

MANSRAGE

An Independant magazine for today's men.
First issue Free!

Manifesto
Death, Death,
DEATH - to P.C.!!!

The Slow Death of
America

Immigration Reform:
by any means
necessary!

In this issue the novel-
length story by resident
writer Maxx Feral:

**DEATH ON THE
M'KUNGA RIVER!**



MAN'S RAGE MAGAZINE

EST 2012 - ISSUE #1

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MAN’S RAGE MAGAZINE IS TO BE PUBLISHED
SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR. FIRST ISSUE (THIS)
IS FREE TO DOWNLOAD AND DISTRIBUTE.

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Yes, that's right, true believers, the first issue is FREE.

"Man's Rage" is a magazine unlike anything else on the newsstands, though it's inspired by the "Men's Adventure" magazines that used to be the norm. It's main theme is "What if Men's Adventure magazines were written today, combined with Pulp stories along the same theme?" It is entertainment, it is thought provoking, it is macho and it is NOT "Politically Correct".

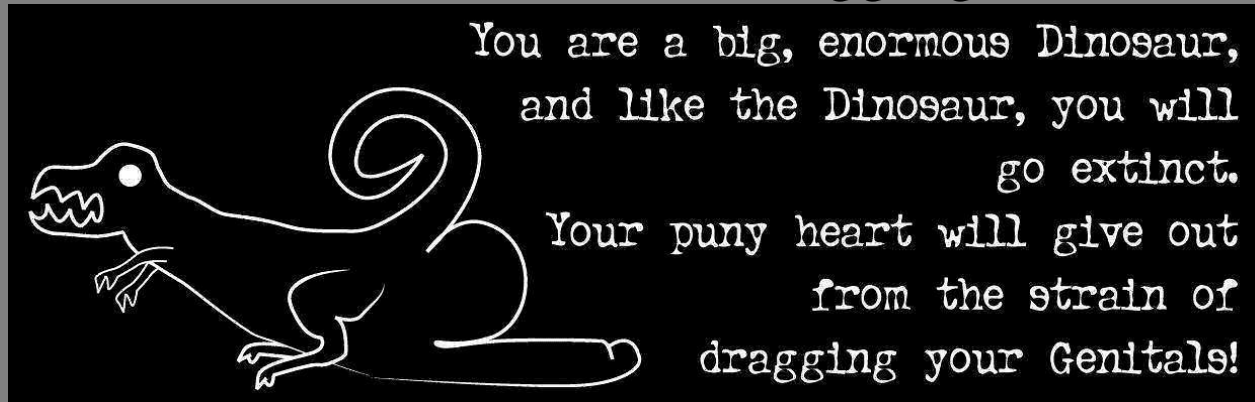
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Let's repeat, the first issue is free.

That's to give everyone a good taste of what's in store for them! Subsequent issues will be \$5 each though a good "Preview" file will be available to browse it. Someday, if we pound a nice steak in the heart of this PC vampire and things go well, we might well have this printed in RL. We could do it now, but it'd be very expensive and likely get blocked from the major bookstores/newsstands. But this whole project is to try to say to the vampire PC "Publishing Industry" that "The people do NOT want your mindless bland tedium to which pornography is the only innovation!" Likewise, since free the ads are all parodies. This magazine will certainly solicit and accept advertisement in a format of absolute freedom also in tradition of the Men's Adventure mags, but will not endorse nor change format to attract/appease any advertiser. Some Feminist or "other" special interest wants to advertise for a site that says we are nutcases, FINE, unlike them we believe in "Free Speech" and "Free Markets" but we won't stop our article that month say on any topic they might not like.

Letters to the Testicle Dragging Editor



Greetings and welcome to Man's Rage Magazine, the first fist flying adventuresome issue! Since this is the first issue there is no "Letters Column" so to speak and so I'll just fill in this page by telling a story, namely the story that inspired this. While back, I was in a bookstore/Coffeshop doing my usual hobby of sitting and reading. I was re-reading a favorite Conan story from one of the newer re-prints, debating over the economics and practicality of replacing my rather worn ancient copies with a set of new, good quality re-prints. Also I had a miscellany of other items, notably a Frazetta art book.

