

THE TIGER TRAIL

by Edison Marshall Illustrations by PAUL FREHM

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Dr. Long is visiting Southley Downs to which he is conducted by Ahmad, an Oriental. There he meets Mr. Southley, whom a detective friend, Alexander Pierce, had told him to watch, and his son Ernest. Southley, Mr. Hayward and his son Vilas, and then Josephine Southley, whom he had seen faint 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 of Southley Downs. This frightens the elder Hayward, who also sees it. Ernest begins to feel that Ahmad Das is perpetrating some devilry. Now read on—

The old man sat down in a cushioned chair. He gave no heed to the water pouring from his clothes. He looked tired and listless.

"The levee is breaking," he answered simply.

Only his son seemed to understand. I looked up from the work of tying my shoes, procured in my room on the way to the library. We made a silent circle in the dim light.

"What does it mean?" Hayward cried. "Does it mean we'll be drowned?"

He spoke hoarsely, but the announcement steadied me. Floods were material, and could be faced. They couldn't run and hide behind the curtains.

"Nothing as bad as that," Southley answered. "Of course it means a flood; but by no conceivable circumstances can the waters reach the top of the hill where this house stands. But we'll be cut off from civilization—for days. The water will sweep all around the hill, flood the railroad bed, and fill all the low places—eight feet deep. We won't be able to reach the heights across the valley."

Hayward seemed to leap toward him. He simply appeared to break before our eyes. His voice rose shrilly, and he shook his arm in Southley's face.

"Then get me out tonight!" he screamed. "Get me away from this house while there's yet time."

"I'm afraid it's too late now," Southley answered.

"Call a car for me at once—hear me? There's still time to make the road. I won't stay here another hour. Get on your feet, you fool—and call a car for me. You'll regret it if you don't."

"There's no one to drive—but Ahmad," Southley answered wearily. "And what about your son?"

"Damn my son! Damn this wicked house! Did you say Ahmad?" For an instant we saw the battle of two fears in his great face. "Get Ahmad, then. I'll be ready as soon as I find a coat. Vilas can tend to our business, and he'll communicate with me."

Southley sighed; then got to his feet. He touched a bell on the table. Only a moment we waited. Then through the door came Ahmad Das—calm, imperturbable, his Oriental face quiet as a sea's. Never was there such depth of shadow as we saw in his eyes.

He came swiftly across the floor with that marvelous, feline grace. "Yes—sahib—"

"Get the touring car at once," Southley ordered. "You have to take Sahib Hayward to the station. Don't lose an instant. The levee is breaking. It will be broken before you return, so you'll have to leave the car in the station and come in a boat. Arrange for supplies while you're there—we may be cut off for weeks."

"I'll cut down the walk to the base of the hill," Hayward instructed. "Pick me up there, and we'll have at least a minute."

The Oriental bowed, then slipped away. He went just like a shadow. He found a raincoat in the hall, and in an instant he was out in the flood of rain.

Hayward put on his own overcoat, and started out after him. The rain and the darkness swallowed them both.

A window had been left just beside the fireplace, and through it we could ordinarily see the garage. Ernest and I gazed through that window. Ahmad was evidently having difficulty in beating his way through the storm. It was a long time before we saw an indication that he had reached the garage. Then we saw his auto lights flash on.

We were barely able to make them out, although it was plain that the garage door was open and they were shining directly toward us. Of course the distance was far; and the piercing rays could hardly penetrate the wall of rain. The lightning had entirely ceased. We couldn't hear the roar of the engine at all. Then we saw, quite plainly, the track of the lights as the car sped about the shoulder of the hill.

Perhaps, in all, the walk to the garage and the starting of the car had taken four minutes. The walk to the base of the hill, where the postern path met the driveway, took ordinarily two minutes. It was straight downhill, and if Hayward had walked swiftly at all, he would certainly have two minutes to wait. The car came slowly, and still we could see the faint luster in the rain that was its lights.

They curved on to the base of the hill. Then Ernest uttered a syllable of exclamation. "He's driven past the point," he said.

"Possibly Hayward has walked on a few feet," I suggested.

The car slowed up and stopped

for a single instant, then started slowly on. It was hard to believe that it halted long enough to permit the portly form of Hayward to enter. It looked to us as if Ahmad were trying to throw the car-lights onto the side of the road. Then, to our vast amazement, we saw him turn around.

The car headed back, just as slowly, and circled about to the garage.

The servant stopped the car in the rain; and we waited a long three minutes for him to drive on again. We only knew he was standing still from the faint blur of the lights in the downpour. I don't remember that we three men talked at all. Possibly there were one or two wondering remarks—as to what was the cause of the delay.

And just then the dark form of the Hindu came into the hall. The look of question on his face seemed very real indeed. I remembered it afterward, as did all the rest of us.

"Where," he asked, "is Hayward Sahib?"

"You mean Vilas?" Southley asked.

"The elder Hayward, whom I was to drive to the station."

