

The DOOM TRAIL

—By—
Arthur D. Howden Smith

CHAPTER IX—Continued

"Ta-wan-ne-ars has only one regret that he is to die," he said. "That is because he cannot live to find your lost soul and return it to you."

She laughed harshly. "Ta-wan-ne-ars is a child," she said. "His heart is turned to water. He talks of things which are not. My soul is here." She tapped her left breast. "It does not matter, however, for the Ga-ga-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta does not need a soul as other mortals do."

She turned on her heel abruptly, and followed the priests into the long bark house from which they had emerged.

The great mob of Indians melted away as soon as she left us. They all but fled in order to reach their lodges before sundown, and so hurried were our guards that in removing us from the stakes to the Council-House in the center of the village they forebore to beat or maltreat us.

In the Council-House they supplied us with a liberal meal of meat and vegetables. Then our bonds were replaced, and we were covered with robes, whilst our guards covered close to the fire in abject fear. They started at the slightest movement. Had we been able to stir hand or foot I think we might have won our freedom. But they used care in blinding us, and we lay inert as corpses.

"What do they fear?" I whispered to Ta-wan-ne-ars at length, desirous of hearing a friendly voice.

"I do not know exactly, brother," he said. "These Cahnuaga are renegades from the Great League."

"But the Moon feast they talk about," I persisted. "What is that?"

"It is some invention of their own," he replied. "Perhaps Murray or De Veulle helped them with it. My people know nothing of such things."

Through the bark walls of the house came the weird, minor melody which had attended the appearance of the Mistress of the False Faces, mingled with shrieks, groans, screams and yells. Our guards huddled closer together. They abandoned their weapons and covered their heads with blankets. A drum throbbed near by, and at intervals sounded the wailing chant of the masked priests and the thudding of dancing feet.

The uproar increased in violence. Women's voices, some in dreadful protestation, some in eager ecstasy, joined in it. It was near, then at a distance, then returning. And occasionally that one shrill, sweet voice quelled the saturnalia and was lifted on a note of pagan exultation—only to be drowned in the thumping of drums.

Our fire dwindled and was rekindled. The night crept on toward the dawn. The monotony of the noises, the endless repetition, deadened the senses, and we slept. When I awakened, 'twas to see the daylight trickling through the smoke-hole in the roof.

Somewhere in the sunshine a bird began to sing, and my captors yawned and sat up. The squat chief, his fears of the night gone, kicked Ta-wan-ne-ars awake.

"This is the day of the Moon feast," he said. "You will soon clamor to die."

CHAPTER X

The Moon Feast

We were yanked to our feet and pushed outside. Thousands of Indians lined the narrow, dirty streets between the bark houses and lodges. They greeted us with a silence so intent that it was as arresting as a shout. Not a finger was laid upon us, not a voice raised. Yet the fierce anticipation which gleamed in every face was more threatening than definite gestures.

Ahead of us opened the flat expanse of the dancing-place, with the two lonely stakes, flanked by piles of freshly gathered firewood, standing like portents of evil against the dark-green background of the pines which walked the rear of the amphitheater.

Ta-wan-ne-ars looked eagerly in every direction, but she whom he sought was not present nor were there visible any of the carrion crew of priests. Only the sinister faces of the negro, Tom, and Bolling, with his tangle of red hair, stirred recollections in that alien, hostile mass.

Our guards bound us to the stakes as they had the day before, and Ta-wan-ne-ars, with a significant glance at me, rallied them with the searching wit of his race.

"The Cahnuaga dogs are not used to taking captives," he commented. "They are women. They should be tilling the field. They do not know how to torment real warriors."

When they were passing the thongs under his arm-pits, the Seneca bent forward and fastened his teeth in the forearm of the incanting guard. The blood spurted and the man yelled with pain. Ta-wan-ne-ars laughed.

"Unarmed and bound, yet I can hurt you," he cried. "Truly, you are women. The warriors of the Great League scorn you."

