

# 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 astounded 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.  
 Dr. Long becomes jealous of the love he believes to exist between Vilas Hayward and Josephine. During the course of investigations of the crime Dr. Long becomes suspicious of a man named Robin. He determines to watch him.  
**NOW READ ON—**

In some way that I was yet to find out, he was involved in the problem of Southley Downs. He had washed the blood from the rock on the hillside. He had eluded the inspector and myself in the chase in the darkness. Now I had found him with Southley working upon the engine in the power-house—and yet they had seemed merely to be examining it, rather than at work. I remembered that neither of them had held tools in their hands, or even seemed to have any tools with them.  
 I was suddenly deeply suspicious of this man Robin. I remembered that he had volunteered his services to the negro Sam, and that looked as if he had business of his own at Southley Downs. His excuse for coming seemed somewhat trumped-up. Besides, he looked his part too well. He was too perfect an example of a certain type of squatter. He had an English accent, and I had been watching all through my visit at Southley Downs for the intrusion of some one with such an accent.  
 Roderick, of whom Alexander Pierce had told me, who evidently had not yet put in his appearance, had lived long years in England. The names were somewhat similar, too; and I had heard before of that peculiar trait of human nature that influences a man against giving up his own name altogether. The alias he adopts is usually somewhat similar to his own name.  
 I made a feint of going back to a book. Southley seemed relieved. He left me in a moment, and joined his daughter in the den. Vilas had gone to his room, and lost as it was among the many, breathless corridors of the great house, I could imagine it was the last place in the world he had really wished to go. I drew my chair up to the great dormer window that overlooked the power-house. And I didn't see one word of the type beneath my eyes.  
 The hill was swept by moonbeams. There was a silver path across the face of the swamp, leaping ever to my eyes. I waited possibly five minutes. And then I saw Robin emerge from the power-house.  
 For a long minute he waited in the shadows, and my suspicions leaped to a certainty. Then I saw him steal away toward the edge of the marsh.  
 A minute more and I was out in the darkness too, trying to shadow him. I tried to keep to the less open part of the hillside and yet not lose sight of my quarry. He walked slowly at first, and I shortened the distance between us to one hundred yards. As yet I had no reason for

thinking he had seen me. His form was perfectly visible in the moonlight, but all at once he increased his pace.  
 I walked faster, too. My quarry broke into a slow trot. It was impossible that I could run behind him and still keep out of sight. So I made a furious dash toward him at top speed.  
 For a moment I thought I would overtake him before he saw me; but when I had covered half the distance between us he began really to run. He straightened out his long legs, and fairly seemed to fly—straight for the marsh at the bottom of the hill.  
 "Stop, Robin!" I shouted at him. "Stop at once!"  
 He only increased his speed. I never saw a man run faster. I was in good condition, and I gave him the best I had. He hadn't the chance to elude me that he had in our previous encounter earlier in the evening. The moon was out now.  
 He splashed across a pond of shallow water at the base of the hill. Possibly he thought I would not follow him here. But he was to be disappointed. No water was deep enough to throw me off now. I was going to find out his connection with the crime if I had to follow him to the mainland across the swamp.  
 But at once he splashed out of the pond and circled back up the hill. I was soaked to the knees, but I gave it no thought. Of course he couldn't run so fast up the steep slope, nor could I. And by breath was coming in great sobs before I approached the house.  
 He swung about the great structure, and I dipped far enough to one side to watch. I saw him slip into the postern door that led to the library.  
 Twenty seconds later I entered the same room. Evidently he hoped to elude me in the maze of rooms. But he had forgotten one thing.  
 His boots—the same boots that had left the telltale track beside the rock—were splashed with mud and water. They made a trail across the rugs and hardwood floor of the library. And they turned into the den.  
 Once more the drama of Southley Downs had shifted to this little room. Once more I stood at its threshold. And I had a curious sense of portentous developments that would come to pass within its doors.  
 Southley and Josephine were standing up near the same table that had figured in the drama of the previous night.  
 "Close the door," Southley told me. "But where is that man Robin? I saw him rush in here. And I know he has something to do with this mystery."  
 "Robin? You mean the man who helped me in the power-house?"  
 A large blue portiere hung at the side of the den, and out of the corner of my eye I saw it waver. No wind blew it. And then, looking straight, I saw the ends of white fingers that clutched its folds.  
 "Mr. Southley, the man is behind that curtain now!"  
 Then the man behind the curtain answered me himself.  
 "Oh, old Doc Long!" came a familiar voice. "You're the most persistent devil!"  
 There is only one person in the world that calls me "old Doc Long." The hope of hearing his voice about this cursed house of the Southleys was dead in my breast. It was the voice of the man I had longed for, whose deep brain and able hands would so quickly bring light where there was shadow.  
 He pulled the curtain aside, the gray eyes laughed at me. I saw through the disguise at last, and marveled at my blindness heretofore. Of course it was no one but my old and trusted friend, that world-famous detective and fisherman, Alexander Pierce.  
 After we had got through pounding one another on the back and roaring out what a pleasure it was to meet again I began to put a few questions to the great detective. And all the time I marveled at his disguise.  
 "But why didn't you let me in on it?" I demanded just a little hurt.  
 I saw laughter in his eyes, but his face remained grave.  
 "You are doing so well without me, doc," he replied. "And the way you chased me through the mud—it was rich, my lad! What a persistent devil you are! Miss Southley—if ever this young man gets on your trail, you'll never be able to shake him off."  
 "Miss Southley already knows that," I commented. "And look at my trouser legs—my best dinner clothes. You

