

# THE TIGER TRAIL

by Edison Marshall Illustrations by PAUL FREHM



**WHAT HAS HAPPENED BEFORE—**

Dr. Long, out fishing with Alexander Pierce, a detective, tells of his projected trip to Southley Downs. Pierce advises him to keep his eyes wide open while there. On the way in a train Dr. Long is attracted by a girl, who later faints. Dr. Long treats her, and looking into her bag, is as- surounded to find a loaded revolver.

Dr. Long meets Ahmad Das, an Oriental, who conducts him to Southley Downs, where he meets Mr. Southley and his son, Ernest Southley. Mr. Hayward and his son, Vilas, and then Josephine Southley, who is the girl he had met on the train. Josephine tells him the story of Southley Downs and its ghost, which is not the ghost of a human being but of a tiger.

Dr. Long has a quarrel with Vilas Hayward over Josephine, and finds that the Haywards have a strange authority over the Southleys. He is ordered to leave Southley Downs. The rain prevents him leaving at once. Dr. Long and Ernest go out on the road in the rain looking for the tracks of a tiger that Ernest says are there. They find the tracks. Later Ernest and Dr. Long see a prowling creature in the hall at Southley Downs. This frightens the elder Hayward, who also sees it. Ernest begins to feel that Ahmad Das is perpetrating some devilry.

The elder Hayward is later found dead, his neck broken as if by a gaint's blow.

The coroner and police arrive in order to investigate.

Because of the murder, Dr. Long must remain at Southley Downs. All the persons there are questioned by Inspector Freeman.

**NOW READ ON—**

Of course his reason for wanting to know was perfectly obvious. He wanted to see whether I could have possibly had time to hire one of the negroes to murder the elder Hayward. He knew that I had not done the deed with my own hands, from the fact that I had already established an alibi.

"We've got a motive for you, Long," he told me at the end, "but not much else. There are others that we have some of the other things, but no motive."

He called on Ahmad Das. The latter told him how he had gone out to the garage after the car; how he had looked in vain for Hayward in the driveway, and how, later, he had found the body.

The detective flushed slightly and leaned forward.

"You didn't like the elder Hayward, Ahmad?" Freeman asked abruptly.

"No, sahib."

"Why didn't you? What had he ever done to you?"

"He was not pleasant to serve, sahib. Many times he swore—"

"And I believe he struck you once, Ahmad."

Ahmad's voice lowered. "Yes."

"And why did he?"

"I was slow in a service that he asked."

"He didn't like you either, Ahmad."

well."

"Because we went to different schools. Both of us are comparative strangers to Southley Downs."

The detective turned to Josephine. "And what light have you to throw on this matter, Miss Southley?" he asked.

"None at all," the girl replied.

"And where were you, after the scene in the den?"

"I went straight to bed. My maid helped me undress."

"And the Haywards must not have been so unpopular with you as with your brother and Ahmad?"

"I was with both of them a great deal."

"And I think you took Vilas' part against Dr. Long."

Her voice lowered.

"Yes."

"And why did you do that?"

"Because I couldn't do anything else under the circumstances."

"You evidently didn't like Dr. Long?"

"I did like Dr. Long. But his relation with me was greatly different from that of Vilas."

She looked squarely into his eyes as she talked. The room faded except for her. The faces of the watching circle became as mist. I don't know why each answer she made seemed to go so deep into me—each word—each inflection of voice an indelible imprint in my memory. I couldn't turn my eyes from her white face. I hardly heard the detective's questions when he turned to Southley. They came from somewhere far off.

"Please tell me, Southley, just what were the relations between you and the Haywards."

"The elder Hayward and I were the oldest friends," the old man answered. He spoke falteringly, in the hesitant way of age.

"They had been here almost a month?"

seen this contingency. The detective searched swiftly for twenty minutes; then paused to wipe the little beads of perspiration from his lean face.

"It's no use," he said. "No clews worth finding."

He started toward the door. "There's one place you haven't searched at all," I told him.

"Where?" He turned in amazement.

"That drawer full of linen." I pointed to a drawer in the dresser.

"I glanced into it. He wouldn't put it in such an obvious place as that. Even Ahmad Das wouldn't be that much of a fool."

"Perhaps, Inspector Freeman, you haven't heard of M. Dupin?"

Inspector Freeman stopped to consider.

"His name has slipped my mind," he confessed.

"M. Dupin was a very famous detective—a Frenchman. A very great American wrote about him long ago."

"Oh, you mean a story-book detective," Freeman scorned. "I'm glad to say I've never wasted my time reading such trash. None of 'em were ever practical. Practical men are the go nowadays. The time they wasted in theories and talk—"

"Yet sometimes their theories came out right. Mr. Dupin would have been the first to tell you that for the very reason that you would think that drawer too obvious a place for a man to hide a garment, it would be the very place an astute criminal would hide it. He would know in advance that you wouldn't look there, and therefore it would be a good place. He proved it with the story of a stolen letter, hidden among a packet of other letters, in plain sight."