Strangely enough, they made no retaliation upon him; but, having securely fastened us to the stakes, withdrew and stood somewhat apart from the encompassing crowds.

The silence continued for more than an hour, when a lane was opened opposite to us and Murray and De Veulle sauntered forward.

"I trust you have fared well, Master Juggins—I beg pardon, Master Ormerod?" remarked Murray urbanely. "No discomforts? Enough to eat and sufficient attention?"

I profited by Ta-wan-ne-ars' example,

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and thrust for the one weak spot in the man's armor of egotism. "You do proclaim yourself for what you are," I answered him steadily. "Sure, no man of breeding would descend to the depths you reach. I do assure you, follow, if you ever return to civilization and attempt to mix with the gently bred, your plowboy origin will out."

His face was suffused to a purple hue. "Sdeath!" he rasped. "Sir, know you not I am of the Murrays of Cobheliaw? I quarter my arms with the Kioths! I have a right to carry the Bleeding Heart on my shield! I—" "No, no," I interrupted. "Tis easy for you to claim here in the wilderness, but the humblest cadet of the house of Douglas would disprove you. I dislike to speak ill of any woman, and certes I could weep for the grief of her who conceived you, whatever she was. But I make no doubt she was some Huron squaw."

His face went dead white. "I was pleaded with overlong to spare you," he said in accents so cold that the words fell like icicles breaking from the rocks. "I am glad I resisted. I shall give orders now that your torments be the most ingenious our savages can devise."

"I doubt it not," I said. "You will die in much agony," he continued placidly. "Nobody will ever know of your taunts. And I—his vanity flared up again—"I shall die a marquis and a duke."

"And a convicted criminal," I added. He murmured to De Veulle and walked away, the savages moving from his path as if he were death in person, for indeed they feared him, more even than they feared Black Robe and their own accursed priests. He was the master of all.

"So you are to be chief torturer, monsieur le chevalier?" I remarked to De Veulle. "Even so," he agreed. "There could not be a fitter," I said sympathetically.

"I thank you for your appreciation," he replied. "I have instructed the savages to give you the long torment. You will be still alive this time tomorrow. Think of it! Your Iroquois friend knows what that means—an eyeless, bloody wreck of a man, begging to be slain!"

He beckoned to the Cahnuaga chief. "Let loose your people," he ordered, and stepped back.

The Cahnuaga put his hand to his mouth, and the high-pitched, soaring notes of the war-whoop resounded through the air. And as if one directing center animated them all the thousands of savages closed in on us, yelling and shrieking, weapons menacing, feet pounding the measures of some clumsy dance.

They swirled round and round us, those who could get nearest dashing up to the stakes to mock at us or threaten us with words and weapons. Nobody touched us, but the strain of constantly expecting physical assault was nerve-racking. Ta-wan-ne-ars smiled serenely at them all, and when he could make himself heard, returned their threats.

Not Much Doubt as to Where She Stood

Attorney W. B. Ward tells of the utterance of a client he once had in Kansas City that he regarded as a classic in finality. The client was of ebony hue and was asking to be divorced from what she termed the "most incontinent, triflingest man that breathed."

Judge Birney figured such exhortation indicated another suitor somewhere in the background. By clever questioning he attempted to wring from the irate witness that there was another man in the case, but she stoutly denied such inference and continued with the denunciation of the hapless spouse. After an hour the court decided the plaintiff had earned her decree and so indicated, but in passing judgment he observed verbally that the plaintiff would in all probability be married again within a month. Disregarding formality and

even with contempt the woman took her stand in front of the bench and fixing Judge Birney with her eyes she exclaimed:

"Judge, the man I'd marry again ain't been born yet and furthermore his mother's dead."

