

THE BLACK LILY

By CORA BALL MOTEN

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came the echoing call of that fierce cry from a score of savage throats. He knew its meaning. Idly he wondered about it all. The strange rise of the "Questing Arrow." Always before he had thought it just a bit of the well-learned hocus-pecus of his people.



Brighter Days!

You need not punish a sluggish system with purgatives that do violence. Just chew a pleasant Cascaret before bedtime. Next morning you'll be a new person. Candy Cascarets are made from cascara—which doctors say actually strengthens the bowel muscles. So their action is always beneficial. They clear up a stubborn, bilious, headachy and constipated condition every time. You awake with coating gone from tongue; with eyes brightened; breath sweetened; appetite on edge. For a bright morning, try a Cascaret tonight. Then you'll know why 20 million boxes are used every year.



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The mystifying drama that in his early training for the strange priesthood which his office of Hereditary Chief compelled him to submit to, he too, had learned, but never practiced seriously. When he might have done that he was sent away to that far school to learn "the magic of the outlands." True, it had proved to be no magic at all, as his people thought of magic. Still it was a sort of magic. For it destroyed his faith in the things that his fathers had practiced from far, unremembered ages until the present day—destroyed it, and set up other ideals and ideas in its place.

So—now, at the sound of the "Questing Call" sent to the gods of the air, arrow after arrow was offered them and cast back, till the "Blue-winged Dart of the Ether-Space" should be sent aloft and caught in the all-seeing, un-erring grip and sent—to find "That Which Was Sought."

test rites that he remembered so vividly now. But what of that? They were test rites and the stage could always be set for such things. It was not he knew for many of them, although for the inner secrets he was not yet to receive his training. No one, not even the High-Priest-to-be, must take that secret into the outer world with him.

The Horrid Cry

He was back now, and instead of being initiated into the rites of the ancient priesthood of which he was the titular head, he as a fugitive from the horrors of the very rites that it was his duty to inflict upon heretics of the ancient Faith. The grim humour of the thing struck him. He smiled a bitter smile of cynical fatalism and unbelief.

Just then the horrid cry sounded. A great quiver shook Ramon Montez. It left him cold and clammy with the sweat of fear. The "Questing Arrow" again had found its mark.

Dolores was out there. Had she guessed that it would come seeking them out of the blue reaches of the air? Had that been why she had left him alone in his aerial bed? She knew that the Arrow only followed the straight path to that Thing or part of Thing of "That Which Was Sought," that lay nearest the spot from whence it came. Did she, knowing the certain death to follow a successful quest/dare that death to save him?

Then came the first baying call of the hunt. He knew they were on the trail. Could he follow and intercept them? Could he save Dolores in spite of herself?

It was worth trying. Painfully and with grim determination, the wounded man raised himself from his high bed and slowly but surely essayed the downward climb.

Ramon Seeks Escape

Faintly in the distance he heard the cries. He knew they were following the general direction of the river. He thought of the progue and its helpless burden. Well, perhaps—but no. There was no power on earth that could save his friend. His heart felt sore and heavy at the scurvy trick of Fate that had separated them. He remembered John Northington's staunch loyalty, his friendship in the hour of need. He sighed.

Around him the underbrush was so dense that he had the greatest difficulty in pressing his way through it. His broken arm was paining him. The hunt was bearing further to the west. He would make the river trail below the detour. Somewhere probably they would come out there.

But he must make the trail farther down. He knew that Janthra would probably be on guard at the point must not let them see him so near the start or they would know there was another. At all costs they must think that the Questing Arrow had led to him. He knew Dolores. Knew they would not see their victim in that dense foliage where she would be hiding. If he could win to a point where the hunt had started. He intercepted her, all might yet be well. But could he?

He stopped and listened. The cries were still bearing away from the river. The going was more difficult.

Suddenly he came to an old, almost obliterated trail. It led at right angles to the one he was following. He took it. Probably it would bring him across the inland trail before the hunters reached it.

With failing strength he pushed ahead. A swinging branch struck him smartly in the face. He recoiled and sat down a moment to recover himself.

The cries were coming nearer. He must make the intersection of that trail. He rose, staggering, to his feet. But they would not heed his will. He sank back upon the rotted carpet of the jungle.

A Desperate Plan

Far ahead of him the hunt swept by. He knew not that just beyond that old trail was impassable.

Tired, and weary with pain and disappointment, he sat for a minute of exhausted hopelessness. If they reached the river path now, surely they would intercept Dolores.

They must be checked. He made a superhuman effort to arouse his failing strength and struggled to his feet.

With sobbing gasps he crept onward on the back track to the river trail.

After what seemed years of struggle, the thinning trees told him he had made it. The pack still gave voice far ahead of him. He knew

that they would make the trail before him. Then he thought of another ruse. A desperate one, and his life would be the forfeit, but what matter?

Just beyond him were the rapids. Staggering and stumbling with weariness, Ramon veered out toward the river bank. He cleared the sheltering line of trees. As he stumbled on he tore his tattered cloak from his shoulders.

On the bank he threw it down, first tramping the place as if in a struggle.

Then, very deliberately and very slowly he waded out into the crocodile infested waters.

A great, black, floating body, suddenly came to life. With terrible grace it performed a wide sweeping arc and started toward the wading figure of the man.

Ramon's jaw tensed. He stopped, waiting with a sort of fatalistic calm. Loosely, but with exceeding swiftness, the great sawtoothed snout approached.

It was upon him. The dripping red jaws opened.

(The End of the 7th Installment) To be continued next week.



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