

MAMBA'S DAUGHTERS

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PORGY

A Story of Sacrifice, Romance, Humor and Tragedy

WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN THE LAST CHAPTERS

Lissa has blossomed into a maiden of exotic beauty. She has become identified with an intellectual group where her voice—the deep contralto, handed down from Mamba through Baxter—has attracted much attention.

Lissa is now a member of Charleston's intelligentsia where she meets Frank North, a young Negro painter and violinist. He is very talented and worthwhile, and is interested in Lissa.

Lissa is considerably disgusted with her lofty associates. One day she tells Mamba that in spite of the fact that she is said to be proud of her Negro heritage, all her associates are trying their "damndest" to be white.

Gardinia Whitmore, a mulatto beauty and the true rapper type, seeks Lissa's companionship. But Lissa, because of her refined nature, is rather afraid of Gardinia's overtures.

Gardinia has asked Lissa to accompany her on a "wild" party. After much inward conflict Lissa consents to go. But she soon abandons her accustomed reserve and becomes the scintillating life of the party.

Prince, the village shik, whose favor is courted by all the fair damsels, is attracted to Lissa. He proceeds to give Lissa a "good time."

Prince does not meet with the approval of Mamba. Nevertheless, Lissa introduces Mamba to Prince as the young couple are about to go upon another of their frequent auto rides. The auto ride ends at a dance, where the whole crowd falls a victim to Prince's bad liquor. Gardinia, a member of the crowd, recovers from her intoxicated spell only after she has discovered that Prince and Lissa have disappeared from the punch.

Gardinia makes good her promise to Mamba to "look out" for Lissa by immediately notifying her of Prince and Lissa's disappearance.

Mamba senses the danger and immediately summons Hagar, who, having been told that "Prince" is none other than Gilly Bluton, whom she betrayed years before, recognizes the necessity of immediate action.

Hagar remembers an isolated cabin frequented by "Prince" during the latter's underworld activities. Thereupon, she and Mamba set out for the cabin. As they approach it, they hear Lissa's frightened voice.

When they open the door they find Lissa seated in a corner with her dress torn and arms locked about her legs below the knees. "Prince" stands over her in a threatening manner.

Lissa leaps into Mamba's arms and together they leave the cabin. Hagar, completely forgetting herself, unleashes her great strength upon the covering and ungrateful "Prince," and strangles him to death with her bare hands.

Hagar is forced into hiding. Mamba sends Lissa to New York City, where Saint Wentworth meets her.

Saint and Lissa take a taxi for the home of the Reverend Thomas Grayson, who, upon their arrival, offers Lissa the protection of his home—especially after Lissa produces the address given to her mother many years before by Grayson.

—NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY—

INSTALLMENT XV

The fowls had quieted down again after the first cock-crow, and she saw them, misty blobs of darkness, ranged along a limb against the sky. That meant a good hour of darkness ahead of her. She drew her skirt up and tucked it high like a field hand's, leaving her long legs bare to the knees and unimpeded. Then she set off with a free stride in the direction of Bluton's shack.

The moon had set, withdrawing its diffused radiance from the misty west, so that now even the solid mass of the swamp toward which she journeyed was invisible against the horizon. But the tides of life had definitely set toward the new day, faint as yet, but stirring along the earth in little exhilarating waves, filling the air with those subtle vibrations that are the precursors of light. Through the gloom the big free-striding figure of the woman advanced. The movement about her quickened. She threw a glance behind her, and high in the east, she saw a finger of light touch the mist. Then suddenly she was upon that hour of the twenty-four when Earth recapitulates her creation, when in a brief cosmic atavism she slips back to her wild beginnings.

The void through which Hagar moved no longer hung poised in inertia. Free-running tides of life set it swinging and pulsing. The mist lifted and divided itself into vast, slow-moving bodies that hung close to the ground and hesitated until some unseen force seized them and whirled them together in silent chaos. The woman stopped in the road, touched by the magic of it, and stood gazing about her. She saw vague, inchoate masses heaped upon the dim earth. She saw these masses obliterated by the mist, and when she looked again, the curtains were withdrawn and the young

day had modelled them into forests, fields, and cabins. The light gathered speed. It poured along the ground, dividing tree from tree. It lifted into the branches that still clutched at retreating mists and peopled them with separate leaves. Then, as at a given signal, the world burst into sound. Birds shrilled from the casena bushes, and like an ominous call Hagar heard the teeming life of the swamp awake and lift its composite voice. She had been tricked by beauty, and day had taken her unawares.

She broke into a dog trot. It was imperative that she reach the shack before people were up and about. The voice of the swamp grew louder, and now, against its gloom, she saw the squat ugly bulk of the shack.

