solitary life?”

“I am busy.”

Later Bareda sent Phil back to town in the motor-car. It was then cocktail time—or would be at home; in the tropics white people dine later. Phil, feeling a great disinclination to be left alone, headed for the club. He was trying to put the girl Eve out of his mind, but her lovely face haunted him. He wanted a drink; he wanted distraction.

The club-house was empty except for a single figure in the smoking-room, a man Phil had not seen before; short, stocky, middle-aged, with a handsome face ravaged by self-indulgence. Phil did not need to be told that this was Randal Trantor. He was sitting slumped in a basket chair with a tall glass on the arm and the brooding, dangerous look of the confirmed alcoholic. To be handled with gloves! thought Phil.

“Hello!” said Trantor, with an arrogant stare. “I suppose you’re the tourist. What the hell’s your name?”

Phil was accustomed to the vagaries of drinking-men. “Nevitt,” he said.

“I’m Trantor.”

“So I supposed.”

“Supposed?” said Trantor, sharply. “What have they been telling you?”

“That you are the king pin of Annunziata.”

“Humph!” grunted Trantor. “What’ll you drink?”

“The same as yours.”

Trantor swallowed down what remained in his glass and shouted for two Scotches. “What do you think of Annunziata?”

“Very beautiful.”

“So you’re one of these beauty-lovers,” said Trantor, sneering.

Phil refused to lose his temper. “Sure, in my humble fashion,” he said. “Aren’t we all?”

Trantor ignored the question. “Come two thousand miles just to see beauty!”

And found it! thought Phil, thinking of Eve.

“Not interested in rum, by any chance?” sneered Trantor.

Phil hardened. So the man knew his purpose in coming to Annunziata! He had employed a spy to go

through his papers. Phil continued to smile. “I enjoy rum along with the other good things of life,” he said. . . . “I have just been through your plant,” he added, meeting Trantor’s glowering eye.

“I told Bareda to show you everything,” said Trantor.

“Thanks,” said Phil. For nothing! he added to himself.

“What you think of the rum factory?”

“First-class. Wonderfully equipped and organized.”

“It ought to be, after the money I’ve sunk in it,” growled Trantor.

The drinks were brought. Phil noticed that Trantor was served with a double portion. He gulped it and grew visibly drunker before Phil’s eyes. As time passed, finding that he could not cow Phil, he became effusively friendly. This was more difficult to put up with.

“You must come up to my ranch, Nevitt. I got a beautiful place up in the hills, if it’s beauty you’re after. Six thousand acres. It’s all the pasture there is. You and me ought to be friends. Christ! I was longing to see a new face. I’m fed up with the footless white men who hang out at this club. They

let me insult them, Nevitt. It's bad for a man. Makes him arrogant. This is a hell of a country for white men, anyhow. I could see right away that you had backbone. You stood up to me, and I respect you for it! I respect you!"

A little later he reached the lachrymose stage. Holding a freshly-filled glass up to the light, he said; "I ought not to be drinking this. It's like poison in this climate. I'm getting to be a regular sot. I put away a case every week beside what I drink at the club. If you were a friend of mine, Nevitt, you'd make me stop it."

"You don't mean that," said Phil, grinning.

"The hell I don't mean it! I would be grateful to anybody who would make me stop drinking. If you were my friend you'd take it away from me."

"All right," said Phil. He got up, took the glass out of Trantor's hand and tossed the contents out of the window.

Trantor sprang up in a rage. "Damn you . . . !" Phil looked him coolly in the eye; he broke into drunken laughter and dropped back in his chair. "What a fellow you are, Nevitt! What a fellow you are!" He raised his voice; "Cudjoe! another double Scotch!"

“Cudjoe, make it a black coffee for Mr. Trantor,” called Phil.

“Whisky!” roared Trantor.

The old Negro steward was evidently accustomed to such scenes. He brought whisky, and Trantor gulped it with a triumphant grin. It was all one to Phil, of course. He wasn't Trantor's keeper.

“I like you, Nevitt,” babbled Trantor. “Why don't you settle down on Annunziata? I'd have somebody to talk to then. You could live the life of a gentleman here. Are you married?”

“No.”

“Well, I'll tell you. I got a dandy housekeeper, Nevitt. Looks after everything for me. Damned handsome, too. Just turned thirty. You settle down here and I'll let you have her.”

“I couldn't think of depriving you,” said Phil.

“Don't mention it. I don't want her any more. I'm going to be married. And it would be kind of awkward, you understand. . . .” He winked drunkenly at Phil.

“Married?” said Phil.

“Yes. That's why I got to cut out this drinking. I got to get myself in condition. I'm marrying a young

woman.”

God help her! thought Phil. “Somebody from the States?” he asked, politely.

“No, an island girl . . . Maybe you think I’m demeaning myself,” he added, with a drunken man’s sharp look.

“Lord! I don’t know her,” said Phil.

“She’s white and American, all right,” said Trantor; “both sides of the house. It’s true she had a Spanish grandmother, but I can’t object to that because it was from her that she inherited her beauty . . . She’s a beauty, Nevitt, a great beauty! And nobody on this damned island has the wit to recognize it but me! I’ll show her off in New York and London. I’m well connected in the States. She’ll be a sensation!” Trantor rubbed his hands.

A powerful disquiet attacked Phil. “What’s her name?” he asked.

“Eve Brinsley.”

A slow, crumbling fire burned through Phil’s breast, the kind of fire that does not burst into flame, but leaves everything charred and dead behind it. He looked at the drunken beast before him and learned what it was to feel murderous. Lacking a better weapon, his fingers ached to close around that

swollen neck.

As from a distance he heard Trantor saying: “And temperament! My God! Nevitt, what a woman she will make! All fire! She’s entirely unawakened as yet. I’ve been waiting for her to grow up. Her mother is watching over her for me. . . .”

Phil, frightened by his own feelings, got up abruptly and walked out.

“Hey! where you going?” Trantor cried, fretfully. “Come back here.”

Phil pushed on out through the screen door and made his way blindly through the little alley to the main street. Now in the cool of the evening the sidewalk was well filled, and the creole girls in their bright dresses glanced with interest at the handsome American stranger who was so extraordinarily tall. Phil never saw them. They glanced at each other, giggling and half scared, and hurried on.

Phil was struggling to get a grip on himself. What is it to you? asked the voice of common sense. A girl you have seen once! These people have nothing to do with you. You have your own life to lead; your job to attend to. Forget her! Forget her! You’re acting like an emotional fool!

It was no good. The picture of Eve in her

springtime beauty forced to mate with the beastly
old man drove him mad.

Chapter 6:

Phil could never have told where he went. An hour later he turned back, craving a drink. Giving a wide berth to the club, he turned into the hotel. The bar was half full. At one end of the mahogany the young creole, John D'Acosta, was standing alone; slim, straight, and elegant in his Spanish manner. Phil heard him order a straight Scotch.

By his voice he recognized him as the mysterious highwayman of the night before, and some of the pieces of the island puzzle snapped together. Crossed in love, was he? In love with Eve. And of course he knew of her coming marriage with Trantor. In the mirror back of the bar Phil saw in D'Acosta's eyes a savage pain akin to his own.

“Hello, D'Acosta,” he said, advancing. “You know me.”

D'Acosta started and turned with a look of hatred. Said nothing.

“What the hell!” said Phil. “We're in the same boat. Drink with me.”

“Damned Yankee!” muttered the creole. He had

his little glass of neat whisky in his hand; Phil saw that he meant to throw it in his face and stepped back. D'Acosta, however, thought better of it; set his glass down on the bar untasted, and left the place.

Phil flamed with anger. "All right, then, go to hell!" he shouted after him.

He downed a couple of drinks and felt an overwhelming need to express his feelings. Sore. Sore. Sore. Chicago Harry, the bartender, was a good egg, but he was too busy to talk to him at the moment. Phil looked around. Sitting at a table in the back of the room he saw the battered white man that they had called Buckra Bart. He had no drink before him and looked sunk. Approaching him, Phil said:

"Hello, white man! Will you drink with me?"

Buckra Bart revived as if by magic. "With pleasure," he answered, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. He had the voice of an educated man. "But it's only fair to tell you I'm busted wide and can't reciprocate."

"That's all right."

Phil shouted for the drinks and sat down. The disreputable Bart was a dark man in his late forties who looked older; still wide in the shoulder, lean in

the flank. His young-looking eyes attracted Phil; seemed to put them on an equal footing as regarded age. Phil felt able to let himself go with this man.

“I don’t think any the less of you because you’re down on your luck, stranger. Damn it, when I look around me it seems to me that it’s the best among us that get thrown up on the beach. Those who have guts enough to refuse to play the stinking game of civilization. Look at me. I’m what they call a young man on the make. I’ll end up as a tycoon if I live long enough. And is it because I’m a better man? No! It’s because I have learned how to pussy-foot among the masters; how to crook the neck and bend the knee. I’ll get along. I’ll get along. O Christ, how I hate life! It’s so mean!”

“Easy, lad!” said Bart, showing his broken teeth in an indulgent grin. “Your whisky’s gone down the wrong way. You want to go slow with it in this climate. It’s bad for white men. Take a lesson from me!”

All the fire suddenly went out of Phil. “The drunker I get, the better,” he muttered.

Bart looked him over admiringly. “Cheer up,” he said. “You’re one of fortune’s favorites, but you don’t know it.”

The barroom gradually emptied as the customers started home for dinner. “Will you eat with me?” asked Phil. “I suppose we’ve got to eat. I can’t face that crummy dining-room alone.”

“Sure,” said Bart, “and much obliged. My stomach was just inquiring if we were going to eat tonight.”

In the dining-room the pretty Nina fawned on the well-dressed Phil, and treated his companion with lofty disdain. The latter didn’t care, but it made Phil hot.

“Just because I’ve got the price,” he growled. “It’s like a dining-room girl. The same the world over.”

“Well, what do you expect?” said Bart.

“By the way, my name is Nevitt,” said Phil.

“I know it. I’m Bart Brinsley.”

Phil put down his knife and fork. “Brinsley?” he said, staring. “Are you any relation to . . .”

“The old woman of the mountain? Only her husband.”

“But I thought . . .”

“You thought she was a widow. Sure she wears a widow’s cap to try to persuade herself I’m dead,

but I refuse to live up to it.”

“And the girl?”

“My daughter . . . You’ve seen her?”

Phil nodded. “I took shelter there from a shower.”

“I haven’t lived with my wife for twelve years,” said Bart.

“I’m not surprised,” said Phil.

They suddenly grinned at each other and felt like old friends.

“You see, the plantation was hers,” said Bart, as if that explained everything.

And it did. “Why do you stay on the island?” asked Phil.

“For two reasons,” said Bart. “First, I like to steal a glimpse of my daughter occasionally; second, I haven’t the price of a ticket to take me anywhere else.”

Phil wondered if he was aware of the fate in store for Eve. For a while he couldn’t speak of it. Meanwhile he ordered plenty of drinks from the bar. Bart was exhibiting an excellent appetite. When Phil growled at the food he said:

“It’s a darn sight better than I’m accustomed to.”

Finally it came out. “Did you know that Randal Trantor was going to marry Eve?” asked Phil, careful with his voice.

“Sure,” said Bart. “That was settled a long time ago. There’s no secret about it.”

“Is she willing?” Phil asked, keeping a tight hold on himself.

“Certainly. What a chance for her!”

“If she was my daughter,” said Phil, slowly, “I’d kill the brute before he should have her.”

“How foolish to kill him before he marries her,” Bart said, with a wicked grin. “Afterwards . . . maybe.”

Phil looked at him somberly. “You don’t mean that. Not that I gag at murder; I was ready to murder him myself this afternoon. But if she was to *profit* by his murder, she would be smirched for life!”

“Pooh!” said Bart. “If you’ve got money you can thumb your nose at smirches.”

“How old is Trantor?”

“In the neighborhood of sixty.”

Phil’s voice began to shake. “Seventeen and sixty! It’s horrible to think about.”

“That’s the sentimental view,” said Bart. “When

you are as old as me you will look at realities. Eve won't suffer, because she's never been awakened. And a man of Trantor's age isn't going to waken her. She will accept marriage with him as a disagreeable necessity. Later, I suppose, some other man will awaken her. That's up to Trantor. Meanwhile, he's worth a couple of million, and he can't live forever."

To Phil this was the philosophy of a man beaten by life; horrible. But he kept a hold on himself. "Doc Ramseur says he's got a constitution of castiron," he muttered.

"I wasn't thinking about his constitution," said Bart. "He's a well-hated man. Did you know that three attempts had been made on his life since he came to this island?"

"No."

"Well, it's a fact. Maybe the fourth one will be successful."

Phil's control was slipping. "It's revolting!" he muttered.

"Two million dollars will gild the bitterest pill on earth," said Bart. "My wife's plantation is finished; the house is ready to fall about their ears. How else can I make sure that my girl is rescued

from a life of poverty? You don't know what it is to be broke, Nevitt. I mean permanently down and out with the heel of the world in your face. Look at me! I would lie, I would steal, I would kill to save my girl from a fate like mine!"

Phil scarcely heard a word of it. "Such a marriage is revolting!" he cried. "The thought of it sickens a man with blood in his veins. For God's sake, if there's no clean love in the world, no happiness, no fun while you're young, you had better kill your child and put her out of it!"

Bart got up a little unsteadily. "I see I've worn out my welcome here. However, thanks for the chow. . . You're a good fellow, Nevitt. I could tell you that it's none of your damned business" . . . Phil made a threatening move . . . "But I won't," he hastily added. "Forget it, Nevitt. And for God's sake lay off the whisky!"

Walking carefully, he went through the hall and out the front door.

Nina came sidling up to the table. "Him nasty fellow," she said. "No good friend for you."

Phil saw the girl through a blur of rage and whisky.

"You fine man," said Nina, with a flirt of her

curls. "Me like you."

He stared at her.

"I don't live here," Nina volunteered. "Go home nine o'clock every night. Live 6a Soursop Court. You come see me there?"

"Sometime," said Phil, to get rid of her.

He started to get up. She flung an arm around his shoulders to press him back. "Don't go, Phil. I bring you whisky here. All you want."

They struggled a little, and a cotton tab fell out of the girl's dress. On it a human eye was crudely painted. "For God's sake, what's that?" said Phil.

"Just a lucky charm," she said, quickly concealing it. "Stay with me, Phil."

He pushed her off and went into the bar. Chicago Harry was alone now, polishing glasses in preparation for the evening trade. "Give me a double Scotch," said Phil.

Chicago was a brawny, red-haired Irishman as much out of place in Port-of-Grace as a cocoanut palm in his native city. God knows what strange current had washed him up on Annunziata. He hated the island. He looked at Phil slyly and said:

"Excuse me, Mr. Nevitt, but you're piling them

up too fast. I will say for this unchristly climate that you can get up the same pressure on half the fuel. You're stoking too hard."

Phil pounded on the bar. "Give me a drink," he said. "I got to get drunk!"

Chicago with a shrug set out the bottle and glass.

"Drink with me, Chicago."

"Don't mind if I do, Mr. Nevitt."

He toasted Phil with the snatch of an old song:

"Brought up by honest parients and raised most
tenderlee,

Till I became a sporting-man at the age of twenty-
three."

Phil surveyed the endless row of bottles on the shelf behind the bar. "It would be a good stunt," he muttered, "to drink your way from bottle to bottle down to the end."

"Not for me," said Chicago. "One kind of poison is enough."

Behind the bottles rose pyramids of polished glasses. "What a lovely smash they would make!" said Phil. "God! if I could smash something it would ease me!"

“Don’t tempt me, Mr. Nevitt, don’t tempt me!” said the grinning Chicago. “I got that feeling myself!”

The swinging shutter at the street entrance banged back against the wall and a party of men entered; D’Acosta and his three young friends, Figueroa, Alvarez and Cardenas. They had left off their encumbering capes; Phil saw that he was in for trouble and welcomed it. They lined up and noisily ordered Scotches. D’Acosta was the oldest of the four, and the others, his satellites, took their cues from him. Cardenas said to Figueroa:

“Look at the human tower. It’s head is lost in the clouds.”

“Too high! Too high!” said Figueroa. “It’s framework is rickety.”

“It would take less than a hurricane to blow that down,” said D’Acosta.

Phil carefully placed his glass on the bar. “Turn around, D’Acosta,” he said, “so I can see where to hit you.”

D’Acosta, instantly blind with passion, rushed Phil, crying: “Damned Yankee! Damned Yankee!” He ducked under the swing that Phil aimed at him and seized Phil around the body. Phil could only jab

him ineffectively with short-arm punches. A great joy was rising in him. He had something to smash.

“Gentlemen! Gentlemen!” protested Chicago Harry. His eyes, too, were bright with the lust of battle.

While D’Acosta held Phil, Cardenas, the huskiest one, ran around and delivered a stinging blow on Phil’s ear. Completely enraged, Phil drew up one knee and broke D’Acosta’s hold with such force that the creole was hurled to the floor. Phil turned to punish his new assailant. Step by step he forced Cardenas back across the room, hitting him repeatedly. The other two, Alvarez and Figueroa, attacked Phil from behind, striking him about the head, and trying to drag him away from their friend. Phil towered over all of them.

Chicago could stand it no longer. With a roar, he vaulted clean over the bar. “Fight clean, you yellow punks!”

Cardenas fell backwards across a table with Phil on top of him, Figueroa and Alvarez on Phil. Chicago ran over and under his added weight the table collapsed and flung all five to the floor, where they mixed it up wildly. Across the room D’Acosta rose to his feet and looked around for a weapon.

There was a single bottle standing on the bar. He snatched it up by the neck and ran over, watching for a chance to strike Phil. The liquor poured over him without his noticing it.

At this moment Bart Brinsley came in through the swing shutter, attracted by the row. He was just drunk enough to delight in the scene. He said to D'Acosta with an affectation of politeness: "This way, please." D'Acosta turned; Brinsley struck with lightning swiftness and the bottle flew out of the creole's hand. They grappled.

Meanwhile Pernisson, his wife, Nina, the cook—everybody in the building—came running and crowding in the two doorways from the hall. Another group gathered, gaping over the shutter in the street door. The women joined their screaming to the uproar. Nobody offered to interfere in the fight. "Go for the police! Go for the police!" yelled Pernisson.

One by one the combatants on the floor regained their feet. Figueroa and Alvarez ran in different directions to escape the onslaught of Chicago. Cardenas continued to put up a vicious fight against Phil. Figueroa scrambled over the top of the bar and picked up a bottle from the shelf behind. Chicago

caught Alvarez at the back of the room, missed a mighty swing and fell. Alvarez, escaping, joined his partner behind the bar and snatched up another bottle.

Bart Brinsley was chasing D'Acosta around the room, hitting him when he could. D'Acosta ducked under the flap of the bar, and Brinsley drew back, not caring to start a mix-up among so much glassware. Phil and Cardenas were hard at it across the room. D'Acosta hurled a bottle at Phil's head. It shattered against the wall, and Phil, startled, gave ground. Cardenas took advantage of it to smash out through the swing shutter and plunge through the crowd outside. He had had enough.

There was a pause then. The three creoles behind the bar reached for bottles and stood them on the mahogany, handy to their hands. Their notions of fighting were different from those of the Americans, but in their own way they were game. Instead of catching Phil alone as they had expected, they found themselves up against the three best scrappers in Port-of-Grace. Phil and his two friends, empty-handed, lined up across the room and invited them to come out and take it like men.

“Let them have it!” said D'Acosta.

The bottles flew and crashed on wall and floor. Nobody was hit. A pungent stench of mixed liquors filled the air. Out in the safety of the hall the proprietor moaned and clutched his hair. "Why don't the police come?" the terrified women asked each other.

After a second volley, Chicago, maddened by this waste of good liquor, charged across the room, and vaulting over the bar, dropped in the middle of the creoles, scattering bottles in every direction. Phil, afraid that they might kill him, hastily scrambled after; Bart more prudently ducked under the flap and joined his partners.

An ungodly trampling and smashing took place in the narrow alley behind the bar. The glassware fell in showers. The creoles, not having room to swing their bottles, were hopelessly outclassed. But the Americans had difficulty in getting at them. D'Acosta, shielded for a moment by his two comrades, climbed over the bar and ran out through the swing shutter. Alvarez went down flat on his back. Figueroa started to crawl back under the flap.

Phil, Chicago, and Bart, taking after Figueroa simultaneously, jammed in the narrow space and Figueroa escaped. Alvarez, finding himself left

alone on the floor, leaped up as if he had been galvanized, and rolled over the top of the bar. Both creoles escaped through the shutter only a few yards behind their leader.

“After them, boys!” yelled Phil.

They got out through the shutter just in time to see the creoles disappearing around the corner into the side street. At the next corner they turned again and ran up the back street, with Phil and his friends about twenty-five yards behind. The running feet, the cries, shattered the evening peace of the vine-covered bungalows. Everybody ran out on the steps to see.

At the next corner the fugitives charged through a gate and, springing up the steps, disappeared inside a bungalow. Phil, Chicago, and Bart were just mad enough to follow. Crashing through a bamboo shutter, they found themselves in a lighted room where they were received with a chorus of wild screams.

Not until they were inside did Phil realize that this was Coralie’s house. The thought flitted through his head: damned shame! but it was too late then. Coralie herself, fat, pretty, and bland, sat rocking in a chair throughout, like a spectator at a mediocre

show, good-natured and contemptuous.

The three creoles ran around the room, trying to keep out of the way of Phil and his friends, while the girls—there were four of these—scattered like insects in the effort to dodge both parties, screeching continuously. It was a fancy room with any amount of lamps, cushions, knick-knacks. It seemed as if everything was thrown down and smashed simultaneously. Coralie rocked on.

The creoles got through a door at the back and contrived to hold it and lock it behind them. Phil snatched up the heaviest chair he could see and smashed it to pieces against the door without making any impression on it. He was left with the broken back of the chair in his hands.

“Come on, fellows!” he shouted. “Put your shoulders to it!”

Under their combined weight the door gave way. They were just in time to see the last of the creoles going over the window sill inside. Turning to run out of the house to head them off, they met three smart negro constables coming in the front entrance. Phil, completely mad, charged the Sergeant and stretched him flat with a blow on the chin.

“Don’t fight the police! Don’t fight the police!”

yelled his two friends.

Phil was beyond hearing. He picked up the second constable and threw him out on the veranda through a window; the third joined his Sergeant on the floor. Three more came in from the veranda and Phil charged in to mix it up with them. Just then somebody—one of his own friends, perhaps—hit him over the head and he knew nothing more.

Chapter 7:

Phil passed from unconsciousness into a heavy sleep. When he woke up he found himself lying on a bench in a wooden cell. The place was freshly whitewashed, but it had a suspicious sort of smell that causes one to look in the cracks for vermin. A square window, heavily barred, looked out on a narrow paved yard bounded by a wall, and there was a small barred opening in the wooden door. It was suffocatingly hot.

He pressed his aching head between his hands and groaned. Recollection of the night's happenings flashed before his mind's eye like pictures of somebody else's adventures; but he knew they were his own and was appalled at himself. He, Phil Nevitt, the young man who had always watched his step and kept within bounds, to run amok like that! A man never knew what was hidden under his own civilized veneer. What got into me? he asked himself.

A face appeared at the small opening, the door swung in, and Inspector Fielding entered, as neat as wax in his white uniform. Fielding was a well-meaning man, but he didn't register very hard

personally. He was worried.

“So you’re awake?” he said.

Phil concealed his feelings under a flip air. “More or less.”

“I certainly am sorry to see you here,” said Fielding.

“Oh, yes?”

“We never had a gentleman in this predicament and, frankly, I scarcely know what to do with you. The fact that you are a tourist complicates the matter.”

“Oh, let the law take its course,” said Phil. “I promise not to appeal to the State Department. . . . But for God’s sake don’t jaw at me!”

“If that’s the way you’re going to take it . . .” said Fielding, sorely.

“I didn’t start the trouble,” Phil pointed out. “Four men came into Pernisson’s to beat me up. It was only my good luck that I found two friends to help me.”

“So I have been informed,” said Fielding.

“Have you locked up my friends?”

“No. Neither Pernisson nor Miss Coralie wish to bring charges if the damage is paid. D’Acosta, on

behalf of himself and friends, has already paid half.”

“I’ll pay the balance,” said Phil. “How much is it?”

Fielding offered him some inventories.

Phil didn’t feel able to read. “You don’t have to rub my nose in it,” he said. “Just tell me the amount.”

“Half is ninety-eight dollars and sixty cents.”

“Cheap at half the price,” said Phil. “I’ll pay you as soon as you can get somebody to fetch my briefcase from the hotel.”

“All right,” said Fielding. “But that’s the least of your troubles. I’m obliged to hold you for assaulting the police. My men are very forbearing in dealing with white men, and I’ve got to hold up their hands.”

“Why, sure!”

“Constable Jarbow sustained a dislocated shoulder and Sergeant Meek has a black eye.”

“How can he prove it?” asked Phil. “He’s black all over.”

“It’s not going to help you to treat the matter as a joke!” said Fielding.

“Well, how much for the black eye and the

dislocated shoulder?”

“It is likely to cost you a trial and a term of imprisonment!”

Phil stood up suddenly. His head reeled with pain and he gritted his teeth. His tall figure dwarfed the little cell. “Fielding, I’ve been a fool and I’m willing to pay for it as far as I can. But I’m damned if I’m going to submit to any moral lectures from you or anybody else. Get that!”

Fielding shrugged. “Mr. Trantor is in a rage about this,” he remarked.

“In a rage because I got drunk?” said Phil. “That’s funny, from him.”

“You have put him in a difficult situation. He doesn’t want to subject you to a public trial, but he can’t let you go without hurting the morale of the police.”

“He has my sympathy,” said Phil.

Fielding ignored the crack. “If you will leave the island quietly he’ll square the police.”

“When?” asked Phil.

“Tonight as soon as it is dark. In that way all scandal will be avoided.”

“I understood there was no ship from here for a

fortnight.”

“The mail schooner to St. Cloud sails at five. She will be held for you until nine. Many ships call at the main island and you can travel in any direction you choose.”

Phil lit a cigarette. “Give Mr. Trantor my compliments,” he drawled, “and tell him he can go to hell!”

“You are talking foolishly,” said Fielding. “Mr. Trantor is all-powerful here.”

“Will he have me beheaded?”

“Be serious! What possible pleasure or profit could you have from remaining here? . . .”

Phil bluntly interrupted him. “Look here, Fielding, it’s poor business for me to be hurling insults at Trantor through you. You go back and tell him I refuse to discuss the matter with you, and he had better come to see me himself.”

Fielding went away, shaking his head.

After having given Phil three or four hours in which to calm down (but it had the contrary effect) the police inspector opened the door of the cell to say that Mr. Trantor wanted to see him.

“Well, I’m disengaged,” said Phil. “Show him

in.”

“Insolence isn’t going to do you any good,” said Fielding, angrily. “Follow me.”

He strode away through the corridor, leaving the cell door open. Phil sat tight on his bench. There was a silence, then Trantor came stamping down the corridor, and Phil grinned to himself. You’ve put him in a nice rage, he thought. Keep cool!

Trantor showed himself in the doorway with a crimson face. He was fairly sober. “How are you?” said Phil, affably. “Nice of you to come and see me. Sit down.”

Trantor showed his teeth. He was too angry to speak. Wouldn’t it be lovely if he had a stroke of apoplexy? thought Phil. “What can I do for you?” he asked.

Trantor’s voice was hoarse and shaken with rage. “I am not here to discuss anything with you, but to issue an order. At eight o’clock tonight you will be put aboard the government boat and taken to St. Cloud. If you go quietly you will be allowed to pack your things in the hotel. If you resist, you will be thrown aboard the boat and your stuff thrown after you.”

“You won’t do that,” said Phil, smiling.

“I won’t do it, eh? I’ve got twenty black policemen to do it for me!”

“Exactly. And if you allow these blacks to manhandle a white man, it will damage the prestige of all the other whites here.”

“I’ll take that chance.”

“Still, I can’t believe you’d be so foolish.”

“Foolish?” echoed Trantor, staring.

“If I am deported from this island, on my return to the United States I shall put the case before the President. I’ll tell him the truth about your administration; how you are so thoroughly hated that three attempts have been made on your life . . .”

“Who told you that?” demanded Trantor.

“Never mind. I see by your face that it’s true. . . . It’s only the beginning of what I have learned here. I have in mind that your consumption of whisky exceeds a case a week—you told me that yourself; furthermore, I shall mention that you have been living in sin, as they call it, for over fifteen years and that you now propose to put away your mistress and children in order to marry a young white girl. . . . Shall I go on?”

Trantor stared at him in silence. His bloodshot

eyes stuck out; he was panting for breath. Phil waited for the stroke of apoplexy, but it failed to intervene. Without further word, Trantor turned and, slamming the cell door after him, strode away down the corridor.

At about five o'clock the door opened again and Bareda came in. Phil arose, bristling. The Deputy Commissioner exasperated him by looking so neat and cool. Before he could speak, Phil rapped out:

“Please cut out the comment on my disgraceful situation.”

The heavy-faced Bareda, serious and self-controlled, looked at him in surprise. “It’s not my place to make any comment.” A new look came into his eyes and he lowered them to hide it. “In a way . . . I envy you.”

“Envy me!” echoed Phil, staring.

“The ability to tear loose for once. . . . You don’t know . . .”

“Don’t know what?”

Bareda’s eyes were hidden. “What it is always to be corked up and wired down.”

Phil laughed. He almost liked the man then.

Bareda was immediately his controlled self

again. “My object now is to clear up an ugly situation. If you are brought to trial it will make trouble. And the brunt of it will fall on me. So I’m taking a lot on myself . . .”

“What are you getting at?” demanded Phil.

From under his white jacket Bareda produced a wood-saw with a narrow blade. “If you were to escape out of here it would save your pride, wouldn’t it?”

Phil grinned widely. In Annunziata, it seemed, anything could happen.

“The window frame is of wood,” Bareda pointed out. “It would not be much trouble to saw the bars out of it.”

“How about the wall outside?”

“There’s a door in the rear of the wall—you can’t see it from your window. I’ll see that it is unlocked at eight-thirty, and locked again after you’re out.”

“And then?” asked Phil.

“The mail schooner will have instructions to wait for you until nine-thirty.”

Phil hesitated, scowling.

“Mr. Trantor knows nothing about this,” Bareda

added, quickly. “He’s bent on prosecuting you now.”

Phil thought it over. Having learned all about the distillery, about Trantor, and about Trantor’s finances, he had fulfilled the best part of his mission in Annunziata. He could just as well wait in St. Cloud for further instructions from New York. “All right,” he said; “it’s a go.”

“You will, of course, agree to make no complaint about conditions on the island.”

“Not a peep out of me,” said Phil.

Bareda slipped the saw under the folded blanket on Phil’s bench.

“Suppose I didn’t take the mail schooner?” suggested Phil, curious to hear what he would say.

“You would be rearrested at once,” said Bareda, “with an added charge of jail-breaking.”

“You’d get into trouble then.”

Bareda shrugged. “Trouble is no stranger to me. I’d get out of it.”

“I wouldn’t split on you.”

“I’m not troubling about that,” he said, indifferently. “It’s obvious that you had better leave the island.”

“I agree,” said Phil, grimly.

Bareda did not linger. “All is clear, then,” he said with his hand on the door. “Good-by, Mr. Nevitt.”

“Same to you,” said Phil.

Shortly after nine o'clock Phil, Bart Brinsley, and Chicago Harry were seated on a bench on the quay. The mail schooner for St. Cloud lay alongside, with her crew sleeping on deck. Though Phil was the reason for her delayed departure, the creole skipper, bound to obey instructions to the letter, was waiting for the stroke of nine-thirty before casting off.

Phil had picked up his bags at the hotel, and had found his two friends gloomily drinking at Bart's hangout, Spencer's, a low rum shop on the market Square. Chicago had been fired from his job at Pernisson's. Now he was in the highest spirits again because Phil had asked him to accompany him to St. Cloud, and had offered to pay his way back to his beloved home town. Bart Brinsley had refused to leave Annunziata.

Drunkenness and battle the night before had

drawn them close, but as the moment for saying good-by approached, they found little to say. Phil was sore through and through. Every consideration of prudence urged him to get away from Annunziata, but he didn't want to go. The mountains darkly outlined against the stars were exerting a fearful pull on him. His heart was up there.

A negro boy, a hanger-on at Spencer's came running to them across the square. "Master Bart," he said, "you wanted on telephone."

"Me?" said Bart, surprised. "Who is it?"

"Me not know who 'tis, sah. She lady. She in bad way."

Phil and Chicago laughed.

"Well, I suppose I must answer her appeal," said Bart, grinning. "Good-by, men, if I don't see you again."

They shook hands, and Bart left them.

Soon the clock in St. Mary's struck the half-hour, and the crew of the schooner roused themselves. "Come aboard, gentlemen," said the skipper.

At this moment Phil saw Bart Brinsley running back. There was something wild and distracted in

his aspect that caused Phil to lay a hand on Chicago's arm. "Wait a minute."

Bart ran up, white-faced and shaking. At such a moment the ravages that whisky had made in his nerves were apparent. He could scarcely speak. "Phil . . . Phil . . . Thank God! you're still here!"

The sailors standing on the deck of the schooner all turned listening faces, and the white men lowered their voices.

"What's the matter?" demanded Phil. "Pull yourself together!"

"Eve . . . Eve . . ."

"What about Eve?"

"D'Acosta is planning to carry her off tonight."

Phil could not take it in fully. "The man is crazy!"

"No, he's not crazy. He figures that, however it may turn out, she would have to marry him after. And she would! she would!"

An intolerable pain struck through Phil. "What is it to me?" he said, harshly. "Go to Trantor."

"Trantor is drunk by this time of night."

"Then go to the police."

“No! If I go to the police there would be an ugly scandal and Trantor would refuse to marry her.”

“So much the better for her,” said Phil.

“No! it would wreck her life,” groaned Bart. “She loathes that creole. She told me so. Nobody can save her but you, Phil. Because D’Acosta is afraid of you!”

Phil laughed. “So I must save her for Trantor, eh? . . . I’m damned if I will! Go to the police.”