"It's all right in books; but it don't work out in life," Freeman commented.

Of course I knew that as a whole he spoke the truth. But it had begun to dawn on me that Freeman was not the highest type of official detective. If he had been, I would never have asked the question about Dupin; and I would not have had the cold courage to lecture to him now.

"Then there was a later detective—a little, fat Catholic priest," I went on. "He asked his friend where a wise man would hide a pebble."

"And his friend, if he had any sense, would have said to bury it six feet under the ground and smooth off the top."

"His friend told him to hide it on the beach. Then the detective asked where a wise man would hide a leaf. And the answer was—in the forest. I don't say that Ahmad Das would have chosen this drawer if he had time to choose a better place. But it is certainly the most likely place in this room."

I went to the drawer and hunted among the garments. And I'm afraid the color came to my face. Evidently my theories were to go unsupported by fact.

"I guess Ahmad Das didn't hide his pebble on the beach," the detective exulted.

Then I looked twice at a newly laundered shirt that I had picked up and laid down before. It struck me as being an unusually heavy garment. Some inspiration made me unpin it. And folded within it was found another shirt, covered with great spots

ches of dark brown stain.

Freeman leaped toward me and took the garment in his hands. Just for an instant he examined it. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "You've found it after all. Do you know what those spots are?"

"No."

"They're blood. It's convincing proof. And it's Ahmad's shirt, too."

Swiftly he compared the laundry mark on it with the mark of the other garments in the drawer. I didn't dream that this austere man was capable of such exultation. His eyes actually seemed to glisten; and a high color suffused his lean, dark face. I thought of a hound hot upon the trail.

"It's the final proof!" he cried. "We'll get him now. I'll write a confession out of him."

Then both of us drew up sharply.

"Ahmad is coming into his room," I whispered. For I was sure that the faint sound I had heard had been in the corridor.

Both of us instinctively braced ourselves. We didn't know what frenzy of desperation we would have to face if Ahmad saw us with that condemn- ing evidence in our hands. A long moment dragged away.

Then Freeman stole to the door. He looked up and down the corridor.

"Must have been a rat," he exclaimed.

"Rather a noisy rat."

"Maybe the wind. But we'd better get out of here. He'll come back any moment."

I started to pin the dinner shirt into even folds, just as I had found it.

"M. Dupin did the same with the envelope of the letter," I explained. "Then the criminal didn't know it had been found."

"I do believe you've got the makings of a detective!" Freeman told me with a little amazement.

the sole result of the ten inches of rain; now it was done, and the river was quickly falling.

The Florida darkness is always worth watching. It comes so gently, so like a dark mist that the sun blows up. The color of the water changed and deepened. The shadow that were the jungle grew black. Again we heard the sounds of wild life that the storm of the previous night had stilled.

We smoked cigars and talked. And after while one of the colored men came to tell us of a discovery.

A flat rock jutted from the hillside about fifty yards from the scene of the murder, he said. Just at twilight he had walked near it, and had noticed a queer discoloration on the stone. It was evidently clotted blood, he thought, and what looked like fragments of flesh.

"You don't mean—human flesh?" Freeman asked.

His eyes narrowed, ever so slightly. It was evident that the colored man was terrified almost beyond the power of speech.

"Yes, sah. I couldn't tell for sure. But it was some kind of flesh, sah."

We didn't waste any more time. We hastened down the footpath. Although the night had fallen, the darkness was nothing of the intensity of the night before. I was able to discern the outline of his figure as he walked ten paces in front of me. I could detect the shadows that were the stables and garages, and the nearer of the cottages of the colored farmhands. And then, at the same instant, both of us saw another shadow.

Some one was standing perfectly still on the hillside. Of course we

couldn't see plain. He was possibly fifty feet distant; and if we had not possessed such an accurate knowledge of the geography of the hill he might have easily been mistaken for a shrub or stump. He was doing that which all hunters learn to do, standing perfectly still to avoid detection. He was trusting to the shadows to obscure him.

We both stopped on the trail.

"Who's there?" the detective demanded. The shadow did not waver.

"Who's there? Answer, or I'll shoot," Freeman insisted. He started across the turf toward him. And as a deer springs, the other sped down the hill in flight.

There was something startling in the speed with which he ran. We flung out in pursuit, Freeman firing his pistol in the air. But even if he has wished, it would have been impossible, except by the blindest luck, for the detective to have hit the fugitive. A pistol is never accurate at long range; and few marksmen can shoot at all in the darkness. In an instant our quarry faded, slipped away and melted in the shadows.

**(TO BE CONTINUED)**

**Son Is Born**—Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Neet of Wendling are the parents of a son born at the home of the former's father at Second and C streets, here Monday, August 6.

**Drive to Corvallis**—Mrs. Meda Catching and Mrs. Al Montgomery drove to Corvallis Wednesday to visit with friends and relatives.

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