

DARK JUNGLES

BY JOHN C. FLEMING & LOIS EBY

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BARRY FIELDING WINS

CHAPTER XXX

BARRY was never to forget that dawn.

If Renaldo got him aboard that small boat, this would be his last dawn in a friendly country...

She looked very small and very dear, crouched beside him on the log, her pointed chin sunk into her hand, her eyes brooding over the shoreline, where a score of Indians rushed to Renaldo's orders.

Barry felt suddenly, for no reason, reckless and happy. "Allison," he grinned down at her. "Do you mind a personal question?"

"Why ask now?" she retorted morosely. "You've been shooting them at me for years."

"Are—were you in love with Renaldo?" She frowned. "The beast," she cried viciously. Then she considered the question fairly. "No," she reported, turning to smile at Barry. "Thank goodness I wasn't. But I did think he was romantic and handsome and very nice. I was a moron."

Barry felt happier and more reckless. "You wouldn't fall in love with me, would you?" he hazarded.

"I certainly would not," she snapped. "Not if I had the choice. You're too stubborn." She kicked her boot into the sand at her feet angrily. "Of course I didn't have the choice," she added under her breath. "I was in love with you one deep breath after I met you—as any fool could plainly see."

"I couldn't," said Barry. "But," she flared, "I'm not without a certain code of honor even in the jungle. As soon as I get you out of this going-away-on-that-boat business, I'm sending you back to Lila."

"That's big of you," Barry grinned, "but it'll be hard. Lila started for Puerto Barrios this morning."

THE Quiche guard's stolid gaze filtered as he watched his prisoners kiss. He had thought the white woman belonged to the Spaniard. With a note of relief, he noted that Renaldo himself was striding towards them from the beach.

"The quicksilver is aboard," he said shortly. "The boat will leave shortly after sunset. There is no point in our staying here longer." He looked at Allison.

She said quickly, "I won't go back with you."

The Spaniard's face was set, but the cords in his neck swelled. "You won't go with him," he retorted. Then his voice grew coolly formal. "You have everything to lose and nothing to gain by resisting, Miss Topping. I drew up your father's will. In case of your death, I inherit the plantation."

"Boy, what you couldn't have done in Chicago," Barry murmured sarcastically.

"Some day," Renaldo's voice softened as his dark gaze fixed on Allison. "We will be rulers of this country, you and I. Then you will thank me." He ordered the Indian to slash the rope that tied Allison's and Barry's wrists together.

Allison glowered at him through clenched teeth. "I can see myself thanking you," she said.

As the Indian's knife severed the rope, with an expert flick, Barry's memory flashed backward. He turned to Renaldo, his eyes gleaming with suspicion.

"You said you hadn't seen Hall," he said. "But you had. You kept him from getting to the Moncha Suma and this private graft of yours. And you sent Indians up the coast to stop any more intruders bound for Quiche country, didn't you?"

"That Indian who attacked you on the boat at Santiago!" cried Allison, aghast.

The thin smile that played over Renaldo's thin lips was crafty. He shrugged. "I am resourceful when my interests are jeopardized," he murmured. He nodded to the Indian beside them. "Take the prisoner to the boat."

"No!" Allison's cry rang out furious and desperate.

But before the Indian had reached Barry, Renaldo's voice cracked out again. Its swaggering smoothness was abruptly gone. There was a sharp note of anxiety in it.

"You found Hall at the hidden shack? Where is he now?" Barry grinned mockingly. "Wouldn't you like to know?" he taunted.

A dark shadow of fear crossed Renaldo's face. "He went to Moncha Suma!" Turning with nervous haste, he gave an Indian call.

THE Quiche Indians at the beach started toward them at a trot. The jutting promontory cut them from view momentarily. When they did not come around it, Renaldo called again.

His voice echoed back from the cliff.

After several minutes, he slid his gun from his holster and waved Barry and Allison before him. The four of them walked along the shoreline through the brilliant mist of the sunrise air. They rounded the promontory with breathless curiosity.

Before them in the narrow ravine that wound down to the sea was a weird tableau!

A hundred feet in front of a huddled group of mules, Moncha Suma stood tall and thunderous. Only Hall and Tony were beside him. But before him—on their faces in the damp sand—were Renaldo's Quiche workers!

"Get up!" Renaldo's command brought the dazed Quiches auto-

matically to their feet. "Fifty silver pesos for bringing the Moncha Suma to me!" he cried.

Allison moaned. Hall was glowering but weaponless. Tony's hand was on his knife but he looked hopelessly outnumbered by the score of Quiches. There was only one weapon among the three. That weapon was Moncha Suma's black eyes.

They bored into the oncoming line of rebel Quiches like fiery, flashing arrows. The line faltered. "Go on!" Renaldo shouted. "He'll kill you if you don't!"

The relentless fire of the chief's eyes blazed more hypnotically. His voice rang out in the strained silence in a mesmeric key monotone. "You are dead men now. You have broken the oath of Chichicastenango."

"That's rubbish," Renaldo shouted. "Go on! Go on!"

The Quiche rebels staggered on for several paces, like men bewitched. Then, despite Renaldo's angry commands, they stumbled one by one, and dropped into the sand, bodies twitching, lips moving.

Renaldo cursed them bitterly, then lapsed into silence.

Barry glanced back in quick apprehension. He saw the Spaniard's gun turning slowly from him toward Moncha Suma. There was no time for warning. He leaped back!

Allison's scream rang above the gun's report.

HALL and Barry were kneeling, tying the last knot in the rope binding Renaldo's wrists when Allison's tear-stained cheek pressed for a moment against Barry's.

"Hurry!" she whispered. "Tony and I think Moncha Suma is half inclined to slip you a few quicksilver mines for saving his life."

Barry gave her a quick kiss. "You're trembling," he grinned. "In fact, you're beginning to cry! The deal must be set." As the tropic sun broke over the horizon, they went back together to Moncha Suma. THE END

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