"For God's sake, Ahmad! Did you miss him? He started out in the rain, and was going to meet you at the foot of the path. Didn't you understand?"

"I looked—but he wasn't there. Then I thought I had misunderstood, and drove back to the garage. He wasn't there either."

"Good Lord, he'll be drenched. Go down the path and find him."

"Yes, sahib—"

My eyes were upon Ernest's face, and suddenly his gaze met mine. I think that we had the same thought.

"Wait a minute, Ahmad," he said quietly. "Keep the door shut." Then he turned to his father; and stood for a long instant as if in thought. "Father, I think that we'd all better go—and look for Hayward."

We saw no sign of Hayward at first. We got down to the driveway, and flashed out lanterns all along it. We looked up and down the path. We tried to call in the beat of the rain.

"Good Lord!" Southley cried. "He couldn't have got down into the river and drowned!"

We scattered about, and began to climb over the hillside. The rain, the bobbing lantern, the echo of the catastrophe, the dark house behind us and the gathering lakes in front, gave the scene a singularly dreamlike quality. Then Ahmad, who walked close beside me, tripped, and fell over something on the ground.

He uttered an oath in his own tongue; then whirled to look. He bent and felt about with his hand. The place he stood was a little neck of land that dipped down into the flood-waters, an isthmus that separated the height on which the house stood from the plateau opposite.

"Bring the lantern," the Hindu called. "I have found Sahib Hayward."

The lantern showed everything very plainly. We understood why Hayward had not met the servant at the house. His neck was broken, as if by a giant's blow.

We didn't stop to examine the body on that rain swept hillside. I had known the neck was broken simply by the way the great head dropped back when we lifted the shoulders from the ground. The four of us carried him into the house, not an easy load at all. Vilas Hayward met us at the door.

The effect on the younger Hayward was hardly what I expected. It was true that I didn't look for prostration. He was the kind of man that levees gave way from his parents in early boyhood.

"My father!" he shrieked. The sound went high and wild in the storm. "Don't dare to tell me he's dead."

"We don't dare to tell you anything else, because he is," Ernest answered.

Vilas leaped toward Southley; and for an instant I thought he would attack him. His face was drawn hideously in the half-light. He had evidently left his bed only when the levee gave way; he was only partly dressed.

"Then you're the devil that killed him! You, I say, Southley! You killed him to get rid of him, and you'll be trying to kill me next!"

"Don't be silly," I cautioned swiftly. "I was with Mr. Southley up to the moment that we found him."

"Then it was you, Long, in Southley's pay. I won't believe anything else."

Ernest tried to quiet him, and after he had got him away, I took the covering from the dead man's face. I made a close examination of the body. My aged host knelt beside me. Nothing but a superhuman blow could have so broken the neck. It could not have been from a fall; because only a severe fall could have done it, and out on the isthmus where we had found the corpse there were no heights to fall from. Besides, there was plenty of other evidence that some sort of a blow had killed him. The worst of them all were two, deep parallel grooves on his face, from which the flesh had been simply raked. The flesh was discolored, too.

"It's plain as the nose on your face that the man was murdered," Southley said. "Any coroner's jury in Florida would say so. And the sooner we get word into town the better."

"At least," I answered, "the murderer can't get away. Unless he got out before the levee broke, he's on the island with us."

"And it doesn't seem likely that he could get out without superhuman strength and agility. Of course it might have been possible for a speedy runner to reach the highlands across the valley before the flood waters swept over the isthmus, but it's certain he couldn't get back to civilization. The first thing to do is to post guards to watch over the lowlands, and see that he doesn't get out."

Southley's eyes met mine. I had never seen better self-control.

"The first thing to do is to quiet the negroes," I told him. "They are terrorized. The next is to send for aid."

The old man turned quickly. "Do you mean the coroner?"

"Yes. The State will send detectives. I will be glad. It is certain that one of us three will have to face a murder charge, and the sooner it is cleared up the better."

"But we three were together—"

"That won't matter. They will say we hired one of the negroes to commit the crime. We can improvise a raft tomorrow to bring the coroner."

"We can do better than that. I've got a little sneak-boat—just a canoe—that I use for ducks. We'll have to have a bigger one to bring supplies; but it will carry a message to the mainland."

There was little else to do in the rain. We went into the den, and just as morning broke we told Ernest and Vilas our plans. The rain was less violent now. The storm was at the ebb.

"I am sorry I said what I did," Vilas apologized. "It was the excitement of the moment. But I would like to know what you think, Southley. What killed my father—accident or murder, or what?"

"Your father was struck down—there is no question about it," Southley replied. "He was killed by a blow from some unknown source. There is every reason to think that his slayer is still about this house and plantation, and every possible effort will be made to chase him down. No one will be able to leave—first, because of a rule that necessity prescribes; and second, because of the flood. Detectives will be sent out here to investigate."

"And what was the blow dealt with?" Vilas asked nervously.

"Couldn't you—find the weapon?"

