

Africa Waits

by Achmed Abdullah
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IN SEARCH OF A GUIDE

CHAPTER XVII

"I WON'T let you do it."

Lincoln's voice had an edge to it.

Again the other laughed.

"Listen!" he announced. "I am a man washed with seventy times seventy waters of shrewdness and iniquity. Also, I am your friend. And so, slowly, why not tell me the whole truth?"

"The whole...?"

"That you fear this girl—oh, yes—the being a spy. But, also, that—ah—eventually, women spies, have soft, soft lips and white, generous arms."

"I swear to you..."

"Why perjure yourself? I, too, have been in love," he sighed—

"more often than there are hairs in my beard. Very well, I shall not harm her."

"What about other men harming her?" the American asked quickly.

"War, trouble, may be coming this way. And the girl—a Christian, alone, defenseless..."

"Say no more, saheb! I shall stay in Yebba for a while. After all," he smiled, "the women here are pretty and the wines excellent."

He paused; then spoke very gravely:

"In case of trouble, I shall take her into my own house and, later on, smuggle her out of the country to safety. She shall be to me as my own flesh and blood—my mother, my sister—may I eat dirt if I lie!"

They shook hands, and Zaman Khan asked:

"When are you leaving?"

"Within the hour. As soon as I've found a guide."

"You'll find one over there," pointing west, "in the huts of the Negroes. And you will need money for the journey—and a better weapon than your Bedawin rifle."

He reached into his broad waist-shawl and produced a well-filled purse and a heavy army revolver. Lincoln took both.

"Thank you," he said simply.

"There was a silence. Then the Afghan salaamed formally.

"Some day, saheb," he said, "we shall meet again—and, perhaps, fight side by side."

"God grant it, friend!"

Zaman Khan walked away, with a heavy swagger, and the American, without asking himself why he did it, returned to the inn and entered the room where Nancy Brown sat, busily scribbling in a small notebook.

"Writing down my impressions," she told him.

"Going to make a book of it. All about Africa—and the sort of people one meets there—and how a nice man warned me." She lit a cigarette. "I suppose you've come to repeat your warning?"

"No!" was his curt reply.

"Well—don't be so sulky!"

"I," he announced, "have come to say goodbye."

"Oh, really?"

"I'm leaving tonight."

She did not speak; only looked at him. And he wondered why she was looking at him so queerly, so searchingly; and then, on the spur of the moment, perhaps for the first time since he had reached manhood, he was guilty of sentimental words.

For in a low voice he added:

"Please wish me luck."

"Luck?" she echoed.

"Yes, I need it."

"Something—something serious in the wind?"

"Very serious."

She held out her hand. He took it.

"Of course I wish you luck," she said soberly, sincerely. "All the luck in the world!"

"Thanks."

He was going to say more; not about his mission. Of course not. But how he felt about her.

But he did not speak; could not. He loathed what he called fumbling—fumbling mentally, spiritually. It was his New England inheritance.

So he bowed, left—and, as the door closed on him, it occurred to him that, doubtless for the last time in his life, he had spoken with a fellow-American.

WITH calm efficiency he set about his final preparations.

He visited the bazaar where he bought matches, tobacco, a bag of provisions, an extra box of revolver ammunition and a cheap silver watch.

Then he went to the Negro quarter, on the outskirts of town, in search of a guide. From open-air kitchens the sound of frying escaped and the reek of sizzling palm-oil. The men were squatting on their haunches, smoking and spitting and bickering and laughing. The women were at their cooking, finding time while to upbraid their husbands and their offspring in high, shrill voices. Children of all ages and all degrees of nudity were shouting and playing in the filthy gutters.

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HOLD EVERYTHING!

SIGHT SEEING TOURS

SEE THE CITY

WALKING STICKS

"Yes, business has fallen off quite a bit since I had to give up the bus!"

Out Our Way

By J. R. Williams

But they were a happy, friendly folk. Friendly, too, at least at first, to Lincoln. They saw in him the Arab, the man of superior lineage. Once upon a time, within living memory, the Arabs had invaded their peaceful villages with fire and sword, had chained and yoked and driven and sold them as if they were cattle. Still—and the American thought of a parallel, psychological reaction in his own country, south of the Mason-Dixon line—they preferred, to this day, their former masters to the others, the Europeans, who had brought them freedom.

Oh, I thought you was after a job!

I'd like to collaborate with you on a book of your life, such as this one, 'Calipers and Calibers, a Romance of Steel'

Yes, people seem to prefer their heroes in bacon-grease-soaked blackskin to machine-grease-soaked overalls!

Yes, gods! What else is that but a job? Why he's never shot a buffalo or hit a home run—he's never did a thing but build machinery!

EGAD, BUSTER! YOU SADLY UNDERESTIMATE MY PHYSICAL STAMINA! I'LL BE UP WITH THE LARK FOR A PLUNGE IN THE BROOK, THEN TOIL IN THE FIELDS TILL KURFEN TELLS THE KNELL OF PARTING DAY! AFTER THAT A BIT OF FISHING TO TOP OFF THE EVENING, EH?

BETTER TAKE THE HAMMOCK TOO, MAJOR!

With Major Hoopla

Red Ryder

Doc and Doug! They're both wanted for a dozen crimes!

Good! Then I won't have to waste time appearing against them—I've got more interesting company now!

Two prisoners for you, Marshal! Attempted murder, kidnapin' an' robbery!

While little Beaver and the Indians are unloading your rugs, I'll take these two outlains to the Marshal!

Sure, Red! I'll wait for you at the depot!

With his two prisoners Red leads the rugged Navajo caravan to the nearest railroad town!

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Our Boarding House

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