“I will *not* go to the police. If you won’t help me I’ll act for myself. And look at me! Look at me!” he held out his shaking hands.

Phil might rage, but subconsciously he knew he had to go. “Can you get to D’Acosta’s place by car?” he asked.

“No. Horses . . . You’re coming? You’re coming?”

“Can we get horses quickly?”

“Yes.”

“Guns?”

“I don’t know where to lay my hand on any guns.”

“It’s just as well,” said Phil. “We can’t have any shooting.”

The skipper spoke from the schooner's deck. "We're ready to go, gentlemen."

"Will you wait for me for a couple of hours or so?" asked Phil. "I've got a bit of business to see to before I can sail."

"No, sir," said the skipper. "My orders was to sail at nine-thirty and I sail at nine-thirty. I carry the U. S. mails."

"All right," said Phil. "The hell with you. Toss me up my bags. You'll come, Chicago."

"Surest thing you know, partner."

Chapter 8:

Phil dropped his bags in the rum shop and they hired horses at Bateese's combined garage and livery. They rode out of town at a moderate pace to avoid attracting attention.

"How did you hear of this business?" Phil asked of Bart.

"There's a girl works in D'Acosta's house, called Rosanna Nuno. I suppose she's stuck on D'Acosta and his infatuation for my girl has made her jealous. She's been watching and listening. Tonight he had his friends Cardenas, Figueroa, and Alvarez to dinner and she overheard them plotting this thing. It seems that Eve has a habit of wandering around at night . . ."

"Damnation!" muttered Phil.

"D'Acosta had learned of this, and planned to seize her and carry her to his house. Rosanna couldn't do anything until they started out. She then went to the telephone and started trying to locate me."

"What time did they start out?" asked Phil.

"About eight-thirty. They have to pass the

crossroads at the top of the hill ahead of us. It would take them about an hour and a half to ride to my wife's plantation—part of the road is bad. And say another half-hour back to the crossroads.”

Phil glanced at his watch. “Ten-thirty,” he said. “We may make the crossroads ahead of them. Depends on how long they stay at the plantation.”

“My little girl!” groaned Bart.

As soon as they left the last houses behind them, they put their horses to a gallop up the hill. They pulled up at the crossroads. Here the north-shore road ran off to the left, the south-shore road to the right, the valley road straight ahead. The hard-paved highway revealed no tracks, and it was impossible for them to know if the kidnappers had returned from their raid. At the corner stood a little general store and rum shop wide open to the road. Three or four drinkers could be seen standing at the bar, talking loudly. The white men drew their horses back out of the light that streamed across the road. There was a glow over the mountain top to the east, heralding the moon.

“I say we ought to ride on to D’Acosta’s,” said Phil. “If we should get there ahead of him we can wait.”

“Hold on!” said Bart. “I heard something.”

Presently they could all hear a pad-pad down the valley road. A moment later they distinguished a dim running figure straining uphill. While he was still a hundred yards off they could hear his hoarse panting. As he ran up, Bart flashed a light in his face.

“Red Simon!” he exclaimed.

The negro staggered forward and clung to Bart’s stirrup. “Master Bart! Master Bart!” he panted. “Little Misse gone. D’Acosta take her!”

“I know it,” said Bart. “How long ago?”

“Not long, Master. Me run after them. Ten minutes—fifteen minutes.”

“How did it happen, Simon?”

“Misse say want walk tonight. Me put up ladder, she come down. She walk; me follow after. Me hit. Me fall down. When me wake up Misse gone. Me hear horses down the road. Me run after.”

“Did you see any of the men?”

“No. Was D’Acosta took her. Him been round our house.”

“You can go back now, Simon,” said Phil. “Or follow along after us if you want. We’ll fetch her

home. . . . Come on, men.”

Turning into the right-hand road, they urged their horses into a run, stringing out in single file in the soft stuff alongside so as not to give warning of their coming to listeners ahead. In spite of his exhaustion, Red Simon, clinging to Bart’s stirrup, ran on with them.

Soon they came out on the sea far below, brooding under a veil of moonlight. The road crawled around the side of a mountain that rose sheer from the water. The going became so rough they were forced to slow down to a walk. The scene had an unearthly beauty. The whole mountain-side was still in shadow. Below them the sea was smooth, but far out the moonlight revealed the pale band of a reef, and the distant booming of the surf reached their ears.

Beyond the mountain promontory they descended to a flat where they could gallop their horses again. Here a wide field of cane stretched between the road and the sea, and other fields sloped up on their left. Behind these fields crouched the forested mountains, dark under the moon. The moon, a little past the full, was casting a spell on the cane-fields. The dewy green leaves glistened as if

powdered with silver.

D'Acosta's plantation was about six miles from the crossroads. His house was built on the mountain-side back of the cane-fields, Bart said, and was invisible from the road. Turning out of the main highway, they started back between D'Acosta's fields over a dirt road. After a while Bart held up his hand for them to stop.

"There's a wall and a gate at the beginning of the rise," he said. "D'Acosta would naturally leave a lookout there to warn him in case anybody came."

"All right," said Phil. "Let Chicago and Simon stay here with the horses while you and I scout ahead."

This was done. They struck out of the road and, crouching low, made a wide detour through the young cane. They came to a stone wall with unbroken forest beyond. Upon investigating with a flashlight shielded in cupped hands, they discovered that a rough track ran along close under the wall on the other side. Clambering over, they dropped into it, and softly made their way back in the shadow of the forest.

Bart halted Phil with a hand on his shoulder, and silently pointed ahead. In an open space washed

with moonlight they saw the barred gate. It was closed, and the still figure of a man stood leaning on it, looking ahead across the cane-fields.

In order to come on him from behind, they struck in between the trees, and moving a foot at a time, using the flashlight sparingly, made their way around to the road that served the house above. They crept up on D'Acosta's man. He had been told to watch the road in front of him and it never occurred to him to look over his shoulder. Phil slipped out of his coat and held it ready. Finally he leaped on the man, flinging the coat over his head and bearing him down. A single muffled cry escaped him.

Bart was instantly beside Phil. They gagged the man securely with Phil's handkerchief, and bound his wrists and his ankles with their belts. Phil remained to watch him while Bart ran down the road to bring up the others.

The horses and the prisoner were left at the gate under Red Simon's care. Phil said, loud enough for the bound man to hear:

“If he makes a noise hit him on the head with a stone, Simon.”

Simon showed his gleaming teeth in the moonlight. “Yes, master.”

The other three went on. The road was steep and stony. It climbed through a belt of virgin forest which blotted out the moon, except here and there on a bend where a startling silver shaft struck down. "Go slow," whispered Phil, "and take care not to start any stones rolling down."

They finally issued out on a plateau that had been cleared by D'Acosta's forbears. It was set about with big trees and the grass was checkered with moonlight and shadow. A hundred yards in front of them rose the house, the usual low-spreading structure with a wide porch running around the three visible sides. The front windows were lighted up and at a table out on the porch sat D'Acosta and his three friends eating and drinking. A manservant passed in and out, waiting on them.

Phil and his friends dropped in the grass and crept softly closer, keeping to the shadowed patches. There was a light hanging directly over the table, which Phil figured would prevent the men sitting under it from seeing far into the darkness. They had drunk enough to be reckless of their safety. They were laughing over the success of their raid. Snatches of their talk reached Phil's ears.

Cardenas said: "I would feel safer if we were

inside the house and the lights out.”

“Sam will give us warning if anybody comes,” answered D’Acosta.

“The negro I knocked out on Brinsley’s will come to and give the alarm.”

“What of it? The negroes won’t ride after us of themselves, and the old woman is nailed to her chair.”

“She could send into town for help.”

“Sure! But they don’t know who did it. Hours will pass before they can trace it to me. It will be too late then. The old woman will be glad enough to hush it up.”

Phil ground his teeth together. Beside him he heard Bart muttering, “O, damn him! Damn him!”

Chicago whispered: “Let’s rush them, Phil.”

“Wait!” said Phil. “First we must find out where they have put the girl.”

From the porch they heard D’Acosta say with a laugh:

“How easy it was! Like taking a lamb from its mammy.”

“She never even bleated,” said Alvarez.

“I will kill him!” muttered Bart.

“Ssh!” whispered Phil. “Mark that lighted window around on the right. Let us get a look through that.”

They circled around through the shadows. The light that Phil had pointed out was shining through a pair of French windows opening on the side veranda. When they arrived opposite it they stood erect and looked in. It was a bedroom. Eve, wearing shirt, riding breeches, and boots, lay on the bed with her black hair tumbled over her face. She seemed to be sleeping. Phil’s heart burned at the sight, because he knew that it was no natural sleep. On the floor beside the bed sat a handsome creole girl watching Eve with strangely burning eyes.

“Rosanna Nuno,” whispered Bart.

“Creep in and speak to her?” said Phil; but feeling how Bart was shaking, he quickly added: “No, I’ll go.”

“Not alone, Phil! It’s too risky,” said Bart.

“The girl will let out a screech at the sight of you,” put in Chicago.

“I have a good argument,” said Phil. He drew a roll of bills from his pocket and, detaching the outside one, kept it in his hand.

At the side of the house where the veranda came to an end there was another pair of steps. "You fellows," whispered Phil, "follow me to the bottom of the steps and wait there. Keep your heads down below the level of the veranda floor and for God's sake be quiet. You are not to move unless an alarm is raised and the men attempt to rush me. We want to sneak the girl out without their knowing it, if we can."

Phil took off his boots and handed them to Chicago. They crept through the grass in single file. Phil snaked his body up the veranda steps while the others waited below. D'Acosta and his friends were out of sight around the front corner of the house. Luckily they were making a good bit of noise. The side veranda was in darkness except for the one light shining out of the window. Phil showed himself in the opening, grinning and laying a finger on his lips.

The creole girl caught her breath and clapped a hand over her mouth to still a scream. Phil held up the bill so that she could read the numerals. She took her hand down from her mouth and he saw that she was won. He moved swiftly then. Tossing the bill to the girl, he leaned over the bed and gathered up Eve in his arms. She moaned softly. If only she did not

wake and betray them! He held her warm body close to his own. The creole girl was shoving the bill under a chest of drawers so that it might not be found on her. As Phil went out of the window he looked back and saw that the girl had sunk back against the wall like one lost in heavy sleep. He grinned.

He hastened for the steps. The veranda floor creaked under his weight, but the men in front of the house were making too much noise to hear it. At the foot of the steps Bart rose up with a gasp of relief and joy and held out his arms. Phil reluctantly handed over the limp Eve. Bart had a better right, he supposed. They all streaked silently for the shelter of the trees. Phil sat down and put on his boots.

When they reached the top of the descent Bart paused. Behind them D'Acosta and his friends were still laughing on the veranda. "They're getting off too easy," growled Bart. "Let's smash them!"

"Go on!" whispered Phil. "This is the best way to get back at him. Picture his face when he goes into that room and finds the bed empty. He will never know who tricked him."

"His man at the gate will tell him."

"I'll square him."

Bart went on unwillingly. Reaching the gate below, they paused to unbind D'Acosta's man. When he stood up Phil said, carelessly:

“I reckon D'Acosta will pretty near kill you for this.”

The young negro groaned. “Me God! Me can't face him, master!”

Phil handed him a bill. “You have friends, I suppose.”

“Yes, master.”

“Hide yourself until it blows over.”

“Yes, master.”

They rode hard over the dirt road between the cane-fields, Simon clinging to Phil's stirrup. Coming to the rocks, they had to slow down to a walk. Suddenly Eve's voice was heard:

“Put me down, damn you! You can't do this to me, D'Acosta! I'll kill you!” She struggled violently in Bart's arms.

Bart, laughing and tender, had to drop the rein in order to hold her. “Whoa! darling! Take it easy! This is me! This is your old dad. I've got you safe!”

After an amazed pause, Eve flung her arms around Bart's neck. “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!” she

murmured. “Oh, thank God you came! It was like a bad dream!”

It was the first time that Phil had seen her softened, and he ached to be in Bart’s place.

“I don’t deserve the credit for saving you,” said Bart. “It was Phil Nevitt who took the lead.”

“Nevitt,” she said, in a flat voice. “I’m sorry he was in it. I don’t like him.”

Phil swallowed this grimly. At any rate she was honest.

“Who is the other white man?” she asked.

“Chicago Harry.”

She made no comment.

“This is the first time I have held you like this since you were a baby,” said Bart.

“It’s good,” she murmured. “Why do you never come to see me?”

“For a good reason,” said Bart, grimly.

“What do I care how poor you are? I’m like you. I feel the same way as you about things.”

“Bless your heart!” murmured Bart. “I wish I was a better man!”

Presently she began to tell him what had

happened. "I heard a sound behind me. Somebody had hit Simon over the head. . . . Where is Simon?"

"Right here at Phil's stirrup."

"Me all right, Missee," said Simon.

"Good! . . . When I turned around a man leaped out from behind a clump of palmetto and seized me. I couldn't see who he was then. I fought him as hard as I could, but other men ran up to help him, and one pressed a handkerchief soaked with some sweet-smelling stuff over my face. It made me weak. I passed out."

"Chloroform," said Bart.

"When I came to my senses we were riding along in the moonlight. A man had me in his arms. I recognized D'Acosta. I tried to fight him, but he held me, and another man pressed the handkerchief over my face again. I don't remember anything more until I found myself with you."

"Forget it!" said Bart. "You're safe now."

"Did you kill D'Acosta?" she asked, coolly.

"No, my pet," said Bart, and Phil could hear the grin in his voice, "Phil wouldn't let me."

"Naturally," she said, scornfully. "He's not a fighting-man."

“Don’t you fool yourself,” said Bart. “He’s the best scrapper I ever saw.”

She paid no attention to this.

“D’Acosta ought to have been killed!” she said, stormily.

“We’ll see about that later,” said Bart.

It was getting on towards three o’clock when the three white men rode back into town. Having turned over their horses to a sleepy negro in Bateese’s, they started to walk down the main street, Christian Street, towards the market square. They were the only living things visible under the lights. But out of the first doorway stepped an agitated white-clad figure.

“Is the girl safe?” he asked.

It was Alfred Bareda. Bart stiffened. “What girl?” he growled.

“I know where you’ve been,” said Bareda.

“She’s safe,” said Bart.

Bareda leaned against the wall in relief and wiped his face. “Thank God!” he murmured.

“How did the story get out?” asked Bart,

sullenly.

Bareda fell into step and they walked on, talking in whispers. “The story is not out. Nobody knows it but me. When the schooner sailed, the captain sent a boy to tell me that Mr. Nevitt was not aboard. So I started to investigate. I found his bags at Spencer’s. From a boy there I learned about the telephone call, and from the boy at Bateese’s I learned where you had gone. One of you let fall D’Acosta’s name when you were getting the horses. So I put two and two together.”

Bart Brinsley preserved a sour silence. Phil didn’t feel that it was up to him to say anything.

“Why didn’t you come to me, Mr. Brinsley?” said Bareda, reproachfully.

“Because I didn’t want Trantor to know about it.”

“He will never know it from me.”

“And I don’t want D’Acosta arrested.”

“I agree,” said Bareda, quickly. “I hope you won’t think me presuming, Mr. Brinsley, but I’m just as anxious for this marriage to take place as you are.”

“What is it to you?” growled Bart.

“Well . . . a man doesn’t like to speak of his private feelings, but . . . well, I’m hoping that it may be the saving of my employer.”

Bart began to soften towards Bareda. “That’s all right, then,” he said, gruffly.

“The difficulty is with Mr. Nevitt,” Bareda continued. “I shall have to tell Mr. Trantor in the morning that he cut his way out of jail and it’s going to be very hard to keep him hidden. His size makes him so conspicuous. I have bribed the two negro boys, but others must have seen him.”

“No,” said Phil. “There were a couple of others, but we fixed them, too.”

“D’Acosta and his friends?”

“They never saw us.” Phil briefly described what had happened.

“Wonderful!” murmured Bareda. “What a clever and nervy piece of work.”

“Phil can stay at Spencer’s,” suggested Bart.

“There’s no privacy in that place,” said Bareda. “I’ve got something better to propose. Mr. Trantor owns a bungalow in Frederick Street that is vacant. It has some furniture in it, and you can buy what more you may need. I will rent the house to Mr.

Brinsley and Mr. Donahoe, and you can conceal Mr. Nevitt there without my seeming to be privy to it.”

Phil chuckled. It was distinctly humorous to think of finding a hideout in his enemy’s house.

“It will be a little uncomfortable for him,” Bareda went on, “but it’s only for three days. On Saturday we will smuggle him aboard the schooner when she sails again. We all owe Mr. Nevitt a tremendous debt of gratitude, I’m sure.”

“Please cut out the plaudits,” said Phil.

“I have the key to the bungalow in my pocket,” said Bareda; “we can go directly there.”

Chapter 9:

When Phil got out of bed in the bungalow towards noon, Bart and Chicago Harry were out. A terrible depression was weighing him down. There was something in the atmosphere of this damned island that sharpened the feelings, it seemed, and made things harder to bear. He went out on the veranda and took a slant up and down through the concealing vines. But there was no comfort in the sight of the bowery street under the dazzling sunshine. The scent of frangipanni drove him wild. Coralie's house was across the way and a little nearer the market place. He made up his mind to visit her, Bareda or no Bareda, as soon as it became dark.

In an hour Bart returned. He had been drinking some and the reckless grin had returned. Bart had to have the stuff to keep him going.

“Any news?” asked Phil.

“Eve sent me a letter by Red Simon,” said Bart, trying to make out that it was no great matter. “Read it.”

Phil's pulse beat faster when he took the paper

in his hand. What a fool you are! he told himself. She can be nothing to you. Handwriting and phraseology were those of a schoolboy. He read:

DEAR DAD:

Mother found out that I was gone last night, and I was forced to tell her what had happened. Hell to pay. She swore she would not stay another night in this house. Early this morning she sent a note over to Trantor's place by Simon not telling him what had happened, but just that prowlers had been hanging around our place. Simon is just back with the answer. Trantor says we must come right over to his place and stay until the wedding. So we're getting ready now. We'll load the old girl into the bullock cart, chair and all. Love.

EVE.

“This means?” said Phil.

“They'll be married at once,” said Bart. “And a good job, too. I'll breathe freely again when it's done.”

Phil set his jaw. Bart put him in a rage when he talked like this. What is it to you, anyhow? Phil

asked himself. You have already taken it. Just the same, it was a fresh stab.

“Will you give the bride away?” he asked Bart, turning it off with a grin.

“Looking like this?” said Bart, spreading out his hands. “These are my best clothes.”

“You’ve got to order an outfit quick,” said Phil. “This is a coöperative now. We pool everything.”

“Darn decent of you,” said Bart, “but if I was dressed like Beau Brummel I wouldn’t get an invite to this wedding.”

“Order it, just the same,” said Phil. “This afternoon. The best that the town can supply.”

After lunch Bart went off to the tailor’s as pleased as Punch. Nobody enjoyed the good things of life more than Bart. For Phil the afternoon hours dragged by slowly. He lay around, reading and sleeping. Damned hole! he thought, looking out through the vines. He forgot what a paradise Annunziata had seemed to him on the first day. He had a mighty craving for liquor, but remembering what it had done to him two nights before, he kept away from it.

This was a Thursday. During the afternoon the news spread around town that Randal Trantor and

Eve Brinsley were to be married on Sunday afternoon. Chicago, when he came in to cook the supper, was all agog with it. Trantor was going to make it a big occasion, he said. There was to be a barbecue in the open air, and everybody on the island, white, yellow, and black, was invited.

“The heck with it,” said Phil. “We’ll be in St. Cloud, Chicago.”

When Bart came in Phil said: “Well, you didn’t get your suits ordered any too soon. Will the tailor have them ready?”

“Yes,” said Bart. There was a cloud on his face. “Ready Saturday.”

“What’s the matter?”

“Well, I don’t fancy standing in the crowd to see my girl’s wedding.”

“Why go at all?” said Phil.

“I’ll have to now.”

“Why?”

“If the invitation includes all and sundry D’Acosta and his gang will be there. Suppose they try to stage something?”

Phil whistled. “Trantor ought to be warned.”

“No!” cried Bart. “If anything was said to

Trantor, who can tell how the jealous, drunken fool might break out? It's too dangerous."

"Jealous, drunken fool?" said Phil, grimly. "This is the man you're handing over your daughter to."

"Once married to Trantor she will be secure," said Bart, obstinately.

Phil shrugged.

"It's up to me to watch D'Acosta at the wedding," Bart went on. "Will you stay over for it?"

"No," said Phil, curtly. "Bareda is going to smuggle me aboard the schooner on Saturday."

"She sails again on Monday. What will two days matter?"

"No," said Phil.

"There'll be a tremendous crowd," Bart went on, persuasively; "you won't have to show yourself to the wedding party."

Pain like a hot blade struck through Phil. "Me?" he cried. "Me go to Trantor's place and cheer at his wedding? I'll see him damned first! I'm surprised you should expect such a thing. No, I won't go!"

Even while he shouted, Phil was aware that it was only a defense mechanism. The very pain he felt dragged him with the desire to have a last sight

of Eve. And there was always the insidious hope that something might happen to prevent the wedding.

Bart, suddenly aged by disappointment, looked down at his hands. “Well, I’m sorry,” he muttered. “I’d sooner have you beside me than a dozen ordinary men.”

Phil made an abrupt right-about face. “All right,” he growled, “I’ll stay—if we can fool Bareda.”

Bart, too grateful to speak, gripped his hand.

But Chicago’s face fell like a child’s. Phil said: “That’s all right, Chicago. You will go on Saturday.”

When darkness fell Phil could no longer endure his confinement to the house. He was all on edge; his partners had got on his nerves. There had been nothing in the paper about either his arrest or his escape from the jail. He figured that the townspeople knew nothing about the situation, and that Bareda must have squared the police or they would have been after him already. The police knew, of course, that Bart Brinsley and Chicago Harry were his pals. He drifted out into the street.

But he was not allowed to forget his tormenting

thoughts. It was too early to call at Coralie's and he headed West through the market place into the poorer quarter of the town. Tonight everybody had come out into the street, where they gathered in groups to discuss the coming wedding. In Annunziata no such piece of news had broken in months past. Phil could not help but hear snatches of their talk as he passed along.

“ . . . little white priestess . . . ”

“ She seventeen, he sixty. ”

“ Go along! Wouldn't you marry black debbil for two million dollar? ”

“ Randy Trantor, him not live long now. ” A loud laugh greeted this remark, and Phil gritted his teeth.

In front of a rum shop a black woman was indignantly defending Eve. “ She not Obeah girl; she Myal girl. Work good spell. Cure Jem Larue's boy when his breathing low. ”

An unseen speaker cried out: “ She walk at night. Me pray God she never cross me path! ”

Phil soon had as much of this as he could stand. He turned back. Upon rounding a bend in lower Christian Street he suddenly came upon Trantor's great sixteen-cylinder car stopped in front of a creole dwelling. There was no other such car in

Annunziata. It had just come, for the people were still rushing from every direction. Instantly a crowd formed around it.

It was an open car with the top down. A smart black chauffeur with an impassive face was at the wheel. Behind sat a handsome creole woman with three children obviously hers; a boy of fourteen and two younger girls, all very finely dressed. Phil was arrested by the woman's expression. She seemed not to be aware of her surroundings. Her face was dark and convulsed with fury. The tight-lipped boy was a smaller replica of his mother; the two little girls were weeping pitifully. They couldn't get out of the car because of the press around it. An old creole woman stood on the running-board, trying to embrace the woman on the seat and weeping loudly. The younger woman kept pushing her off like an automaton.

Phil guessed who these people were. If he had needed a clue, the talk of the women around him would have supplied it. "Jule come home!" they cried to one another, grinning. "Jule is home! . . . Jule bring her brats home!"

"White girl kick her out damn quick!"

"Jule come down in the world now!"

“Look your last at that big car, Jule. You walk now, like us.”

“Serve her right. She hold she head too high. Act like she queen of the island.”

Phil moved on, feeling a little sick. He had to cross the road to get around the car. The passengers were out of it now, and the chauffeur started ahead. The street was too narrow for him to turn, and he drove on down, pursued by derisive yells from the crowd. Lumps of mud were thrown. The woman and her children had disappeared inside the house.

Back in the better part of the town, Coralie’s bungalow rose before Phil. He was not at all sure what kind of a reception he would get, but he determined to chance it. She was sitting alone on the porch in the dark. She saw him under the street light and spoke in her warm, caressing voice:

“Hello, Phil.”

“Can I come in?” he asked, humbly.

“Surely! What am I here for?”

He went up the steps gratefully. Glancing into the living-room in passing, he saw that every trace of the havoc he had helped to create two nights before had been removed. A lavish new assortment of floor lamps, table lamps, vases, and gimcracks

generally had been introduced.

“Come and sit beside me,” said Coralie.

He dropped into a chair and started to apologize. Coralie stopped his mouth with a plump, scented hand. “Silly boy,” she said, “what do I care? I got a nice lot of new things out of it. It’s true the girls were scared; they like it. You are a big hero to them now. Do you want to go in and see them?”

“No,” said Phil. “Let me stay here and talk to you.”

She patted his knee. “Nice boy! Feel blue, eh?”

“What makes you say that?” he asked, fearful that she knew too much.

“What fly high got a long way to fall,” she said.

To put her off the scent he talked about all sorts of things. At last, with a careless air, he voiced the question that had brought him there: “Do you believe in Obeah, Coralie?”

A guarded note came into the woman’s voice, and she unconsciously dropped into the creole patois, “Who tell you ‘bout Obeah?”

“Oh, you hear plenty of stuff. I’m asking you.”

“I don’t know nothing.”

“Just now, as I was coming along the street,”

said Phil, “all the people were talking about Trantor’s coming marriage. They call Eve Brinsley ‘little white priestess,’ ‘Obeah girl’ and so on. That’s all damn nonsense.”

“Maybe,” said Coralie.

Phil could feel a wall of antagonism rising in her. He thought: I’ll never get anything out of her by joshing her beliefs. He said: “Why do the people credit her with magic powers?”

“I don’t know who start that talk,” said Coralie. “Eve Brinsley very strange girl. Got powerful eye. Nobody can look her in the eye.”

Rubbish; thought Phil. But he held himself in. “Who could she have learned Obeah from?”

“She got Obeah woman for nurse,” said Coralie. “Dead now.”

“Do white people ever consult the Obeahs?” asked Phil.

Coralie smiled. “More often than you think.”

“What is a Myal woman?”

“She work good magic; she against Obeah.”

“What does the Obeah woman or the Obeah man do?” asked Phil.

“You just make fun,” said Coralie.

“No, I’m serious.”

“Sell charms,” she said. “Charms for good luck; charms against sickness; charms for love. Tell the past and the future.”

“Like our fortune-tellers,” said Phil. “We have plenty of them. Shrewd people. Size you up at a glance. Ask questions without appearing to. Then tell you what you want to hear.”

“No,” said Coralie. “Obeah ask no question. Make you see what is far away.” Her voice deepened. “If you love somebody no love you, Obeah make a charm for that person to love you. If you hate . . . Obeah kill. Give you little coffin to drop you enemy’s path. If he step over it he die.”

There was a silence. “You not believe me?” she said.

“I can’t,” said Phil. “My mind won’t credit it.”

“If you like I show you something,” she said, softly.

“Go ahead.”

“I ask no question,” said Coralie. “I bring before you the person you thinking of now. Me, I don’t know who it is.”

She got up and, reaching through the open

window behind them, pulled up the blind. Light streamed out, falling full on her as she stood in front of Phil, a small woman with a creamy skin, not young, not slender, but still pretty and alluring. The remote look in her eyes struck a little awe into Phil. She swayed slowly in front of him and moved a hand in front of his eyes.

“Let you’s’e’f go! Let you’s’e’f go!” she crooned. “Be at peace!”

Phil relaxed. The torment of his mind was quieted; a feeling of content stole through him.

“Peace! . . . Peace . . . !” she crooned.

The swaying figure before him appeared to grow dim in outline. Only her eyes shone, vivid and commanding.

“Shut you’ eyes!” she said.

He obeyed and she reached in and let the blind fall again. He heard her sink into the chair beside him. “Open you’ eye,” she murmured.

Phil did so and saw Eve standing in front of him in all the lovely colors of life. The veranda was dark; she made the light. Not dressed in the tomboy breeches and boots with earthy face and hands and tangled hair, but supremely beautiful as he had seen her for one moment framed in a doorway in the

high-waisted white dress with her black hair braided around her head like a coronet.

The vision lasted for several moments. She smiled and seemed to shape his name with her lips. He jumped up with a groan, reaching for her. His arms closed on emptiness. It broke the spell. She was gone. He dropped back in his chair.

After a silence Coralie asked, “Did I do it?”

“O God, yes!” said Phil. “How did you know?”

“I know nothing.”

“You must have known. How did you . . . ?”

Coralie shivered and stood up. “Forget it,” she said in a strained voice. “I bring you a drink. You need it.”

Later Phil went home, busily explaining away the matter in his own mind. Coralie could never have seen Eve dressed like that, he told himself. What she had done was to materialize the picture that was already in his mind. A simple trick of hypnotism, that was all. . . . However, the feeling of awe persisted.

Not for a moment was Phil allowed to forget Eve. On the afternoon of the following day a creole

boy from the Army and Navy Stores came to the house to deliver an order.

“Eve Brinsley in our store,” he announced, excitedly.

“Miss Brinsley,” suggested Bart.

“Pardon, sir; Miss Brinsley. Man! She grown up now; she fine young lady. She more beautiful as Norma Shearer. All say she most beautiful girl in the Islands. She come to town to buy for wedding. Go to every store and buy, buy, buy!”

“Is she alone?” asked Phil.

“She alone with chauffeur.”

When the boy had gone Phil said to Bart: “Why don’t you take the opportunity to stroll over to Christian Street and speak to her?”

Bart shook his head. “Don’t want to shame her. I’ll wait until I get my new clothes.”

Just the same, he presently sneaked out of the house, and Phil knew that he had gone in the hope of getting a distant glimpse of Eve.

Bart missed it, because while he was out and Phil sitting alone behind the vines, the big open car turned out of a side street and drew up in front of the bungalow. Eve was in the back, almost buried under

her packages. When she arose Phil's pulses began to pound. Be quiet, you fool he said to himself. She didn't come to see you!

It was a new Eve that sauntered up the path, grave and lovely. She was wearing a bright, fly-away dress of flowered chiffon and a wide black hat that dropped an enchanting shadow across her face. Useless for Phil to tell himself that she was just a girl like any other, a mere child, a tomboy and bad-tempered to boot; beauty set her apart and he felt worshipful.

She bowed to him and made to go on into the house.

“Bart isn't in,” said Phil.

She turned to go back.

“Aren't you going to speak to me?” said Phil. He couldn't keep the hurt out of his voice.

She stood looking at him with knitted brows. She was a mystery to him. In an effort to avert the threatening storm, he said the first thing that came into his head. “I have a message for you.”

“From whom?”

“Bart. When he heard you were in town he said that I was to give you his love if I happened to run

into you.”

Eve’s glance was unyielding. “Why doesn’t he come to me?”

“He said he didn’t want you to see him until he got his new clothes.”

She smiled briefly, hesitated, looked on the floor.

Phil took advantage of it to say: “He’ll soon be back. You can wait for him.”

She shook her head. “I can’t wait.”

She hesitated still, and Phil waited on tenterhooks for what might be coming. Eve glanced inside to see if there were listeners. “I’m glad you forced me to speak to you,” she said in a grown-up manner. Where had she acquired it overnight? “Because I have really something to say to you.” She wasn’t looking directly at Phil. “It’s been on my conscience for two days. . . . I was rude and hateful to you night before last. I don’t know what made me so. I have a horrid nature. But I *am* grateful to you inside.”

Phil was deeply moved. “Don’t speak of it!” he said. “It was nothing. I would have been glad to help for Bart’s sake, even if I had not known you.”

“My father, too,” she went on, not looking at him. “I want to thank you for being so good to him.”

“Bart is my friend,” said Phil. “I don’t rate thanks for that.”

“I shan’t forget it,” said Eve. She met his eyes deeply and offered her hand. The once grimy paw was incased in a sleek white glove. “Good-by, Phil.”

He retained her hand. “Wait,” he said, struggling to speak calmly; “there’s something I want to say to you.”

She withdrew her hand. “Better not,” she murmured.

“It must be said. . . . Eve, do you realize what you’re doing? Do you *want* to marry Trantor? Think, think what he is!”

The first words angered her so that she closed her ears to the rest. She made her face into a wall. “Certainly I know what I’m doing. I’ve had years to think of it!”

She moved down the path and Phil dropped back in his chair. Forget her! he adjured himself. She isn’t worth it! Her beauty is only a snare! But he could not drive out the recollection of how for a moment her eyes had met his.

Chapter 10:

On Saturday afternoon Alfred Bareda sent a negro boy around to the bungalow with a note addressed to Bart.

“The mail schooner will be held until seven o’clock this evening. It is quite dark then. At quarter to seven I will send a motor-car with the curtains up to the bungalow for our friend. This car can run directly alongside the schooner at the quay and he can get aboard without being seen.”

Phil with a hard grin dictated the answer to Bart while the boy waited for it outside.

“My friend has decided not to leave the island until the next trip of the schooner on Monday. . . .”

“Better not put it so bluntly,” objected Bart.

“Nobody is going to run me off this island,” said Phil. “Let them understand that I’m going at my own good pleasure.”

So the note was dispatched as dictated.

It brought Bareda around to the bungalow within a quarter of an hour. He was, as always, conciliatory. They went inside to talk.

“Mr. Nevitt, I appreciate your feelings in this

situation and I'm just as anxious as can be to spare them, but how can you stay?"

"What's to prevent?" said Phil.

"Mr. Trantor knows that you are still on the island."

"Who told him?"

"It appears that you were so indiscreet as to walk in the streets last night. His chauffeur saw you."

"Then why doesn't he send and arrest me?"

"The situation has changed. He would like, if possible, to avoid a sensational affair on the eve of his wedding."

Phil grinned. "I see."