Bluton was lying where she had left him. Quickly she bent over, gathered him up and flung him upon her shoulder. Then, casting a hasty glance around, she went out and closed the door. She had only a hundred yards to travel for cover, and this was fortunate, for, as she left the shack, the sun pierced the mist and drenched the clearing with light. It outlined the huge figure of the woman with fire, and cast a Gargantuan shadow before her as she labored forward beneath her rigid and grotesquely posturing burden.

She extended an arm and parted a curtain of vines, then she passed through into welcoming gloom. Black ooze squirted between her toes and covered her feet. She heaved a deep sigh of relief and paused to take her bearings.

First she must dispose of the body, and to do this most effectively she must penetrate to the heart of the swamp where no one would be likely to find it. She bent forward and shifted the burden from her shoulder to her arched back. Then she set off as briskly as possible, tearing a

way through the matted growth with her right hand while she steadied the body with her left. But this position caused her to advance with lowered head and eyes fixed on the pools of shallow water through which she waded. At first this pleased her, for the little mirrors flung back pictures of sky seen through swaying cypress, with small white clouds tangled in their branches. But presently she became aware of the reflection of an object that projected over her shoulder and looked down into the water, as she was doing. She paused, and the reflection did likewise. Then she recognized its cause as the head of the corpse which hung over her shoulder close to her own.

With the first sense of uneasiness that her deed had brought to her she shifted her load so that it would no longer gaze downward and started forward again. But with an almost animate persistence the body moved with each stride, and gradually the round, blank silhouette again eclipsed the miniature skies through which she waded. Now her anger rose, and she splashed heavily through the water, shattering and dispersing its reflections.

An hour passed, and the sun, now well over the tree-tops, commenced to draw a thin steam out of the swamp. The din of voices that had heralded day commenced to abate, settling in drowsy diminuendo into an almost complete silence. Then as Hagar reached the dense growth that clogged the central area of the morass and made progress difficult, the air about her broke into a shrill crimson whine, and a black cloud of mosquitoes enveloped her, settling like dust on head, shoulders, and less. Involuntarily she struck out with both hands. With a heavy splash her burden fell from her back and commenced to settle slowly into the semi-fluid ooze. Slapping wildly at the maddening cloud, and with her skin on fire from the poison, Hagar turned her back on the body and broke savagely through the tangle in search of one of the little islands that rise through the water of the swamp and offer a slight harbourage from the pest.

At last she found it, a knoll of high ground, lifting out of the cypress knees, and having above it an irregular circle of opaque blue-gray sky. Crouched over almost on all fours, with prehensile hands tearing her way through the undergrowth, the great woman emerged like a prehistoric creature quitting its primal slime, and climbed out upon the knoll.

For a moment she sat panting heavily, her face and arms streaming with sweat and blood from stings and thorn lacerations. Then from her pocket she drew a bandana handkerchief, a clay pipe, tobacco, and matches. She mopped her face, filled the pipe and lighted it, then sat gulping the acrid smoke in great draughts and blowing it in a cloud about her. The last of the mosquitoes took reluctant flight, and with a long sigh she lay back on the tough swamp grass to think things out.

She realised with relief that there was no occasion for speed. Beyond the swamp lay a broad belt of open and populous land planted in truck

farms, and this must be crossed at night if she would escape detection. She need not resume her journey, then, for several hours, and this was the best place to wait.

She ate breakfast from her package of provisions, and refilled her pipe. Already her fatigue was passing, and her mind commenced to turn over her problem, dwelling upon its various aspects. Usually, when Mamba had told her what to do, that ended it, and she gave the matter no further thought. But now, with the realization that the guiding genius of that intelligence had gone from her, gone perhaps forever, a sense of individual responsibility bore down upon her and forced her to study and reason on her own account. Mamba had had to think mighty quickly there in the dark with Lissa waiting to hurry away to safety. And Mamba did not know this country as she did. Did not know Proc Eaggart, for one thing. Mamba's plan depended for success entirely upon her escape; her ability to traverse the mainland and reach one of the Sea Islands where there were almost no white folks, and where the Negroes would hide that big clumsy body of hers, from the police so that she could not be caught and questioned.

Her train of thought broke off, and for a moment her mind was a clean blank; then vividly the image of Bluton intruded itself. She saw his limbs jutting woodenly from the water, and black ooze creeping toward his open eyes. Poor Gilly—she couldn't hate him now. Then she wondered if he would hate her. If he would forget that she had saved him once and remembered only that she had strangled him and left him to rot in the black mud of the swamp.