Well, my re-living of Conan's dangerous trek through the house of a mad Techno - Wizard to face his deadly servant who'd turned on him was interrupted by an annoying "You are a sexist for reading that..." whine. Of course it came from a woman... Well, I was in a real good mood that day and so instead of saying something bad, which IMO is not a good thing, 'especially to no woman, I just rolled with it. I leapt over to her table carrying my iced tea and my books and I just politely introduced myself to her.

Now, this surprising behavior startled the lass and she looked 'bout to blush or cry. She wasn't scared o' me, just so surprised I didn't wither into a ball of self defeating whimpering and apologize to her for looking at something so "Sexist" as that Frazetta cover or something like that...

Well, I wouldn't exactly pull open a "Hustler" in public and have a prominent "Spread" of a lady "Spreading" so to speak, but IMO there's nothing wrong with a close up of Frazetta's "Egyptian Princess" masterpiece.

But my words were not so much to defend that, as to talk to her and look at what she was reading; A stack of "Diet" books and "Fashion" magazines. Really, I was "Sexist" because I like Conan and "Heroic Fantasy" and "Pulp Adventure" but notice, as I pointed out, how all the characters were really healthy. Frazetta was a master and a good old 50s man of action, he knew what good muscles were, from Tarzan, Sailors, etc. and how to draw them in fantastic action.

And his women, whoa! They weren't just gross exaggerations of the "Hourglass" figure, nor anorexic waifs (get to that later) of "High Fashion" they were healthy, beautiful women, including with plenty of curves and realistically drawn minimal fat.

So, I noted this and I looked at her books with her, starting with the fashion magazines. Talk about an unhealthy, sexist stereotype; These women were so anorexic, it kind of confirmed a rather impolite statement I heard about "High Fashion" that as Usury was a trade the Jews could indulge in, Fashion became the shelter of Homosexuals.

That they chose models to "Obsess" over if you get my drift because these waifs, often into Heroin as much as anorexia and surgery reminded them, esp. from the rear, of young boys just off the bus... Oh, doubtless I'll get some nasty statements about that allusion. Hey, "Burroughs" is one of my fav writers, don't mean I'm into it.

So I pointed out one of the main cover spreads and the lady there had been "Computer Edited". Wasn't enough that she starved herself to a dangerously low level of fat (less than 3%) had makeup almost literally caked on, including on close up inspection over some pock marks, and probably was either a heroin or early stage meth user (energy and appetite avoidance) they used a computer to make her look more "Beautiful" on top of that. I pointed out some variances in the background that gave away some signs, so used to computer art on my end...

And don't dare say this is an exception. Recently an online magazine got "Sued" by a major fashion house for pointing out one of their top models, a very beautiful but "Old" (40s) lady and the end results didn't just look unhealthy, they looked bizarre. After the lawsuit hit the news and the magazine just said "So sue us, we got a lawyer volunteering" someone else found out it wasn't just a "Shop" issue (PhotoShopped) it was a "Head Swap". Yep, they took the body of a young model doing the catwalk, and just cut and pasted the older lady's head on her, the weird muscles were from her actually at an angle as it was caught mid stride versus a standing pose!

You should have seen this lady, she was a brunette in her mid 20s, and a bit heavy but nowhere near fat. She was wearing a lot of makeup, had spent lots of money on making her hair look wild, and reeked of perfume. She was also wearing stuff that she'd probably spent a lot of her own money on, but was painfully tight.

I'm just like "Who's fantasy is worse?" Me, I love adventure but also keep myself in decent shape and note that these physiques are all reachable. The stories are fun and enjoyable. On the other hand, she's looking at these things that are designed to make her feel incomplete. She'll always want to lose an extra X pounds, or save up X more dollars for this horrible but expensive dress or some fancy makeup or some weird perfume and hope for...what? To become a "Model" to be courted by "Mister Romance Novel Pirate actor who's probably Gay"?

And I was pointing this nice, but I was making the lass a bit scared. Too few "Real Men" left in this world, the women are used to either "Feminized" men or "Peacocks". Real men...well no garbage list from me, but frankly real men have the guts to say what is right, I think I can say that without fear of contradiction from other "Real Men", no?

And, like another "Sexist" I wasn't brutal with this, I wanted to be nice to the lady, even though she'd started our conversation with an insult to me.

I just said, more or less;

"Look, these are just dumb stories that are a hoot to read. But I'm more concerned with your magazines, they make you feel bad no matter how much you starve yourself, how much you spend on makeup and clothing, (pointed out one she had marked, more revealing than Fraz's Egyptian Princess!) you'll always feel you need something more, and that right now, you aren't beautiful."