This continued for a long time. Twilight was at hand before they dropped back, and a select band of young warriors began to exhibit their skill with bow and arrow, knife and tomahawk. Arrows were shot between our arms and bodies; tomahawks hurtled into the posts beside our ears; knives were hurled from the far side of the open space, so closely aimed that their points shaved our naked ribs. Once in a while we were scratched; the handle of a tomahawk, poorly thrown, raised a bump on my forehead. And De Veulle, squatting on the ground with a knot of chiefs, applauded the show.

It went on and on. New forms of mental torture were constantly devised. Darkness closed down, and the fires beside the stakes were lighted. I was in a daze. I had ceased to feel fear or misgiving. I was conscious only of a great weariness and thirst.

Of a sudden I realized that the shouting had died down. The prancing figures were at rest. But into the circle of firelight swayed the hideous column of False Faces, their masks of monstrous birds and beasts and reptiles seeming alive with horrid purpose in the shifting gloom, their feet moving harmoniously in the hesitant step of the dance, their voices united in the monotonous music of their chant.

They strung a circle, as they had done the day before, and baited, heads wabbling this way and that. There was a brief pause, and I noticed De Veulle, risen to his feet and staring intently behind me, where the wall of pines made a perfect background for the spectacle. A sigh burst from the half-seen throngs of savages. "Ga-ga-sa Ho-nun-as-tase-ta!"

I craned my neck, and as well as the things permitted me peered around the stake to which I was lashed. A white figure flitted from the protection of the trees and glided toward us. The False Faces started a queer, rhythmic air, accompanied by gently throbbing drums. The figure commenced to dance, arms wide, hair floating free. Beside me Ta-wan-ne-ars choked back a groan of hate and love and fought fruitlessly against the rawhide thongs.

'Twas Ga-ha-no. She wore again her ceremonial uniform, the kilt and mocassins; but this time they were white, fashioned of skins taken from the bellies of young dogs. Her limbs and body, too, were coated with some white substance that made her gleam like a delicate marble statue when she postured in the flickering radiance of the fires.

She tossed up her arms in a curving gesture toward the moon, riding low above the treetops. The music of the attendant priests swung into a faster measure, the pulsing of the drums became subtly disturbing, commanding. "O So-ka-ga-gwa," she cried. "I, your servant, the Mistress of the False Faces, begin now the Moon feast we make in your honor!"

She resumed her dance, but 'twas very different from the graceful, pleasing steps she had first used. I know not how to describe it, save perhaps that 'twas like the music, provocative, appealing to the basest instincts in man, indecent with a peculiarly attractive indecency. It was, I think, the dance of creation, of the impulse of life, one of the oldest and in its perverted way one of the truest dances which man ever devised. It could only be danced by a savage people, primitive and unashamed.

Faster went the measure of the dance. Faster whirled the glistening white figure. Now she danced before us, her eyes burning with mockery—I know not what—of Ta-wan-ne-ars. Now she spun around the open space in a series of intricate steps and posturings.

The music worked up to a crescendo, the drums thudding with furious speed. Ga-ha-no leaped high in air and raised her arms toward the moon, whose sickle shape was no whiter or fairer than she.

The chant stopped in the middle of a note, and as her feet touched the ground again she ran lightly across the amphitheater and threw herself into De Veulle's arms. He tossed her upon his shoulder.

"The Moon feast is open, O my people," she called back as he disappeared with her into the shadows.

All those thousands of people went mad. The dancing-place became a wild tumult of naked savages, men and women, leaping in groups and couples to the renewed music of the False Faces. Decency and restraint were cast aside.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Man is an awful liar. When he sinks a long putt he smilingly declares it was only a matter of luck, but he knows deep in his heart that it was because he is a great man.—Eldorado (Kans.) Times.

A Different Valuation
"When you figure on what you're worth," said Hi Ho, the sage of Chinatown, "you may get a different result from your conscience from the one your bank account gives you."