"But he's terribly angry," Bareda went on. "He suspects that I am privy to your escape from jail. If you do not sail on the schooner tonight he has ordered me to have you arrested."

Phil got red. "He can damned well . . ."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Bareda, quickly. "That's not the whole story, unfortunately." He pulled a paper out of his pocket. "Mr. Trantor has sent this cablegram. In showing it to you I am going against my employer, but I do want you to know that I am your friend, too, Mr. Nevitt. My only

object is to settle this matter without an ugly row.”
He handed over the paper and Phil read:

Chapman,
Coldistill,
New York.

Your representative Philip Nevitt has made trouble here, drunk and disorderly, assaulting police, breaking jail. Suggest you recall him to prevent public scandal. S. S. Maraval sails from St. Cloud Sunday. I'll ship him to St. Cloud.

Randal Trantor,
Commissioner for Annunziata.

“Well, I'm damned!” said Phil, amazed. As the consequences of this devilish message presented themselves he saw red. “By God! I'll make Trantor pay for this!” he cried. “If he wants a fight I'll give it to him! He forgets how vulnerable he is!”

“But in the meantime you'll have to sail on the schooner,” murmured Bareda. “You can't fight him effectively from the jail.”

Phil paced the room, blind with rage. Trantor had him on the hip. He, Phil, had got himself in wrong in the beginning and he was in the

commissioner's power. Trantor's niggers were well able to fling him aboard the schooner or fling him into jail like a bum. The thought of the humiliation near broke Phil's heart. But it had to be faced. The only weapon Phil had to use against Trantor was cunning. As he walked the room his face changed from crimson to very pale. He returned to Bareda with compressed lips.

"All right, I'll go," he said.

The dark man heaved a sigh of relief. "That's fine!"

"You said you'd stick by me," complained the disappointed Bart.

"Stick by you?" said Bareda. "Excuse me, but I don't understand."

Bart said: "The reason Phil wanted to stay here was to help me watch over Eve. D'Acosta is drinking hard. He is just mad enough to stage something at the wedding."

"Oh," said Bareda, in relief, "you can depend on me for that, Mr. Brinsley. If D'Acosta and his friends come to the wedding . . ."

"They'll be there!"

"Every move they make will be watched!"

“Niggers!” muttered Bart. “You can’t rely on them.”

“Send around the black Maria at quarter to seven,” said Phil to Bareda, with a bitter grin. “I’ll go aboard.”

Bareda immediately rose. “That’s a load off my mind! I honor you for your decision, Mr. Nevitt. I’ll see you aboard the schooner.” He bowed to each man and went out. Though, next to Trantor, he was the most powerful man in Annunziata, he never offered to shake hands with Americans.

Bart and Chicago looked somewhat anxiously at Phil’s hard white face. “What’s in your mind, Phil?” asked the latter.

“Oh, I’m sailing, all right,” said Phil, with a laugh. “But I’m coming back.”

Bart’s face lighted up, but Chicago looked dubious.

“It’s only a five hours’ sail to St. Cloud. And, thank God, I’ve money left. Maybe I can find a plane there.”

“Not a plane,” objected Bart. “If you came back by plane it couldn’t be hidden.”

“Well, by boat, then. The harbor at St. Cloud is

swarming with boats of every kind. . . . I won't sail into the harbor here because all arrivals are signaled from the entrance. Where could I land, Bart?"

"There's a cove called L'Anse St. Jean on the North side. No houses there. Every sailor knows it."

"Any road near?"

"The road is just a couple of hundred feet up the hill."

"All right. You hire a car and be waiting there for me tomorrow morning from six o'clock on."

Chicago was shaking his head. "This strikes me as foolish."

"Foolish?" said Bart, angrily.

"Phil is kidding himself that he's thinking things out clearly; he's only mad. He ought to charge Annunziata off to profit and loss."

"Damn it, Chicago, would you lie down under such treatment?" cried Phil.

"Maybe I wouldn't. But I'd be foolish not to."

"Enough said. I'm coming back."

While Chicago was cooking supper, Red Simon rode up to the bungalow on horseback with a letter for Bart. Bart read it with a fond grin, and handed it over to Phil. Phil told himself that it wouldn't do

him any good, but he read it. Eve's new elegant manners did not as yet extend to her intimate correspondence.

DEAR DAD:

I called to see you yesterday but you were out. All set for the big show tomorrow. Bareda is a wonder. We are to be married in the great hall. Mother will give me away from her chair. So you won't want to attend that part. But after a ding-dong fight I have got a place for you at the white people's supper which is to be served in the dining-room at six-thirty. And you are to sit at my right, hear? Mother can't come to the table so you needn't fear an encounter. The aforesaid fighting was with Mother; Randy is very kind and does everything I want. He is going to give Mother a house in town and plenty of servants for her to pound her stick at. So you can come up to Greenrise to see me as often as you like. I'm going to buy you a motor-car. I have a thousand dollars a month to spend as I please. Ain't money wonderful! Randy is going to take

me to New York in the Spring. Whoops!
Love!

EVE.

Phil tasted the bitterness of gall. "She's all steamed up for the show, isn't she?" he said, handing the letter back.

Bart sat down to write an answer. Red Simon carried it back.

Later a boy from the cable office brought a message for Phil. The contents did not surprise him.

Nevitt,
Port-of-Grace.

You are required to return immediately. Take S. S. Maraval from St. Cloud Sunday.

CHAPMAN.

Phil immediately wrote on the bottom of the form:

Chapman,
Coldistill,
New York.

Beg to resign position. Will render

account by mail. Regards.

NEVITT.

Bart, reading this over his shoulder, objected to “regards.”

“That’s what’s known as sarcasm,” said Phil.

“Some might call it cheek.”

“All right, let it go at that.”

Chicago came in to see what was up. He shook his head at Phil’s reply. “Better think it over, Phil.”

“I’m damned if I will!” said Phil. “Up to now I’ve been the bosses’ white-headed boy and I’m fed up. I’m not going up to New York to eat their dirt. I’ll be on my own. At the least I can always work with my hands.”

“You can’t send that reply from here, or Trantor will get word of it,” said Bart.

Phil shoved the form in his pocket. “All right. I’ll send it from St. Cloud.”

The boy was sent back.

Chapter 11:

On Sunday morning the sky over Annunziata was like an inverted turquoise bowl. The wisps of water vapor had drawn in close to the mountain tops; there would be no showers today. Everybody in Port-of-Grace who possessed a flag hung it out, and the big trek up to Greenrise, Trantor's ranch, began early in the morning, though the guests were not asked until afternoon. The ceremony was to take place in the ranch-house at four o'clock and the big feed to begin immediately afterwards. After dark there were to be fireworks and the Port-of-Grace band would play. Trantor had put all this in his newspaper. The notice concluded with a characteristic touch: "When the band stops playing at eight-thirty everybody will go home."

The ranch was seven miles from town and every possible conveyance was brought out of hiding; family chariots that had not turned a wheel since the Danish regime; buggies, democrats, surreys, wagons, and carts. After all the horses had been hitched up, mules, burros, and bullocks were turned to service. The half-dozen available motor-cars shuttled back and forth doing a wartime business at

a quarter a head. And the greater part of the people walked. Scrubbed, frizzed, and starched up to the nines, they made a colorful procession.

All the wedding arrangements were under the direction of Alfred Bareda, who had performed prodigies of organization. Between five and ten thousand people were expected, and he had had less than three days to prepare for the handling and feeding of them. Everybody had seen him hustling around town with his serious and preoccupied air. Nobody ever saw Bareda in a sweat.

It was afternoon when Bart and Phil drove out of town in the hired car. Port-of-Grace was like a city of the dead then. Phil had been to the bungalow to put on a fresh suit. Chicago had left them. They climbed the high hill back of the town and descended into the central valley. The back curtains of the car were up and Phil was concealed behind them. They were the last to start and the road was deserted.

Five miles out of town a branch road zigzagged up the face of the mountain on the left and at an elevation of a thousand feet came out in an unexpected upland valley stretching away to the north for several miles. These slopes of rich grass

surrounded by the mountains comprised Trantor's ranch. The scene was very different from the rest of the tropical island. Up here the air seemed to be purer and cooler. A small stream ran through the middle of the flat valley and in the fields on either side Trantor's herds were pastured. Halfway through, his house stood on rising ground to the left. From his front veranda the proprietor could survey the whole of his domain.

The big field immediately below the house presented a scene of rich broken color like a kaleidoscope. Phil reckoned that there were seven thousand people present. A hum went up from them like the droning of a swarm of giant bees. They were crowding around several big tents with open sides, and a row of pits where immense sides and joints of beef were roasting in front of the fires and sending up an appetizing odor.

Bart parked the car at the edge of the crowd and, leaving Phil in it, started off to make a reconnaissance. Bart looked fine in his new whites. Phil had fed him just sufficient whisky to give him confidence.

In half an hour he returned, saying: "D'Acosta and his gang are not here yet." He was grinning in a

way that caused Phil to ask:

“What’s up?”

“Out-of-doors everything is well organized,” said Bart, “but in the house team-work has broken down. Eve’s in the hands of the dressers and there is nobody capable of directing the servants. They have sent down to the town for Jule Davila.”

“Not Jule!” said Phil, startled.

“They had no choice.”

“She won’t come.”

“Sure she will. It will tickle her to discover that they can’t do without her. Bareda will pay her whatever she asks.”

“I don’t like it,” said Phil. “I saw that woman in town night before last. She looked half insane with jealousy and rage.”

“What can she do? She knows unless she keeps quiet Trantor will stop all supplies.”

“It’s a rotten situation!”

Bart grinned. “Eve can cope with it.”

Time passed. The band blared under the shelter of a tent near by, and there was a buck-and-wing contest outside. . . . The Islanders, black, brown, and golden skinned, mixed together without distinction

of hue. Old women sat in the grass, keeping an eye on the rolling babies while the young fathers and mothers milled around, hailing their acquaintances. The focus of interest was the barbecue. Rows of boys stood in front of the smoking meat, rubbing their bellies. The only element not well represented were the well-to-do creoles, merchants, and landowners, who had not received a personal invitation and so would not come at all. The people were enjoying themselves as people do at a treat, but they showed no gratitude to the giver of it. They glanced towards the house and discussed the marriage with jeering grins.

Phil called Bart's attention to it. "You can see what they think of it."

"The hell with them," said Bart. "They don't count."

D'Acosta and his three friends jingled up on horseback. They dismounted, and two Negroes came forward to hold their horses. Today they were wearing the ordinary white riding-togs of well-to-do planters, and sun helmets. They passed not far from the car without seeing Bart and Phil sitting on the rear seat. Phil had his first look at D'Acosta by daylight. He had a thin handsome face crudely

marked by balked passion; the face of a man burning in a hell of his own devising. Cardenas, Alvarez, and Figueroa were merely conceited, swaggering young bravos. All were well made. The four of them immediately separated and lost themselves in the crowd. It had an ominous look. Presumably they were being watched by the police, but it was impossible to be sure of it.

“They are here for no good,” muttered Phil.

“You stay in the car for the present,” said Bart. “I’ll keep an eye on D’Acosta. They can’t do anything without a signal from him.” He left Phil.

Soon it was time for the ceremony. The greater part of the crowd moved up the rise and gathered in a dense mass below the veranda. Phil got out of the car and moved after them. The country Negroes stared at him with round eyes. They had never seen so big a white man. The townspeople were getting accustomed to him. Bart came up.

“Risky to show yourself,” he murmured.

“These people know nothing about the trouble between Trantor and me,” said Phil.

“There are police scattered through the crowd.”

“The police were not to get their orders to arrest me unless I refused to board the schooner. Trantor

thinks I'm on my way north on the *Maraval*. He can never spot me in this crowd.”

“You're taller than any of them.”

“Well, I can squat,” said Phil, with a hard grin.

He looked at the house—Eve's future home—with a painful interest. It was the most pretentious dwelling in Annunziata. Its wide verandas and overhanging eaves gave it a cool and luxurious appearance. The middle part was raised a little to provide for a row of windows under the eaves to light a hall running through from front to back. In this hall the ceremony was to take place.

While they waited Jule Davila was brought up to the side of the house in one of the Trantor cars. The onlookers knew her, and grinned in appreciation of the situation. The chauffeur handed her down. The handsome creole woman bore herself stiffly and glared defiantly at the crowd. The two disappeared around the house.

Alfred Bareda came out on the veranda, followed by several of his assistants. He addressed the crowd from the rail. “The ceremony has taken place.”

It was like a knell on Phil's heart. So that's that! he thought. The crowd raised a cheer. In his ears it

had a derisive ring.

“Mr. and Mrs. Trantor wish to walk around the grounds,” Bareda continued, “so that all may have an opportunity to greet them. If you will spread out in a double line down to the tents and back again, everybody can see.”

Bareda’s assistants ran down and began pushing the people this way and that. When they saw what was required of them, they fell into a long double loop reaching down to the tents and back to the veranda again. The bridal couple came out of the house and a louder cheer was raised. Phil heard the same derisive note in it. He wondered if Trantor could hear that note. Probably not. Trantor had been drinking and his eyes were glazed. He can’t see anything, thought Phil. In spite of Bart’s signals, he would not lower his head.

At the sight of Eve, Phil caught his breath. She was wearing the same quaint, high-waisted dress. So it was her wedding-dress that she had put on for him that night! With the addition of a veil caught back by a wreath of orange blossoms and a great bouquet of white roses and lilies-of-the-valley, she was radiant. Her eyes had the starry look that is associated with brides. It is supposed to express

happiness, but may be due to nothing more than the excitement of the occasion. The people cheered and cheered again. Phil's breast burned. What a crime! What a crime! he was whispering to himself without knowing it.

The bridal couple came down the steps and started slowly through the lane of people, bowing to the right and left like royalty. The wedding-party followed. Only Mrs. Brinsley remained sitting in her wheel chair on the veranda with a grim, triumphant smile. Phil saw the parson, the police inspector, the doctor, the bank men, and other officials, all accompanied by their wives. Bareda remained in the house. Phil and Bart stood near the steps at the back of the crowd. D'Acosta and his three friends were scattered up and down in the crowd within their view. Eve's glance picked out Bart and she smiled to him gaily. Phil, she ignored. She could hardly have missed him.

Before the couple had gone far from the steps there was an interruption to the triumphal progress. Trantor stopped abruptly, staring at something at his feet. He stooped, picked it up, and tossed it away over the heads of the crowd, showing his teeth in rage. The object fell in the grass not far from Phil and he saw that it was a small block of wood

fashioned in the shape of a coffin. Only a few of the people saw what it was. One or two frightened faces turned. Further down the line they were cheering. Phil caught hold of Bart's arm.

“For God's sake, look!” he whispered.

Bart laughed. “Nigger foolishness!” he said. “Anyhow, he didn't step over it.” Walking to the spot, Bart pressed the object into the yielding earth with his heel.

It was all over in a few seconds. Trantor recovered himself and the procession moved on. Eve's face was hidden from Phil. Phil made believe to laugh with Bart, but he was shaken.

When the wedding-party finished their slow tour of the meadow, the feasting began. The sun went down and the swift tropical darkness gathered. The scene was weirdly lighted by the fires in the pits. Noisy in the beginning, the crowd gradually became strangely quiet for Negroes, and Phil could picture how a whisper of what had happened was passing from one to another. Many started home without waiting for the band to stop playing. Phil could feel the wave of superstitious terror that passed over the people.

It was now time for Bart to leave Phil.

“D’Acosta can hardly pull anything now,” he said, “but watch him.” Bart went into the house.

D’Acosta was sitting on the veranda steps, smoking, and Phil sat against the wall at a little distance where he could watch him without showing himself. A considerable time passed. The fireworks were discharged in the meadow. Many more people went home. The fires were allowed to go out. Finally the band stopped playing.

Those of the people who remained came drifting up to the house to see what was to be seen. Since there was no one to stop them, some of the bolder spirits stole up on the veranda to look through the lighted windows. John D’Acosta was among them, and Phil followed D’Acosta.

The dining-room filled almost the whole of the south side of the house. It had two pairs of French windows at the front and a whole line of windows along the side. Every one of these openings was soon filled with a close bank of spectators, standing back a little so that the light from the room would not fall on them too strongly, and keeping very still. Phil found a place at one of the end windows where he could see everything in the room, and at the same time watch D’Acosta, who, barely visible behind

others, was looking in through one of the side windows.

Within the big room the supper was drawing to a close. There were about forty guests seated at one long table, including all the Americans in Annunziata and a few of the leading creoles whom Trantor had seen fit to invite. At the far end of the room Trantor and Eve sat side by side at the head of the table, facing Phil. Bart had the first place to the right of Eve. In his smart new clothes he looked as well groomed as anybody present. He had been drinking a good deal. Bareda occupied an humble place at the foot of the table, with his back to Phil. It was not a boisterous party; the guests had a constrained air. Everybody was drinking champagne except Trantor, who had the usual tall whisky-and-soda beside his plate. A bottle of his own particular whisky, Spey Royal, was in front of him.

The sight of Eve caused Phil's heart to ache as freshly as if it had never known an ache before. Having laid aside the conventional veil, she looked more human. She was leaning forward to whisper some tale in Bart's ear and her face was all alight with deviltry. The tomboy, again, maddeningly desirable. All her attention was to her father instead of to the husband she had just acquired. She can be

gay! thought Phil. She has no heart.

Suddenly he became aware that D'Acosta had slipped out of his place. Phil went around the corner of the house and passed back along the veranda, behind the watchers at the window. D'Acosta was not anywhere among them. Phil went on down the steps at the end and prowled around in the dark, looking for him. Finally he saw D'Acosta come out of the kitchen door with an ugly grin fixed in his face. Phil drew back into the darkness out of his way. D'Acosta returned to his place at the window and Phil to his.

In the supper-room Coulson, the bank manager, was now on his feet, making a speech to toast the health of bride and groom. His humor was somewhat elephantine; the guests applauded and laughed politely. When he came to an end they drank the toast standing, and sat down again with a great rustling and moving of chairs.

It was now up to Trantor. He was pretty drunk. His bottle was empty. He shouted for a fresh one and when it was brought from the pantry by a pretty waitress, poured himself a drink and drove the cork back in the bottle with a blow of his fist. Phil noted that the tall glass was nearly half full of liquor.

Trantor hoisted himself to his feet and looked around the table. Drunk and inclined to be hateful, Phil saw. He was too far away to hear all that Trantor said. Only an occasional phrase reached his ears.

“. . . I don't give a damn what people say about me. I go my own way. . . . If the niggers on this island don't like the way I run things, it's just too bad. . . . I'm perfectly willing to give them a big feed—I can afford it—but that don't mean I'm trying to curry favor with them. . . .”

There was a good deal more, and the guests became exquisitely uncomfortable. Afraid of catching a neighbor's eye, they didn't know which way to look. The smiles of the ladies became painful under the strain. Eve, the only completely honest person present, looked at her husband in frank surprise and condemnation. She said something to him that Phil could not hear.

It diverted Trantor. He gulped his drink and raised up Eye beside him as if to present her to the guests. The smiles round the table became more natural; a ripple of applause was heard. Trantor flung an arm around Eve and Phil saw her shrink. Apparently she now for the first time realized what

marriage meant. Trantor drew her closer to him; he was about to kiss her before them all, when a look of horrible terror came into his face; his arm slipped from around Eve; he crashed over sideways on the table and slid from the table out of sight to the floor, carrying bottle and glasses with him.

For a moment there was a deathly silence in the room. Eve, transfixed with horror, stood staring down at something Phil could not see. A woman cried out softly, and immediately the room was filled with women's cries. The men sprang up, knocking their chairs over. Bareda ran wildly down the room to reach his master's side.

Other men went to Bareda's assistance; Trantor was lifted up and carried to a sofa that stood against the inner wall of the room. By the way his arm hung down and his head lolled; by the expressions of the men as they turned away from the sofa, Phil knew that he was dead, and horror gripped his throat like a hand. Eve stood at the head of the table like a frozen woman. Several servants ran in from the rear. Among them Phil saw Jule Davila staring at the dead man with stricken eyes.

Somebody spread a napkin over Trantor's face. At this significant act a dreadful cry was raised

among the natives on the veranda, "Obeah!" Whispered at first and gradually rising to a shriek as panic seized them and they sprang over the veranda rails and fell down the steps in their madness to escape. "Obeah! Obeah!" It retreated in the distance and was taken up by what remained of the crowd below. "Obeah! Obeah!"

D'Acosta pushed into the dining-room, grinning. Phil followed him. The insane cries outside threw many of the women in the room into hysterics, and their distracted husbands tried in vain to quiet them. Only Eve was unmoved. Phil saw Bart leading her away like an automaton through a door at the back. A frantic noise and confusion filled the place. But Bareda kept his head. Though a greenish hue had crept under his dark skin, his eyes remained steady. He moved among the men, saying:

"Mr. Trantor has passed away. There is nothing you can do by remaining. Please get the ladies out."

The room cleared. The women who were unable to walk were carried out.

Bareda suddenly spied Phil and came to a dead stop. His jaw dropped. "You . . . here?" he stammered.

"What does it matter now?" said Phil.

Bareda recovered himself. “You’re right.” He caught hold of Phil’s coat, and Phil noted how his knuckles whitened. “I’m *glad* you’re here!” he whispered. “I shall need a cool head like yours to advise me. Please stand by!”

“Sure,” said Phil.

Meanwhile D’Acosta had gone to the sofa where Trantor lay. He lifted the napkin and stared into the dead man’s face with a mocking grin. Phil, fearing that he intended some outrage to the dead, started quickly towards him, but D’Acosta, letting the napkin drop, went on through the door at the back. He seemed to know his way around the house.

Chapter 12:

The Venetian blinds in the dining-room had been lowered all around as a bar to prying eyes; consequently the heat of the room was stifling. The lower end of the long table had been cleared and Trantor's nude body lay upon it under a dropped light. Dr. Ramseur, with the aid of a creole assistant, was performing an autopsy. His instruments and chemicals had been fetched from town. At the head of the table sat Phil Nevitt, Bareda, and Inspector Fielding, awaiting the result. One of Fielding's black policemen stood against the wall.

Phil had been reluctant to take part in this conference, but Bareda was insistent. "I am the head of affairs now, all unfitted as I am," he had said. "I have not sufficient confidence in myself to carry through an investigation of this sort. You're from the outside; you're an experienced man . . ."

"Not experienced in crime," said Phil.

"Well, you have attended trials; at least you have read accounts of them. And I am so ignorant."

Fielding had objected. "This man is a fugitive

from the law.”

“That’s of no importance now,” said Bareda.

So Phil had consented to help him. It was obvious that somebody was needed. Fielding was a good enough local police officer, but he lacked initiative; Dr. Ramseur was an experienced man, but his vitality had been sapped by too long a stay in the tropics.

Ramseur finished his work and drew a sheet over the corpse. His assistant was sent away with the instruments and chemicals.

“What are your findings?” asked Bareda, anxiously.

“Nil,” said the doctor, spreading out his hands.

“What?”

“Trantor died as the result of a paralysis of the central nervous system, but there is no evidence as to what produced it.”

“It was due to natural causes, then?” said Bareda, eagerly.

“I can’t say that, either,” said Ramseur, uneasily.

“Surely you don’t think there is anything in this senseless cry of ‘Obeah.’?”

“Certainly not. Obeah may have had something

to do with it, but it was Obeah aided by a palpable poison.”

“Yet you can’t find evidence of poison?”

“None whatever. The poisons concocted by the natives are vegetable poisons almost instantaneously absorbed by the tissues. All I can tell about Trantor is that he was thoroughly alcoholized.”

“Then what are we to do?” murmured Bareda. “We can’t let the matter drop and we can’t proceed with it.”

“Doctor,” asked Phil, “did Trantor have a heart condition or anything else the matter with him that might account for his sudden death?”

“No.”

“Then we must assume that he was poisoned.”

“That is my opinion.”

“He must have got it in his drink. I saw him take a drink while he was on his feet.”

“His glass was overturned,” said Ramseur, “but here’s the bottle.” He laid a hand on it. “I picked it up from the floor myself. I will analyze the contents at once.” He retired to the other end of the room.

Phil said, “Did any of you happen to notice the actions of John D’Acosta this evening? You all

know that he was infatuated with Eve . . . with Mrs. Trantor.”

“How could D’Acosta have had access to Trantor’s whisky?” asked Fielding, “How could he have got into the house?”

“He was in the house,” said Phil. “I saw him come out of the kitchen. Unless I miss my guess you will find him in the kitchen now.”

Ramseur approached. “D’Acosta is an educated man,” he said. “He would scarcely have dealings with the Obeahs. I have a more plausible theory.”

“What’s that?”

“Jule Davila. Thrown out of the house without warning three days ago. Shamed in the face of the whole island. What’s more natural than for her to revenge herself? . . . Jule was in full charge of pantry and kitchen.”

“I believe it was D’Acosta,” said Phil.

“There is another possibility,” said Fielding. “Bart Brinsley.”

Phil bit his lip. He could see how easily a case might be built up against Bart. Bart had been strangely eager to promote this marriage.

“You all saw how Brinsley insinuated himself

into the house tonight,” Fielding went on. “He had every opportunity to do this thing. He and his daughter were as thick as thieves.”

Phil carefully controlled his voice. “Are you implying that she had a hand in it, too?”

“I’m not implying anything. It is just something we have to keep in mind. She has more to gain from Trantor’s death than anybody. It leaves her rich and free. She has been associated with Obeah since she was a child.”

Bareda said in a tense voice, “No accusation must be brought in that quarter until you are very, very sure.”

The doctor shrugged and returned to his analysis.

“If D’Acosta is in the house shouldn’t he be questioned?” suggested Phil.

The policeman was sent into the kitchen. He presently returned, bringing D’Acosta. Fielding sent the officer down to the other end of the room on the pretext of helping Ramseur.

“Sit down,” said Bareda to D’Acosta.

The latter had a grinning and defiant air. “Thank you for nothing,” he said. “Who is my accuser

here?”

“Nobody has accused you,” said Bareda. “If suspicion attaches to you it is only because of your actions during the past few days.”

“What actions?”

Bareda shrugged. Phil spoke up:

“He is referring to what happened on Wednesday night.”

D’Acosta knew then who had balked him. He showed his teeth in purest hatred.

At Bareda’s request, Fielding took up the questioning. “You weren’t invited to the wedding. Why did you come?”

“Everybody was invited,” retorted D’Acosta.

“All the common people, yes. Why did you come?”

“Just to see the fun.”

“You stood out on the porch looking into this room.”

“I did.”

“Why did you go around to the kitchen?”

D’Acosta’s eyes narrowed. “Who told you that?”

“I did,” put in Phil.

“Snooping, eh?”

“Naturally. After what happened on Wednesday night.”

D’Acosta snarled silently. “It made me thirsty to see you all drinking champagne,” he said. “I went around back to get some.”

“Do you mean to tell us that you could so humble yourself as to go to the kitchen door for a drink?” asked Fielding.

“Sure, if I was thirsty. Wouldn’t you?”

“Did you get it?”

“I did.”

“Who gave it to you?”

“I won’t tell you. I don’t want to get a servant into trouble.”

“Well, what persons in the kitchen saw you drinking it?”

“They would all deny it.”

Bareda intervened. “The champagne is in the pantry under charge of one of my men who has to account for every bottle. None of it got into the kitchen.”

“Then you’re lying,” said Fielding to D’Acosta. “What *did* you go to the kitchen for?”

D’Acosta merely grinned at him.

“I assume, then, that the answer would incriminate you.”

“Well, your assumptions can’t hang me,” said D’Acosta.

Phil moved over to the Inspector and prompted him.

“What did you come into this room for, after . . . after the accident?” asked Fielding.

“I wanted to make sure that Trantor was dead,” answered D’Acosta, boldly.

“You were pleased?”

“Sure, I was pleased! You’re a lot of hypocrites. This marriage was a crime against nature and I say whoever knocked off Trantor did a good deed!”

Fielding was at a loss. He looked down and made marks on the table with a pencil. D’Acosta was grinning triumphantly. Phil in a whisper prompted the inspector again.

“Do you believe in Obeah?” Fielding asked.

A wary look crept into D’Acosta’s face. “Nigger magic!” he said, scornfully. “No! Do you?”

“Will you be willing to go on the stand and swear that you have never purchased an Obeah charm for any purpose?”

“Certainly I will swear it.”

D’Acosta’s look of caution suggested to Phil that they were on the right track. “Let’s search him,” he said, taking a chance.

Instantly D’Acosta’s grin faded and his eyes flew to the doorway. Phil was too quick for him. He flung his arms around D’Acosta from behind and held him while Fielding went through the pockets of his smart riding-togs.

From a pocket of his vest Fielding drew a little vial of blue glass with a glass stopper. Phil released D’Acosta. Fielding passed him the vial. It was empty. Removing the stopper, Phil conveyed it to his nose. It had a pungent smell reminiscent of frangipanni.

Phil returned it to Fielding.

“For what purpose did you use this little bottle?” asked the Inspector.

D’Acosta had recovered his self-possession. “For my medicine.”

“What do you want medicine for?”

“I am subject to sinking spells,” said D’Acosta with a derisive grin.

Fielding bit his lip. “Where did you procure this medicine?”

“It’s an old-fashioned remedy. My cook brews it from herbs.”

Fielding put the vial in his pocket. “I’ll keep this for further investigation.”

Fielding, Phil, and Bareda put their heads together. It was obvious that D’Acosta was only playing with them. Phil urged that he be arrested; Bareda was unwilling to take the responsibility; Fielding said that it was immaterial, because they could put their hands on him at any time. There was no place he could run to.

So D’Acosta was allowed to go for the moment, and the policeman fetched in Jule Davila from the kitchen. Jule entered like a queen. She had blue-black hair, a honey-colored skin; and her face was fixed in the lines of a passionate mask. She cast a look at the sheeted form down the room and shuddered.

“Jule,” said Fielding, “where does Mr. Trantor keep his whisky?”

She answered his questions quietly and sullenly.

“In a locked cupboard in the pantry.”

“Who had access to that cupboard?”

“Master carried the key.”

“Do you mean to say he had to go to the pantry every time he wanted a drink?”

“No. When he want fresh bottle he send servant to me with key. He always know how many bottles are there.”

“When was the cupboard last visited?”

“About four-thirty this afternoon. Master send his valet George with key. I opened the cupboard.”

“How many bottles were there?”

“Twelve. Fresh case was sent up from town yesterday. I take out a bottle and, knowing that another would soon be called for, I take out second bottle and put it on shelf. I send key back by George.”

“Was the second bottle in plain view on the shelf?”

“Yes. Nobody dare touch master’s bottle.”

“These bottles come with a sealed lead cap over the stopper. Did this second bottle have its cap on while it stood on the shelf?”

“No. I take it off.”

“Why did you take it off?”

“For no reason. I take cap off first bottle to send it in, and go on take second cap off just to have bottle ready.”

“And the second bottle stood there on the shelf until it was called for at the end of the supper?”

“Yes.”

“You are sure that it was never moved?”

“I sure.”

“Who had occasion to visit the pantry during that time?”

Jule named over the servants. In addition to the three maids and a man regularly employed in the house, Bareda had sent up six men from town as waiters and helpers.

Upon a suggestion from Phil, Fielding took a new line. “Did you see John D’Acosta in the kitchen tonight?”

“Yes.”

“What was he doing?”

“I look in from the pantry and I see he had one of the maids, Stella, in the corner. So I go to him

and I say, ‘Mr. D’Acosta, we all busy here tonight. This no time for foolishness.’ And he go out.”

“What are your relations with John D’Acosta?” asked Fielding.

A flash of anger showed in Jule’s guarded eyes. “Mr. D’Acosta is a gentleman and I am the housekeeper here.”

“Well, friendly or unfriendly?”

“Neither the one nor the other.”

“Were you surprised to find him in the kitchen?”

“Not John D’Acosta. He go anywhere after pretty face.”

“Did the girl, Stella, visit the pantry after he had gone?”

“Yes. They carrying dirty dishes out.”

“Couldn’t she have tampered with the whisky?”

Jule’s lip curled with scorn. “A light-minded wench! She wouldn’t dare!”

“Jule,” said Fielding, “it seems strange that you should take that whisky out of the cupboard before it was needed and remove the cap and let it stand there for four hours.”

“I tell you the truth,” she said, sullenly.

“You said that none of the servants would dare to tamper with the master’s whisky. Somebody tampered with it. Was it you?”

“No!” The fixed mask of her face broke up; passion burned in her eyes and made her voice quiver. “You on the wrong track, Mr. Inspector. It wasn’t whisky killed master. It was Obeah spell. There was a coffin in his path.”

“He didn’t step over it,” said Fielding, dryly.

“He took it in his hand!”

“Do you know who worked the spell?”

“Sure I know! Everybody know that!”

“Who was it?”

Jule shut up like a trap. “You never hear that from me!” she said.

It was clear to whom she was referring, and Fielding looked pleased because it confirmed his theory. Phil kept a tight hold on his temper.

At this juncture Dr. Ramseur created a diversion by coming down the room with the bottle of whisky in his hand.

“There’s nothing the matter with this whisky,” he said.

Phil, Bareda and Fielding stared at him with

dropping jaws. “*What!*”

“It is perfectly pure.”

“No poison?”

“Not a trace!”

Jule smiled triumphantly. “Will you believe me now?” she asked. “It not whisky kill the master; was Obeah spell!”

All four men looked blank. A chill stole through Phil. Were they up against something here that was beyond human power to deal with? With a violent effort he shook it off.

“No! Let’s keep our heads, men! We *know* there are no such things as magic spells. Trantor was poisoned!”

“But how?” murmured Ramseur.

“That’s for us to find out . . . Perhaps this is not the bottle that he drank from.”

“It must be!”

Phil studied the bottle attentively. “Doctor, how much of this whisky did you use in making your tests?”

“I can tell you exactly. Two ounces in a graduating glass.”

“Let me dope this out. . . . I happened to be looking directly at Trantor when he poured his last drink. I was surprised at the size of it. He filled a tall glass nearly half full. A drink four fingers high. . . . Let’s test it.”

There was a bottle of water and glasses on the half-cleared table. Phil poured water into a tall glass to show them the height of Trantor’s last drink, and emptied the water into the whisky bottle.