"Let me tell you, you ARE beautiful. I find you very attractive. And I'm not seeing but rather seeing through all your make-up, I bet your skin is really nice if you'll let it breathe a bit."

"So, well we have our drinks already, but perhaps I could ask you to a movie or something? Or just walk in the park... I would like to get more personal with you,

darling--"

I'm not "Casanova" and that's where her "Feminist hate the man, destroy him" programming kicked in and she ran, giving a remark that, well "Inspired" this here letter's column title... And that is really too bad because I really liked sitting next to her and would have liked to, to put it politely taken things to another stage. This is something I shall expand on in future articles for this magazine; That the "High Fashion"/"Diet" industry is far more damaging for the psyche than anything "SciFi/Fantasy" dishes out. Combine that with the "Man hating Feminist" garbage, it's a recipe that really messes up a lot of women and has helped F--- up society. I wasn't waiting for "Tiffany Towers in a chain mail bikini" and treating every woman who didn't look like that like sh-t. I saw a nice, attractive lady in real need of "Love Therapy" from a real man and I'd have done my duty as a man and been friendly and loving to her. Now, while I don't have mister "Ravishment Fantasy" Pirate's wonderful golden hair, or painted muscles I wasn't too far off from Mr. Tarzan either, doing lots of working out and getting thinner at that time. I was the more realistic, "Natural" person while she was the one waiting for a "Fantasy".

I don't type this in any sense of "Triumph". I feel bad about that incident, not just the "Reptile Brain" losing an opportunity to have fun, but that she's totally brainwashed by this modern "Fantasy" of female "Independence", "Empowerment", "Man is the enemy"...blah blah blah. It's been a few years and I'd bet that by now she's been married and probably already divorced, just that inside her she's always seeking something she can't reach and unlike a saner goal that's used to keep oneself driving on despite adversity, she's always feeling "Unfulfilled" and hating herself for it.

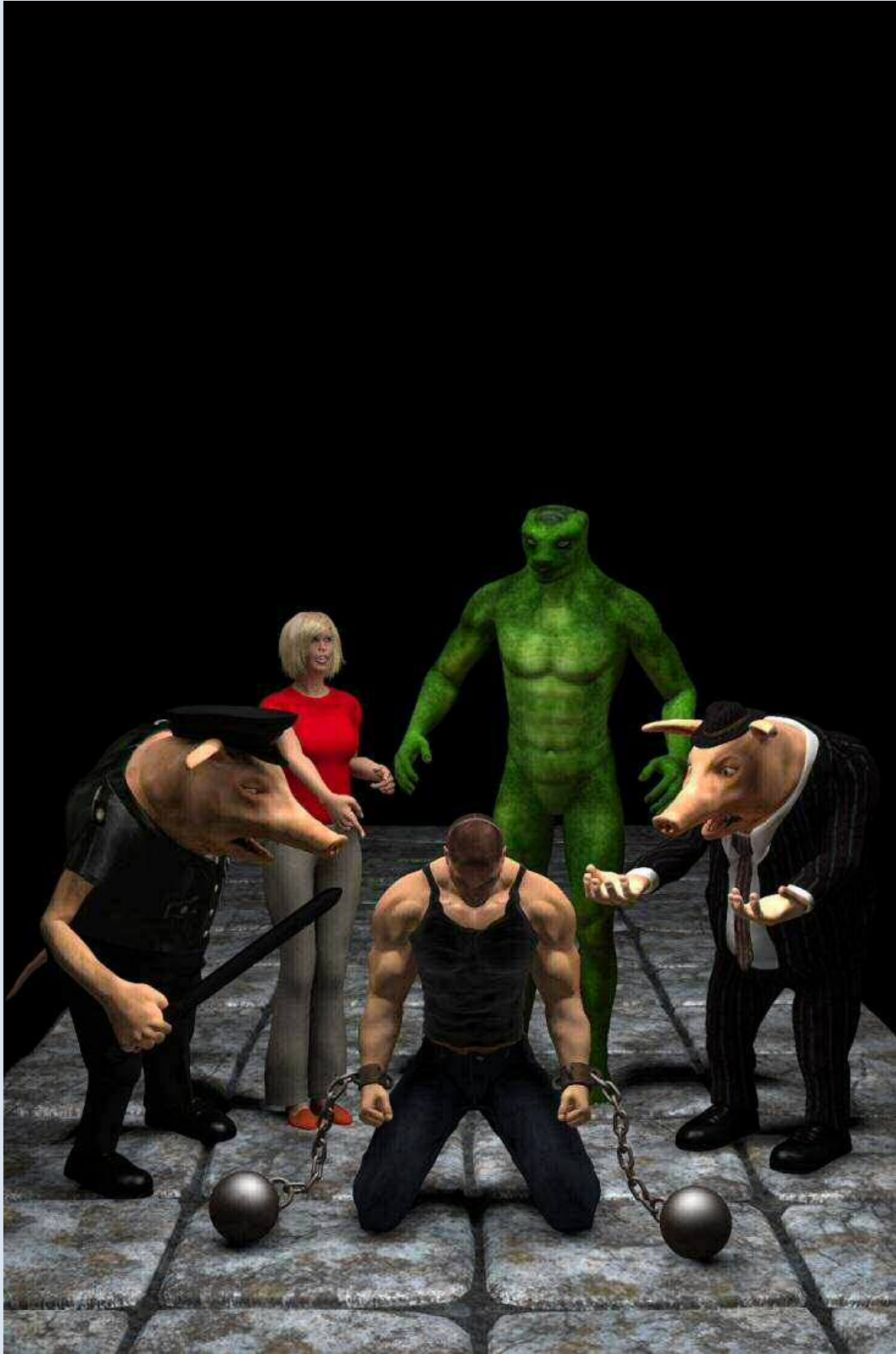
Now, I've been very abstract about the lady, and I've not met her again, and if by any chance she reads this, well... I doubt you'll change your opinion of me, but I meant what I said. Even if you don't want me ever to associate with you, well that's fine, I ain't the only feller out there. But what I'm concerned about is what I said. I live in the real world, not some wild fantasy world, you need to also. You need to live now, love now, not in the future. We plan for the future by saving and working towards our goals, but we need to live here and now. And, miss, you ARE beautiful, so please scrub off some of that makeup and dress more natural. For instance, you could "Hippie/Gypsy" yourself for dollars and you'd look wild!