are a trifle wet yourself."  
 "These beautiful boots protected me." Then he grew serious. "Besides, Long—among your many talents I'm afraid you can't claim to be an actor. Just a look—a word—might have given me away. It was much better that you devote your attention to the excellent work Inspector Freeman has been doing. And as to the reason why I came in disguise—I don't believe the time is quite ripe to divulge it. I assure you that it served my ends very well."  
 "But it seems you trusted every one else." I glanced toward Southley and his daughter.  
 "Naturally Mr. Southley knew it. I came at his invitation—and your own, of course, too. Long, Miss Southley learned the truth just this evening, and I consider it a distinct reflection on the ability of her father and myself to judge character that we waited so long in making her an ally. But I will say—its more her father's fault than mine."  
 "You must remember that my acquaintance with my daughter was somewhat slight," Southley explained to us. "She has been away to school so much—only here a few weeks. Besides—she did know a few things. I'm sorry I didn't tell her more."  
 Father and daughter exchanged smiles. Josephine herself seemed changed. It was curious that I had not noticed it the moment I stepped into the room. There was a new light in her eyes, a rising of the delicious color that played ever in her cheeks. Again I saw the smile that I had marveled at that night in the drawing-room long ago. Evidently there had been developments in the mystery of which I was not aware.  
 "Remember, we will need your son too," Alexander told my host.  
 Alexander and I walked together into the drawing-room, and we had a minute's talk at the foot of the stairs.  
 "I'm going to my room now," he explained. "It's a maid's room on the third floor, but it fits my purpose perfectly. I have a few chemical experiments to make."  
 "Of course it was you who destroyed the evidence on the white stone."  
 "Not destroyed it. Merely gathered it up. I wanted to make some blood tests. And it pained me to cause you and the inspector so much disappointment."  
 "I imagined it would!"  
 Then we had a little laugh together. It was all too plain that a deep professional jealousy existed between such free-lance experts as Alexander and staff detectives like Inspector Freeman.  
 "But why in the world did you tear that piece from Ahmad's shirt?" I asked.  
 Alexander laughed again—a boyish joyous sound that died quickly in the silence of the room.  
 "I'm afraid that is evidence of my quixotic nature," he said. "But I had to have sample of the blood-stains; and I knew it would break Freeman's heart if I took the whole shirt. So I just tore off the piece."  
 He sobered and became very businesslike. That was one of the marvels of the man. One minute he was the best of comrades—boyish, laughing, irresponsible. The next, he was the cool-headed, tireless sleuth with every nerve and muscle alert.  
 "There's work for tomorrow," he went on swiftly. "You'll have your part to do. So will Southley have his part, and his two children. Tomorrow I'm going to take the boat on a little expedition—over to the plateau. You are to meet me on the path at my return—just after nightfall. You can have the inspector with you if you like. Southley and his daughter will be close about, and they will know their parts. The hour to strike is almost here."  
 "And Vilas? What about him? And Ahmad?"  
 "Ahmad is the suspected murderer. I'm afraid Vilas won't do."  
 "But Josephine Southley would think otherwise," I told him with some bitterness. "You must know—that they are allies. You couldn't have missed that point."  
 "Allies?" he echoed coldly. "What do you mean?"  
 "She's going to marry him—that's what I mean. And she's bitterly against me. Thinking that her lover might be accused of the murder of his father, she told the detective things that implicated me and got him to hold me here."  
 He turned and started up the stairs. "Sometimes, Dr. Long," he told me slowly, "your mental grasp is quite

