

THE BLACK LILY

By CORA BALL MOTEN

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In them were alight, and it was the glow from them that lit the room.

They find a Friend

A table and several home-made chairs were grouped on one side of the long room while on the other was a wide fireplace. At the right of this fireplace was a slab of rock about five feet by two seemingly sunk into the earthly wall like a flat panel. A few rough cooking utensils set on a shelf beside the fireplace.

As the two people gazed about them, Dolores with wonder-filled eyes and Chenah with a disappointed look of expectancy, the rock slab slowly lifted as if some unseen hand drew it up.

An opening gradually disclosed itself to view behind it. Through the opening a faint sound of lapping water could be heard. Chenah stepped forward eagerly, Dolores only stood and stared.

A faint sound was heard as of dragging steps. Chenah stooped and entered the opening. There was an instant of silence. Then a deep carrying voice.

"Who art thou?"
"Tis one who needs thy help, Father Jose." The voice was Chenah's.

"My service for thine now, son." The voice was nearer. "With this one, who is in dire need of present help and cannot help himself, I have come already from the outer water way. Will help me? Thou art strong."

Dolores moved a step nearer to the opening, and stood waiting breathlessly.
"In a moment, Chenah came backing through, bearing a burden. Immediately following, came the long body of a prone man, and assisting in bearing him with arms beneath the drooping arms and limp shoulders, another.

At her first sight of the blood stained burden carried between the two, Dolores let out a long hissing gasp of surprise and pity.

The unconscious man was John Northington.

Straight to the low couch the two men carried him. When they laid him down and stood erect her eyes rested for the first consciously perceptive minute on the man whose deep voice had come to her first through the cavernous passage.

Father Jose Gives Aid

He was tall and straight as an ancient pine and the long white hair and beard he wore fell around him like a beneficent halo. His skin was like soft, coffee-colored parchment which the years had mellowed into a strange beauty. His large hands were delicately fingered and facile like the hand of a surgeon.

As if her presence there was expected, the old man merely noticed it and then turned to Chenah.

"The fire son, and water. It will be needed here." He turned to the man stretched on the couch.



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"Thou," he spoke questioningly as he bent a quickly appraising look on Dolores. "Canst thou stand the sight of—wounds and blood or—?"

Before he had finished she was by his side.

"For my Ramon's friend I can stand anything. I have known more than wounds and blood in the past days—Father." She hesitated a moment before the term Chenah had used, but noting the gentle light on the face, she spoke it. He smiled and there seemed to thrill through the smile the very spirit of protective and compassionate love that made the title the only right one for the man.

"It is well." He motioned her nearer. "If thou wilt but hold the foot steady, here." He was working as he spoke, he had not noticed the girl's own wound so great was the other's need.

Dolores, very tenderly placed her cupped hands gently around the limp right foot and steadied it while the old man expertly cut the bits of leather and torn cloth out of the deep wounds into which they had been imbedded.

"But for the long leather, and strong, of these leggings the 'black death' would have severed the leg," he murmured, as he clipped and dug gently but skillfully for the bloody particles.

"It is well, it was the leg he seized to drag him into the cavern beneath the bank, and that it should have been the entrance through which I was forced to come so hurriedly from the pursuit of those who came so near finding me instead of the prey they sought." He was working more slowly now.

Chenah, the fire alight, and a huge kettle full of water from a hide bottle of which there were several hanging in the corner, came to help.

They Fear Jonthra

"Thou shouldst more carefully guard thy comings and goings, Father. It is not well for thee to move so freely—above. Jonthra has sworn, and thou knowest Jonthra."

"But the drum beats had borne the message to me of the trouble, and I knew that there was one in dire need of help from the accursed evil. Ah—to what evil has the Spirit of Love been tortured when a fair Flower of the Forest should serve the evil purposes of man by being the means by which serpent's poison is sucked into his lungs."

"If the people could but be made to understand. But they are over-riden by ignorance and superstition and the wicked use of great knowledge—knowledge that could bless instead of curse if it would."

Dolores was listening as she obediently held the wounded foot. Her eyes were puzzled with questioning wonder.

"But, Father," Chenah spoke argumentatively, it seemed, "thou who know the Secret of the Death Flower, the Secret only given to the High Priest of each generation, surely thou couldst stop the evil if—evil it is." The last was only half conviction.

The Explanation

"Yea, if I might; but even I—so deadly is the knowledge—I fear to loose it among the people. So much evil might be done if men knew the Secret. It is so simple, so easy yet—so dangerous."