---Ben (editor/Publisher)

Of note:

Thanks to "Kiwine" for his permission for use of this image to this magazine. The lass on the bottom right reminds me just of the lady I talked to in that bookstore those years past...





MAN-ifesto:

Welcome to the first radical, pulse-pounding issue of "Man's Rage" magazine. This is a publication of adventure, entertainment, education and social protest and the target audience is the MALE. Primarily WHITE MALE, but it's not necessarily a "Racist" publication, but in case you missed the cover absolutely NON-PC... No bullshit about trying to file off all the rough edges to smoothly shove down everybody's "Special Needs" throats. This is NOT for fragile, PRECIOUS individual SNOWFLAKES. It'll make you MELT you weakling, go masturbate to Mister Rogers or something, mmkay?

This Magazine will NOT be like other current "Men's" magazines. No reviews of Cologne, tips for begging the "Hottie" in the bar to let you fuck her guides to be "Sensitive", to suck up to the boss to mmmmaybe get a raise before he outsources your job, too. Gawdz, I could cry reading some of that shit...

This magazine is entertainment for MEN. Not necessarily "Porn" though plenty of "Spice". This Magazine is also a shout of RAGE at how, we, the MALES have been treated. And it's a revival of yesteryear before we were so castrated by today's society. It'll have thrilling adventure/sci-fi/fantasy stories. It'll have education on how to do cool stuff. It'll address problems to the world, especially MEN today with no care for "Left, right, sensitivity" or any -ism or -ology out there.

I fully believe that this treatment of the MALE is part of a sinister agenda, all males but primarily the white ones. We have been targeted because WE are the ones most able to resist it should we muster the rage and the focus to oppose the controllers. The image is what I think of this system. You have the man chained with Political Correctness and a "Changing" (being ROBBED) world. You have the hogs of petty fascist authority and usurious swinish greed controlling his freedom and sucking off his labors. You have the WOMAN put over the MAN just to tear him down. She thinks she's on top now, being "Empowered" but still "Protected" but all she is is a SLAVE but now less than that she's a "Commodity" of the controllers, the sinister satanic force taking over the world and preparing for mass genocide against the human race.