astounding—for its perfect and abounding aptitude to make a fool of yourself."  
 And he left me to ponder in the halls below.  
 Inspector Freeman—who had learned the truth at last—and I walked down to the shore with Pierce at 11 o'clock the next morning. The rowboat waited for my friend, and in it were two strong colored men to row. Alexander had put on hip-boots and was armed with a heavy rifle. And it was plain to see that Freeman was entirely contemptuous of the whole proceedings.  
 "You're a funny one, Pierce," he spoke jokingly—and at the same time meant every word he said. "In the first place, coming with all that stage scenery on yourself. It takes one of you correspondence school detectives to do stunts like that. I suppose you thought that the murderer would recognize your determined face from your picture in the newspapers—and make himself scarce before you could get out the handcuffs."  
 "Rather a different reason, my dear inspector," Alexander answered him as he began to slip the great cartridges into the magazine of the heavy rifle. "It wasn't the murderer I was so frightened of. In the first place, I didn't want you to leave the scene in disgust, as you might have done upon recognizing me. You were doing too good work."  
 "You needn't have been afraid of that. The man was already in my hands. And I'm glad you appreciate the work I have done."  
 "Perfectly, Freeman, perfectly. It was particularly clever the way you found the shirt."  
 "Of course, you were in the hall all the time."  
 "Of course, I wondered what you and my good friend Long were going to do."  
 "I suppose you know that the shirt is going to put the noose about Ahmad's neck?"  
 "One can never tell, inspector."  
 "It's a piece of evidence that cannot be questioned—although I admit the final tests as to the authenticity of the stains has not yet been made."  
 "And besides, Freeman—there are other reasons why I thought it best that certain occupants of this house didn't recognize me," Alexander went on seriously. "It would help out in

the end, I confess I don't care for disguises as a rule. And now I must bid you good day, and go search yonder jungle for the murderer of Hayward."  
 Freeman laughed uproariously. "With a rifle, too!" he exulted. "I think you were going elephant hunting. Of all the quixotic enterprises! You can't believe that the murderer is still at large, when I have him under my constant supervision in the house! Pierce, I have every admiration for your qualities, but I assure you you are making the mistake of your career."  
 "Every one has to make mistakes—sometimes, inspector," Alexander returned quietly. "Besides—I don't suppose you remember about the breaking of the levee—how the murderer would have time to cross the isthmus to the plateau, but couldn't possibly go farther?"  
 "I remember that perfectly. But the real murderer didn't try to cross at all. He came back into the house."  
 "Then there's the matter of the scratches—and the legend, and the rest of it. None of these things must be overlooked, Freeman. And I'll meet you both soon after dark."  
 We watched the negroes row away across the dark swamp water. He was gone all afternoon. Once it seemed to me that I heard the far-off echo of two rifle shots, but I couldn't be sure. Freeman continued his investigations. Vilas walked about on the green hillside like a hunted man. The long afternoon waxed hot, the shadows lengthened, the sun cast its glamor over all the waste of the marshes. Twilight dropped like a white mist, and the stars began to crop out of the sky. The night life of the marsh awakened—in

sect and wind and bird had their chorus.  
 I don't know where my thoughts were that long afternoon. I tried to read for a while. It wasn't a success. I knew that my stay at Southley Downs, so often threatened, was at its end at last. Tomorrow we would all cross the marsh to testify at the coroner's inquest; and I would never return to Southley Downs again. The mystery and the charm would go out of my life to stay, as the swamp-water glided beneath the boat.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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