"A Flower that sprays death. A harmless Flower, that may so easily become the sinister weapon of unscrupulous and wicked minded men. Only Jonthra and—I, among living men, hold the Secret. I am outcast because I refused to use it years ago when—she whom I loved was to be the victim. Seeking death with her in the river beyond I found the way, by the help of the gods, to this natural cavern."

"The passage hither I sealed against the 'Black Death' and the other I gradually widened and heightened to make a clear and safe way into the forest where I found food and the things for our comfort and—later buried my Tolyena." His voice was soft with reminiscent love.

"It is well that thou didst leave the opening and so plan that thou couldst unseal it from within, or from far without, for such times as thou shouldst need it. Though always there is the danger through the waterway of the 'Black Death.'"

"But not for me. Even the 'Black Death' has no longer fear for me. The power of Love has overcome even that. Aye it can." The last was said quite simply in answer to the amazement in the eyes that looked into the speaker's face.

"But—." A long low moan from the man on the couch interrupted words on Chenah's lips.

Bending over him solicitously the old man began to wrap a rough clean bandage about the injured foot and leg. The last bit of crushed leather and rag had been removed from the line of deep indentations made by the crushing teeth of the crocodile that had carried the unconscious man into the slimy but water-clear den where he would have lain until death and decay had fitted him for the last meal the monster would feast upon.

Deep under the overhanging bank sloping upward to just above the water line the monster had dragged his prey as the unconscious man had sunk beneath the overturned pirogue in the lower reaches of the rapid current. There, a minute after the saurian had gone to look for other prey, the old man had found him while himself a fugitive so hard beset he had to take the water way to his own hidden home.

Dolores Overcome

With another low moan John Northington opened his eyes. Dolores started forward, her face pale and she sank down. Her own wound at last had gotten the better of her.

Father Jose with a quick exclamation of pity went to the girl. Northington again closed his eyes in utter exhaustion.

"Ah," there was relief in the old man's face as he examined Dolores's wound. "Tis nothing, the mere prick of an arrow with no poison left. This," he smeared a thick yellow salve over the swollen red wound, "a min-

GRIDDLE CAKES AND OATMEAL COOKIES

During cold weather our bodies need heavier food so that those internal engines may be enabled to keep us warm. Here are two recipes for good old-fashioned dishes prepared in a new-fashioned way:

GRIDDLE CAKES

1 cup special cake flour, sifted
1/2 teaspoon soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 egg, well beaten
1 cup thick sour milk or buttermilk
1 teaspoon melted butter or other shortening.

Sift flour once, measure, add soda and salt, and sift again. Combine egg and milk and add to flour gradually, stirring constantly. Beat until smooth. Add shortening. Bake on hot, well-greased griddle. Serve hot with butter and syrup. Makes 12 griddle cakes.

OATMEAL COOKIES

1 1/2 cups special cake flour, sifted
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon cloves
1/2 cup butter or other shortening.

ute only and thou canst go about as always."

Even as he spoke the color flooded back into Dolores's ivory face. The redness and swelling seemed to be smoothed away as a hand smooths a brow and removes the wrinkles of a frown.

The girl's quick little cry of relief seemed to call John Northington again back to the world about him. His eyes flew wide and this time much of the sick look of weariness seemed to have faded from them.

(To Be Continued Next Week)

1 cup sifted brown sugar
1 egg, well beaten
1 1/2 cups oatmeal
1-3 cup milk.

Sift flour once, measure, add baking powder, salt, and spices, and sift together three times. Cream shortening, add sugar gradually, and cream well. Add egg. Add oatmeal and flour, alternately with milk, mixing well. Drop by teaspoons on greased baking sheet and bake in moderate oven (350 degrees F.) 18 to 20 minutes. Makes 4 dozen cookies.

SALADS AS APPETIZERS

Although a salad is not usually looked upon as an appetizer it may quite easily be composed so that it will whet the appetite. Piquant and savory ingredients such as pickled cucumbers, cauliflower, and onions, added to the usual salad ingredients will make a salad that could quite properly be called an appetizer. Here are two suggestions:

A "MANLY" SALAD

One head of lettuce, three or four young green onions (or an equal amount of Bermuda onion when young onions are not in season, three or four pieces of sweet or sour pickle and one hard-boiled egg are the ingredients necessary. Use the heart of lettuce for the body of the salad. Shred the lettuce, chop the onions and pickles, and mash the egg. Moisten with French dressing and pour over lettuce.

PARTY CHEESE SALAD

2 packages (6 oz.) cream cheese
1 cup shredded coconut
Roll cream cheese into 12 small balls. Roll each ball in coconut, which has been either toasted or tinted. Arrange in nest of crisp lettuce, allowing 3 balls to each serving. Garnish with mayonnaise. Serves 4.

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