Daddy's Evening Fairy Tale

BY MARY GRAHAM BONNER

SKYSCRAPER FAIRY

First I must tell you what the Skyscraper Fairy wore. She wore a dress of the loveliest shade of blue—that shade of blue that comes just before dawn and creeps over the city buildings and any hills that there may be in the distance.

It was made in points, too, points from her skirt, points from her shoulders and the sleeves went off in points.

On her head was a crown that was made of blue, too, only there was just the faintest suggestion of rose in its coloring and there were a few very, very faint, very little, very small stars that you could just see if you looked very closely.

Her home was on the top of the tallest skyscraper in a big city of skyscrapers. She lived there a great deal of the time and she called it her home—though of course she had her Fairyland home, too, and she used to go wandering and visiting a great deal of the time.

She used to go at dusk when the city is beginning to have soft shadows over it so that all its dirt and ugliness disappear, and the bright lights of the city and the faint lights from the stars and the deep, deep violet shadows take the place of the things that stand out so plainly in the daylight.

But it was not only because the city was so lovely at twilight time and just at sunset time, too, when the great big sun sank down behind the great big city, that the Skyscraper Fairy loved it.

It was because then she used to go around to see her many little friends.

She went to visit the children. And she had so many friends among them.

They did not exactly know she was the one who came to see them, but they knew often at night how happy



And the Squirrels.

they were when they looked out of their city windows and saw the mysterious, wonderful city lights, and heard the strange, muffled sounds of the city streets.

They did not know why such wonderful thoughts came to them then—thoughts they never could express—they did not know quite why they felt so happy and why their imaginations had such a good time without just exactly letting them into the secret.

For the Skyscraper Fairy wanted to make them all have as interesting a time as the children who were visited by fairies everywhere else. So every city had its Skyscraper Fairy and her workers. The first Skyscraper Fairy of all had seen to that.

She knew that back of so many big apartment house buildings with their hundreds of windows and so many other huge big city places that looked so hard and cold on the outside, were plenty of wonderful children.

And she took them Fairyland thoughts.

At dusk, too, she used to go around and see them as they awoke and made them feel something of the same early morning freshness that they would have felt if they had lived in the country.

Oh, how the Skyscraper Fairy knew them.

She knew how they used to go to the big parks in the afternoon to play, she knew how they used to go and visit the zoo.

She knew how they used to go and feed the pigeons and the ducks and the squirrels.

She knew how they used to draw with their pieces of chalk on the stone walks that were in some of the smaller parks where they went.

She used to watch them as they played—then, of course, in true Fairyland style she wore a cloak so dazzling that they could no more have looked at her than they could have looked at the sun.

She loved her city children and she knew how they, too, loved fairies and she loved the city with its big, hard buildings which softened in the afternoon when the sun set, and as the lights came out, and again in the morning when the blue colors rested over the whole, whole city of skyscrapers.

New Type
The youngsters very proudly showed mother the picture she had been drawing. It was supposed to represent a house, surrounded by trees. Mother was critical. "Just look at that house," she said. "It's too big; it's as tall as the trees." The youngster looked scornful. "O, this is an apartment house," she said. —Springfield Union.



In Later Years of Life

Good Elimination is More Than Ever Important.

As we grow older, there is apt to be a gradual slowing up of bodily functions. The kidneys are the blood filters. Proper function cleanses the blood stream thoroughly. Sluggish function is apt to permit some retention of uric acid and other poisons. This tends to make one tired, listless and aky —to have drowsy headaches and dizziness and perhaps a toxic backache. That the kidneys are not functioning properly is often shown by scanty or burning passages. Elderly people recommend Doan's Pills in this condition. This tested diuretic is endorsed the country over. Ask your neighbor!

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Kissed
"You are sun kissed," remarked Margie. "There are others," announced Maud.

A news item tells of an unpublished manuscript dated 1590, which is a whole lot of rejection slips.

Elouquence is the mistress of all the arts.—Tacitus.

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—Springfield Union.