“You see,” he said, “it fills it to the neck. There is no room for the additional two ounces that the doctor took out. This is *not* the bottle that Trantor drank from!”

The three men stared at it in silence.

Phil put the stopper in the bottle and drove it home with a blow of his fist. “That is how Trantor corked the bottle.” Phil passed the bottle to Ramseur. “Remove the stopper, Doctor.”

It was with some little difficulty that Ramseur worked it out.

“Was it as hard to draw just now when you opened the bottle to make your tests?”

“No,” said Ramseur. “It came out easily enough.”

“Then that is *not* the bottle Trantor drank from!”

“Wonderful!” murmured Bareda. “We are lucky to have you with us, Mr. Nevitt.”

“But how . . . ? But how . . . ?” stammered Ramseur.

“Let’s try to trace the movements of the bottle,” said Phil. “When Trantor collapsed it was knocked off the table and forgotten for a while. . . . Who put it back on the table?”

After a silence Ramseur said, with a surprised air: “Why, I put it back. . . . I hope that doesn’t bring me under suspicion.”

“Certainly not,” said Phil. “When was this?”

“It was some time after Trantor fell; ten minutes or more. The room had been cleared. I kicked against the bottle with my foot and put it back on the table.”

“During that ten minutes,” said Phil, “the murderer replaced the bottle of poisoned whisky with this bottle. During that time D’Acosta was in the room. I wondered what brought him in. In the confusion he was not watched all the time. He could have brought the extra bottle under his coat.”

“Or Jule could,” said Ramseur, grimly. “Hidden

under her apron.”

Jule smiled scornfully.

“Or Brinsley,” said Fielding, sticking to his own theory.

“We can’t prove who it was until we find the poisoned whisky,” said Phil.

Chapter 13:

After a few hours' sleep in town, Phil returned to Greenrise to continue his search for the missing whisky bottle. Randal Trantor's funeral, which was held that day, attracted almost as great an outpouring of the people as his wedding. It was the attraction of fear that brought them. When his coffin was carried out their eyes rolled in a kind of ecstasy. Bart Brinsley dissuaded Eve from attending the funeral; he went as her representative. He was pretty drunk.

Many of the people followed the cortège into town on foot, but a larger number remained hanging around the ranch-house, waiting for a glimpse of Eve. It was obvious that one and all believed that Eve through the power of her spells had brought about Trantor's death. They evinced no condemnation of the deed. They were filled with an awe of her power that was almost like worship. When she appeared on the veranda a great stillness fell on the crowd.

Phil observing this, felt a deep and growing anxiety. So far there was not a scintilla of evidence to connect Eve with the death, but he knew the

irresistible power of public opinion. Evidence or no evidence, if it was universally believed that Eve was responsible for Trantor's death, she was in danger.

Eve, who could not be otherwise than honest, refused to assume the pose of grief-stricken bride and retire into seclusion. Immediately on rising she took charge of the household. She moved around, showing herself freely, inquiring into everything and issuing her orders. She had a resolute and self-contained air that would brook no evasion from the servants. As it was manifestly impossible for Eve and Jule to remain under the same roof, the latter was sent back to town.

Phil and Eve met for the first time since Trantor's death in the dining-room. "Good morning," she said, coldly. "What are you doing?"

Phil could not resent her haughtiness. He was filled with tenderness for her. Seventeen years old and already bride, widow, and the mistress of this disorderly establishment. "Searching for evidence," he said.

"I should think you'd leave that to the proper authorities."

"I'm an authority myself, so to speak. Bareda has appointed me a kind of deputy."

“What an honor!” said Eve, going on to the kitchen.

Phil looked after her, wondering if she were really as sure of herself as she seemed. It did not ring quite true. Perhaps it was only a desperate, childish attempt to brazen out her secret dismay. He trembled with a mixture of compassion and desire. It was indecent at such an hour, he told himself, but he wanted her more than ever.

He subjected dining-room, pantry, and kitchen to a careful search, without finding what he was after. He examined the servants. The maid, Stella, a pretty mulatto, insisted that when D’Acosta came out of the dining-room after the murder, he had remained talking to her the whole time until he had been called back into the dining-room to be questioned. He had nothing in his hands or under his coat. He had not put anything down. He had not gone outside the house. Phil was unable to shake her. Other servants corroborated what she said, and Phil began to wonder if, after all, he could be on the right track. Certainly D’Acosta did not have the bottle when he came back to the dining-room. What had he done with it?

Balked in this direction, Phil turned his attention

to Jule's movements for a time. All the servants averred that after Jule had come out of the dining-room and told them of the Master's death she had not left pantry and kitchen until she was fetched back by the policeman. "She sit in chair, see nothing, like she had stroke," Phil was told.

His theories were badly shaken. His mind turned to Bart Brinsley with an ugly anxiety. Once Bart, when in Phil's company, had said with a grin that the right time to kill Trantor would be after he had married Eve. Bart had had the run of the house the night before. The thought that Bart might be mixed up in this made Phil feel sick. It *must* be D'Acosta, he told himself, and it's up to me to prove it.

He continued his search into the great hall, or lounge, that ran through the middle of the house. It presented an odd mixture of luxury and neglect. Disregarding the termites and other destructive agencies of the tropics, Trantor had filled his house with fine rugs and upholstered furniture which had been almost destroyed. There was a grand piano that had probably never been opened and a fireplace which had never been smoked. He found no bottle in the big room.

Along the north side of the lounge ran a corridor

with a row of bedrooms and bathrooms opening off. Phil paused at the door, not liking to venture further. Eve came across the big room behind him.

“What are you waiting for?” she asked.

“May I look through these rooms?”

“Our bedrooms?” she said, running up her eyebrows. “Is that necessary?”

“I’m afraid so.”

“Come ahead,” she said; “if you enjoy that sort of thing.”

Phil dwelt on her graceful young back. Her insulting air challenged his manhood; he was forced to put the clamps on his feelings.

Eve opened the last door in the corridor. “Dad slept here last night.”

Phil made a brief and thorough survey of the room. Nothing to his purpose here.

Eve knocked on another door and opened it. “Mother’s room. . . . Mr. Nevitt is making a search,” she announced in an ironical voice and went on her way.

Mrs. Brinsley, with the absurd widow’s cap perched on top of her head, sat in her wheel chair by the window with a hard, set face. The thought flitted

through Phil's head: could she have poisoned Trantor in order to secure ease, freedom, and power for her daughter? She looked capable of murder. During the whole time Phil was in the room she never took her angry eyes from him and never opened her mouth. He was thankful to get out in the corridor again.

Eve was there. "My room," she said, opening another door.

Eve's room! His heart beat faster. She hadn't been in it long enough to give it her stamp. He saw a large, cool apartment furnished in white. He looked around for Eve but she had gone.

Trantor's room followed. With two guest-rooms this completed the lot. Phil found nothing.

Eve was in the big hall when he returned to it. There was a new look in her face that he could not interpret. All at once she had become piteously young. Phil held out his hands.

"Eve!"

She jerked her hands back against her breast as if to escape contamination. "What is it?"

"Can't we be friends?"

Her face broke up; tears sprang into her eyes;

she stamped her foot and her voice beat about his astonished ears. "Friends? Friends? Oh, I hate you so much I can't bear it! You are horrible to me! If you want to do something for me take yourself away from this house and stay away so that I won't be running into you at every corner!" She turned and ran into the corridor, slamming the door after her.

Phil scowled at the door in amazement and anger. In God's name, what have I done to deserve this? he asked himself. And there was no answer.

He set his jaw and went on about his work. He transferred the search from the house to the yard and outbuildings. It struck him as odd that there were no empty whisky-bottles anywhere about the place until he learned that they constituted one of the cook's perquisites. She collected the Spey Royal bottles and sold them to a junk-dealer in the town. Thus every bottle could be accounted for. Finding nothing, Phil walked for a mile back and forth along the road, searching in the ditches and the fence corners. Afterwards he followed the banks of the shallow little stream, poking into the holes with a stick. No results.

Towards the end of the afternoon he drove back to town, baffled. The Army and Navy Stores had the

agency for Spey Royal and he stopped to inquire as to the sales. They only had three customers for the brand, he was told; Trantor, the Annunziata Club and Pernisson's Hotel. The whisky sent to the club was charged to Trantor. The hotel ordered a single bottle at long intervals and paid cash for it. The last sale was in October, six weeks before. At that time the hotel had purchased two bottles close together. Phil was shown the sales slips; October 13th and October 16th.

Why two bottles? he asked himself, since one every two months had always been enough before? He thought of the ugly, shifty-eyed Pernisson. Useless to go to him for information. He stowed the fact away in his mind for future investigation.

At the club the old steward, Cudjoe, told him that the Spey Royal whisky was kept in a special locker to which he alone had a key. This was Mr. Trantor's whisky and it was never served to anybody else. If Mr. Trantor had a guest, it was understood that he was to be given the ordinary Scotch. No bottle of Spey Royal had ever been missing. Mr. Trantor always knew how much there was and he would have raised a terrible rumpus had it been found short.

During the afternoon a government yacht arrived from St. Thomas, bringing Mr. Parker Rulon, Attorney-General for the islands, who had been assigned by the Governor to take charge of the case. Bareda rounded up Phil, Dr. Ramseur, and Inspector Fielding and took them to the custom-house to meet the Attorney-General and inform him of what had already been done.

Rulon was a little man with the aspect of a withered boy. He endeavored with a self-important manner to make up for the deficiencies of nature, and he disliked the big Phil on sight. Small-town lawyer enjoying his first taste of authority; such was Phil's silent verdict. Rulon and Fielding, both mediocre men, were instinctively drawn together, and Phil noted with what attention the Attorney-General listened to all the Inspector's suggestions.

When Phil had finished telling his story, Mr. Rulon said: "Thank you very much, Mr. Nevitt. It was good of you to lend a hand when you were on your vacation. Hereafter it won't be necessary to trouble you. Good afternoon."

Thus was Phil let out. However, Bareda was still in charge of Island affairs; he continued to consult Phil as to his various problems and the latter was

able to keep himself informed, at least at second hand, as to what was going on.

“I don’t know what policy to follow in respect to the newspapers,” Bareda complained to Phil. “I am very loath to print all the scandalous gossip and rumors about the case. But the newspapers of the other islands will, and they are delivered every other day by the mail schooner. The *Recorder* will lose prestige! It’s Mrs. Trantor’s property.”

“I should say give ’em the dirt,” said Phil, carelessly. “You owe it to the property and it can’t do any added harm. With your position you ought to scoop all the other papers.”

Bareda looked relieved. “I’m glad I asked you. I needed an outside view.”

After Phil had left the conference, Mr. Rulon had Bart Brinsley, John D’Acosta, Jule Davila, and others brought before him for questioning. Phil learned that nothing of first-rate importance was brought out at this hearing. After it was over, Bart came around to the bungalow to talk things over. He took a big shot of Phil’s Scotch. “Easy with that stuff,” warned Phil.

“Whisky can’t feaze me now,” said Bart, grinning. “There’s too much excitement going. . . .

They've got a couple of witnesses to swear that they heard me say that Randal Trantor wouldn't live long after his marriage," he went on. "I should worry about that! Everybody on the island was saying the same."

"I heard you say worse than that," said Phil.

"Well, you don't have to spread it around."

Phil looked at his friend somberly. "Bart, you are perfectly capable of having killed Trantor."

"Sure!" said Bart, grinning widely. "If I thought I could get away with it."

Phil dared not put a direct question to him. If by chance he learned that Bart *was* guilty, his position would become impossible. "The Attorney-General is a fool," he said, glumly. "He and Fielding will team together. They are convinced that you and Eve made away with Trantor between you."

"What! Eve?" cried Bart. "That's preposterous!"

"Certainly it is. But how are you going to convince two envious, thick-headed fools? Believe me, there is a real danger."

"I never thought of that!" murmured Bart, more to himself than to Phil. "I must brace up. I must watch my step. I must think of what I'm doing." He

looked at Phil. “You’ll stand by us, Phil?”

“Sure!” growled Phil.

When Bart had left him he wrote a letter.

DEAR CHICAGO:

Randy Trantor dropped dead at his wedding supper last night. I needn’t go into detail because the story will be spread all over the world and you will have read it in your own newspaper before you get this. Here’s the point. He was certainly poisoned in his whisky and the bottle afterwards switched. I’m trying to trace every bottle of Spey Royal. I find that a bottle was purchased by the hotel on October 13th and another on October 16th. Can you remember getting these two bottles so close together and why? Write me full particulars.

In case this proves to be an important lead you should hold yourself in readiness to make a quick trip to Annunziata. I’ll stand the damage, of course.

Yours,

PHIL.

Chapter 14:

During the whole of the following day Attorney-General Rulon and Inspector Fielding were engaged in solemn activities the nature of which was hidden from Phil. He knew that they went up to Greenrise in the morning to look over the scene of the crime. Up at the ranch and also at the custom-house many additional witnesses were examined, but the results were not given out.

Bareda had taken charge of the *Annunziata Recorder* and little was to be learned from him. Phil smiled at the skill with which the editor exploited every sensational rumor without making any actual charges. It was announced that the paper would be published twice a day until further notice. Bareda told Phil he had already received orders from St. Cloud, St. Peter, and the other islands of the group, besides places as far away as Barbadoes, that would more than cover the added expense.

During the day Mrs. Brinsley was carried back to her own house on the mountain. She was offered a house in town and refused it. Phil could picture the bitterness that filled the old woman. It was her own fault; she made it impossible for anybody to live

with her. Nevertheless, he was troubled by this move. In banishing the old lady and setting up housekeeping together, Bart and Eve were playing directly into the hands of the gossip-mongers. Later Phil learned that Mrs. Brinsley had engaged Jule Davila for her housekeeper. Thus she definitely took sides against her daughter.

Red Simon brought Phil a note from Bart asking him up to the ranch for dinner. Phil went out and called him up from a pay station.

“About coming up to dinner. I don’t think I’d better.”

“Why not?” demanded Bart.

“Well . . . does Eve know that you are asking me?”

“Sure. She suggested it.”

Phil stared into the transmitter in silent surprise.

“Well?” asked Bart.

“I’ll be glad to come,” said Phil.

He hired a horse and rode up to Greenrise.

They ate in a little room back of the dining-room that Eve called the morning room. In a dull black dress, with white lace at the sleeves and neck to relieve its somberness, Eve was very grown up and

quite friendly. But back of it was a wall of reserve which warned Phil: Thus far and no further! It was harder to bear than her bad temper.

As soon as they had finished eating, she got up, saying to Bart: "I know you and Phil have a hundred things to talk over, so I'll say good-night."

When she had gone Phil sat down, glowering at his plate.

Bart glanced at him with a grin. "What's the matter? Grieving for Trantor?"

Phil looked at him. "If I tell you, can you keep it to yourself?"

"Sure."

"It's Eve," said Phil. "I'm mad about her." It was a relief to let it out. "I didn't know that a man could suffer for a woman like this. She has put me in hell—this child! She has me to make or break!"

"Well," said Bart, dryly, "that complicates the situation." He was pleased, though.

"She hates me," growled Phil.

"Oh, I wouldn't say that!"

"You don't know all that's happened. She hates me!"

"Why should she?"

“God knows! Every thought I have is for her!”

“Well, why don’t you go and find out what’s the matter? She’s out on the veranda.”

“How do you know?”

“Boy,” said Bart, grinning, “I’m twenty years older than you.”

Phil stared at him, then violently flung down his napkin. “All right! I will!”

Sure enough, he found Eve idly swinging in a glider on the front veranda. “Well!” she said, in great surprise, “I thought you and Dad were deep in conference.”

“It’s you I want to talk to,” said Phil.

“Mercy!” she said. “I *am* flattered. Sit down.”

Phil sat, suddenly at a loss for speech. He was filled with a longing too immense to be put in words.

“Did I leave the table too abruptly?” Eve went on in her “charming” voice. “You don’t need to feel that you have to pay attention to your hostess. I’m sure you would much rather be talking to Dad.”

Phil said nothing.

“I was sitting here planning some of the things I would like to do to this place. It needs trees. I must

find some quick-growing kinds.”

Phil twisted uneasily. He had an unholy desire to smack her.

She went on: “The best kinds of trees grow so slowly that I would be an old woman before they’d do me any good. And I may not be living here then.”

“Trees?” growled Phil. “Have you no feeling about Trantor?”

“No. Why should I? He was old and he died.”

“He was your husband.”

“The fact that the parson said some words over us can’t make me feel any different.”

“He was murdered.”

“So you say. But there is no proof of it. It seems natural to me for an old man to die.”

“How could you bring yourself to marry him?”

“That was arranged while I was a child. I never thought about it. Everybody has to marry, doesn’t she? There wasn’t anybody else. Besides, I wanted to do something for my family.”

“Your heart is as hard as a stone!” muttered Phil.

“I suppose it is if you say so,” she retorted. “I don’t know anything about hearts. What’s to be

done about it?”

Phil could not trust himself to speak.

“Would you have wished me to be in love with Trantor?” she asked.

Her coolness suggested that she was deliberately provoking him, and Phil suddenly blew up. “For God’s sake, don’t give me any more of that line!” he cried. “Be yourself!”

Eve turned on him with her amazing swiftness. “How dare you speak to me like that! I’m only trying to be polite to you. You’re my father’s friend. You’re a guest in my house. Believe me, if I let myself go you would like it much worse! I hate you so much I can’t bear it! You are utterly detestable to me!”

“Why?” demanded Phil.

“Why? Because you’re so damned conceited and superior, that’s why! You look down on me from the ceiling like God at a sparrow! You treat me as if I was nine years old. I am always expecting you to pat me on the head and offer me a nickel. . . .”

“That’s a lie!” cried Phil, furiously. “Not with you!”

“It’s *not* a lie. I guess I ought to know. I have to

put up with it! You're too conceited to live!"

"There's nothing in it!" cried Phil. "You make all this up just to drive me crazy. You ought to be well smacked. That's the only way to deal with a woman like you, to smack you!"

"You're not man enough!" taunted Eve.

"Not man enough!" cried Phil, with a wild surge of joy. "Watch me!" He seized her roughly in his arms. She struggled. "You devil! You devil!" he muttered. "I'll have you! I'll tame you! You're going to be mine!"

Eve suddenly became quiet. He was afraid, then, but he wouldn't release her.

"It's your fault," he growled. "You are the only woman who ever got under my skin, and you enrage me so I don't know what I'm doing. You know your power over me; it amuses you to drive me wild! I . . ."

Before Phil realized what was happening her arms were wreathed around his neck and she had drawn his head down until their lips met. "You fool!" she whispered. "You darling fool! Why didn't you tell me so before?"

"Why . . . why . . ." stammered Phil. "I did, and I got my face slapped for it!"

“In the beginning I thought you were flirting with me.”

Phil drew her hard against him. Nothing more needed to be said.

“When did it start?” she asked, after a while.

“In the first moment I saw you. When you raised the whip to me I went crazy. And I never got over it.”

“Me, too. When you took the whip from me I adored you!”

Phil chuckled. “Yet you cursed me, I believe.”

“Naturally.”

“If you loved me, for God’s sake why did you marry Trantor?”

“I thought you were just playing with me. I didn’t know what marriage was. I was frightened by my own feeling. It was easier to fly into a passion and make out that I hated you.”

“It was my fault,” said Phil. “I ought to have stopped the marriage.”

“How?”

“I don’t know, but I ought to have stopped it. You were too young to know what you were doing.”

“Don’t trouble about it now,” she whispered, kissing him. “It’s all over.”

“No,” said Phil, “it’s just beginning.”

“Trantor is dead.”

“The case isn’t.”

“Don’t think such gloomy thoughts,” she whispered, passionately, “but love me! . . . love me! Never stop loving me!”

“I can do that, too!”

“I will never torment you again,” whispered Eve.

“Yes, you will,” he said, chuckling.

“No. I have changed. When you kissed me I grew up.”

“People don’t change like that. The first time you get sore at me you’ll take it all back.”

“Well, you’ll see,” said Eve. . . . “Ah! you’re so big and strong and slow!”

“Slow? Not at all!” said Phil.

She laughed with her face hidden in his neck. “All right. Anyhow, you’re the one for me. You’re the cliff and I’m the wave, and I’ll dash myself against you in vain!”

“Dash away!”

As they sat folded in each other’s arms, Phil saw the top of a head rise slowly above the edge of the veranda floor. He sprang up, dropping Eve.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

“Somebody spying on us.”

He vaulted over the rail. As he touched the ground he saw a crouching figure disappearing around the corner of the house, and dashed after it. Eve was behind him. He had another glimpse of the man as he turned the back corner of the house, but among the scattered outbuildings in the rear he lost him. Eve turned towards the kitchen door to rouse the servants, but by now Phil had got the better of his first anger, and he stopped her.

“It would only make a bad matter worse,” he muttered. “Let him go.”

As they made their way indoors, Eve said: “After all, what difference does it make? Everybody will have to know about us soon.”

“Trantor was buried only yesterday,” said Phil.

“It’s nobody’s business but yours and mine.”

“You don’t know the world, baby.”

“Anyhow, it was only a negro. They may talk

among themselves, but they never tell white people anything.”

“He didn’t run like a negro.”

“There are no white men on the place,” said Eve, in surprise.

“Maybe he doesn’t belong on the place.”

Phil was too uneasy in his mind to settle down on the veranda again. Hand in hand they went into the house to look for Bart. He was still in the morning room with his feet on a chair and a highball in his hand. Half-seas over, Phil saw. Eve took it as a matter of course. She said, with her inimitable directness:

“Dad, Phil and I are in love with each other.”

“Oh, my God!” cried Bart, in mock despair. “Is that the best you can do for yourself? That human giraffe! That factory chimney! Why don’t you take the Eiffel Tower?”

“Suits me,” said Eve. “I want something I can look up to.”

Phil saw that Bart was in no condition to talk seriously and he said nothing about the snooper.

“I must go home,” he said, reluctantly, to Eve.

“Home?” she echoed, clinging to him. “You’re

going to live here now.”

Phil shook his head. Brooding over Eve’s upturned face, stroking her hair back, he decided that he must tell her the truth about the situation.

“Eve,” he said, “all the ignorant people on this island believe that you brought about the death of Randal Trantor by some kind of Obeah spell.”

Eve’s face manifested purest surprise. She laughed briefly.

“Sure it’s ridiculous. But you and I ought to stay apart until the real murderer is found and the whole ugly business cleared up.”

“I never cared what people said about me,” she burst out.

“You’re right. But if it should become known that you and I are in love with each other, in the minds of such people that would constitute a motive for the murder.”

“I *hate* to act as if I were afraid!”

“Sure, and I’m with you,” said Phil. “But you must remember that if they should go so far as to put you on trial, your jury would have to be chosen from among these people.”

Eve paled and her eyes turned from one man to

another. “A trial . . . jury . . . *me!*” she murmured. “They wouldn’t dare! . . . Dad!”

Bart avoided her questioning eyes.

“What a fool I have been!” she murmured. “Why didn’t somebody tell me what I was doing? Dad, why didn’t you stop this marriage? You were the only one with any sense.”

Bart hung his head. “I made a mistake,” he muttered. “. . . I couldn’t foresee what was going to happen?”

Phil rode away from Greenrise about nine o’clock. Low clouds were hanging between the mountains, and the darkness and stillness brooded over earth like vast presences. Phil was pricked by a lively sense of danger, because he suspected that his enemy might be lurking somewhere along the way. Strain as he would, he could not pierce the darkness on either side of the road. He knew that the clapping of his horse’s shoes on the hard surface was advertising his coming a long way off.

For a mile and a half the road followed the course of the little stream that flowed between Trantor’s pastures. As he rode the mountains drew

together on either hand. At the lip of rock where the water fell five hundred feet into a gorge below, the road turned to the right and zigzagged down into the main valley in long loops. Trantor had built this mountain road out of his own funds. There had been something big about the man, Phil admitted.

Under stress of emotion Phil had become like a sensitized plate. The lowering clouds, the smell of growing grass, the hoarse sound of the deeply falling water, had a special significance tonight. It was all a part of Earth, and he belonged. Even danger was fine. When he came to the edge of the wider valley there was a rift in the cloud blanket overhead and the stars shone down in ineffable beauty. His breast was crowded with a joy that was hardly different from pain. This is what it is to love, he thought.

He let the horse make his own pace. The mountain-side was so steep that you could have stood almost anywhere on the parapet of the road and tossed a pebble into the next loop a couple of hundred feet below. It had been cleared when the road was built, by the simple process of burning off the timber. The awful gulf of darkness was relieved here and there by a spark of light in the window of a dwelling. Far away on the face of the opposite

mountain he saw a pin point of light that must be shining in the window of Mrs. Brinsley's room. He pictured the soured old woman sitting in her chair, staring at nothing. Tonight he could even feel sorry for her.

The stars now furnished him a little light to see by. Halfway down the mountain-side, after crossing a culvert over a dry watercourse, his horse pricked up his ears and whickered. There was another horse in the shadows. Phil instinctively flung a leg over the animal's back and dropped to the road on the off side. At the same moment a shot blazed and crashed from the bank not twenty feet away. The horse plunged, jerking the bridle out of Phil's hand, and set off down the road at a gallop. Phil, quicker than thought, flung himself over the parapet. Another shot passed over his head. Dropping on the steep slope of earth and stones below, he rolled and slid down, clutching vainly to stop himself, and finally plunging into a scrubby tangled growth that held him up.

There he lay for a moment to recover his wind. Nothing was to be heard but the wild pounding of his horse's hoofs on the road. He could see nothing through the screen of leaves. He pushed on down the slope, slipping, stumbling, colliding with the young

trees, blindly forcing his way through the thorny undergrowth. Without any warning, he shot over the edge of the bank above the next reach of the road and dropped a dozen feet or so into the ditch alongside it, where he lay scratched, bruised, and shaken, but unhurt.

Meanwhile the galloping horse had rounded the bend and was bearing down on him. Phil ran into the middle of the road with arms outspread. The animal loomed out of the dark, ears pointed ahead, all four feet planted, sliding to a stop. Phil snatched at bridle and pommel, and swung into the saddle. The horse galloped on, completely out of control.

Phil made no attempt to curb him until they got down into the valley. Here he succeeded in guiding the animal into the soft stuff, so that he was able to listen. High above him he heard the pounding of another set of hooves. His enemy, not knowing that Phil had recovered his horse, must have wasted time in looking for him. Phil grinned, and clapping heels to his mount, headed for town.

He had a long start, but his pursuer was better mounted. Whenever Phil paused to listen, the pounding hooves behind were nearer. Still Phil judged that he would be able to make town before

being overtaken. The man would never dare follow him into town.

As he rode up the hill to the crossroads, Phil saw that the rum shop was still open. Its lights streamed out across the road, giving Phil an idea. In his own mind he was satisfied as to who had attacked him, but he wanted proof of it. Slipping out of the saddle, he smacked his horse and sent him careering down the other side of the hill into town. Phil slipped behind a big silk-cotton tree opposite the rum shop.

The following rider, as he came riding up from the valley, pulled in his horse to a walk to avoid attracting the attention of the drinkers at the bar. When the light fell on him, Phil saw, as he expected, the tormented, savage face of John D'Acosta. He rode in shirt and breeches and his head was bare. Nothing of the Latin dandy about him now. Instead of turning off to the left in the direction of his home, he rode on down the hill towards town. Phil followed on foot.

Port-of-Grace went to bed early and got up early. Already Christian Street was deserted, and only a few lights showed here and there. Phil proceeded directly to the police station alongside the market. In addition to the black Sergeant on duty, he

found Inspector Fielding writing at his desk. Fielding turned around with a sour smile:

“So here you are! You look as if you’d been through the mill.”

Phil bristled at his tone. “Never mind that. I want to report that I was attacked on the road coming down from Greenrise. John D’Acosta laid in wait for me and shot at me twice.”

“So?” said Fielding, smiling still.

“Don’t you believe me?” Phil demanded, hotly.

“I have heard another version of the affair.”

“So D’Acosta has been here?”

Fielding shrugged.

“What did he tell you?”

“I’m not here to give information.”

“You choose to believe his story instead of mine.”

“Not at all. I have an open mind.”

“You refuse to order his arrest?”

“I certainly do—unless you can bring me some evidence in corroboration of your story.”

“The only witnesses to the attack were the horses,” said Phil, dryly.

“I suppose you think that’s funny.”

“Never mind that,” said Phil. “I’m going to find out whether or not a citizen is entitled to protection on this island. Meanwhile, give me a permit to carry a gun so that I may defend myself.”

“The application is refused,” said Fielding. “There has been trouble enough.”

“Damn you . . . !” began Phil, and bit it off, realizing that it only makes matters worse to curse a policeman.

“What were you doing up at Greenrise?” asked Fielding.

“None of your business!”

Fielding smiled. “I’m afraid you’ll find that it is very much my business. It’s too bad that you didn’t accept the late Mr. Trantor’s invitation to leave the island. From the information that has come to me, it appears that you are getting in very bad, very bad, Mr. Nevitt.”

“Ah, the hell with it!” muttered Phil, walking out in a rage.

Chapter 15:

On his way down Christian Street Phil had seen lights in the second-story window of the *Recorder* office; he returned there and went up. At the back of a long open loft several composers were at work. The *Recorder* possessed one linotype of antique design, and the balance of the paper was set up by hand. At the table by the front windows Alfred Bareda was filling endless yellow copy sheets with his clerkly hand. His white suit was as immaculate as ever. He glanced up at Phil with his usual grave mask. Bareda's strong features gave him the look of a man of action, and his present mild occupation seemed out of character.

"Mr. Nevitt, you appear upset!" he said, in a concerned voice.

"I've got a story for tomorrow's paper," said Phil, grimly.

Bareda pulled a fresh sheet towards him and held his pencil ready. "What is it?"

Phil told him what had occurred, but Bareda did not start writing. He chewed his pencil, shook his head, pulled his ear. Finally he said, deprecatingly:

“Mr. Nevitt, I can’t print this story.”

“Why not? Fielding would have to take action if you did.”

“If you were a newspaper man you would understand. There is no substantiation.”

“You mean you don’t believe me?”

Bareda looked shocked. “Of course I do! Of course I do, Mr. Nevitt! . . . But if D’Acosta sued the paper I couldn’t substantiate the story. Owing to my official position, I have to be especially careful.”

“This is just splitting hairs!” cried Phil, angrily. “How much rope do you want to give this devil D’Acosta?”

“Please, Mr. Nevitt, not so loud!” said Bareda, with a glance towards the back of the room.

“He drugged and kidnapped a young girl—there were plenty of witnesses to that. . . .”

“We had to think of her good name.”

“You have evidence to show that he has been dealing with the Obeahs, probably to procure poison; now he shoots at me!”

“I know it,” agreed Bareda. “It’s a scandal! But for the moment my hands are tied! . . . And that’s not all he’s done, either.”

“What else?” asked Phil, sharply.

“You remember the creole girl, Rosanna Nuno, the one who informed Brinsley about the kidnapping? D’Acosta beat her into a state of insensibility.”

“Why don’t you arrest him for that?”

“She refuses to bring a charge against him.”

“Where is she?”

“Her mother brought her down to town.”

“Have you informed the Attorney-General of this?”

“What is the use?” said Bareda. “She would deny it all.”

“Why? Is she afraid of D’Acosta, or in love with him?”

“I don’t know. Both perhaps. D’Acosta has a way with women.”

“Well, Rosanna knows I’m her friend,” said Phil, grimly. “She accepted money from me. Will you take me to her?”

Bareda hesitated.

“For God’s sake, where do you stand in this?” Phil broke out. “Whose side are you on, anyhow?”

“Not so loud!” murmured Bareda. “I’m on the side of justice, Mr. Nevitt. I’m your friend, too, though you appear to doubt it. But my position is so delicate! . . . I’ll tell you where the girl is, but I mustn’t appear in it.”

He gave Phil careful directions. “When you find the door, knock like this.” He illustrated on the edge of his table. Three raps, a pause, and three more. “The women are living in a state of terror. They won’t open unless they know it’s a friend.”

Bareda’s instructions led Phil into the maze of alleys west of the market place that constituted the native quarter. He passed through a gateway into a muddy yard surrounded on three sides by a low building like a barracks, with a separate door for every room. All the rooms were dark and silent. A street lamp inside the gateway threw an uncertain light in the corners of the yard.

Phil found the right door and gave the signal. The door was opened and he had a glimpse of a neat, bare, one-room interior. An old, brown-skinned woman faced him, and on a cot against the wall lay an unrecognizable figure swathed in bandages.

“Who you?” asked the old woman.

“Nevitt, Rosanna knows me.”

She pulled him in and, closing the door, switched off the light.

“No good for neighbor look in,” she explained.

Phil was left in darkness with the two women. He took a bill from his wallet and, feeling for the old woman’s hand, pressed it into her palm.

“For the sick girl,” he said. “For medicine and good food.”

She struck a match to see the denomination. “All right,” she purred. “You good friend.”

She pushed a chair alongside the cot and Phil sat down. “So D’Acosta beat you up,” he said to Rosanna.

“Knock down,” she said; “kick me. Take big stick and beat. Me hurt bad.” She told Phil the whole long story, punctuated with groans. Phil was ready with his sympathy and a warm understanding was created.

“He ought to be punished,” said Phil.

“Me no go to court,” said Rosanna, quickly.

“You don’t have to appear in it,” said Phil, soothingly. “We’ll get him for something else. Wouldn’t you like to see him go to jail for a while?”

“Yes,” said Rosanna, eagerly. “If him don’t know me put him there.”

“I’ll keep you out of it,” said Phil. “He’s suspected of working Obeah. That’s against the law. Do you know anything about it?”

“Him come Jebuseeah for spell last week.”

Phil pricked up his ears. “Who’s Jebuseeah?”

“Obeah man live in this yard. Make powerful spell. Him daytime name George Panna.”

“How do you know D’Acosta has been to see him?”

“Me mother tell me. Her see him come here.”

The old woman made sounds of confirmation.

“Do you know what he got from the Obeah man?” Phil asked, eagerly.

“Yes. When him come home one night me see him put something away and when him sleeping me look. It is little gourd with Obeah mark on it and medicine inside.”