Well, what was done was done, and there was no use to worry about it. Now, if she reached the outer edge of the swamp by sundown and waited an hour, then set out to the southward — But Gilly hated the dark. "Bright lights," he would say, "gimme le bright lights." Yes, to the southward, that was what she must think about—thirty miles to Edisto Island. By fast travel she could do that by sunrise. Her thoughts came slowly, they made short rushes, stumbled, brought up against obstacles, like a child learning to walk. By sunrise. . . . She'd not risk the bridge—but swim across below it. . . . Perhaps if Gilly hated the dark so he wouldn't stay where she had left him. "Saint Helena Island," she said suddenly, out loud. She had heard lots of talk about Saint Helena—two nights farther away—maybe three—thousands of niggers there—lodge members—if she could get there and tell a lodge sister that she was a "Vestal Virgin" they'd hide her sure. The "Virgins" always stood together—even their own men couldn't find out their secrets. . . .

When dark came on and Gilly couldn't see the stars—only black water—what then. . . . Yes, the "Virgins" always stuck up for each other. She remembered once when—He'd be so frightened maybe he'd break loose. In the hot sunlight Hagar's blood was suddenly chill. She mopped her face with the bandana. Then she refilled and lighted her pipe. The Reverend

Grayson knew what he was talking about. He had said right out in church that spirit's couldn't walk. Even old Maum Vina believed that—and she had been almost a conjure woman herself with her herbs, and her money in the road. She would think about the Reverend awhile. . . . He always wore that shroud. . . . Yes, Gilly would forget that she had saved his life once. . . . He'd only remember that she had strangled him and left him with his eyes full of black water.

The Reverend—the Reverend—Hagar made a desperate effort to visualise him, but his face eluded her—he was only a column of whiteness against a wall that had a cross painted on it. What had he said that day when he took Maum Vina's hope away from her? . . . Spirits only lived in heaven or hell. . . . That was it. The terror that had been pressing in upon her was suddenly dissipated. Again her mind was a clean blank. She got to her feet and moved about the island, stretched her limbs, and again became conscious of the hazy sunlight that beat down upon her.

She saw that the sun was directly overhead, and she realized that she was hungry. Opening her lunch she ate heartily of her cornbread and cold meat, then lay on her belly and drank a few swallows from the side of the island where the water was clearest. A sense of well-being pervaded her body. Why worry? She'd be on Edisto by to-morrow morning. Likely as not they would never find Bluton and think he had gone away. Then Lissa would always be safe. Some day, a long time off, she might even get back to see Mamba again and hear all about Lissa from her. She stretched her length on the grass, and presently, in the steamy narcotic noon heat, she dropped into sleep.

She saw Bluton turn slowly over in the mud. She saw the rigid knee and elbow joints give and the man stand upright. Then she saw him following her path through the swamp, but without effort, and this was strange, for his eyes were blind with swamp ooze. Briars that had impeded her did not detain him. He parted the vines and thrust his face into the clearing. She opened her eyes in a stare. And there he was. After the passage of an indeterminate space of time the apparition faded.

Hagar was terrified, but she knew what she would have to do before she proceeded on her way. Fighting mosquitoes with tobacco smoke and flailing arms, she retraced her steps and with incredible labour of body and agony of spirit dragged the corpse to the island. Rigor mortis was passing, and Hagar composed the limbs decently, and bathed the face and eyes with her handkerchief. Then, leaving it, gazing up into the open sky, she set off for the outer edge of the swamp. . . .

Her spirit soared, her step became light and sure. It seemed that only now was she free of the actual physical incubus. She stretched her arms wide and straightened her broad shoulders. Gilly would rest easy now with the sun in his face all day and

(Continued on Page Four)

The Stormy Career of Jack Johnson -- No. 11

Text by **ROLFE DELLON**
Drawn by **FRED B. WATSON**



There had been much personal bitterness between Jack and Burns, and his friends had circulated rumors that Jack was "yellow." At one time, a few days before the fight, Burns had attempted to hit Johnson with a chair. But Jack was not cowed by this display of poor sportsmanship.



Jack was merely made more eager by these outbursts. He trained intensively and thoroughly. To prove his excellent physical condition he wagered that he could out-run a kangaroo. He won the bet, and in the bargain set such a vigorous pace that the kangaroo toppled over dead.



The day of the fight was December 26, 1908. The representation of the press was the largest that had ever witnessed a fight up to that time. Out of a purse of \$35,000, Jack's share was but \$5,000. This inequality of terms was due to Jack's anxiety to bring about the fight.



Twenty-five thousand spectators attended. Hundreds formed in line 24 hours before the fight began in order to obtain good seats. While other hundreds were turned away for lack of seating capacity. There were fans from all over the world, a number of whom were in sympathy with Jack.