

# VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren

**SYNOPSIS:** Ralsul, son of the Emir of Mekazzen, takes time from his intrusions against France with Major Napoleon Niccoli, of the Foreign Legion, to slip into Margaret's room late at night. When Margaret protests angrily her mother-in-law rushes to Jules Margaret's husband, and declares that by repulsing Ralsul Margaret has endangered the industrial position of the empire with the Emir. Margaret hurries from El In Beth at Alva's apartment, and is stopped by a curious sound.

## Chapter 25 A NEW FRIEND

WHAT a heavenly sound! Someone was positively whistling, quite near; someone was softly whistling an air that she recognized. Where had she heard it? Paris, Marseilles, the ship, Gibraltar, Tangier? A hand had been playing it in one of those places.

Where?  
And whoever was whistling must be a European. Moors don't whistle.

Just?  
Or, of course, it might be the Senor Pedro Malignal.

Ralsul? He was a Moor, but having been educated in France, and lived so long in Europe, he might whistle. She had never heard him do so—nor Jules either, for that matter.

What would happen if Ralsul caught her there?  
Anger mingled with the fear that clutched at Margaret's heart. Who was she, that she should read this wretch; this beastly native?

Margaret's mouth set in a straight line; her hands clenched; and she realized that she was carrying the heavy dagger with which she had hammered on the door of El In Beth at Alva's room.

Drawing it from its cut-steel sheath, Margaret saw that the blade was bright, keen-edged and sharp-pointed.

"This is ridiculous," she said, and crept forward in the direction of the sound.

A few yards farther on, yet another corridor of this warren branched from the passage in which she was.

Standing at an unglazed Moorish window that was little more than an arrow-slit with a horseshoe top, was a man, wearing a hooded cloak, and yellow heeled slippers; a very much bigger man than Ralsul, bigger than Jules or his father.

Motionless, in the dark shadow of the wall, he watched intently someone or something that interested him below.

Suddenly, hearing her footsteps, with a swift movement he turned toward Margaret, at the same time drawing farther back than the light, but not before she had recognized the bearded face of Ober-Lieutenant Carl Von Miltongen alias Herr Schlacht.

"Oh, good morning," said Margaret. "I've rather lost myself, I'm afraid. Could you tell me how to get to the courtyard—the inner courtyard, from which three flights of stairs lead up to the part of the castle where my husband's mother's apartments are?"

The man bowed courteously, swiftly studying her face with a steady gaze which, though keen and penetrating, was yet not offensive. In the moment of her sudden appearance, it seemed that something wary, watchful, anxious, peeped out from behind the hooded, bearded mask that was his face. As he did not immediately reply Margaret began all over again in French.

"Bon jour, Monsieur. Je suis..."  
"I speak English," interrupted the man. "Please to speak to me if you have a preference. I understand it quite perfectly, though I do not speak it so quite perfectly."

"Oh, good," replied Margaret. "My French is very far from perfect, and so is my understanding of it, especially if it is spoken quickly. Will you kindly show me the way out?"

"Yes, I know the way out," replied the man, and added, with a slow smile, "Sometimes the way out is easier than the way in, isn't it?"

"Sometimes," agreed Margaret, "and sometimes it is a great deal harder."

"Ah," he observed, "do you, perhaps, think you find it more difficult to leave Mekazzen than to come into it? I, myself, find it more difficult to come into Mekazzen than to go out."

"Well, at the moment," replied Margaret, "I want to get out of this wing of the castle. Once I'm in the courtyard, I can find my own way to my husband's quarters."

"Yes," agreed Herr Schlacht, "I will do so with great pleasure," but

I not move from where he stood. How is your husband?  
"What do you mean, 'How is he'?"  
"I think he has some head and dry mouth this morning. But you had not see him today, no?"  
Margaret's manner and expression became less friendly.  
"I help Herr Pedro put him to bed," smiled Schlacht deprecatingly, "he was so ver' drunk. I am sorry to know it, because it make you angry that I know it."  
To this Margaret made no reply. "Perhaps you know one or two things that I know not, and can tell me. Perhaps I know one or two you know not—ver' useful to you—and can tell you."  
"Thank you," said Margaret. "Is that the way out?" and pointed down the passage.  
"Yes. No. May I speak to you?" replied Herr Schlacht.



Motionless, he watched intently. "Well, you are speaking to me, aren't you?"  
"I have the pleasure of little conversation, but I mean, could I speak to you about some matters... Like friends, like business friends, I mean, I think you and I could be very good friends, and help each other. Play with each other hands."  
With an angry and haughty look as she could assume, she stared. "What was the man driving at?" Herr Schlacht smiled disarmingly.  
"Play into each other's hands, isn't it?"  
"What do you mean?"  
"I think I can help you in your affairs, and I think you can help me in mine."  
"I don't see how I could be of service to you," replied Margaret coldly, "and I certainly don't see how you could help me in any way. Not that I require any help from anybody. Of course not. Why should I?"  
"You do need help," replied Herr Schlacht, shaking his head and smiling upon her in a kindly, almost fatherly manner.  
"When I need help I will appeal to my husband, thank you, and he..."  
"Pray forgive me if I offend, but I know. Suppose you want help last night when Ralsul came to your room?"  
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This amazing man makes a strange bargain with Margaret, tomorrow.

## HITCH HIKER IN SAN FRAN TRAP

ROSEBURG, Ore., Mar. 9. — (P) — Walking into a police trap at San Francisco last night, Robert Moore, wanted in Roseburg on charge of assault and robbery, was arrested and now awaits extradition to this city,

according to word received here today by Sheriff Webb. Moore, a hitch hiker, is alleged to have beaten and robbed A. P. Macomber, a San Francisco salesman, travelling by automobile, near Elton, this county, on February 26 after being given a "lift" from this city.

SALEM BANKS OPEN ON CURTAILED BASIS  
SALEM, Mar. 9. — (P) — Salem banks continued operation this morning on the same restricted basis of yesterday, admitting customers at side doors and cashing checks only in emergency cases.

## OLD AGE PENSION MEASURE SIGNED

SALEM, Mar. 9. — (P) — Governor Julius L. Meier today signed the old age pension bill which passed the

house last week. The measure will become a law after 90 days. It provides a \$30 a month pension for all citizens of the state eligible for such pension.

wise be furnished. Pension commissions are likewise set up in the act for the counties.  
DENVER, March 9. — (P) — David Campbell, 37, a rodeo clown, died today after an operation for appendicitis. Campbell was known as the originator of hundreds of rodeo antics and a broncho rider, roper and bulldozer.

## S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—The "Treasure Bug" Bites Tommy!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



## BOUND TO WIN—Briar's Discovery!

By EDWIN ALGER



## THE NEBBS—Caught

By SOL HESS



## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



**Basketball Display In Copco Window**  
An attractive basketball window display in the Copco home office building on West Main street is attracting much favorable attention from passersby. The display features the Copco trophy which is awarded the southern Oregon basketball champions each season and which has been in the possession of the local high school during the past year. With the completion of another successful season this winter, Medford will have a good chance to annex the Copco trophy permanently, although Ashland's name appears on the cup for the 1929-30 and 1930-31 seasons. One more winning year will clinch the trophy for either Medford or Ashland.

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