“For what purpose?”

“Me not know that,” said Rosanna.

“Where did he put it?”

“In top drawer him chest. Under him

handkerchief.”

“Is it there now?”

“Maybe so.”

Phil got up. Armed with this piece of evidence, perhaps he could clean up the whole mess. He was hot with eagerness to try it out. There were other questions he wanted to ask Rosanna, but he could not put them to her without betraying what he was going to do. He could not trust her as far as that.

He spoke soothingly. “That’s fine, Rosanna. We’ll see if we can get him for working Obeah. Your name will never be mentioned, so don’t worry. You just lie here and get well, and I’ll see that you never lack for a friend.”

Phil got out of the house and hastened back to the *Recorder* office. Bareda was still filling sheets of yellow copy paper. “Did you learn anything?” he asked.

“Sure, I got a promising lead,” said Phil, grinning. “May I use the telephone?” Since he had not met D’Acosta riding home after his visit to the police office, Phil suspected that he was staying in town and wanted to make sure.

Bareda pushed the instrument towards him. After a little delay, he succeeded in rousing a sleepy

operator, and asked for Coralie's number. Presently he heard her voice on the wire.

"This is Phil."

"Hello, honey," she murmured, caressingly. "Are you coming around?"

"I thought of it. Is John D'Acosta there?"

"Yes."

"I'll come some other night then."

"I'll keep you apart," said Coralie, and Phil could hear her breathe a chuckle into the transmitter.

"No. I'll be seeing you soon." He hung up.

"What are you going to do?" asked Bareda, staring.

"A little job of burglary," said Phil, with a hard grin. "Can you lend me a gun?"

"Good God!" said Bareda. "I have nothing here. Tomorrow, maybe."

"Perhaps I won't need it then," said Phil.

Running downstairs, he made his way to Bateese's livery stable and garage in the alley across the street. It was here that he had hired a horse in the afternoon. The horse had returned, he was told, and was safely bedded in his stall.

“He threw me at the crossroads,” said Phil, casually, “and I had to walk into town. I want a fresh horse.”

The old stableman shrugged and went away to fetch it. In his opinion the white man was mad; however, he was good pay.

In Bateese’s on several occasions Phil had had the feeling that he was being watched. Now he located the source of it. The front part of the establishment where the motor-cars were stored had a small inside window. Phil caught a glimpse of a black face in it just as it was sinking from sight. He strode to the window. It looked into Bateese’s hardware store adjoining. A single light was burning in the store as a safeguard against thieves. But as far as Phil could see the store was empty.

The stableman returned, leading a black mare who looked fresh and fairly able. Phil mounted her and once more headed out of town. The only weapon he carried was a flashlight.

Chapter 16:

It may have been one o'clock when Phil approached the D'Acosta plantation. He had taken no account of the time. As he turned into the side road between the cane-fields he pulled his horse into a walk and softly entered through the open gate below the hill. At the foot of the rise he dismounted, and leading his horse a little way into the woods, tied her to a young tree and went on up on foot.

He came out on the plateau of grass above and saw the wide bungalow crouching under its lofty trees, dark and still. He hoped that it might be empty also, since he knew it was not the custom in Annunziata for servants to sleep under the same roof with the master. He made his way around to the rear to reconnoiter the outbuildings. All dark. From somewhere among them a dog set up a savage barking and rattled a chain. Phil remained standing silently in the shadow of the house. After a while a negro voice silenced the dog and Phil stole away.

He went up the rear steps of the veranda. All the French windows were closed with shutters. Phil had no means of knowing which might be D'Acosta's

own room. He went to the nearest pair of shutters. This was the room where he had found Eve. The shutters appeared to be somewhat loosely hooked together on the inside. Phil jerked them sharply, and the lock parted with a snap. He waited. The dog set up a renewed barking. After a while he stopped. There was no sound from within the house. Phil entered the room.

A brief flash of his light showed him the chest of drawers, and he went to it. This, it appeared, was not D'Acosta's room, for the drawers were empty. At the back a door gave on a hall running from front to rear. Leaving all doors open behind him, and pausing between every step to listen, Phil made his way forward through the hall. On his right the dining-room; on his left a bathroom; beyond the bathroom a larger bedroom.

Here a faint suggestion of stale tobacco smoke suggested that he was in D'Acosta's room. Phil entered it warily. It was furnished with the quaint and beautiful mahogany pieces that were made on the island in the eighteenth century, including a gigantic four-poster bed. On the walls hung hunting trophies and weapons and many photographs of women. Trophies of another kind, Phil thought, grimly.

He made his way to the handsome old chest of drawers and, softly opening the top drawer, cast his light inside. Handkerchiefs. Moving them aside his heart set up a great thumping at the sight of a little egg-shaped yellow gourd tucked into the corner of the drawer. It had been bound round with surgeon's tape to hold the cover fast. So he had won! He conveyed it to his nose and smelled a faint suggestion of frangipanni. A liquid gurgled inside the gourd. Everything was falling into place. He dropped his prize carefully in a side pocket.

As he moved the handkerchiefs back and softly closed the drawer, there was a click and lights flooded on. Whirling around, he saw John D'Acosta standing in the doorway with a gun in his hand and a murderous, grin on his face. The shutters behind Phil were fastened. He was trapped.

D'Acosta moistened his lips. "Put up your hands," he said, softly.

It flashed through Phil's mind that he might as well die fighting, since D'Acosta would kill him anyhow. About twelve feet separated him from the other man. He dived low for his legs. D'Acosta fired but he was not quick enough. The shot passed over Phil's back. Phil tackled and flung D'Acosta

violently to the floor. The gun was discharged again. Before D'Acosta could recover himself, Phil was out of the door. He ran around through the other bedroom.

D'Acosta, regaining his feet, burst out on the veranda through the locked shutters. Phil vaulted over the rail. D'Acosta, coming out of the lighted room, couldn't see well. He fired at random and shouted for his men. "Pedro! . . . Jake! . . . Hickey!"

Phil did not feel much fear of the negroes. The dog was barking hysterically. D'Acosta's next cry struck a real terror into Phil's breast.

"Loose the dog!"

Phil circled around among the trees, and gaining the road, ran down at his best speed. He heard the trampling of horses above, and the baying of the dog as it came around the house.

"After him, Pancho! After him!" yelled D'Acosta.

At the bottom of the hill Phil searched in vain for his horse. D'Acosta on the way in had discovered it and led it away. In order to confuse the pursuit, Phil ran back across the road and dived among the trees on the other side. Horsemen were pounding down the hill now, with the baying dog in

advance. How can I shake off the dog? Phil thought with a creeping feeling of despair.

Putting up his arms to shield his face, he plunged through the undergrowth in the direction of the stone wall that bounded the cane-fields. He heard the dog with unerring scent come crashing through leaves and branches behind him. Scrambling over the wall, he lifted a great stone from the top and waited. As the dog was about to leap, he hurled it with both hands between his eyes. It smashed against the beast's skull, and he dropped without a sound. Phil, bending double, gained the cover of the half-grown cane and waited.

A moment later the horsemen pounded out through the gate and pulled up. They were not fifty yards from where Phil crouched. "You, Pedro, find the dog!" shouted D'Acosta.

A negro voice answered: "Him quiet, him dead, master."

D'Acosta cursed Phil foully. "Come on! We'll cut him off!"

They galloped ahead between the cane-fields. Phil, listening intently, could distinguish the hoofbeats of four horses. He pushed ahead through the young cane. Coming at length to the edge of the

cane at the main south road, he crouched and listened. He could hear the hoofbeats far down the road. They were coming back. He ran across the road into the cane on the other side.

Lying flat on the earth and peering out, he saw D'Acosta and two of his men coming back and his heart sank. That part of the road which was hewn out of the rocky cliff offered no cover, and if D'Acosta had left an armed man on watch at that point, there was no chance of getting by. Phil knew of no other way back to town. He pushed on through the cane towards the sea. After a while he heard the men riding back down the road. Having blocked it at one end, they intended patrolling it until Phil was forced to show himself.

He came out on a lonely stretch of beach. The lagoon was calm; a gentle surf splashed on the sand, and far out the breakers boomed on the reef. He started walking west in the direction of town. Unluckily, between him and safety, the beach was interrupted by the great promontory of rock which rose sheer out of deep water. Now and then he could still catch far away the hoofbeats of the horses pounding across the flat.

The cliff loomed out of the dark ahead like a

nightmare barrier; hopeless. He considered the possibility of swimming around it and gave it up with a shiver. Sharks, he had been told, rarely ventured inside the reef, but the lagoons were swarming with barracuda who could tear a swimmer's flesh to ribbons in a few minutes. Not that way!

As he drew closer to the cliff Phil distinguished a row of three or four little wattle-and-daub shacks along the sand and his hopes sprang up again. Fishermen! Fishermen must have boats. He moved up softly and discovered that a little stream emptied into the lagoon here. These simple people had no fear of robbers, and their gear was spread all around; nets and reels to wind them on; spars, sails and oars. Their boats, large and small, were drawn up on the shore of the creek.

In all the little houses the doors and windows were tightly closed. Apparently the fisherfolk sealed themselves up when they went to sleep. Phil debated whether or not to waken them. It was impossible to foresee how ignorant and superstitious negroes might react—run from him, perhaps, and raise an ungodly racket. He decided to help himself to what he wanted and pay for it later.

The lightest of the skiffs already had a pair of oars in her. He softly pushed her off the mud and poled out of the stream. As soon as he was out of earshot, he sat down and, running out the oars, headed east up the lagoon. In that direction a faint glow in the sky revealed where the town lay on the other side of a high intervening hill. With a thankful heart he touched the little egg-shaped object in his pocket to make sure it was safe. So far, so good.

To enter the harbor he would have had to cross the reef, a hazardous trip in his flimsy skiff. So he rowed along close to the shore, trusting to find a path somewhere over the hills into town. The cliff towered over his head. Fish darted through the water beneath him, outlined in a pale fire of phosphorescence. Barracuda, no doubt; he was glad of the planks between.

After he had rowed for about three miles through the calm lagoon he came to another group of shacks in the curve of a shallow bay lying below the hill that cut off the lights of town. Feeling sure that these people must have a way of getting into town, he landed on the beach. After a search with his light behind the shacks, he stumbled on a well-beaten donkey track and started upwards.

The rest was easy. An hour later he entered the police station adjoining the market-place. Another black sergeant sat there now, writing his reports. This was Sergeant Meek, whom Phil had handled so roughly in Coralie's house, but Phil had settled for that and there was no hard feeling. Meek's grin revealed a set of teeth that a movie star might have envied. Phil's soiled, torn, and generally battered appearance naturally led the policeman to suppose that the white man had been on the loose again.

"Are you armed?" asked Phil.

Meek pulled out the drawer of his desk an inch or two and called attention to the gun lying there.

"Would you mind dropping that in your pocket in order to have it handy?"

"For why?" asked the sergeant.

"John D'Acosta is looking for me with a gun, and I want you to shoot first, that's all."

To oblige him Meek dropped the gun into his pocket, grinning. He was sure Phil was drunk.

Phil became conscious now of an overwhelming weariness. There was a wooden bench along the wall of the office, and he stretched himself upon it with a groan of satisfaction. "Reckon I ought to be safe here," he said. "You better telephone to the

inspector and tell him that I have secured important new evidence in the Trantor case. It concerns D'Acosta."

"All right," said Meek soothingly.

Phil fell asleep.

He woke to find that Inspector Fielding was shaking him. It was full day. Meek was in the room, also Constable Jarbow and John D'Acosta standing by the desk, pale, tight-lipped, and wary. His eyes were narrowed like a fox's.

"What's this about new evidence?" demanded Fielding.

Phil stood up, very wide awake, and taking the little gourd from his pocket, exhibited it on his hand. "This," he said. "It's an Obeah charm or potion. I found it in a drawer in D'Acosta's bedroom."

A peculiar smile spread across D'Acosta's face, and Phil thought: The fellow has nerve!

"In D'Acosta's house?" said Fielding, scowling. "What were you doing there?"

"I went to look for this. D'Acosta came home, and for the second time tonight tried to shoot me."

"He broke into my house," said D'Acosta. "I caught him in the act of rifling my chest, and I shot

at him as I had a right to do.”

“Let that wait for the moment,” said Fielding. He addressed Phil. “What reason had you to suppose that you would find something of this sort in D’Acosta’s possession?”

Phil said: “It seemed to me that you neglected the evidence I put before you, so I took it on myself to watch D’Acosta and to make further inquiries. I learned from the people who live in Blanchard’s barrack-yard that he was in the habit of visiting an Obeah man there whom the negroes call Jebuseeah. D’Acosta bought this object from him.”

Fielding looked at D’Acosta. “Is this true?”

D’Acosta’s answer astonished Phil. “Yes. Panna gave it to me,” he said.

“For what purpose?”

“I decline to answer that.”

“Why not fetch this Jebuseeah or Panna here?” suggested Phil.

“It’s all right with me,” said D’Acosta.

The constable was dispatched for Panna and the others waited. Phil said, dryly:

“Excuse me, Inspector, but I would feel easier in my mind if you searched this bird.”

Before Fielding could speak D'Acosta raised his hands above his head. "By all means search me," he said.

Meek frisked him. He had had the wit to drop his gun before entering the police office, and they found nothing on him.

In a few minutes Jarbow returned, bringing a fine-looking, well-built negro of mature age, who had evidently been forced to dress in a hurry. But he was not at all flustered. Phil noted how he took everything in with a single glance around the room; D'Acosta, Phil himself, the tell-tale gourd on the desk. His suit was of a thin black serge, expensively made, and he wore some costly jewelry. A superior type, cool and resourceful.

"Panna," said Fielding, "do you know this man?"

"Mr. D'Acosta?" answered the negro, smoothly. "Certainly, Inspector." He spoke like a white man.

"Is it true that he procured this object from you?"

Panna looked at D'Acosta. "Tell him, George," said the latter, with an air of bravado.

"Yes, Inspector," said Panna. "I gave this to Mr. D'Acosta."

“What’s in it?”

“A tempting-dram.”

“*What!*”

“What is sometimes called a love potion.”

Nobody smiled.

“So you confess that you practice Obeah,” said Fielding, sternly. “This is not the first time you have been up before me for that.”

“Never convicted,” put in Panna, softly. “I make no claim to magical powers. If the people believe that I possess them, is it my fault? They come to me for this and that. And sometimes I give them what they ask for out of friendliness. It makes them happy and it does no harm. I take no money for it, Inspector.”

Phil wondered why the inspector didn’t ask him where the fine suit came from, the handsome seal that hung out of his fob pocket, and the ring with a big bloodstone. However, he kept his mouth shut.

“Yes, I’ve heard all this before,” said Fielding. “But this time I appear to have caught you with the goods. What is in that stuff?”

Panna answered in a measured voice: “Water said to have collected on the grave of one who died

for love; a lock of Mr. D'Acosta's hair dried and powdered; a few drops of his perspiration; a few drops of his blood; a little essence of frangipanni, the scent of lovers; that is all."

Phil, hearing this, wondered if he could be living in the twentieth century. Glancing at the two negro constables, he saw that they were extraordinarily uneasy. This thing went deep with the islanders. D'Acosta's face was like a wax mask.

Fielding picked up the gourd and pulling off the tape that sealed it, pried up the closely fitting cover with his thumb nail. "Was this full when you gave it to D'Acosta?" he asked.

"It was full."

"Then about one-third of it has been used."

Panna said nothing.

"Who was this intended for?" Fielding asked D'Acosta.

"I just keep it on hand," said D'Acosta, mockingly. "You never know when you may want it."

"It will be submitted to analysis," said Fielding.

"It is not necessary to go to that trouble," put in Panna, smoothly. "By your leave, Inspector, I will

prove to you that it is harmless.” He held out his hand.

“How?”

“By swallowing the rest of it.”

Fielding, watching him narrowly, handed it over. Panna raised it and poured the contents down his throat. The two black policemen gasped. Phil was so firmly convinced that the gourd contained poison that he looked to see the Obeah man fall dead at his feet. Nothing of the sort happened. Panna merely smiled, and wiped his lips with a fine white handkerchief.

There was a pause. Nothing was to be heard in the room but somebody’s hoarse breathing. Phil was filled with a sickening sense of frustration. All his trouble and risk had gone for nothing. D’Acosta had the laugh on him.

“Can I go home and finish dressing, Inspector?” asked Panna, deferentially.

“You may go,” said Fielding. “I have other things to attend to now. But you will be called on to answer the charge of practicing Obeah when I am ready to press it.”

“I have never taken money, Inspector,” said Panna, slyly. He bowed politely to everybody and

went out.

“Are you through with me?” D’Acosta asked, with a swagger.

“One moment,” put in Phil. “I charge that this man shot at me tonight on the mountain road coming down from Greenrise.”

“It was a dark night,” said D’Acosta, grinning. “How can you be sure it was me?”

“Because I waited opposite the saloon at the crossroads and when you came into the light I recognized you.”

“And I charge that this man broke into my house tonight and stole my property,” said D’Acosta. “I caught him in the act.”

“I refuse to enter either charge,” said Fielding. “Shake hands, the two of you, and keep the peace hereafter.”

“I’m damned if I’ll take his hand!” cried Phil, hotly.

“You took the very words out of my mouth,” sneered D’Acosta. He swaggered out.

Fielding was smiling disagreeably. “As for you, Mr. Nevitt, I recommend that you give up trying to play the private detective. You may safely leave this

matter in the hands of the properly constituted authorities.”

Phil walked out without waiting for him to finish. He was tasting the dregs. D’Acosta was not by any means cleared of the murder in his eyes. If he had bought a love potion from one Obeah man, he could have bought a death potion from another. . . . And what had brought him home so quickly?

Chapter 17:

When the *Recorder* was delivered at the bungalow, Phil eagerly skimmed over the latest reports on the Trantor case. Little news, but plenty of rumor. Eve, naturally, was never mentioned but in the most respectful manner, nevertheless, it was clear to Phil that the belief of the people was weaving a net around her. Amongst the gossip he found a fact that caused his brows to draw together. "On the morning of his wedding-day Mr. Trantor made a will leaving everything he possessed to his wife without reserve. Mrs. Trantor thus becomes the richest woman in the islands." How this would stimulate the wagging of the tongues!

Phil prepared to ride up to Greenrise again, because he was convinced that the solution of the murder was to be found somewhere around Trantor's house. On the way to the stable he went up to the *Recorder* office to try to hold Bareda to his promise of a gun. He had not much hope of getting it, but the inscrutable creole, gray-faced from working all night, silently handed him a package rolled up in quantities of paper to conceal the nature

of its contents.

“For God’s sake, don’t tell anybody you got it from me,” he said.

“You can depend on it,” said Phil.

“And you must procure a permit from Fielding to carry it.”

“Sure,” said Phil, dryly.

At Bateese’s he found that D’Acosta had returned the black mare early in the morning. Taking her again, he rode out into the country, keeping watch to make sure that he was not followed. He was thankful to have the gun in his pocket.

In the valley beyond the crossroads he met the sullen, handsome Jule Davila driving to town in a rough country cart with her scowling young son—Trantor’s son. The two stared at Phil insolently. He called to them to stop.

“Can I have a little talk with you?” said Phil.

“Say what you want,” answered Jule, not yielding an inch.

“If we could walk up the road a piece,” suggested Phil, glancing at the boy.

“Say it here,” said Jule.

Phil wondered if she had heard about the will. “You’ve had a rotten deal, Jule,” he said. “You see, Mrs. Trantor didn’t know what the situation was until she got to Greenrise.”

“So you say,” said Jule.

“She wants to do the right thing by you.”

Jule’s eyes flamed. “I don’t want her charity! I want justice for my children!”

“That’s what she wants you to get.”

“This is just to bribe me to keep my mouth shut!”

Phil saw that it was useless to try to make friends with her. He took another line. “Dr. Ramseur thinks that you killed Trantor,” he suggested.

She smiled contemptuously.

“I think it was John D’Acosta.”

She shrugged.

“Will you help me to find out the truth, Jule?”

“You don’t want the truth, white man!” she retorted, in a quivering voice. “You better leave me be. What I know wouldn’t please you. I know too much! . . . Drive on, Randy.”

Phil grinned mirthlessly. So she had started

calling the boy by his father's name; previously it had been Tom. Phil dismissed the woman's words as an outburst of pure malice, but they left him uneasy. He and Eve appeared to be faced with malice whichever way they turned. He rode on.

At the ranch-house he turned over his horse to a boy and mounted the steps. Through the open door he saw Eve busying herself in the big lounge. She had not heard him come, and he paused for the sheer pleasure of looking at her. She was wearing a white tennis dress and had a red fillet bound round her head. The clean line of her profile enchanted him. Then she saw Phil. She gave him an extraordinary glance; suspicious, defiant; and his heart sank.

“Good Lord! What's the matter?”

She melted at the sound of his voice, and came running. “Oh, Phil, you *do* love me!”

“Eve!”

“I was afraid you might feel sorry today.”

He held her tight. “You child! When will you trust me?”

“I love you too much!” she said. “It makes me afraid when you are not here. What would I do if I lost you?”

“You will never lose me while I’m alive.”

She drew him down on a sofa and crept into his arms. “Love does funny things to you,” she murmured. “Life used to be so simple. Now I am living in a kind of fever.”

“I know,” he said.

“You!” she retorted. “You’ve got as much feeling as an elephant!”

“Well, elephants are very temperamental.”

“Why don’t we go away from here where we can always, always be together? I suffer so when you are away from me.”

“We will go soon, I hope.”

“Why not now, today?”

“Because your marriage to Trantor has set up a train of results that has to be faced out.”

Eve drew away from him. “Don’t throw that up at me,” she said, stormily.

“Sorry,” said Phil smiling.

She came back to him. “I am weak when you smile!”

Phil laughed and drew her close. “Thanks for the tip.”

“Look, Eve,” he presently said. “We’ve got to take our medicine. However this thing may turn out, we can’t marry right on top of it. I must go away for a while to let the dust settle. We can keep in close touch with each other.”

She fondled his hand. “All right, if you say so, Phil. But I feel as if I would die if you left the island without me.”

The door into the corridor opened and Stella crossed the room on her way to the kitchen, a pretty, slender mulatto, but sly. She made believe not to see them, but her expression was too demure.

“You ought to get rid of that girl,” said Phil when she had gone.

“Why?” asked Eve. “She’s the best servant in the house.”

“I believe she’s in D’Acosta’s pay.”

“Pooh!” said Eve. “D’Acosta can’t touch us.”

“Just the same, I advise you to fire her.”

Later they were in the dining-room. Phil said: “Sometimes during a trial they will re-enact the crime in the hope of bringing out the truth. Let’s try it.” He arranged a couple of chairs. “You and Trantor were seated at the head of the table, so. The

bottle of poisoned whisky was close beside his right hand. When he fell it was knocked off on the floor and it lay there unnoticed for ten or fifteen minutes.”

Eve watched him attentively.

“During that time,” Phil went on, “somebody replaced the poisoned whisky with a good bottle. We were all excited, yet we were suspicious, too—at least I was. A bottle of whisky is a fairly bulky object and it is hard to believe that anybody, man or woman, could have brought it into this room under their clothes and carried the other bottle out without being discovered. By the logic of circumstances it seems as if the poisoned stuff must still be in this room.”

Down on hands and knees Phil searched the floor for a hidden trap. He examined the under sides of the chairs and explored the complicated arrangement of stretchers by which the table could be extended to its full length. It was supported at each corner by a huge round leg carved in a fluted pattern. Phil looked hard at the leg nearest the place where Trantor had sat. The table had a wide overhang and anybody fooling with the leg would be hidden. Phil suddenly rapped the leg hard with his knuckles.

“It’s hollow!” he cried, excitedly.

Searching it narrowly, he discovered a close crack cunningly concealed by the carving. Opening his penknife, he inserted the point in the crack and a little rounded door flew open. The tiny cupboard thus revealed was just big enough to hold a single bottle. In it stood a bottle of Spey Royal whisky from which one long drink had been poured.

“We have it!” cried Phil.

A few minutes later he was galloping back to town with the bottle strapped to his body under his jacket. He put up his horse in the stable and walked around to Dr. Ramseur’s bungalow in upper Frederick Street. Upon seeing Phil’s shining eyes and compressed lips, Ramseur led him directly into his consulting-room.

Phil looked around. The windows, open above, were of frosted glass below. “Any chance of our being seen or overheard?”

“None,” said the gaunt doctor, dryly. “This room was designed to prevent it.”

Phil planted his bottle on the table. “There’s your poisoned whisky.”

“Good God,” exclaimed Ramseur. “Where did it come from?”

Phil told him.

“Were there any witnesses present when you found it?”

“Eve.”

Ramseur looked grave, and stroked his chin.

“For God’s sake,” Phil burst out, “if I was mixed up in this, or if Eve was, would I gallop straight to you with it?”

“I don’t know what goes on in the dark places of a man’s mind,” said Ramseur, scowling.

“D’Acosta did it,” said Phil.

“It doesn’t seem reasonable that D’Acosta should be familiar with the peculiarities of Trantor’s furniture. He had never been admitted to the house, so far as I know.”

“He had an accomplice in the house, the girl Stella.”

“I didn’t see her in the dining-room after the accident.”

“He could have given her the poison when he went around to the kitchen, and afterwards changed the bottles himself.”

“It is possible,” said Ramseur, “but it sounds far

fetched. . . . On the other hand, Jule Davila had been living in the house for fifteen years. The table was probably made while she was there.” He put the bottle to his nose. “Smells all right. . . . But wait. There is a faint suggestion of some deleterious substance.”

“Analyse it!” said Phil.

“First let’s try an experiment.”

Ramseur opened a door and in a corridor outside Phil saw several cages containing rats. The doctor said with his bitter smile: “I occupy myself in my off hours by trying to isolate the organism of one of our obscure fevers. These are my subjects. . . . Nothing will come of my work.”

Opening one of the cages, he grasped a rat and brought him out. The creature was perfectly tame. “This fellow is sick,” he said. “It would be an act of mercy to finish him off.” He took a piece of bread from a pan of food on top of the cage and returned through the door. Putting the bread in a saucer, he poured a little of the whisky on it and presented it to the rat. The creature smelled of it with agitated whiskers and eagerly started to nibble.

“Strange how every living thing craves stimulant,” murmured Ramseur.

While the rat was still busy with his meal he staggered. A horrible spasm seized him and he lay over on the table . . . dead. The two men looked at each other with eyes full of horror.

“So that’s that,” said Phil, hoarsely. . . . “Doc, you cannot believe that I had anything to do with this!”

“You don’t look like a poisoner,” said Ramseur, grimly, “but somebody may have deceived you.”

“Analyse the stuff!”

“All right. Come back in an hour.”

“What would I be doing in that time?” cried Phil. “I’ll wait in the reception-room so I won’t bother you.”

When he called Phil back into the consulting-room, Ramseur said, with a nod towards the bottle: “It contains enough methyl distillate to kill a hundred men. It’s one of the alcohol series. That’s why it was so hard to detect in whisky.”

“Where did it come from?” muttered Phil.

“That’s for the police to find out. The natives brew it from rotten wood. When it is distilled and redistilled it kills like a hammer stroke, as you have seen, and leaves no trace in the body. We have had

cases of poisoning from the stuff before. I have some of it here.” He allowed Phil to smell of a little bottle. The potent spirit stung his nostrils.

“Then this is Obeah work?” said Phil.

“So I should imagine,” said Ramseur, dryly.

“Doctor, can’t we keep this discovery to ourselves for a little while?” begged Phil. “To give me time to make some inquiries. The police in this case are both stupid and malicious.”

Ramseur shook his head. “I can’t take that responsibility. The police must be informed immediately.”

Phil shrugged and left him.

Chapter 18:

Phil returned down Frederick Street and went into Coralie's. The maid who answered his knock was frankly surprised to find a gentleman calling in the afternoon, but she took his name, and after a while Coralie came to him, her usual smiling and caressing self, though somewhat less alluring in the light of day.

They sat down on the veranda, hidden from the street by a screen of vines. The air was heavy with perfume. Coralie within her limits was a wise woman and friendly to Phil, but she was of alien blood and he was not sure how far he could trust her. However, he had no choice now.

"Coralie," he said, "the poison that killed Randal Trantor has been found. It was Obeah work."

She drew a quick breath and let it escape slowly. "Ahh!"

"You know what evil-minded people are saying," Phil went on. "Will you help me to dig up the truth?"

"Surely!" said Coralie.

Phil noted that her voice was not entirely candid.

At the first mention of Obeah a look of fear had come into her eyes. Apparently she was unable to distinguish between poison and magic. In her mind poison *was* magic.

“What about this man George Panna?” he asked, “whom the people call Jebuseeah?”

“He’s a fakir,” she answered, readily. “He knows nothing. He was never taught what the first people brought from Africa and have passed down. He makes it up. He makes a lot of money selling tempting-drams, healing-powders, conjure-stones, and so on. I bought a conjure-stone from him and I tried it and it was a fake.”

“How did you know it?”

“If you put a real conjure-stone in alcohol for a minute and take it out, the alcohol is like water; it has no taste; it will not burn.”

“Perhaps Jebuseeah works stronger charms than love and luck.”

“No,” said Coralie, contemptuously, “he only wants to make money. He’s too much afraid of the police to work a death spell. And anyway he hasn’t the power.”

“Who has the power?” asked Phil, softly.

“The old witch-women and the witch-doctors in the hills. You never see them in town.”

“So the death spell that killed Trantor came from the hills,” said Phil. “Will you help me to trace it, Coralie?”

“Me?” she said, in a tremulous voice. “I don’t know those people. I never had any dealings with them. I have only heard of them.”

“Tell me who they are and I’ll take the responsibility of running them down.”

Coralie’s voice scaled up hysterically. “I don’t know who they are. I have only heard that there are such people.”

“Find out for me,” he pleaded. “You know everybody, all kinds of people.”

“No!” she cried. “Their secrets have never been betrayed to a white man. They would know who told! Nothing can be hidden from them. They would strike me down. You waste away. You die slow. Oh, God . . . !” She covered her face with her hands.

Phil saw that he would obtain no further help here.

Coralie recovered herself with an effort and put her hand on Phil’s knee. “Phil, honey,” she

murmured, falling into the patois, “don’ you go for get mixed up with these people. You handsome fellow, Phil; so big and strong and full of life. You’ strength no good against Obeah, Phil. They strike you down. Me sad for that.”

“All right,” he said, to soothe her.

He started home.

Walking in Frederick Street, he met Nina, the pretty dining-room girl from Pernisson’s. She was wearing a pink silk dress that had never come from the silkworm and a store hat; the golden legs were hidden under near-silk stockings and the pretty feet in horrible shoes. However, she was well pleased with her own appearance and preened herself at Phil’s approach.

“Hello, Phil!”

“Well, I’ll be damned!” he said, forcing the note of heartiness. “Where did you spring from?”

“Why you never come see me?” said Nina, languishing. “Look for you every night.”

“Well, I’ve been busy.”

“Busy! You no like me,” she said, pouting.

“Sure I do; I like you too well. But my reputation is none too good around this town. I’ve

got to be careful.” He studied Nina, wondering if she would serve his purpose. She would do anything for money, he supposed. They were close to his bungalow. “Come on in and let’s talk,” he said.

“Talk no good,” she said, with a sidelong look. She followed him up on the veranda.

“Nina,” he said, scowling, “I’ve got an enemy. Twice he tried to kill me. I think he’s putting Obeah on me. I feel bad.”

Nina’s great dark eyes widened. “You got put stronger spell on him,” she said.

This was precisely what Phil desired to hear. “I don’t know who to go to,” he said, looking worried. “The only Obeah man I know is Jebuseeah.”

“No good,” said Nina. “Him not true Obeah.”

“Who is the most powerful Obeah on the island, Nina?”

“Mam Bashra,” she answered, unhesitatingly. “Her mother of Obeah. All others bow to her. Mam Bashra hundred year old. Her mother, her mother’s mother, her mother’s mother’s mother, back to her who bring Obeah from Africa, all are witch-woman. Her know everything.”

“Where does she live?”

“In the mountain call Rocher Tonnerre. Eighteen mile. You leave the road at Suck River.”

Phil hesitated. He distrusted Nina, but he believed he could hold her in line with money.

“Will you take me there?” he asked.

“How much you give me?” asked Nina, coolly.

“Five dollars.”

“All right.”

“Tonight?”

“All right. You hire motor-car. Drive yourself so nobody know where we go.”

“Right.”

“I come here nine o’clock when supper over.”

“Here?” said Phil, uneasily.

“I bring you old clothes; I black you’ face. Mam Bashra no work for white man.”

Phil’s skin prickled. He was venturing on perilous ground. However, since he had started the thing, he wasn’t going to draw back. “All right,” he said. “I’ll be looking for you at nine.”

“Give me dollar for old clothes,” said Nina.

At ten o'clock Phil and Nina were speeding through the warm night over the road that Phil had traveled so often; up the long hill at the head of Christian Street, through the crossroads and down into the central valley. They had an open car and the top was down; on either hand the mountain tops were blackly silhouetted against the stars.

Nina had resumed her working-clothes. Bare-legged in the faded cotton dress with her dark curls flying, she had recovered her savage charm. Phil had given her a jacket of his own as protection from the night air. She rode with her head leaning against his shoulder, and he submitted uncomfortably, for a man in love does not thereby become insensible to the touch of other women. She had begged a packet of cigarettes from him and she smoked one after another contentedly. After passing the crossroads, they met nobody on the road.

“Aren't you afraid the duppies will catch you?” asked Phil.

Nina belonged to the younger generation of natives who alternately trembled and laughed at superstition.

“Motor-car go too fast,” she answered, lazily. “Duppies no can catch now.”

He laughed.

As they approached a hamlet beside the road, consisting of a store and a few native shacks, she told him to slow up. No light showed in any of the houses. "Turn to the left," she said.

They entered an unpaved road that passed between cane-fields and started to climb into the foot-hills. The road was washed by the rains and Phil had to proceed with care.

"Dim you' lights," she whispered.

They crawled past a house of some pretensions that presented a line of forbidding dark windows to the road. Behind it crouched a line of outbuildings with a ruined sugar-mill of long ago. The place gave no sign of life except for the barking of a dog.

