

Mamba's Daughters

By DU BOSE HEYWARD

(Continued from Page Three)

Knows him, yo' know his ways wid women."

Hagar was awake now, and she responded to Mamba's old power over her. It was almost as though the older brain had assumed control of nerve and muscle in the big body,

telling them what to do. Hagar reached into the room and caught up a cloak that she flung over her night-dress; then, with Mamba, she sprang for the car.

bounded, plunging, plunging through tunnels of blackness under live-oak avenues, racing between broom-straw

fields under a wide emptiness of sky. And always Hagar, sitting on the rear seat and leaning forward with her face at Slim's shoulder, told him which turnings to take. About them the night, under its shroud of mist, lay as quiet, as indifferent to human urgency, as death. The steady pulsing of the motor and the rattle of the vehicle served only to accentuate the awful loneliness of the country.

The rocketed past the huddled cabins of a settlement and struck a narrow dirt road that led out through a stand of yellow pine toward the swamp that lay black and solid against the horizon. Hagar's fingers clamped down on Slim's shoulder.

"Stop," she whispered. Under her hand the machine seemed to die in midair, gasping, and settling suddenly to earth. The trees that had been rushing past them

Over the uneven road the machine stopped in their tracks, crowded close, and looked down on the three intruders.

"We got to get out here an' walk," Hagar said. "Come on, we ain't got no time to lose now."

But the man did not leave his seat. Mamba turned back and asked why he waited.

He settled forward in the seat, his body relaxed, his head propped against the back.

"Nuttin' doin', Gran'ma," he drawled. "Ah's a hire, driver. Ah ain't got nuttin' against Prince. Ah ain't see nuttin' Ah ain't hear nuttin'. When yo's ready to go home, yo' can wake me up."

But now the initiative had passed to Hagar. She caught Mamba by the arm and urged, "Come on, Ma, we

ain't need no man to help."

"They would soon be there now, Hagar" explained as she hurried the old woman forward. This was the place where Bluten ran his crap game. A little farther, at the swamp's edge, they would find the cabin. They were upon it. There was a small opening in the trees, and through it the sky let down a dim gray light. The cabin was a black cube with one candlelit window. Before the door in spidery

outline stood the red racer.

Not until the women were at the door did they hear the first sound. Lissa's voice in a sort of desperate monotony: "Not that, Prince—not that—not that."

(Continued next week)

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