Southley looked at him sharply. "That will be hunted for tomorrow," he replied. "All we could tell was that he was struck with some blunt sort of a weapon, and with terrific power—enough power to snap his neck like a reed. The blunt weapon must have had two nails or spikes—because there are two deep parallel scratches in the bruised flesh."

My eyes were upon Vilas' face. He didn't look at us.

"I only know one thing—one kind of a weapon that would leave a mark like that," he said in a strange harsh tone. "And that isn't a weapon at all. It's an animal's paw."

"And that is the one thing that must be forgotten by all of us, if we are to learn the truth," Southley told him. "It only brings horror, not clear thought. Forget the legend at once, and begin with clear eyes. That's our only chance."

With this, our little group broke up. Ernest tried to snatch a few hours of sleep on the sofa. I had

plans of my own that necessitated a consultation with the negro that was to carry word to the coroner when the sun rose. And just as I came back from my talk with him I met Josephine on the stairs.

"Where are you going?" I demanded.

She seemed surprised at my tone. "And what right have you to ask?" she answered me.

She might have been the spirit of the dawn itself in her soft gray drapes, and the light of stars in her eyes. I knew from her look that she had heard of the tragedy.

"It is just that I'm afraid for you," I told her humbly. "No one knows what might not happen—in this house."

"And you are still watchful for me—even since last night?"

Of course she referred to the scene in the den. No words can tell how appealing, from the shadows of the stairway, was her voice.

(Continued next week.)

Hints for the Home

by Nancy Hart

"Tis the month of gifts and surprises—gifts for the bride and the graduate; the Bon Voyage gift; remembrances for vacation and week end trips.

And in most households the question of "What shall the gift be" is so important that the question of "How shall it go" will be forgotten until the last moment.

Remembering previous scrambles for pretty wrappings, let us be prepared this time with a small supply of accessories that help the simplest gift to make a good impression.

There should be on hand a few sheets of fancy paper, a bolt of ribbon or perhaps monogram seals in silver or gold. And above all things—there should be suitable greeting cards, for the daintiness and apt message of a well-chosen greeting card give a personal touch that the visiting card is powerless to convey.

Spanish Corn Pudding
A delicious recipe that can be made in a hurry from provisions on the emergency shelf.

Use a can (2½ cups) green corn, ¼ chopped green pepper, 2 table-spoons chopped pimiento, 1 table-spoon chopped onion, 1 teaspoon salt, 2 eggs, beaten, and ½ cup sweetened condensed milk. Blend thoroughly, pour into buttered baking dish and bake in moderate oven 25 minutes.

When Making Berry Jams
To prevent the seeds from hardening when making berry jams, observe these rules: Use only fresh fruit. Wash it first, then hull, put in a kettle on a slow fire until it boils, then add the sugar (beet or cane), and boil briskly. Cook only up. Ernest tried to snatch a few hours of sleep on the sofa. I had

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Nor does saving mean niggardliness about money matters. Saving simply means that you are buying success on the time payment plan. It simply means that you are planning intelligently to get the things you want, when you want them and as you want them.

That answers the question of "Why save, after all?" But here are further answers to that question. A cash reserve gives you greater resourcefulness. It gives you the advantage of being able to purchase wisely. The opportunity to make valuable strategic moves in business—in making investments. The feeling of greater confidence—in everything you do—that puts new power into your efforts.

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thickens when dropped on a cold plate, it is done.

A Tid Bit for the Children's Lunch
Do not stand left-over berries and cut fruits away in the refrigerator where they will become mushy and unpalatable, but turn them into a tempting dessert for the children by dropping them into a mold and covering with flavored gelatin that has been dissolved in hot water and cooled. It takes but a moment, and seems a great treat to the little folks.

When Eating Fish, Remember
If a fish bone becomes lodged in the throat, a raw egg swallowed immediately after will carry the bone away.

A Novel Polish for Patent Shoes
Sweet milk is said to be as good as the best shoe cream for enameled shoes. Remove dust and dirt from the shoes, then wash them with milk and after a few minutes wipe off with a soft dry cloth.

Easy to Remember for Burns
If equal parts of white of egg and olive oil mixed are applied at once to a burn and the spot covered with a piece of old linen, no blister will form.

Kills Smell of Paint
To rid a freshly painted room of the odor of paint, put a pail of water in the room and change it every few hours. A sliced onion or lemon added to the water will accomplish the result more quickly.

Peerless Feed Grinder

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TELEPHONE service is essentially a community enterprise backed by national experience.

Almost every community on the Pacific Coast has at least one telephone exchange. And each exchange has its staff of home town folks—men and women who are your neighbors, who attend the same clubs and social gatherings, patronize the same stores and daily assume their responsibilities as interested citizens of the place where they live and serve.

Back of your telephone too is the cumulative experience of half a century of research and development—continuous and concentrated effort to improve the telephone art. Thus from the Bell Laboratories and all of the twenty-four operating companies of the Bell System, telephone service in every community benefits by new inventions and the discovery of better ways to do things—all making for the highest standards in telephony now known.

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