When they had passed the place Phil turned up his lights again. From this point the road was no more than a track, broken with ruts and stones, and always climbing. Phil crept along in first gear. Off to the left they could hear the sound of tumbling water. Nina had become very quiet.

The road ended altogether in a glade beside a quiet pool that had the look of a picnicking-place. In front of them the face of the mountain rose steeply and the voice of the falling water became more

insistent.

“Put car in among trees,” said Nina. “Get out here.”

They started to climb a steep, rocky track that more or less followed the course of the stream. Phil went first, choosing footholds with the aid of his flashlight. As soon as they were out of the car Nina lost her desire to make fun. She followed, clinging tightly to Phil’s jacket. The stream came down through a gulch, broken by many cascades and falls. Step by step they climbed above the valley.

On a narrow shelf high in the steep mountain-side the shape of a building among tall trees rose dimly before them. It was larger than the usual native shack. “Put out you’ light,” whispered Nina. As she led him to the door, her hand trembled in his and he heard her muttering to herself. “Knock,” she whispered.

The door was opened so quickly that Phil had the feeling they were expected, though he did not see how that could be, since Nina, on leaving him that afternoon, had gone to her work and had come to him straight from her work. The room within was dark, but he could make out a misshapen little figure in the doorway. From behind the figure spoke a

woman in slow hoarse accents, calculated to strike terror into a superstitious soul.

“Come in.”

The door was closed behind them. The interior was all in one room. A few dying embers glowed on the hearth, but not sufficient to give any light. The shack was tightly closed and the mephitic smell on the air caused Phil’s flesh to crawl. He had a hunch that there were several other figures in the far end of the room, and stiffened to meet possible danger from that quarter.

The woman was seated on a box alongside the hearth. The little limping figure pushed up another box. “Sit,” said the woman.

“This Mam Bashra’s granddaughter,” said Nina. “Name Amri. . . . This Quashie,” she said to the woman, indicating Phil.

Phil sat down, and Nina dropped to the floor alongside, pressing against him, trembling. The woman sat down opposite and puffed at a pipe of stinking tobacco. The cripple was crouching behind her. Phil started to fill his own pipe to show her that he was at his ease, wondering what was coming next.

Nina pulled Phil’s head down until his ear was

within reach of her lips. "Give money," she whispered.

"How much?"

"What you like. Pay more after."

Phil, without taking his roll from his pocket, detached the outside bill and passed it over. Amri struck a match to look at it and in the light of the little flame Phil saw that she was not black, but coffee-colored; a woman in her fifties with a broad face as impassive as Buddha's. She thrust the bill inside her dress, and saying, "Wait," went out through the door.

The moments that followed were hard on the nerves. The cripple was watching them beyond the fireplace. The men at the other end of the dark room — Phil was certain there were two or three of them, were as still as animals, but he could hear them breathing. Nina, in terror now, wound her arms around Phil's waist and pressed her head against his body.

"Let go!" he whispered. "Give me room!"

But she clung to him like a drowning woman.

Finally the door opened and Amri said, "Come!"

Phil breathed the clean night air gratefully. The

woman started away, walking swiftly and surely through the dark, and he followed close at her heels to keep her in sight. He could not take out his flashlight without coming out of the character he had assumed. She did not lead higher up the mountain, but passed to the right over level ground under tall trees. Nina followed Phil, holding tightly to his jacket.

They were stopped by a wooden door in the face of the mountain, the entrance to a sort of cave, Phil surmised. He distinguished a wall of planks crazily nailed together in negro fashion. The woman opened the door; it was pitch dark inside.

“Enter!” she said, hoarsely.

Phil gathered up his courage and stepped over a wooden sill. Nina started to follow, but the woman stopped her.

“Stay here!”

“Me want stay with him,” quavered Nina. “Me want stay. . . .”

“Stay outside!”

Nina dropped in the grass and the door closed. Phil, feeling trapped, listened, but there was no sound of bolt or bar outside. Anyhow, he reflected, he could burst out the whole flimsy wall, should it

be necessary. He found himself in a cave with a hard-packed earthen floor. As his eyes became accustomed to the blackness, darker than the night outside, he distinguished a faint glow around a bend in the cave ahead and moved towards it, feeling his way along the curving rocky wall.

A little fire came into view, burning in the middle of the floor with sickly greenish flames. As he drew closer he saw that some substance had been thrown on the sticks which bubbled and stank. The smoke gathered in a cloud under the roof of the cave, finally finding its way out through some aperture. Beyond the fire the cave stretched on, but he could distinguish nothing in its shadows.

On the floor around the fire was scattered an extraordinary collection of rubbish—a human skull and a heap of bones, a piece of a mirror, the skin of an alligator, some dried toads, a quantity of feathers, a little pile of teeth and other objects that could not clearly be distinguished. Beside the fire stood a strange-looking white cock with his feathers all standing on end. The bird was alive, but appeared to be doped, since he did not move at the man's approach. On the bottom of an upturned iron pot beyond the fire was arranged a little heap of sticks, earth, egg shells, feathers, etc., with a piece of string

placed on top of it.

At first Phil thought he was alone in the place, but presently he distinguished a crazy muttering, and out of the depths beyond the fire appeared a nightmare figure, a negro woman incredibly old, clad in a dirty cotton dress short enough to reveal her shrunken gray shanks terminating in misshapen bare feet. Her head was shaved and the skin drawn so tight upon it that every suture of the skull was outlined, the eyes deep-sunken, the lips drawn back from her broken teeth.

Phil, revolted by this obscene travesty of humanity, clenched his jaw and forced himself to stand his ground. He was not afraid; he was sickened.

She came inching forward in an extraordinary posture, one leg crossed in front of the other, hands behind her back, body rhythmically swaying. Her eyes were fixed on the roof of the cave and she paid no attention to Phil. By this time he was familiar enough with the native way of talk to catch most of what she was intoning.

“O Far-Off-One hear me prayer, Adwo!
Hear me, Adwo!
Holy drummer say when him rise from the dawn
Him sound for you in the morning
Very early! Very early! Very early! Very early!
O Him that slays the children of men before they
grown, hear me!
Very early! Very early! Very early! Very early!
Me addressing you, Adwo!
You understand!”

Each time she intoned “very early” she stamped grotesquely on the earth with one foot and pushed herself around in a circle. Phil could easily have believed that he had descended into hell. It’s only a show! It’s only a show! he kept telling himself, but the blood ran cold in his veins.

Finally she reached the fire. With legs still stiffly crossed, body swaying, she bent almost double, breathed on the little pile of rubbish on the upturned pot and spat on it. Then, gathering up the articles one by one, she placed the sticks together, crushed the egg shells and other ingredients between them and bound all together with the piece of string. She changed her incantation now. Phil heard her mumbling:

“Me bind up their mouth,
Me bind up their soul,
Me bind up their god,
Me begin with Sunday, Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday.”

For each day of the week she gave a twist of string around the sticks. Finally she tied it securely and tossed the little bundle to one side. With the same gesture she appeared to throw off all her hellish airs, and squatted down behind the fire, nothing more than any other decrepit old woman, peering across at Phil with dim eyes full of curiosity and malice.

“What you want, white man?”

Phil regretted then that he had stooped to disguise himself. He felt like a fool.

Without giving him time to answer, she went on: “Sit down, white man. Me know why you come. Me know everything happen. You have wicked enemy. Him put Obeah on you for to death you.”

Phil squatted down on the other side of the fire. “That’s right.”

“You come right place,” she said. “Me have strongest power. Me mother of Obeah. All bow to

me. Me give you charm for death your enemy. Me make you coffin for drop in John D'Acosta's path. When him step over him die."

An inward shiver went through Phil. She knew too much. "Doesn't D'Acosta come to you for charms?" he asked, warily.

"No. Me not see that man."

Phil was considerably let down by her answer. However, she might be lying. In order to draw her out further, he said: "I'll take the coffin, but I want a dram for him to swallow to make it sure."

"All right," she said. "You want quick death or slow death?"

"The quick death."

"All right. You give me hundred dollar me make quick death."

"A hundred dollars?" exclaimed Phil. "Good God!"

Mam Bashra moved her shoulders peevishly. "Strong charm strong price," she said. "Go away, white man! Me got plenty work to do."

"I'll pay it," said Phil.

She stretched a trembling claw across the fire.

"First I want to see what I'm getting," said Phil.

“Go away, white man,” she said, peevishly. “Ask black people what Mam Bashra can do.” She put her hands behind her back and began to sway sideways. Her eyes rolled up in her head and froth appeared on her lips; her voice rose to an inhuman squall. “Me Mam Bashra, mother of Obeah! All power shrivel to nothing beside mine! For eighty year me play hell around here. Me death sixty-nine persons; put three hundred persons to suffer. Suck River is little hell below. The people like bitter weeds; no young man can make a rise here. On Sundays they go to church and call God’s name in vain, and on the way home they come to me for Obeah . . . !”

Phil’s scalp tingled and crawled in horror. He fought it down. The old creature was mad or was merely lying, he told himself. Sticking to his point, he said: “I want a dram like that which Randal Trantor drank and died.”

Mam Bashra’s stretched lips drew further back in a noiseless laugh. “You come right place,” she croaked. “Me death Randal Trantor.”

Phil’s heart rose and swelled in his throat until he was near to choking. “So you say,” he said, thickly, “but I want proof of it.”

“Proof?” said Mam Bashra. “All the black people know that. Eve Brinsley come to me for charm to death Randal Trantor.”

Phil gaped at her stupidly. A red mist gathered in front of his eyes. “You lie! . . . You lie!” he stammered.

“Eve Brinsley come to me,” she repeated; “Eve say, Mam Bashra, me mother make me for marry Randal Trantor. Me hate Randal Trantor. Him old man full of evil. Him treat women bad. Give me charm for death Randal Trantor. Me give death dram to Eve Brinsley for nothing because all my people hate Randal Trantor.”

Phil rose slowly to his feet. Overwhelmed with horror, he no longer knew what he was doing. “I’ll kill you! . . . I’ll kill you!” he muttered.

Mam Bashra sprang up with a surprising agility and seized a bucket of water that Phil had not noticed. She flung the contents on the fire and instantly the cave was filled with a hissing, stinking darkness. The shock of darkness brought Phil to his senses. Terrified of his own impulse, he turned and ran for the entrance of the cave, and bursting through the door into the clean night air, leaned against the planks, panting.

Nina and the fat Amri were waiting for him. “You get what you want?” asked the latter. Seeing the big white man so overcome by her grandmother’s power, her voice was sleek with satisfaction.

Phil did not answer her. Switching on his flashlight to show him the path, he ran through the trees, Nina following him, crying:

“Wait, Phil, wait!”

In the shadowed doorway of the shack lurked a man’s figure. Phil transferred the light to his left hand and pulled his gun. But the man made no move to come out. Perhaps it was not the first time that a customer had fled from the dreadful incantations in Mam Bashra’s cave. Good for business. Phil put away his gun and scrambled down over the rocks, letting Nina follow as she could.

They climbed into the motor-car. Phil backed out from among the trees and started down the rough road at a speed that threatened to wreck springs and tires.

“Slow up! Slow up!” implored Nina. “What happen, Phil? What she say to you? What you get from her?”

When finally he turned into the main road and

stepped on the gas, the wind beating about his head gradually cooled him off. All hocus-pocus, he told himself; nigger magic. Why be impressed by it? The old bitch was just mad enough and cunning enough to put on a good show.

When he had driven further and was able calmly to weigh the charge against Eve, it suddenly struck him that the whole thing was a plot. Behind the crazy old witch there was a mind working that was not crazy at all. Mam Bashra had been put up to it. A plot, and he could guess who the prime mover was. The object of it was to divide him from Eve, and drive him from the island.

Meanwhile Nina was clinging to him and whimpering: “What happen in there, Phil? What she tell you? What you going to do?”

A plot, he thought, and Nina was the come-on. It was not the first time he had had reason to suspect Nina. Another one of D’Acosta’s women! She had been sent to him that afternoon to lead him into this, and he had fallen for it like a simpleton.

“Tell me, Phil, tell me!” she pleaded. “What you going do?”

At first he checked the impulse to curse her. No use letting his enemy know that he had become

wise. But the girl's blandishments nauseated him; and the fact that she was so pretty filled him with a hot desire to hurt her.

“Take your hands off me,” he growled. “Get over in your own corner and stay there. For two cents I'd strangle you, by God!”

Nina shrank away in terror and said no more. The rest of the drive passed in silence. When Phil drew up at the garage she sprang out of the car and disappeared in the darkness.

Chapter 19:

It seemed to Phil that he had but just fallen asleep after hours of threshing about on his cot, when he was awakened by an insistent knocking on the bungalow door. His watch told him it was eight o'clock.

The early caller was Doctor Ramseur. The bitter old man came directly to the point. "Nevitt, do you know what they're saying around town?"

"I'm not good at riddles," said Phil.

"They're saying that you and Eve are in love with each other; that you are up there all the time and that you hug and kiss on the veranda."

Phil controlled his anger. "Why do you bring such stuff to me?"

Ramseur stared at him angrily. "Why? Because you ought to know about it, that's why! Whether it's true or false, you must understand how injurious this sort of talk is to Eve."

Phil drew a long breath for patience. "Quite," he said.

"I want to be in a position to deny it," Ramseur went on. "If you will assure me that there's nothing

in it, I'll take pleasure in nailing the lie wherever it shows its head."

Phil began to feel sorry for the old man. He was a good sort. "I can't do that."

Ramseur stared at him. "Good God! then it's true!"

"I didn't say that, either. . . . But why shouldn't we be in love with each other? We're young enough for it. And love is free."

"Her husband is scarcely cold in his grave!"

"Yes, and what a husband!"

"But there is decency to be thought of, Nevitt! Simple decency."

"I have it in mind," said Phil, dryly. "I haven't said that we were in love. I haven't said anything. You are in the same position that you were when you came. You know nothing."

Ramseur paced the floor of the living-room. "I don't understand you young men! I don't understand you!"

"Doc, I know you mean well," said Phil, "but it seems obvious that you ought to keep out of something you don't understand."

"I'm fond of Eve," mourned Ramseur. "This

will ruin her!”

Phil said nothing.

“There is a way in which you could give the lie to this talk without appearing to notice it,” Ramseur went on.

“How?”

“By leaving the island.”

“Did anybody put you up to this?” asked Phil, sharply.

“No.”

“I can’t leave my friends when they’re in trouble!” said Phil.

“But if you are only injuring them by staying here?”

“No!”

“Eve has her father.”

“He’s a broken reed,” said Phil. “The drink has got him.”

“Well, I’m here,” said Ramseur.

“You don’t understand the young.”

“I can see that she obtains the best legal advice.”

“Legal advice! Has it come to that? . . . No! There’s no use arguing about it. A man knows what

he can do. I cannot leave my friends at such a time.”

Ramseur raised his bony shoulders and let them fall. “Then there’s no more to be said.”

He left.

Phil shaved, dressed, and picked up what he could find in the bungalow for breakfast. Later he hired the black mare from Bateese’s and rode out of town. However it might look, it was essential for him to discuss the situation with Bart Brinsley.

An hour later, as he put his horse up the mountain road, he heard the sound of motor-cars and looked over his shoulder. Two cars came into view in the valley road, heading for town. In the first car Attorney-General Rulon was riding beside the chauffeur, with two negro men and a policeman behind. In the second car Inspector Fielding was in front; two negro women and a policeman behind. One woman, yellow-faced and middle-aged, was sitting up defiantly; the other huddled beside her, a tiny shapeless bundle of clothes with an incredibly wrinkled black face peering out. So Mam Bashra and her satellites had been arrested. The worst could now be expected. Phil urged his horse on.

When he rode up to the house at Greenrise, Eve was watching for him. She rushed across the

veranda. “Oh, Phil, you were so long coming! I’ve been watching for you since sunup!”

Phil was not going to repulse her, though the negro leading his horse was still in sight. What difference did it make now? He gathered her close. “Oh, Eve,” he groaned, “I love you so much it near breaks my heart!”

“Silly!” she said. “If you love me, why are you sorry?”

“When you feel so much you can’t tell whether you’re glad or sorry.”

“I know how that is,” she said. “But when you come I am divinely happy! Be happy, Phil!”

He kissed her lingeringly. “Where’s Bart?” he asked.

Her face fell. “Still in bed. . . . I’m afraid he’s drunk.”

“He would be!” said Phil, bitterly.

“No!” she cried, all ready to be angry. “I won’t have him scolded! . . . What difference does it make? He drove into town last night to see his old friends. He wanted to share his new prosperity with them. So natural! He didn’t get home until after I was up. The servants put him to bed.”

“I’ll have to wake him,” said Phil. “Get coffee.”

He found Bart lying in bed on his back, with his mouth open. Not a pretty sight. Phil shook him violently and shouted in his ear. For a long time Bart’s only response was to curse him incoherently. Finally he opened a bloodshot eye.

“Wake up! Wake up!” cried Phil. “Do you know me?”

“Sure I know you . . . God-damned giraffe!” mumbled Bart. “Get the hell out of here and let me sleep!”

“Wake up!” said Phil, directly in his ear. “Eve is in danger!”

That sobered Bart partly. He dragged himself up and sat on the edge of the bed, swaying and nauseated. “What’s that? What’s that? O God! I feel terrible!”

Eve came in with steaming coffee which Phil forced him to swallow. Phil got Eve out of the room again on the pretext of sending her for spirits of ammonia. He dragged Bart to his feet and marched him up and down the room, protesting and giving at the knees.

“Listen to me, Bart! For God’s sake, listen! . . . I went to see Mam Bashra, the Obeah woman, last

night. She told me that she had given Eve the poison which killed Trantor.”

This brought Bart up with a jerk. “She lies!” he said.

“Sure she lies. But she’s crazy enough to have been persuaded that she is speaking the truth. The police have just arrested her. If she tells them the same story she told me, you know what that will mean in Rulon and Fielding’s hands. Eve will be arrested.”

Bart stared at him uncertainly. “Arrested? Arrested? . . . On the word of a damned nigger witch?”

“Plenty of other niggers will be brought forward to corroborate the story.”

“Ha!” said Bart, with a flash of sense. “You can’t convict a white person on the sole testimony of negroes. That’s the unwritten law of the islands. She’ll be acquitted.”

“Acquitted!” groaned Phil. “O my God, what kind of an acquittal would that be? Everybody in the world would know *why* she had been acquitted, and everybody would still believe her guilty!”

“Pooh! She’s a rich woman. Snap her fingers at ’em.”

“Money isn’t everything.”

“It is to me.”

“Sure. Because your race is run. You’re an old man and all you ask of life is comfort. Eve is just on the threshold. She’s entitled to everything—friendship, love, children—and a good name.”

“If any damned policeman lays hand on my girl I’ll kill him!” said Bart.

“Wake up,” cried Phil, “and face this thing! If the police come for her she’s got to go.”

“What can we do?” said Bart, with a scared look.

“Find the real criminal before they bring Eve to trial. The police will do nothing because they think they have solved the crime. It’s up to you and me to produce the murderer.”

Bart twisted his head from side to side and pulled at his lip. “O God! if you’d give me a drink I could think more clearly,” he muttered.

The blow fell at noon when the two open cars drove up with the Attorney-General, the inspector of police and two black policemen, in addition to the

uniformed chauffeurs. Eve, Phil and Bart were waiting for them on the veranda. The men had prepared Eve for what was about to happen, and her pale face wore a scornful smile. Bart was sober but shaky.

Rulon and Fielding, coming up the steps, cast looks of sour disapproval at Phil. The little Attorney-General swelled up, saying:

“I am under the painful necessity of putting Mrs. Trantor under arrest.”

“On what charge?” demanded Eve, haughtily.

Rulon’s eyes trailed away. “Murder.”

Bart, unable to hold himself, broke into a furious cursing.

“Cut it out!” said Phil, sharply.

Bart clenched his teeth and, with a wild gesture, marched away into the house.

“What evidence is there to support such a charge?” asked Eve.

“A reputed Obeah woman known as Mam Bashra has testified that you applied to her for a death charm against Mr. Trantor, and that she supplied it to you. From her description of the charm it seems to be the poison that killed him.”

“She’s mad!” said Phil.

“How do you know?” put in Fielding, quickly.

“I saw her as you drove into town. One look at the gibbering old lunatic was enough.”

“The question of Mam Bashra’s sanity will be decided in due course,” said Rulon, stiffly. “In the meantime, there are three corroborating witnesses and we must take cognizance of so serious a charge. . . . Please get ready, Mrs. Trantor. You may, of course, bring anything with you that you need, but under the circumstances Inspector Fielding will have to remain with you while you are packing.”

“Thanks, I am quite ready,” drawled Eve. “Anything I may need can be sent down to me.” While she was speaking she thrust a broad-brimmed straw hat on her head with the careless aplomb of a princess.

Phil clamped down the screws on his anger. “Mr. Attorney-General,” he said, “may I point out that so large a force is scarcely necessary to take Mrs. Trantor into custody? Driving through town it would have a very unfortunate effect on the people.”

“I agree,” said Rulon, dryly, “but how can it be avoided?”

“There are only a handful of white people on this island,” Phil went on. “In subjecting the principal white lady to such an indignity you would be dealing a fatal blow to white prestige.”

Rulon and Fielding glanced at each other uneasily. This was an argument no white official could ignore.

Phil went on quickly: “Why don’t you drive down with Mrs. Trantor and her father in one of her cars, and let the police follow a few minutes later?”

It enraged Fielding to have such a suggestion come from Phil, but Rulon did not wait for his approval. “All right,” he said, “I agree to that.”

“What are you going to do with her when you get there?” asked Phil.

“It will be impossible to admit her to bail, if that’s what you’re driving at,” said Rulon, stiffly.

“Sure,” said Phil. “On the other hand, you can’t put a white lady into one of the verminous little cells where you lock up your drunken negroes!”

The Attorney-General was shaken. “No! No!” he said, hastily. He drew Fielding away to consult with him. Fielding was pale with anger, but he had to submit. Rulon returned, saying: “The inspector informs me that there is a sleeping-room on the

second floor of the police office which is reserved for his own use. That shall be placed at Mrs. Trantor's disposal."

Phil breathed more freely.

"She can take a servant with her if she wishes," Rulon added; "but of course the servant will have to be confined with her."

"Thanks," drawled Eve, "I don't care to take a servant to jail with me. I am accustomed to waiting on myself."

The big car was ordered around and Rulon, Eve and Bart descended the steps to get in. Phil held Bart back for a moment to murmur in his ear:

"For God's sake stay off the whisky. You've got to sober up *sober* today or you'll fail her!"

Bart nodded miserably.

When they drove off Fielding turned his back on Phil and went to his own car. After five minutes had passed he gave the word to start and the two cars swept away. Phil followed on horseback.

When he got down to the bungalow the Trantor car was standing out in front, Bart waiting on the veranda, biting his fingers. Phil noted with relief that he had not been drinking. Phil said:

“First of all, do they expect to try Eve in Port-of-Grace?”

“No,” said Bart. “She’ll be tried before the Circuit Court in St. Cloud.”

“Who is the leading lawyer in the islands?”

“Joseph Halperin of St. Cloud.”

“Is he any good?”

“He’s the best there is. He’s been a judge here. He’s a friend of the Governor’s.”

“I’ll send him a cable in your name,” said Phil; “meanwhile, you must get Bareda and Coulson, the bank manager, together and find out what funds are available for Eve’s defense. Meet me here afterwards.”

In due course Bart reported with an anxious face that the Trantor estate was deeply in the bank’s debt on account of recent purchases of machinery for the distillery, and that the manager did not feel justified in making any further advances without a court order.

“The hell with him,” said Phil. “There are thousands of gallons of rum on storage at the distillery. Tell Bareda to put that up as security for a loan.”

Towards the end of the afternoon Phil and Bart proceeded to the police office on the market-place. Inspector Fielding received them sourly. "The question of visitors to Mrs. Trantor has not yet been settled," he said.

Phil laid a hand on Bart's arm and the latter kept his temper. "I have important matters relating to her defense to talk over with my daughter," he said.

"Oh, well," said Fielding, "as you are acting in lieu of her counsel, it will be all right for *you* to go up."

"Mr. Nevitt also is attending to business for Mrs. Trantor."

Fielding hesitated.

"Telephone to the Deputy-Commissioner and have this matter settled now," said Phil.

"You may go up this time," said Fielding, as if he were conferring a favor. "I will take the responsibility."

Phil bit back what it would not have been prudent to say.

They went up a narrow stair in the wall at the back. A negro wardress was sitting outside Eve's door. She opened it and they were admitted to a bare

room with table, bureau, iron cot, and a couple of kitchen chairs. Eve was pacing up and down with her hands behind her. It gave Phil a fearful wrench to see his wild bird caged. Her face was calm, but there was a strained look about her eyes. There were no demonstrations of affection—not before the wardress. This woman had followed them in and was standing by the door.

They moved as far as possible from her towards the front of the room. Phil drew Eve's arm under his own and pressed it. They told her quietly what they had done. After they had discussed these matters, Eve said:

“Dad, there is something I've got to say to Phil.”

There was a new quality in her voice that caused Phil's breast to contract.

Bart, with an anxious glance from one to the other, went out.

Eve and Phil, with linked arms, stood by the window and looked out without seeing anything. Eve said:

“Phil, dear, I've been thinking—for the first time in my life, I guess. They cannot convict me, but I shall be disgraced just the same. This story will be printed all over the world and everybody will

believe that I am guilty. You must leave me.”

“I will not,” said Phil, in quite an ordinary voice.

“Ah, you’ve been thinking, too!”

“How do you know?”

“Because you were not surprised by what I said. . . . You must see that nothing else is possible. If we had children they would inherit their mother’s disgrace. There is no place in the world where we could hide from it.”

“We will stay right here and live it down,” said Phil.

“On this little island? That would be like death in life for you. You’re just at the beginning of your career. You’ve got a big part to play in the world. You must leave me.”

“Have you stopped loving me?” asked Phil.

“Don’t be silly. It is because I love you so much that I have been forced to think.”

“And I love you,” he said. “Now and forever! . . . To talk of my leaving you is just silly!”

Drawing back her head, she looked at him through her lashes, as if she was measuring herself against him. “You are bigger than me,” she said, somberly, “but I have my own kind of strength . . .

inside. I shall stick to what I say . . . at any cost!”

Phil began to shake. “Eve, for God’s sake, don’t suggest such a horror! I’m not made of wood. I’ve got to keep a cool head. . . . You haven’t been brought to trial yet. It’s my job to see that you never are!”

“I don’t see how you can prevent it.”

“Well, give me the chance!”

“It would be better to cut it off clean now,” she said. “I am strong enough to bear it.”

“No! We must stick together!”

She gave in with a sigh. “Very well. Until I am brought to trial only.” Her head fell back against his shoulder. He kissed her. “I shouldn’t let you,” she whispered.

When Phil got home he found a ray of hope in the shape of a cable from Chicago:

Only one bottle delivered to the bar during October.

HARRY.

Hastening to the cable office, he sent his answer:

Fly to Porto Rico by commercial lines
and engage plane bring you here. Cabling
money.

PHIL.

Chapter 20:

The Honorable Joe Halperin arrived on the mail-schooner from St. Cloud on the next afternoon but one. As soon as the schooner was signaled from the outer harbor Phil and Bart proceeded to the quay to meet him and to convey him to the bungalow for a preliminary conference. "Judge" Halperin had so many friends in Port-of-Grace that their progress through the street was slow.

Phil's first impression of their counsel was not favorable. A fat, red-faced man in a ruffled seersucker suit, there was something forced and unnatural in his sprightliness. He gave off a definitely alcoholic emanation. Nor did Phil like him any better after they had talked together. Mr. Halperin appeared to have made up his mind about the case before he came, and listened with scant attention to what he was told.

"Gentlemen, there is no cause to worry," he said when Phil had finished his story. "The young lady is safe in my hands. I have been practicing in these islands for nearly twenty years. I am familiar with all the ins and outs of our courts. There is not the

slightest chance that they can convict Mrs. Trantor on negro evidence.”

“That is not sufficient,” said Phil, dryly. “We want you to prove that these negroes are lying.”

“So I will, so I will—if they are lying.”

Phil controlled his rising anger. “We are thinking of engaging a lawyer from New York to work with you,” he said.

“Most inadvisable,” said Halperin, quickly. “The people of these islands prefer to handle their own affairs. They are very jealous of strangers. If you insist on bringing in outsiders I cannot be responsible for the consequences.”

“Well, we’ll take it under advisement,” said Phil. “In any case, we must have an alienist of national reputation to take the stand and testify that Mam Bashra is insane.”

“I shouldn’t advise that, either,” said Halperin. “The government will retaliate by bringing in *their* alienists, and the whole case will be plunged into a fog. We are a simple people, gentlemen; we mistrust experts. Leave the jury to me and you’ll have nothing to fear.”

“We’ll talk it over again,” said Phil.

“Sure!” cried the fat man. “In the meantime, my job is to create a favorable public opinion for Mrs. Trantor. That is my specialty, gentlemen. I carry the public with me! I’ll go out and circulate for a couple of hours to sort of get the lay of the land. Meet me here at five and we’ll talk some more.”

He bustled away and Phil looked gloomily at Bart. Bart had scarcely opened his mouth during the conference. His face was ashy and his hands trembled. Phil could see that he would have been better off for a drink, but he dared not let him taste the stuff.

“Not so good,” said Bart.

“O God! he’s a fool!” groaned Phil.

“There’s something in what he says.”

“Sure there’s something in it, but he’s a fool! How can we put Eve’s fate in his hands?”

“There’s nobody any better.”

At five they met again on the veranda of the bungalow. “Well, I been about and listened to what everybody had to say,” announced Halperin.

Phil suspected that Halperin had done most of the talking himself. “Have you seen Mam Bashra?” he asked.

“No. Rulon wouldn’t let me have a go at his star witness, naturally. But he let me read the deposition they have taken from her.”

“Deposition?” said Phil. “The Court won’t receive a deposition if the woman herself is there to testify.”

“She’s said to be near a hundred years old,” said Halperin. “Naturally they’re not taking chances of her dying on them.”

Phil struck his fist into his palm. “That’s what I’m afraid of! If she dies and her deposition is read to the jury, we will have no way of breaking it down!”

“No white jury will convict on that sort of evidence.”

“Your job is to clear your client and not just have her acquitted. . . . I have a hunch that Mam Bashra will not live to take the witness stand!” Phil added in a low tone to Bart.

Mr. Halperin was nettled by Phil’s manner. “All right,” he said, “I’ll clear her if it’s humanly possible. And that brings up another matter that I’ve got to discuss with you.” He cleared his throat. “Very delicate matter. Hope I won’t offend.”

Phil stiffened. “Let us hear it.”

“It is believed that you and Mrs. Trantor are lovers. I don’t know what foundation there may be for it. That don’t concern me. The point is that as long as the people believe it to be so, it creates a dangerous situation. You can be sure that the Attorney-General will not neglect to take advantage of it. It may well turn the scale against Mrs. Trantor. The American people have a tremendous respect for the sanctity of the marriage vows, gentlemen. And all honor to them for it, I say. . . .”

Phil interrupted him dryly. “You’re not addressing a jury now. What do you suggest?”

“You must disassociate yourself completely from Mrs. Trantor until after her trial. You must leave the island.”

“Must?” said Phil, scowling.

“Obviously.”

Phil sprang up and paced the veranda. It was an agonizing decision to be faced with. Halperin might be a fool, but there was weight in what he said. Phil didn’t have to be told about the official morality of the community. He read the papers. Yet how could he leave Eve? He came to a stop in front of Bart.

“What do you say, Bart?”

“I say no!” cried Bart. “Eve has nobody but you—and me! I would give my life for her, but I’m finished! I’m finished!” He dropped his face in his hands.

“We must bring about a reconciliation between Mrs. Trantor and her mother,” put in Halperin, smugly. “The mother should be at her daughter’s side. The jury will expect it.”

“That lets me out,” said Bart, bitterly.

“What a fitting thing it would be if this unhappy affair brought you and Mrs. Brinsley together,” suggested Halperin, with a grin. “Together at your daughter’s side. It would be beautiful. Just until after the trial, of course. We would be absolutely safe with the jury then!”

“Go to Mrs. Brinsley and see what she says,” said Bart. “I wish you luck!”

“I suggest that we ought to put everything up to Mrs. Trantor,” said Halperin. “After all, she is the party most concerned.”

Phil knew very well that Eve would support the lawyer in banishing him from the island—but for quite different reasons. He made his decision. “No!” he said. “I will not leave Annunziata now. I have work to do here. When the time comes for the trial

we'll see.”

“The mischief would be done then,” said Halperin. “I could not take the responsibility.”

Bart could no longer control himself. “Then get the hell out of the case!” he cried. “Get out! Get out!”

The lawyer stared, unable to believe his ears.

Phil endeavored to pour oil on the troubled waters. Taking Halperin's arm, he led him toward the steps. “You must excuse Brinsley's language, Judge. He's been under a terrible strain!”

“Drunken bum!” muttered Halperin. “I feel truly sorry for his daughter!”

“Of course we will see that you are reimbursed for your journey,” said Phil. “The mail-schooner has not yet sailed, so that you will not be out more than a couple of days. . . .”

Halperin snatched his arm away. “What! You are presuming to let me out of this case! You impudent young upstart! Who are you, anyhow? Who else will you get?”

“It is very unfortunate,” said Phil, dryly. “We'll just have to do the best we can.”

“I refuse to take it from you! I shall demand to

see the prisoner!”

“Go ahead,” said Phil. “She’s a minor.”

“All right! All right!” shouted Halperin. “I wash my hands of you all! It’s a foul mess, anyhow! I wouldn’t touch it for ten thousand dollars!” He strode away, raging.

Bart had dropped back in his chair. “We have only made another enemy,” he said, despairingly. “And he’s a big toad in this small puddle!”

“Cheer up!” said Phil. “It’s a load off my mind. We may have made mistakes, but I’m certain we’re right in this. Eve has nothing to gain from a defender of that kidney.”

Bart raised his head and they shook hands on it.

“We’ll get a man from New York,” said Phil. “And take our chance with the islanders.”

Afterwards Phil went up the street to see Ramseur. The gaunt old doctor, with a grim face, led the way into his consulting-room. He had aged ten years since Eve’s arrest. Phil said:

“Doctor, I know you don’t like me . . .”

“I’ve got nothing against you,” interrupted Ramseur. “I think you’re a proper young fellow. But you have got yourself into an ugly situation here. It

would have been better for everybody if you had never come to Annunziata.”

“Maybe,” said Phil, “but here I am! . . . At any rate, we can be honest with each other. I respect you, Doc.”

“All very fine!” grumbled Ramseur. “You be honest with me and . . .”

“I have been,” said Phil, “but you won’t believe me.”

“What do you want now?”

“Have you seen Mam Bashra?”

“Sure. It’s my job to keep her alive. Her sands have pretty near run out.”

“She’s mad, isn’t she?”

“Senile.”

“Isn’t it the same thing?”

“Well, it’s a form of dementia. But you mustn’t bank too much on that. There is generally a foundation of reason for the delusions of the senile.”

“Aren’t they great liars?”

“Frequently.”

“Mam Bashra’s story was made up out of whole cloth, Doc.”

“So you say, but I doubt it. For what earthly reason would she make up such a story? Remember, in telling it she is putting a noose around her own neck, too.”

“She has delusions of power. She thinks none of you can touch her.”

“Even so, why should she invent such a yarn?”

“Some younger and cleverer person has put her up to it by representing that it would enormously increase her prestige among the negroes. And it has!”

Ramseur smiled incredulously. “Whom do you suspect?”

“The one who murdered Randal Trantor.”

“And who’s that?”

“You know whom I have in mind.”

“What possible gain could there be to this person in dragging Mrs. Trantor down?”

“He may hope in this way to bring her within his reach.”

“Fantastic! Fantastic!” said Ramseur, waving his hands.

“You said Mam Bashra was not altogether mad,” suggested Phil. “Does she have lucid moments when

one might get the truth out of her?”

“Maybe,” said the doctor. “It is characteristic of senility that the inward watchman who regulates all our actions sometimes falls asleep on the job. At such moments the patient will come out with startling truths.”

“That’s what I want of you,” said Phil. “Get the truth out of her.”

Ramseur shook his head. “Useless. When I see her there is always a policeman present. She would never let herself go in the presence of a policeman. You would have to catch her off her guard.”

Phil thought this over. “Is her daughter confined in the same cell with her?” he asked.

“No, they’re in separate cells.”

Phil rose. “Well . . . thanks for the tip. . . . Look, Doc. Bart Brinsley’s in a bad way. Have you got something harmless that I could give him to put him to sleep?”

“Barbitol,” said Ramseur. Taking down a jar, he emptied a dozen tablets in his hand and enclosed them in an envelope. “One when he goes to bed. If it doesn’t work you can increase the dose without danger.”

Phil went home.

Chapter 21:

It was growing too dark to make a reconnaissance when Phil left the doctor's. Next morning he was up and out at sunrise. Police office and jail were contained in a long, narrow building of plastered stone. It was two stories high in front and a single story contained the double row of cells in the rear. The whole was placed in a smallish yard surrounded by a concrete wall nine feet high, with a rounded top having broken bottles sunk in the concrete. Christian Street ran in front of the police office; the market place was to the east, and on the other two sides of the yard ran alleyways with low tenements facing the wall.

At this hour of the morning business in the market place was at its height. In the center stood a big pavilion with a corrugated iron roof covering the stalls, while all around in the open squatted negro women, each with her basket of vegetables, fruit, chickens, fetched in on her head from the country before day-break. The racket of gossiping and bargaining was deafening. In front of the market place stood a square stone pedestal which had once supported the statue of a king of Denmark. The king

was gone and the pedestal still awaited an American President. Meanwhile it served as a drinking-fountain for the people.

Today there was an added excitement in the market because under the jail-yard wall an enterprising negro had set up a big packing-case, and was offering a glimpse of the famous Mam Bashra in her cell at twenty-five bit (a nickel) a head. Even in jail the dreaded Obeah woman exerted a powerful spell over the natives. They climbed on the box with wildly rolling eyes, peeped fearfully over the top of the wall, and jumped down shivering. Yet there were always more to take their places. Curiosity was stronger than fear.

At the white man's approach all the negroes fell into self-conscious attitudes. "What's going on here?" Phil asked.

"Mam Bashra, her in jail," said the showman with a jerk of his head towards the wall. "Me asking twenty-five bit for look at she."

"You can't see anything," said Phil to draw him out.

"Yes, boss. Her looking out her window."

"Which window is it?"

"Three window from the front, boss."

This was a valuable piece of information. Phil shrugged and walked on.

He explored the maze of alleys beyond and laid out a route by which he could approach the jail-yard from that side after dark. The door in the back of the wall was of sheet iron, and fitted snugly in its aperture. Entrance to the yard was through the police office in front. When he crossed the market place on his return, Phil saw that the police had confiscated the packing-case and had made the market women move out from the wall.

Phil bought a coil of a light, strong rope in one of the uptown stores; and a flask in which he could carry a little rum. It had a screw top that might serve as a drinking glass. Upon reaching home he found that Bart had gone to see Eve, and he made haste to get his twelve-foot rope ladder knotted together before his friend returned. He hid the ladder under the mattress of his cot.

Bart came in full of bitterness. "Halperin didn't go back to St. Cloud on the mail-schooner. He's still hanging around town, and the talk is that he's to be associated with Rulon in the prosecution. A dirty trick! After we had opened our case to him!"

"We'll save money by it," said Phil. "And after

all we didn't tell Halperin anything that the other side didn't know already.”

After lunch Bart went out again and Phil lay down to take a sleep, since he was to be up most of the coming night. He awoke some hours later to find the burly, red-faced Chicago Harry standing beside his cot, grinning down at him. Bart had brought him in. Phil sprang up in delight and seized both his hands.

“Chicago! What a sight for sore eyes! By God! You didn't let any grass grow under your feet!”

“Grass!” said Chicago, grinning, “I ain't touched it since I left Chicago. Boy! what a trip! I ain't yet got the feel of solid earth under my feet!”

They went out on the veranda to talk things over. Chicago confirmed what he had said by cable; that only one bottle of Spey Royal whisky had been received behind the bar at Pernisson's during the month of October.

“When liquor was wanted, who requisitioned it?” asked Phil.

“I did.”

“In the case of a single bottle like this, who would fetch it?”

“We sent the girl Nina to the stores for it.”

Nina again!

Phil proceeded to tell Chicago everything that had transpired while he was away.

Bareda dropped in at the bungalow. His multiple jobs of commissioner, general manager, executor, and editor were telling on him. His face was drawn and greenish. But overwork and loss of sleep had not shaken his control. He was his usual grave and pleasant self, never pushing himself forward in the company of Americans.

“Good afternoon, gentlemen,” he said. “I heard you had a visitor by airplane.”

“Yes, Chicago Harry,” said Phil.

“What brought him back so quick? I thought there would be a little story for the paper in it.”

“Just say that he’s wanted as a witness for Mrs. Trantor. That’s enough.”

“For publication, sure,” said Bareda, “but privately, what does he know about it?”

“Privately,” said Phil, “we’re on the track of the extra bottle of Spey Royal. The girl Nina Obeida bought two bottles from the Army and Navy Stores during October, and only one was delivered behind

the bar.”

“Good!” said Bareda. “That’s a real lead.” He made some notes of the details of Chicago’s swift trip by air, and departed.

Phil, picking up the talk where it had been dropped, said to his two friends: “This is the third time that different clues have pointed to the girl Nina. There’s no use questioning her; it would only give warning to the man who hires her. But we’ve got to put a watch on her. She lives at 6A Soursop Court.”

“That’s a barrack-yard,” said Bart, “with a lot of cheap one-room tenements. People are always moving in and out. Ought to be easy to hire a room there.”

“Who could we put in it?” said Phil. “What native can we trust?”

“One of Eve’s black boys. Red Simon is too well known around town, but there is Jasper. He has rarely been to town; he’s intelligent and, where Eve’s business is concerned, absolutely dependable.”

“All right,” said Phil. “As soon as it is dark go up to Greenrise and fetch him down. Give him a look at Nina as she works around the hotel, and then

let him hire a room in Soursop Court that overlooks 6A as close as possible. Don't show yourself around Soursop Court."

"Right," said Bart.

Phil considered his own plans for the night. "Haven't I seen a sedan car in the garage at Greenrise?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, leave the open car when you go up there and bring the sedan back. So Jasper won't be recognized."

"Right."

When Bart had departed on this errand, Phil opened his plan of visiting the jail-yard to Chicago.

A grin spread across the bartender's red face. "Risky," he said.

"Sure," said Phil, "but not impossible. Late at night there is only one constable on duty. There are three or four men in reserve who sleep in the police station, but their dormitory is on the other side of the building. The prisoners are locked up and there's no pretense of watching the yard. . . . Will you come with me?" he asked, diffidently. "Mam Bashra has never seen you."

“Will I come?” said Chicago. “Only give me the chance!”

Bart, having dropped Jasper on the outskirts of town with full instructions how to act, came home to dinner. At eight o'clock he went out to meet the boy by prearrangement, and returned to say that everything was in good train. Jasper had had a look at Nina, and had afterwards secured a lodging in Soursop Court cater-cornered from Nina's and not fifty feet away.

The three friends played poker all evening. Bart was in bad shape.

“God! if I could only sleep!” he groaned.

“I'll give you a Barbitol tablet,” said Phil, off-handedly. “I keep them by me.”

By one o'clock Bart was in a deep sleep. Phil and Chicago sat on in the dark, smoking and planning in low voices. The sedan was parked out in front of the bungalow.

When the clock in St. Mary's Church struck two they quietly started out, driving up Frederick Street as if they were bound out of town, and later returning through Christian Street. Chicago was a good partner on such an expedition. He was singing under his breath:

“Once I was strong and handsome, had plenty of cash and clothes.

That was before I tumbled and the gin tinted my nose.”

Short of the market-place Phil turned the wheel over to him and got out to do a little scouting. All was quiet around the jail. From across Christian Street Phil could see Sergeant Meek in the police office writing his interminable reports. When the car passed Meek came to the door to look after it, but it had already turned a bend in the crooked street and he went back.

Phil rejoined the car further down the street and, taking the wheel, made a wide detour around through the native quarter. The narrow alleys were empty. Occasionally a black face appeared in a window, astonished by the passage of a car in those parts. Sometimes, on a bend, their lights shone directly through the window openings on black people sleeping in bed.

Finally, a corner of the jail-yard wall loomed up before them. Phil drew up close under the rear wall and they got out. There was a street light in the market-place fifty feet away. Too much light for their comfort. Phil stole to the corner of the wall and

looked up and down. Nothing stirring. It was the work of a few moments to tie the ends of the rope ladder to the posts supporting the roof of the car, and to fling the ladder over the wall.

From the engine hood they climbed to the roof of the car and the yard lay spread before them. The lights in the market-place shone over the wall and it was too bright for this sort of work. But they couldn't draw back now. Phil picked his way across the broken glass and went down the rope ladder. Chicago followed him.

“Did you cut yourself?” Phil whispered.

Chicago shook his head. “Tain't the first time I went over a wall with broken glass,” he chuckled.

The low extension containing the cells cut the yard almost in half. That part to the left lay in deep shadow, but Mam Bashra's cell was on the side facing the lights of the market-place. They crept towards the cell windows, feeling as conspicuous as actors under a spotlight. Facing them at the far end of the yard was a barred window in the back of the police office. Through it they dimly made out the figure of Sergeant Meek busy at his desk in front. Meek could not have seen them had he looked that way, because of the brightness of the light over his

desk.

They paused, crouching under the third cell window. No sound reached them from inside. They were now uncomfortably close to the office.

“You speak to her,” said Phil. He flattened himself against the wall where he could watch Meek and be ready to warn Chicago if the sergeant moved.

Chicago spoke softly through the cell window: “Mam Bashra! Mam Bashra!”

There was a shuffling sound inside, a pair of skinny claws grasped the bars, and the hideous bald skull and sunken chaps looked out. Her voice was faint and querulous, very different from the squall of the triumphant witch in the cave.

“Where’s the girl?”

The surprised Phil hastily adjusted his mind to this. Chicago had his wits about him. “I come in her place,” he answered.

Mam Bashra peered into his face. “Who you, white man?”

“I Mam Bashra’s friend,” said Chicago.

“White man no friend black ‘ooman.”

Chicago tried a bit of flattery. “Mam Bashra great mother of Obeah. Far away in my country I

hear that.”

She was beyond flattery now. She attempted to shake the bars in her feeble grasp. “Me sick,” she wailed. “Me want for go home.”

“Softly!” warned Chicago. “Or policeman come!”

Her voice sank to a husky whisper. “Me sick! Me sick!”

Phil passed the flask to Chicago, who unscrewed the top and filled it. “Good rum,” he said, offering it. “Drink.”

She took it in her shaking hand, spilling part of it, and tossed it off. She sighed and thrust out the little cup. “More!”

“Wait a bit,” said Chicago. “We talk.”

“I want home! I want home!” she wailed.

She had no pretensions to magic now; she was only a frightened old woman. Chicago said: “White men lock you up for ‘cause you say you sell death spell to kill Randy Trantor.”

“Me no put Obeah on Randy Trantor,” she muttered.

Chicago sought for Phil’s hand in the dark and pressed it delightedly. The scheme was working.

“You tell white men you sell death dram to Eve Brinsley to kill Randy Trantor,” said Chicago.

“Me lying,” said Mam Bashra. “Me never see Eve Brinsley.”

“For why you lie?”

“Amri make lie. Amri say good for business. Bring plenty people for buy spells.”

Phil’s pulse beat fast. Here was light on the situation.

“Can’t do business when you locked up,” said Chicago.

Mam Bashra vainly shook the bars. “Want home! Want home!” she wailed.

“Tell the police you lied before,” urged Chicago. “Tell them you never sell death dram and they take you home.”

The old woman peered at him uncomprehendingly with grotesquely working lips.

“White men hang you for selling death drams,” added Chicago, illustrating with a significant gesture.

She got that all right. Her hand stole to her own scrawny throat. “All right, I tell,” she whispered, huskily.

“Tell them tomorrow. Let them tear up that paper you put your hand to before. Make new paper with the truth. Tomorrow.”

“All right. I tell.”

Phil did not put much store by this. Yes, he thought, if Amri doesn't get hold of you first!

“Who put Obeah on Randy Trantor?” asked Chicago.

“Me not know that,” she said, dully.

“Mam Bashra know everything.”

“Not know that.”

“Was it Amri?”

“Amri make no spell. Amri bring people to me for spell.”

“Do you know John D'Acosta?”

“No.”

“Is John D'Acosta friends with Amri?”

“Ask her,” she said, indifferently.

Phil suddenly put a hand on Chicago's arm. “Hold everything,” he whispered. “The cop is getting up.” And a moment later: “Beat it! He's coming this way!”

Doubling over, they scuttled for the rear and got

around the back corner of the cell building. They dared not make for the ladder because the rear window of the office commanded it. There was a door in the back of the cell-block with a square, barred opening in it. Phil took a slant through the opening and saw Sergeant Meek's flashlight entering the other end of the corridor. Meek was casting his light into each cell as he came.

Phil dropped below the opening and listened. Slowly the sergeant's hard heels approached on the cement floor. When he reached the door of the last cell he was no more than a yard from them. Phil silently signified to Chicago that if the policeman laid a hand on the rear door they must slip around on the dark side of the building. But the hard heels began to retreat again.

After waiting a moment, Phil peeped around the outer side of the building, and through the window of the front building saw Meek seating himself at his desk in the office. Phil and Chicago then made for their ladder, climbed over the jagged glass and, lowering themselves to the car roof, pulled the ladder after them. Meek must have heard the car start, but they were well out of the way before he could reach any point where he could see them.

Driving softly, they lost themselves among the alleys to the east of the market-place. Coming out into the deserted main street at some distance from the police office, they drove uptown for a few blocks to make sure they were not followed, then struck through to Frederick Street and came back. Driving into their own yard at last, they concealed the car behind the bungalow, and relaxed. The whole town slept.

“Well,” said Chicago, lighting up, “we got what we went for. What’ll we do with it?”

“The old woman’s desire to tell the truth won’t last long,” said Phil, gloomily. “She’ll never volunteer any information to the police.”

“Anyhow, we know the truth.”

“Part of it.”

“We ought to rouse up Inspector Fielding and tell him before she has time to change her mind.”

Phil, after considering this, slowly shook his head. “What would Fielding do? He would immediately confront us with Mam Bashra. At the sight of a police uniform she would deny the story in toto. Then where would we be? You must bear in mind that our story of climbing over the jail wall would sound pretty fantastic to the police.”

“Then what can we do?”

“Do you remember all she said?”

“Every word.”

“Each of us must write it out while it is fresh in our minds. In the morning we’ll swear to our depositions before a notary and hold them in reserve until we can get legal advice.”

“The notary will spread the news over town.”

“He doesn’t have to read the depositions before swearing us. We’ll turn the pages under.”

They went into the house and sat down at separate tables to write. In an adjoining room Bart snored heavily.

“Did you mark what the old woman said when she first saw us?” asked Phil.

“Sure. She said: ‘Where’s the girl?’ ”

“Exactly. Evidently she had had another visitor beside us at her cell window.”

Chapter 22:

It was near dawn before Phil and Chicago turned in, and they slept until late in the morning. Upon getting up they found that Bart had gone out. Chicago disappeared into the kitchen to see what he could toss up for breakfast. Phil drifted out on the veranda.

The sun was high and dazzling, and the still air quivered in the heat, heavy with perfume. Frederick Street was like a brightly-painted stage setting. Only the tiled roofs of the bungalows showed above the masses of purple bougainvillea climbing over the porches with other vines strange to Phil, having big trumpet-shaped flowers, canary-colored, lavender and white. The hibiscus hedges flaunted their scarlet blossoms, and the yards were cluttered with clumps of bamboo, awkward frangipanni trees flushed with pink; *lignum-vitæ* trees misted with a delicate blue.

A telephone bell sounded delicately somewhere near. Presently a woman ran from one bungalow to another—strange to see anybody run in such heat. Calls sounded from house to house. The creoles came from several directions and gathered in a group at a gate across the road, listening intently to a

piece of news. A negro appeared running wildly down the middle of the street with his eyes rolling, then another, then a whole group running. Phil had seen a similar sight in his own New York where the cry was: "Something the matter! Something the matter!" His breast tightened painfully. There was only one topic of news in Port-of-Grace, and whatever might have happened was of terrible concern to him.

As he started down the steps he saw Bart coming, and drew back. Bart had his face under fairly good control, but his gait was uneven and jerky. He ran up the steps.

"What is it?" demanded Phil, seizing his arm.

"Mam Bashra," he answered, breathlessly, "dead!"

Phil could only stare at him.

"Found lying in her cell at sunup," said Bart. "The news has only just leaked out."

"Poison?" asked Phil.

"I don't know."

"Have you seen Jasper?"

"No. I was waiting for him when I heard this, and I came right up to tell you."

“Go back!” said Phil, urging him with his hands. “Find out all you can. And see Jasper. By God! If only that boy was on the job last night! All depends on him.”

Bart hurried away while Phil went back to tell Chicago. The two men looked at each other. Chicago said:

“Well, it’s a good thing we saw her first.”

Phil seized his hat and strode away up the street to see Doc Ramseur. He had to wait for him. Ramseur, gaunt and stooped and with deep lines in his face, came slowly up the steps, glanced sourly at Phil, and led the way into his reception-room. He tossed his hat across the room and dropped in a chair.

“Well, what do *you* want?” he asked.

“I’ve just heard the news,” said Phil. “There will be an autopsy, I suppose.”

“There has been an autopsy.”

“Well?”

“The old witch was poisoned. In the same manner as Trantor. This time I recognized the smell of the stuff.”

This confirmed Phil’s suspicions. He glanced

curiously at the dejected old man. “What makes you take it so hard, Doc?”

Ramseur raised his hands and let them fall with a slap on the arms of his chair. “Human depravity,” he growled. “It’s enough to make a man sick of life. . . . A girl, a mere child, so beautiful, and with such a proud head and clear gaze . . .”

“You’ve got your values mixed, Doc,” said Phil, quietly. “You can hold fast to the proud head and the clear eyes.”

“Who else had any interest in poisoning the old creature?”

“I can’t stop to argue that with you now. Tell me the particulars.”

“Sergeant Meek found Mam Bashra lying dead in her cell at five-fifty this morning. I was down within a few minutes. All heat had left the body, but I could tell by other signs that she had not been dead long—two hours at the outside.”

“Good!” said Phil.

“Good?” echoed Ramseur, staring.

“It bears out a theory that I have. . . . Any clues?”

“No. Meek tells a rambling story of having

heard a car twice during the night, once in front of the police office and once in the rear of the jail, but he didn't see it. Shortly after two he made a round of the cells, he says. Something made him uneasy. Mam Bashra at that time was sitting up on the edge of her cot. He asked her if she wanted anything, and she cursed him. Nothing the matter with her then."

"She had a visitor later," said Phil.

"Maybe the stuff was passed to her during the day."

"No. If she had been keeping it, you would have found the container beside her where she fell. It was passed through the window."

"How could anybody get over the jail wall?"

"Oh, I reckon that wouldn't stop a determined person," said Phil, dryly.

Ramseur shook his head in hopeless perplexity. "How could Mam Bashra be persuaded to drink her own foul brew?"

"Maybe it wasn't her brew at all," suggested Phil.

"Still harping on D'Acosta?"

"If I have luck I hope to produce the answer before the day is out," said Phil, picking up his hat.

In the street he met Bart coming in search of him. The creoles at the gates watched their meeting curiously. Phil took Bart's arm and led him back. Both men masked their faces, but Bart was shaking.

"Do you know what they're saying?" he asked, hoarsely.

"I can guess."

"They're saying that Eve saved a part of the poison out and gave it to Mam Bashra."

"That's what they would say."

"Oh, my girl! . . . My little girl!" groaned Bart.

"Buck up!" said Phil. "It's no worse today than it was yesterday."

"But, think, when Mam Bashra's deposition is read in court what a deadly effect it will have *now!*"

"We are prepared to counter it." Phil told him briefly what he and Chicago had done the night before and what they had got out of it.

Bart stopped and looked at him in fresh horror. "Good God! If you produce your depositions now you'll only be putting a rope around your own neck! They will say that *you* poisoned Mam Bashra. It will have the look of a perfect case!"

"I reckon so," said Phil, grimly. "Unless we can

find the real poisoner. . . . Have you seen Jasper?”

“Yes. No results there. Jasper watched the hotel last night. He saw a black boy hanging around the porch that he suspected of being a messenger, and he stuck close to him. Nina Obeida came to the door and the boy gave her a piece of paper with something written on it. She read it and put it in her mouth. Jasper didn’t follow the boy when he left the hotel because he had been told to stick to Nina.”

“Bad luck!” muttered Phil.

“Nina came out of the hotel when her work was done,” Bart continued, “and Jasper followed her home. Shortly after the church clock had struck two she came out again dressed in boy’s clothes. Jasper followed her to a house in Beck’s Alley and waited outside. When she failed to reappear he investigated and discovered that this house had a rear door on another alley. She had just walked through it. He never saw her again. She has not returned to her own room since, nor did she come to work at the hotel today.”

Phil shrugged. It was a heavy disappointment. “It all fits in,” he said, “but it’s not evidence.”

Bart scowled in perplexity. “What could Nina hope to gain by the old woman’s death?”

“She was only a tool along with others—Stella, Rosanna Nuno, Nina. Apparently all the girls are eager to serve him.”

“But on the night of the kidnapping Rosanna betrayed him,” Bart pointed out.

“Jealousy,” said Phil. “When D’Acosta undertook to bring Eve to his home and make Rosanna wait on her the girl was pushed too far.”

“How can he keep in touch with them? Not by telephone.”

“There are plenty of black boys to carry messages. D’Acosta has money. He must have a house in town where meetings can be arranged.”

“There’s one thing you overlook,” suggested Bart; “all the people, negroes and creoles, stand in holy terror of Mam Bashra. I can’t see Nina giving her poison. She’d be afraid of the old woman’s vengeance after death.”

“As I figure it,” said Phil, “Nina didn’t know what she was giving her. She had visited the old woman before, remember, and may have brought her a harmless drink of rum. This particular drink was loaded . . . Amri must be implicated in it.”

“She’s old enough to be D’Acosta’s mother.”

“In that case it is probably just a business arrangement. There must be something of the sort, because it was Amri who put Mam Bashra up to making her so-called confession.”

“Could she have plotted the death of her grandmother?”

“Why not? Such a repulsive old creature could not inspire any natural affection. Mam Bashra was too old. Amri had been kept too long out of her place in the sun. When the grandmother died her mantle descended to the granddaughter. She is Mam Amri now.”

“If you are right, Nina must have been half mad with terror when she saw what she had done.”

“A good reason for hiding herself,” said Phil.

Later four horsemen in romantic black cloaks and broad-brimmed hats rode down Frederick Street abreast. The clatter of hoofs brought Phil and his two friends out on the veranda of the bungalow. The horsemen lined up in the street facing them; D’Acosta, Cardenas, Figueroa and Alvarez, the best mounted men in Annunziata. D’Acosta’s face was ravaged with hatred; his blazing eyes were fixed on

Phil like an animal's. The other three merely looked solemn. Phil found it strange to be so hated. All D'Acosta's plotting comes to nothing unless he can part me from Eve, he thought.

"Go inside," whispered Chicago. "He may try a shot at you."

"I'm not going to turn my back on him," said Phil.

"Don't be a fool!" urged Bart. "The man is mad!"

"His hands are empty."

"You can't watch all four of them. Go inside!"

Phil grinned. "None of them could hit me with a pistol at that distance."

Figueroa, the youngest of the four, dismounted and handed his rein to a companion to hold. Flinging the end of his cape over his shoulder, he marched stiffly up the path. A good-looking young murderer, Phil thought. Well, you never can tell. Mounting the steps, Figueroa offered Phil a square of pasteboard.

"My card."

"What's that for? I know your name."

"It is customary between gentlemen," said Figueroa with a swagger. He let the card flutter to

the floor. “I have the honor to bring you a challenge from my friend, John D’Acosta.”

Phil laughed in pure surprise. “A challenge? Good God! Can men still act so childishly?”

“If they’re not cowards!” cried Figueroa, hotly.

“Phil, this is only a trick!” warned Bart.

Phil wagged his hand to silence him. “Let me handle it, old fellow.” He addressed Figueroa with a grin. “What kind of duel?”

“As the challenged party, you have the right to choose the weapons. My principal asks only that it may be settled quickly, today. You have your seconds at hand here.”

“Your side appears to be one up on us,” said Phil, glancing at the three in the street.

“Mr. Cardenas will eliminate himself,” said Figueroa.

“All right,” said Phil, grinning. “There shall be no delay. We’ll settle it right here and now”—he pointed to the path below—“and the weapons shall be”—He held up his two fists.

Figueroa turned pale with anger. “Gentlemen do not fight with their fists!”

“No?” said Phil. “How about the time you came

to Pernisson's to beat me up?"

Figueroa ignored this. "You're a coward!" he cried. "I'll make you fight!"

Phil saw the slap coming, and seizing the lad's wrists, held them in a steely grip. Figueroa writhed and showed his teeth. Tears of rage sprang in his eyes.

"Coward!" he cried. "You won't fight like a gentleman!"

"Wa-ait a minute!" said Phil, soothingly. "You're a good lad, Figueroa, only just a little touched with the heat. But your principal, as you call him yonder, is a first-class skunk, get me? He is only using you as he has used many others. It is not a duel that he is planning to pull off, but an assassination!"

"Let me go!" cried Figueroa, blind with rage.

Phil suddenly released him. Figueroa hastened down the steps, not forgetting to fling the cloak over his shoulder.

"By this time next year you'll know I'm right," said Phil.

Figueroa mounted and conferred briefly with his friends. They touched heels to their horses and rode

away with loud, insulting laughter. Phil, Bart, and Chicago looked at each other and suddenly began to laugh, too. Each set the other off. Laughter got the better of them. They dropped in chairs and doubled up with laughter. The horsemen rounded a corner.

During the day the Attorney-General and the inspector of police continued to build up a strong inferential case against Eve. The police took up the search for the creole girl, Nina Obeida. They did not find her, but they found a man in Soursop Court who had seen her leave her room dressed in boy's clothes at two o'clock in the morning. They found a woman who had visited her earlier in the evening and who swore that she had seen Nina thrust something that looked like a rope ladder under her bed. They found the grocer who had sold her the rope. Thus it was generally accepted that Nina had conveyed the poison which killed Mam Bashra.

Nina had carried all Eve's meals from Pernisson's to the jail. The wardress swore that there had never been any speech between them, but she was forced to admit that it had not occurred to her to look inside nor under the dishes before placing the tray in front of Eve, or before handing the tray back

to Nina. Thus letters, money, and the deadly poison itself might have been passed in this manner. Bareda was forced to print all this in Eve's newspaper, but he took the curse off it as well as he could by writing an editorial for the same issue, pointing out the tragic miscarriages of justice that had resulted from depending on circumstantial evidence. Unfortunately, the news columns were more widely read and discussed than the editorial.

The police were in a quandary over what to do with Mam Bashra's body. It was decided to inter it under police guard in the free burial-ground high on the hill back of the poor quarter of Port-of-Grace. This was done late that same afternoon. Amri was permitted to attend the interment, together with a dozen alleged grand-nephews and-nieces who turned up, but the rest of the crowd was excluded from the burial-ground. When the grave had been filled in, a sergeant of police was left on guard, and it was given out that a guard would be maintained at the grave until further notice.

Amri was allowed to go home. Her grandmother's "confession" had not implicated her in the murder of Randal Trantor, and it was understood that the prosecutions for Obeah were to be deferred until the murder case was out of the

way. Nobody took these prosecutions seriously, because it had always been found impossible to secure sufficient witnesses in such cases.

Eve's black boys, Jasper and Tucket, acted as scouts, circulating among the negroes of the town and listening to their gossip. Nobody had seen Nina Obeida. It was freely expressed among the townspeople that Mam Bashra's body would never lie quiet in the burial-ground. Already at nine o'clock that night it began to be reported that the witch-woman's duppy had chased the policeman away and that her coffin had risen out of the grave and sailed away through the air in the direction of Suck River. All the negroes believed this. None would have gone up the hillside for a king's ransom.

A little later, the word was whispered around that the coffin had arrived at Suck River five minutes after it had left the grave, and that it would be buried with the proper Obeah ceremonial at midnight. Nobody was to be allowed to witness these awful rites but "Mam Bashra's Eyes," by which Phil understood was meant the initiates of the cult.

"Eyes?" he said. "I have met with that symbol before."

It was evident from the talk repeated by Jasper that the ceremony was to serve further as the induction of Amri as a sort of high priestess of Obeah. The negroes all referred to her now as Mam Amri.

“We ought to be there,” said Phil.

“Why?” asked Bart.

“Nina Obeida is an ‘Eye.’ She may be there.”

“Dangerous,” suggested Chicago.

Phil shrugged. “We’ll keep out of sight, if possible. If we’re discovered it may break up the show, but the negroes will not attack white men.”

“You’ll get nothing at this nigger jamboree,” objected Bart. “The solution of this mystery is to be found here in town.”

Phil was not sorry to leave Bart out of it. “All right,” he said. “You stay on the job in town and Chicago and I will fluff out to Suck River.”

“Should we black our faces?” asked Chicago.

“No. I tried that before and nobody was fooled. . . . But we should take Jasper and Tucket with us as a front.”

Bart shook his head. “They’re good boys, but I doubt if they have nerve enough for that.”

When Jasper and Tucket were brought to the bungalow, Phil put it to them. Would they go to Suck River?

The two slim young negroes looked at each other and hesitated. Their faces slowly grayed with terror.

“It’s to get Mistress Eve out of jail,” suggested Phil.

“Can me and Tucket stay alongside you?” asked Jasper.

“Sure,” said Phil, “we’ll all stick together.” The two boys exchanged another look. “All right, we go.”

Chapter 23:

At Suck River, Phil hid the car among the trees at the end of the road, and the four of them started up the precipitous stony path alongside the hoarsely falling stream. It was a little past twelve and the show had started; they met nobody in the path. Down in the valley they had heard the disturbing tremor of the distant drums, but now the sound of water filled their ears.

It was a clear, starry night with no moon. The trade wind was sweeping up the valley, threshing the leaves and knocking branches together. They climbed silently, feeling their way up from stone to stone without using a flashlight.

On an exposed point at a bend of the track above them, they saw the figure of a man outlined against the sky and Phil sent the two black boys ahead a little. The watcher threw a light in their faces, saying:

“Who you?”

Jasper made some indistinguishable reply. “Go back!” the man said, whereupon they silently jumped him and bore him down. One clapped a

hand over his mouth. All three figures were wedged between the rocks.

Phil switched on his light, and the two white men hastened up to secure the man. A handful of raw cotton was thrust in his mouth, and his lips pasted together with strips of surgeon's tape. This was something new to the bush negro. His wrists and ankles were bound together and Phil and Chicago Harry eased him down the stony climb, the two black boys going on ahead of them to guard against a surprise. They met nobody. Thrusting the negro in the back of their car, they climbed once more.

As they rose higher they began to hear the drums again, coming loud on a gust of wind; fading; later a human shriek, and the undertones of many howling voices. The two black boys turned in terror; Phil let them by and they crept along behind. Just before coming to the ledge or break in the mountain slope where Amri's house stood, Phil led the way out of the track to the left, and made a wide detour over a slide of loose rocks which finally brought them to the fringe of woods at the back of Amri's clearing. Through the trees they could see a fire with flames wildly blown in the wind, and the full sound of the voices assaulted their ears.

They crept forward with anxious care. Branches snapped, palmetto leaves rattled, and they stopped with their hearts in their mouths; however, the wind and the voices drowned out such sounds. Each man chose a place where he could look out and squatted down. The two black boys crouched close to Phil, because he was the bigger of the white men.

The little clearing was perhaps a hundred yards long and half as wide, with the house at one end, the fire at the other, and enormous trees all around; no undergrowth. The opening was like a vaulted hall. The leaping, shifting flames crimsoned the undersides of the lofty branches, and played on a huddle of squatting negroes at one side. Those in front had drums to beat or big shells to blow; the others were yelling. Single figures would spring up here and there, twist grotesquely, and drop again. Calabashes of rum were being passed. Among the blacks Phil picked out a few yellow faces, but Nina Obeida was not among them. He saw the Brinsleys' droll little black servant. There were no children present.

The native drums sounded different notes and were played with different beats. The long-drawn moans issuing from the conch shells were like the cries of the damned. There was no order in the singing; Phil could distinguish no words, but only

yelling. Each trying to out-yell the other. At intervals a shriek would cut through the chorus that made a shiver run down his back. Rum and hysteria had dehumanized the black people; they moved and goggled and shook themselves like nightmare figures. Each man had a human eye crudely painted on his black breast; the women had eyes pinned to their dresses. Harmless creatures ordinarily, but there were fearful possibilities of danger in their present excitement.

At the far end of the clearing the door of the house was suddenly thrown open and a voice of command came from inside. Instantly the yelling was shut off and the drums fell into a syncopated cadence. Out through the door danced a fantastic figure; Mam Amri in a black dress hung with dried toads, parrots' beaks, bunches of feathers, and so on. Her gross figure shook with loose fat; hands, face, and hair were daubed with some substance resembling white mud. Her hair was artificially stiffened and drawn out on end; her features fixed in a grin like epilepsy, eyes rolled up and a corner of the lip lifted. She had a staff in one hand.

A long groan of awe escaped from the negroes and they commenced bowing almost to the ground. Mam Amri danced toward the fire with a mincing

step, as a female ape might dance, crossing her feet, turning from side to side, shaking her body and pushing herself around in a circle with one foot. Meanwhile she sang in a voice almost as hoarse as a man's. Her song had words, but they were in a native dialect which was gibberish to Phil.

Having reached the fire, she threw something in it which caused a green flame to shoot up in the middle. The negroes groaned. She then danced back towards the house. The beat of the drums became more exciting now, and Amri's dance correspondingly wilder. Fat, middle-aged woman capering like a goat; the sight was unspeakably horrible. To Phil she no longer seemed a woman, but the Spirit of Evil itself, coming out in the red firelight. Many of the negroes covered their faces in awe.

Amri stopped with dramatic suddenness and struck her staff on the ground. The drumming was arrested in midbeat; the people were quiet: "Come!" she commanded.

Immediately the sound of ax blows was heard inside the house. A piece of the wattle-and-daub wall was knocked out, and a moment or two later there was a gaping hole close to the ground. A plank

coffin was shoved out from within, a hastily knocked together affair not in any way like the neat coffin the police had provided for Mam Bashra. One after the other, two stalwart negro men followed it through the hole and stood up, fearsome figures naked to the waist and whitened with the same muddy stuff. Each had an immense eye traced on his breast with a finger. One of the negroes handed Mam Amri a cup. Standing with her back to the coffin and swaying, she commenced a new song accompanied by a soft rumble from the drums. With the first words she poured a red liquor on the ground. This song was in the common negro dialect and Phil caught a phrase or two.

“Great ‘Bayifo, no-name, receive the red wine. . . .
You grandchild, Mam Bashra . . . dead . . .
Me beg of you let here dig a hole. . . .”

At this moment a new figure came into the firelight from the direction of the track from below, a thin, half-grown boy with his hat pulled down over his black face. He was much better dressed than the others. Jasper gripped Phil’s arm. “That boy give letter to Nina Obeida last night,” he whispered. The newcomer pushed his hat back and Phil fixed his face in mind. He looked as if he had Hindu blood;

sooty skin, straight nose, thin lips. Phil had a sense that he had seen him before.

The boy quietly dropped among the negroes in the front row. Mam Amri saw him. She danced up to him without interrupting her song, and Phil saw a paper pass from hand to hand with lightning quickness. Phil could never have seen it had he not been looking for something of the sort. Singing and swaying, Mam Amri let the paper open in her palm, and glancing at it, thrust it in the bosom of her dress.

“She has been warned of our coming,” Phil whispered to Chicago.

A moment or two later he saw the black boy edging out of the crowd to make his way back the way he had come. “Go after him,” Phil whispered to Chicago. “Seize him and hold him until I come.”

Chicago slipped away.

Having finished her song, Mam Amri ordered the bearers to pick up the coffin. All the people then ranged themselves in a double line between the house and the fire and broke into a wild song, twisting, jigging, clapping, rolling their heads like creatures possessed. The coffin was carried between the two lines. Through the gaps Phil and his friends could still see what was going on.

The two muscular bearers raised and lowered the little coffin three times. Suddenly they began to strain and stagger as if its weight had become too much for them. The coffin appeared to leap and to roll in their arms, to bump against one, then the other, almost knocking them down, and, when they tried to move forward, dragged them back staggering against the wall of the house. The people broke into cries of fright. It was a horribly realistic exhibition. The faces of the bearers were agonized and one could see drops of sweat oozing through the white stuff that covered their bodies. Finally they were forced to drop the coffin. As it lay on the ground all could see it rock a little, and the people moaned.

One of the bearers gasped out: “Mam Bashra no want for bury.”

Mam Amri dropped on her knees beside the coffin. “Grandmother, what pain you’ soul?” she asked, and putting her head down affected to listen. She got up again. Phil saw her pause to whisper some stage directions to the bearers. She said aloud: “Mam Bashra say can’t lie quiet in grave until she tell who dead her.”

Quiet fell on the people; the drums were still.

Mam Amri performed an idiot dance in front of the coffin, muttering incantations that Phil could not hear. Suddenly, with an outswEEP of her arms, she thrust aside the people in her way and in all her crazy trappings faced the spot where Phil and his friends were lying. "Me see you, white man!" she said, hoarsely. "Me see everything in the world. Come out, white man! Come out; you see something white man never see before. Come out if you not afraid!"

It was impossible for Phil to take a dare like this. He sprang up, saying, "Come on, boys!" and strode out into the open. The two black boys crouched behind him, almost paralyzed with terror.

With a horrible grimace Mam Amri turned to the coffin again. "Pick up," she commanded. "Grandmother!" she went on, addressing the coffin, "for the sake of the living, tell us who dead you."

The ghastly comedy recommenced. The bearers made as if to carry the coffin to the fire, but it appeared to buck and throw them sideways. They struggled to get it back in line, but seemingly it was beyond their strength. The coffin forced them out of line and drove them, holding back with all their might, across the open space towards Phil.

The people were completely hysterical now. A voice cried out: “O God! O God!”

“Who call on God?” Mam Amri demanded, wrathfully.

“ ‘Bayifo! . . . ‘Bayifo!’” moaned the voice.

Phil, seeing what was coming, stood his ground with a hard grin. The coffin swung out sideways and bumped him lightly on the chest. A shuddering groan escaped the people; then silence.

“Master, master,” whispered Jasper, “ask for other bearers. You got right.”

“This is a fake,” cried Phil, loudly. “Let somebody else carry the coffin.”

Mam Amri laughed silently. “All right,” she said, “choose them.”

Phil hauled forward the trembling Jasper and Tucket. “Pick up the coffin,” he said.

“Carry to the fire,” said Mam Amri grinning.

The slim boys, gray-faced and sweating, endeavored to obey. They made the first step or two, then the coffin commenced to roll in their grasp. They flung their arms around it, but it was too much for them. They dropped it and, crying like children, threw themselves down at Phil’s feet and clung to

his legs.

“Master, she won’t go that way! . . . Master, great weakness fall upon me! . . . She too strong, Master! . . . Inside coffin Mam Bashra say to me: ‘Boy, it was the long white man who dead me!’ . . . I hear her say that! I hear her!”

A mutter of rage swept over the crazed negroes. They arose like one man and started slowly forward with their distorted faces thrust out.

Phil, throwing the boys off, strode to the coffin. “You fools!” he cried to the advancing negroes. “This is all hocus-pocus! Mam Bashra is lying under four feet of earth in the Port-of-Grace burial-ground! This is what I think of such foolishness!”

He brought his foot down with all his force on the flimsy coffin. The box collapsed and parted, and out rolled the wasted figure of the cripple who waited on Mam Amri. He was very much alive. Phil roared with laughter. The cripple endeavored to scramble away, but Phil seized him by the hair and held him up for all to see.

“Is *this* Mam Bashra?”

Nobody answered him. They stopped and hung their heads. They were completely deflated. The men surreptitiously drew their shirts across the

painted eye on their breasts; the women unpinned their symbols and let them fall. At one stroke they were transformed from hysterical devil-worshippers into the simple, good-natured cane-hands that they really were. They slunk out of range of the white man's eye.

Only Mam Amri stood her ground, defying him with a snarl. "Seize her!" Phil whispered to his two boys, but they were not too eager to obey. When Phil approached her Mam Amri turned to run. Catching her by the shoulder, he swung her around. She shrieked with rage and tried to bite him. The two boys came to his aid then. Phil thrust his hand inside her dress and drew out the folded paper. It opened in his hand. On it was printed in pencil:

X wone out po gatch mou. If teople
wet yad pear cim tieces dobody han slame
mou.

In place of signature there was a penciled eye. Phil thrust it in his pocket, grinning. The translation could wait.

"What we do with her, Master?" asked Jasper. His courage was strong again.

"Take her with us."

They hauled her away as she was, in all her paint and feathers. Mam Amri, fighting and squalling like a cat, disputed every foot of ground. Jasper and Tucket hustled her along with grins. None of her followers offered to interfere. She had lost them. It was a swift fall for the mother of Obeah.

At the end of the road they found Chicago Harry standing guard over the black boy in an old yellow touring car that Phil had seen in Bateese's garage.

"He appears to have driven out in it alone," said Chicago. "He says his name is Jacopo and that he works in Bateese's. That's all I can get out of him."

"Let him drive his car back to town," said Phil. "I'll sit beside him with a gun. You take Jasper and Tucket and bring Amri in our car. Turn the other negro loose."

While Jacopo drove, Phil applied himself to studying the mysterious message with the aid of his flashlight. The word "dobody" immediately suggested nobody. So it was not a foreign language, but a cryptogram. "Teople" was obviously people. With this clue "po" became to and "pear" became tear. It was the simplest form of cryptogram in which certain pairs of initial consonants are transposed; p with t, b with s, g with w, and so on.

Decoded, the message ran:

X gone out to watch you. If people get mad, tear him pieces nobody can blame you.

A little shiver crawled over Phil's skin. It had darn near worked, at that.

Chapter 24:

As they neared Port-of-Grace Mam Amri became very quiet. In her paint and feathers she was not anxious to call attention to herself. It was now about three o'clock and except for the lights in the newspaper office, the town was dead. The two cars drove into the yard of the bungalow and the prisoners were carried in through the back door and placed on chairs in different rooms. Bart was not in the house.

In the living-room Phil took his gun out and faced Mam Amri. "I want to know who sent you that note tonight," he said.

She looked him square in the eye, grinning with insane defiance.

Phil knew when he was licked. "No good," he whispered to Chicago. "She would let me shoot her sooner than tell. I'll try the boy."

He went into the kitchen. Mam Amri called out: "Don't tell or Obayifu strike you down!" Chicago gagged her.

When Jacopo saw Phil, gun in hand, he fell into a very extremity of fear, shaking, sweating, writhing

in his bonds. “Master, don’t hurt me! I good boy! I do no harm!” He spoke better English than the run of negroes.

“Quiet!” warned Phil, “or I’ll shoot you without any talk.”

The boy fixed his imploring eyes on Phil’s face and silently moved his lips.

“Who gave you that letter tonight?”

“I don’t know that man,” whined Jacopo.

Phil slipped the safety catch. “That’s not going to help you.”

Jacopo moaned. “Master, it’s the truth! I never see him. I don’t know his name!”

“Where did you get the letter, then?”

“In the market fountain, master.”

Phil stared. “The market fountain!”

“Over the tap on the east side there is little hole between stones. I lean over to drink; slip my fingers in; get letter.”

“How did you know it was there?”

“A man telephone me at Bateese’s store. I sleep in the office.”

“This has been going on for some time?”

Jacopo nodded.

Phil opened the boy's shirt at the neck and saw the eye painted on his bony black breast. "When did this stuff begin?" he asked.

Jacopo told his story between gasps and sobs. "Last year friend take me Suck River. Was high time out there. Amri say Mam Bashra want make me her Eye because I clever boy. Go to school six year running. So I 'nitiated in the Eyes. I get drunk. One day after that boy tell me Frank Bateese looking for me. So I go to his place."

"Is Bateese one of the Eyes?"

"No," said Jacopo. "He rich man. Own hardware store, three motor-car, many horses . . . Frank Bateese say he give me nice job in store because I got learning. Keep books, make change, pay bills, answer telephone. Let me sleep in office. So I work there. One day telephone ring. Man say, 'You Jacopo?' I say: 'Yes.' He say: 'Obayifu.' That's password of the Eyes. He tell me 'bout that hole in fountain; say get a paper and give to Nina Obeida. I got do it because I am an Eye. With the paper there is a dollar for me. After that I take many letters."

"Nina passed the fountain half a dozen times a day," Phil pointed out. "Why couldn't she get the

paper for herself? She was an Eye.”

“That man want me go between him and Nina,” said Jacopo. “Somebody watch Nina, maybe.”

Phil put the gun in his pocket, much to Jacopo’s relief.

“You delivered notes to other people, too?”

“Yes, master.”

“You can tell me about them later. . . . You gave Nina a note last night?”

“Yes.”

“What was in it?”

“I don’t know that, master. Funny words.”

“Sometimes you got answers to your notes,” suggested Phil.

“Yes, master.”

“What did you do with them?”

“I put them same place.”

“And then telephoned the man?”

“No, master. I don’t know where to telephone him.”

“How did you let him know when there was a letter for him?”

“I stand the mop outside the garage door.

Anybody pass on Christian Street could see that.”

Phil grinned. “Simple,” he said. “Any hour of the day or night?”

Jacopo nodded. “The Eyes never close,” he said, solemnly.

“You’d better forget that nonsense now,” said Phil. “Did you never watch to see who stopped for the note?”

Jacopo hung his head. “Yes. One time I hide and watch. So many people stop at fountain, put hand on stone, bend head to drink, I don’t know who take the paper.”

Phil considered. “We’ll try it out now when nobody is passing,” he said.

Jacopo’s terrors came winging back. “He kill me! He kill me!” he wailed.

“He can’t kill you if we lodge him in jail,” said Phil.

“You never lodge he in jail, master. He too smart.”

“Well, we’ll see.”

On a rough piece of paper as near like the other as possible, Phil printed a message with a grin.

X home. Cim nead.

And signed it with an eye.

Tucket, who resembled Jacopo sufficiently to be mistaken for him in the dark, was sent to Bateese's garage to stand the mop outside the door. They gave him Jacopo's hat and smart jacket. Jacopo told him where he would find the mop and how to place it.

"If you are deceiving me I can still kill you," put in Phil, playing with his gun.

Jacopo wept and protested his honesty.

After placing the mop, Tucket, in case he might be watched, was to proceed to the market-place, put his hand on the fountain and take a drink. The note would already be in place then. He was to retrace his steps up Christian Street, and after a couple of blocks turn through an alley into Frederick, and return to the market pavilion, where he would find Jasper waiting.

The two cars were to remain in the back yard for the present. Phil would have given a good deal to know where Bart was. There was an ugly fear in the bottom of his mind. The prisoners were left tightly bound and gagged with surgeons' tape. Phil, Chicago Harry, and Jasper started out separately to

take up their positions around the market-place. Phil stopped to take a drink at the fountain and slipped the note into its crack. He then concealed himself in the corner of the shuttered porch in front of Pernisson's. By breaking out two of the little slats he could at the same time watch Christian Street in front and command the pump in the market-place at the side.

The letter-box had been skillfully chosen because there was no cover anywhere within fifty yards of the fountain. No chance of springing out and grabbing their man. It was impossible to guess from which direction he might come, or where he would go after getting the note. Chicago had been posted in lower Christian Street across the way from the police office, while Jasper was crouching under the shadow of the market pavilion. It had been agreed that they should give their man a chance to lead them to his hangout before grabbing him.

Phil had been in his hiding-place only a little while when Tucket slouched along the pavement in front of Pernisson's, took a drink at the fountain and went back again. So far, so good.

A long wait followed. It was stifling in Phil's corner, and he cautiously opened the shutters a little.

Nobody could have seen him without pressing directly against an opening. The market-place lay empty in the dim light of the hanging street lights. There was no sound except the plashing of the fountain. It ran two little streams for drinkers, one on the east side of the pedestal, one on the west.

Phil heard no sound of the man's coming. He turned his head from one peep-hole to the other and the fellow was there, stooping down to drink with a hand on the stone. He had slipped out of the alley behind Pernisson's. Phil's heart beat thickly. He could make out nothing beyond a middle-sized hunched figure in a dark suit, felt hat pulled low. He never turned his head towards Phil. Which way would he go?

Straightening up, he walked smartly away towards the west. This way Chicago ought to pick him up. Phil ran out of Pernisson's and out into the square, keeping the fountain between him and the retreating figure. Looking around the corner of the fountain, he saw the man suddenly change his direction, and head for the alley behind the jail-yard. He would miss Chicago now. But Jasper ought to pick him up.

When the man disappeared in the alley, Phil

gave him a few seconds to satisfy himself he was not followed, and then ran with all speed for the corner of the jail-yard. He saw nothing of Jasper. Peeping around the wall, he saw that the alley was empty. At the next corner there were three ways the man might have taken, and all of them were empty. After a futile search, Phil returned to the market pavilion with a sore heart. It was the agreed meeting-place. Chicago and Tucket were already there. Tucket said:

“When me come, Jasper, him hide hese’f in alley behind jail.”

Phil plucked up a little hope.

Jasper presently came running to them, breathless with excitement. “Me track him, master. Me track him that house in Beck’s Alley. He don’t go through. He go inside. He there now. Me take you there.”

Jasper led them through the maze of alleys back of the jail to the doorway that had fooled him on the previous night. It was not a door, but a narrow arched opening giving on a passage that led under the second story of a house. Beyond the house the passage ran on between outbuildings and finally came out on another alley. It was very dark in here

and they felt their way along slowly. Midway there was an eight-foot stucco wall on the right which appeared to inclose a yard. In it, under an arch, was a heavy wooden door.

“Him go in there,” whispered Jasper, excitedly. “Me see go in.”

Phil passed his hand over the door and it ran into a padlock. “Then he came out again,” he said sorely; “because it’s locked on the outside.”

Chicago groaned softly. “Slipped through our fingers!”

Phil swallowed his disappointment. “Anyhow we’ll go in,” he said. “And see what’s there.”

Phil, then Chicago, was boosted to the top of the wall. Chicago dropped inside and clung to Phil’s legs while Phil reached down and hauled up the negro lads. Presently they were all standing in the yard. It was a small place paved with brick and cluttered with empty casks, wooden crates, and other offcasts of a warehouse. The rear wall of a two-story warehouse faced them in the dark. It had a door on the yard flanked with a barred window on either side. None of the windows had sashes, and the second-story windows were without bars. The door, as they expected, was locked. This one had a

keyhole.

“If we smash it in and the man comes back he’ll take alarm,” said Phil. “We can put a cask against the wall and let Chicago stand on it. He can take me on his shoulders and I’ll go through an upper window. The boys can then boost Chicago up and I’ll reach down and grab him.”

In this manner the two white men gained the second story of the warehouse. The boys were ordered to return the cask to its place and to conceal themselves in the yard. Phil and Chicago found themselves in a loft upwards of a hundred feet long and perfectly empty except for the dirt and rubbish on the floor. The front windows had sashes and through the dusty panes they looked down on lower Christian Street. There was a freight hoist in one of the front corners.

They went down a flight of stairs to the ground floor. This likewise was entirely open and empty except for the debris left by the last tenants, and it began to look as if they would have only their trouble for their pains. However, upon glancing into the hoist-shaft Phil saw that the building had a cellar, and after a search with the cautious use of the electric torch, they found a trap at the rear of the

building. When they lifted it a ladder was revealed. They descended it, Phil first.

“Let the trap down over your head,” he said. “In case he should come back before we’re out.”

They paused at the foot of the ladder. A strong disquiet attacked Phil—he could not have told why. It was one of those unaccountable feelings that seem to rise from the blood. Chicago felt it, too; Phil heard him whisper:

“I don’t like this! I don’t like this!”

In the cellar they could switch on the torch without fear of betraying themselves through the windows. Like the yard outside, it was paved unevenly with brick. It appeared to be entirely empty, but a rear corner opposite to where they stood had been partitioned off with heavy planks to make a lock storeroom. Throwing his light on the door Phil saw that it was not completely closed now. Pulling it open he cast the light in.

The torch dropped from his hand and he jerked back against Chicago, gasping, “O Christ! Nina!”

He quickly recovered the torch and directed it with a steady hand. Within the door the body of Nina Obeida lay stretched out on the bricks. She was still wearing the boy’s clothes. Her dusky face was

smooth, her eyes closed, the black curls as gracefully tumbled as if she had just fallen asleep. But when Phil dropped to his knee and felt of her she was cold and stiff. She had been dead for many hours. In the little shirt and trousers she looked like a child.

“I was afraid of this,” muttered Phil.

“Ah, the poor pretty thing!” said Chicago.

“She’s the third!”

“Why her?”

“She knew too much.”

Beyond the body a rectangle of bricks had been pried up and the earth beneath excavated. The bricks lay on one side of the grave and a pile of loose earth on the other, with a spade sticking in it.

“He will be back to finish this job,” said Phil.

Along one side of the room ran a wide wooden shelf with all sorts of paraphernalia scattered upon it. Phil’s eye picked out a big glass jug half full of a colorless liquid; a glass retort with an alcohol lamp to heat it; a small bottle stopped with a rubber cork. Removing the cork of the big jug he smelled of it. Wood alcohol. When he drew the little rubber cork an unforgettable pungent odor stung his nostrils.

Methyl distillate.

“This is what killed them all,” he said. “The whole evidence is here.”

They heard a footstep on the floor overhead, and Chicago pulled his gun.

“Put it away,” whispered Phil, switching off the torch. “Pull the door to, just as we found it. You and I must both stand on the right hand side so he can’t see us before he comes in. Let him get all the way in before we jump him. I’ll hold him down while you tie him up.”

The footsteps crossed the floor overhead. They were neither hurried nor timorous. The one who was coming pulled up the trap door and let it fall back lightly against the wall. He came down the ladder step by step in a leisurely manner. At the bottom he paused, and Phil clenched teeth and hands. The strain was almost more than nerves could bear. Beside him Phil could hear Chicago breathing rapidly from the top of his lungs.

They heard the click of an electric torch and a glow came through the crack of the door. The man crossed the bricks without taking any care to walk softly. The light increased. He pulled the door open and the room was flooded with light. He came in.

The walls reflected the light back on him.

It was Alfred Bareda.

They jumped and bore him down on his face. He fought like a madman. They had to beat him into unconsciousness before they could secure him.

When they carried Bareda's limp body into the police office it started a sensation that rolled up moment by moment into staggering proportions. Sergeant Meek simply could not credit Phil's story. He believed that something was being put over on him, and refused to allow Phil and Chicago to go to the bungalow to fetch the other two prisoners. He roused up the sleeping reserves to detain the two white men, by force if necessary, and started wildly telephoning to Attorney-General Rulon, Inspector Fielding, and Doctor Ramseur. It was only after repeated warnings from Phil that Mam Amri and Jacopo would certainly succeed in freeing themselves that Meek finally consented to send two constables after them.

The officials straggled in one by one in various stages of hasty dress. Their incredulity and dismay were on a par with that of the black sergeant. There lay the battered Deputy Commissioner on a bench at

the back of the police office and they could not take it in. *Bareda!* Impossible! In order to convey it to their understanding Phil repeated the story in the simplest possible words. In the course of this Bareda recovered consciousness and sat up on the bench, holding his head between his manacled hands. His wild and broken aspect offered silent confirmation of Phil's story. Bareda refused to say anything, and when pressed by Rulon, cursed him with surprising savagery. At last he was able to cut loose.

Bart Brinsley also turned up in the station house. It appeared that he had procured a key that opened Nina Obeida's door in Soursop Court, and had been waiting in her room all night, confident that she would return to get her things.

"You ought to have left a note at home, telling me where you were," said Phil, grimly. "It would have saved me a bad quarter of an hour."

"How so?" asked Bart.

"Never mind it now."

Mam Amri and Jacopo were brought in by the two constables. The woman was ashamed to be caught by the white men in the ridiculous trappings of her trade, and attempted to brazen it out by showing her teeth. Jacopo was shaking with terror.

Amri had been told nothing, and by this time there was such a crowd in the little room that she could not see Bareda on his bench at the back. Rulon attempted to question her. She stared at him defiantly and refused to speak. Finally he said:

“Do you know this man?”

The crowd parted to let her see Bareda. She stared at him and began to tremble. A piercing shriek broke from her. “Alfred! No! No! Not you! Not you!”

Bareda raised his scowling bloody face. “What’s the matter with you?” he growled. “I have nothing to do with you.”

All control had escaped her. She dropped to her knees on the floor, clasping her hands and rocking forward. “Alfred! Alfred! My son!”

Bareda turned away his head, sick with disgust. “For God’s sake, go wash yourself!”

Chapter 25:

As it became clear that Phil's fantastic story was no more than the simple truth, a violent reaction in Eve's favor took place. When she was released from jail at breakfast time she was cheered through the streets of Port-of-Grace. It made her feel a little cynical.

"I'm just the same as I was yesterday," she said. "And last week. What fools people are!"

Phil likewise became the hero of the hour. Rulon and Fielding, his former enemies, were now so anxious to placate him that they sent up to D'Acosta's place and arrested the young planter. He was to be charged first with the kidnapping, second with an attempt to shoot Phil. When Phil heard of the arrest he and Bart went straight to the police office. Phil spoke as one with authority now.

"Turn him loose! Neither Mrs. Trantor nor myself will appear against him. He's punished himself sufficiently."

When the prisoner was brought out from his cell, Phil said: "D'Acosta, I owe you a kind of apology. For days past I've been believing that you were the

poisoner. I'm sorry.”

D'Acosta, with his ravaged face, was consistent to the end. Flinging the corner of his cape over his shoulder and planting the broad-brimmed hat on his head, he looked at Phil and saying, “Go to hell!” stalked out.

Phil caught Bart's eye and they both exploded in laughter. “Well, anyhow, I've cleared my conscience,” said Phil.

As the days passed, Bareda continued to maintain his silence. Neither Rulon, Halperin, Fielding, Doctor Ramseur, singly nor together, could get anything out of him. When they goaded him too far, he burned them with his vitriolic tongue—there was a lifetime of bitterness stored up in the dark-skinned man, and they were glad to return him to his cell. Phil, the man who had caught him, was the only one Bareda would tolerate. Phil took no moral attitude with the prisoner; he was only curious to understand the workings of his extraordinary mind; and in Phil's company Bareda could air his vanity. They warned Phil against the danger of venturing into his cell alone, but Phil laughed at it.

“Put yourself in my place, if you want to understand me,” Bareda said to him one day. “My

father was a white man, my mother's father was a white man and maybe her mother's father was white, for all I know. From one of these white men I inherited a white man's nature, a white man's soul, if you like. A white man's soul and a colored skin, that's the answer. One of these white men—or all of them, maybe—transmitted the love of power to me and I had to scheme for it as I could.”

“You went pretty far at that,” said Phil.

“Sure I went far. You don't know the half of it. Under the drunken Trantor I was the actual ruler of this island. I could manage him like a child. All the better-class creoles, who made believe to dislike me, worked with me secretly, and through my mother I kept the blacks in line.”

“Did you think they would make you Commissioner when you wiped out Trantor?”

“I wasn't such a fool,” said Bareda. “I knew that the Americans would never appoint any but a white man. That made no difference to me. All the reins of power were safely in my hands.”

“Then why did you liquidate Trantor?”

“I wanted his money,” said Bareda, coolly.

“I see. So you planned to have him marry Eve Brinsley, then kill him, have her accused of the

crime, and when she was acquitted marry her yourself.”

“That was the original plan,” Bareda said, with a strange smile, “but when the girl grew up I wanted her for herself. I wanted her—in a way that you will never know. Everything has come easily to you.”

“And my being on the island spoiled it all!” said Phil.

“Not at all. I could easily have got rid of you. It was that damned fool D’Acosta’s attempt to carry Eve off that wrecked everything. I couldn’t foresee that. It hastened the marriage, and I was obliged to kill Trantor while you were still here. You understand, of course, that I had to kill Trantor on the day of his wedding.”

“I understand that,” said Phil, grimly.

“You ought to be grateful to me,” said Bareda, with a tormented grin.

“Let’s keep off that,” said Phil.

“There’s one thing I’d like to make clear,” said Bareda. “Jule Davila was an unconscious tool in my hands because she hated Eve. But Jule had nothing to do with the actual poisoning of Trantor. I put the poison in the bottle myself as it stood on the shelf in the pantry.”

“Where was the good bottle?” asked Phil.

“Waiting in the table leg. I merely changed one for the other.”

“What I can’t understand is,” said Phil, “why did you keep on plotting after you saw how it was between Eve and me? A man as clever as you ought to have realized that you had no chance of winning Eve then.”

“Not as long as you lived,” said Bareda. “But I did not intend that you should live long. When D’Acosta failed to kill you on the night I sent him after you, I planned to have the negroes at Suck River tear you to pieces. If that failed, I still had another card to play.”

“What was that?”

“I had spies everywhere—yellow-skinned and black; I knew that you and Eve had agreed that you could not marry until a decent interval had passed. You were going to leave the island for a while. Well, you never would have returned. I had arranged that.”

“Well, I’m damned!” said Phil.

Bareda smiled at the tribute.

On a day in February Phil and Eve entered the reception-room of Columbia Distillers in New York. During the two months that they had been in hiding, the sensational case on the far-away island had pretty well passed from people's minds. The fact of their marriage had not been published. Miss Finucane, the reception clerk, was a good deal flustered at the sight of Phil.

“Oh, Mr. Nevitt, what a surprise!” she said, not knowing quite how to take it.

“You're looking as beautiful as ever,” said Phil, blandly. “Will you send in my name to Mr. Chapman?”

“Mr. Nevitt to see Mr. Chapman,” she said over the phone.

Phil and Eve sat down to wait. Eve was fresh from the Rue de la Paix, and showed it. “Don't look at me like that!” she whispered. “She will think we were only married yesterday.”

“I shall never become accustomed to you,” said Phil, solemnly. “Never!”

“Silly! . . . I don't think you should have brought me here,” said Eve.

“It's my revenge!” said Phil.

“Revenge?”

“You are the most beautiful and the most desirable woman in the world at this moment, and when these fellows see you they will go mad with envy!”

“Silly!”

Robertson, Mr. Chapman’s secretary, came bustling out, a sharp-faced young man whom Phil disliked cordially. “Hello, Nevitt,” he began, very busy and offhand; then caught sight of Eve and his jaw dropped. “Oh, I didn’t realize . . .”

“My wife,” said Phil. “Mr. Robertson. . . . I want to see Mr. Chapman.”

“But you have no appointment,” objected the secretary. “You know how busy he is. It is absolutely necessary to make appointments in advance. What did you want to see him about?”

“Sorry, it’s confidential,” said Phil, grinning. “Just tell him I’m here.”

Robertson, with a dirty look, disappeared.

“He won’t see you,” murmured Eve. “Why do you expose yourself to such a humiliation?”

“Humiliation?” said Phil. “I wouldn’t change places with the Grand Tcham of Tartary. So how

could any little New York tycoon humiliate me? Besides, he will see me. He has just as much curiosity as anybody else.”

And sure enough a young lady presently came out to say that Mr. Chapman could give Mr. Nevitt five minutes.

Phil entered the presidential chamber first by intention; therefore Mr. Chapman did not immediately see Eve. The little man was very stiff and his nose looked pinched. He opened up on Phil instantly.

“Nevitt, I’m not going to pretend that I’m glad to see you. After what happened in Annunziata I’m surprised that you . . .”

Phil stepped to one side. “My wife, Mr. Chapman.”

The great little man’s eyes goggled. He was not a lady’s man, but he had the grace to stand up. “Oh! . . . Ah! . . . Charmed, I’m sure. Please sit down, Mrs. Nevitt.” He turned to Phil. “If you have something to discuss with me, wouldn’t it be better if . . . ah!”

“I had an object in bringing her,” said Phil.

“Well . . . I only thought it might be a little painful for her,” said Mr. Chapman.

“I didn’t come to ask for my job back,” said Phil.

“Then what is the object of your call?”

“You sent me down to Annunziata to obtain certain information for you. I got it and sent it in. A little unpleasantness then arose. But I bear no ill-will. I bear no ill-will. . . .”

Mr. Chapman glanced at his watch. “Please come to the point.”

“The point is this,” said Phil, “if you are interested in the Annunziata distillery, my wife is the sole owner.”

“*What!*” said Mr. Chapman.

“Mrs. Nevitt owns ninety-four per cent of the stock. The rest is held by various dummy directors.”

Mr. Chapman stared, speechless for the moment.

Phil rose. “Well, I reckon we must go, Eve. We have that engagement at the Colony.”

Mr. Chapman underwent a remarkable transformation. He beamed, he exuded pleasure. “Sit down, Nevitt. You haven’t given me a chance to say a word yet. Besides, you weren’t fired; you resigned. To my eternal regret!”

“But our five minutes is up,” said Phil.

“Sit down, man! Others can wait. Let us all sit over here by the window and forget for a while that this is a business office. Do you smoke, Mrs. Nevitt?” He pressed a button on his desk as he got up, and the efficient young woman entered. “Miss Doane, I don’t wish to be disturbed so long as Mr. and Mrs. Nevitt are with me. Please tell Mr. Robertson.”

Phil and Eve exchanged a wink.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

[The end of *The Obeah Murders* by Hulbert Footner]