This magazine will be a wild ride. And not one for the weak or the willing slaves. Really, I'm making it clear now, that's why the first issue is FREE. Let them call us what they will but do NOT let them say "You've seen one issue, you've seen them all, cause we are just getting STARTED.

Death, Death, DEATH to P.C.!!!



Image from Classic Varney the Vampire, public domain

- MAKE IT CLEAR -

Man's Rage declares War on Political Correctness, this vile vampire that has been used by the Controllers to degrade socetty. It declares P.C. nothing more than Fascism with a smiley face and a creator of more racism and hatred than it supposedly opposed! We must purge this vile vampire from our society, from our thoughts while we still have BLOOD!

A big focus of this magazine will be a war on "Political Correctness". It is this magazine's position that "PC" does NO good. That it is both a cheap corporate marketing ploy and an attempt to twist the progressive progress of past decades into an insulting perversion of what they were. That it is meant to be like sealing the release valve on a pressure cooker and turning up the heat, to create worse racism and prejudice down the road after the pressure bursts.

Thus this magazine is against PC. We will shamelessly have tons of stereotypes, we will have no sacred cows, we will show unpopular opinions. It is not necessarily racist, but certainly pro white male. It is not sexist but against the anti-man radical feminism.

So, if you think you are a precious individual snowflake, you were warned. We ROAST sacred cows here. We MELT "Precious Individual Snowflakes". The only "PC" thing about us is that we will likely manage to be offensive to nearly ALL races, creeds, perversions, whatever by the time we are done!

Articles under the "Death Death Death" to PC logo will be exploring how this attempt to offend few and be bland to all have hurt society.

The Slow Death of America

a Man's Rage Magazine ongoing series
in social commentary and investigative
journalism



America is a great country, surely the greatest in the world, the fruit of the Age of Enlightenment. Perhaps, even from the dim mythic past to whatever unknown, unknowable future will America shine amongst the greatest ever before or since. Very few other societies have offered so much personal freedom and opportunity as America. As much diversity yet stability, opportunity for success and protection for complacency, a sky to shoot for and a trampoline for when it's missed to make the bounce back to try again softer.

But America is threatened, it is even dying. It has been slowly bled from within by traitors. Traitors who used the public's apathy bred by decades of prosperity. Who sold their country short for another mansion, another yacht out of dozens...

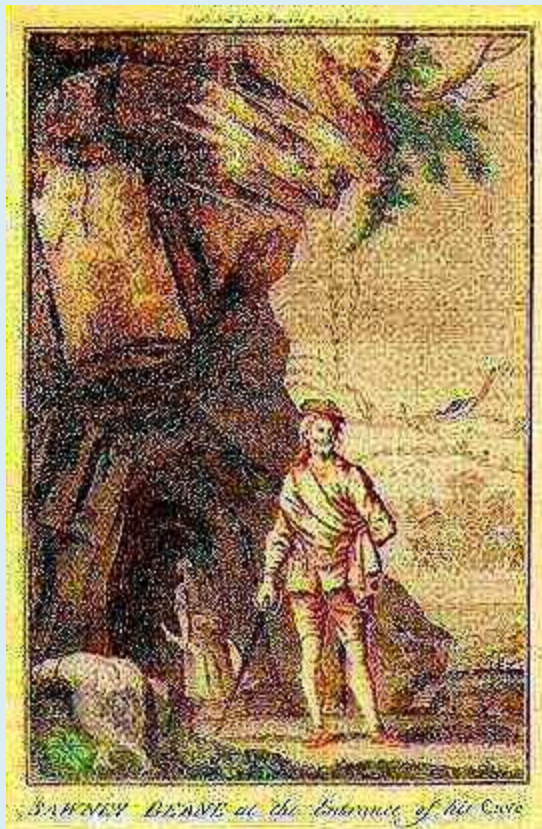
Man's Rage Magazine sates that it is for America. Not for "Left" or "Right" politics, but for the dream of America. The careful balance of many competing interests to create the world's richest economy and freest society. There are no sacred cows, we shall mock a hippie that thinks an illegal immigrant scab is a 'human rights' issue just as we will condemn a parasite traitor pig who hires him to bleed America.

This will be an ongoing expose of the conspiracies ruining America.

To begin with, those at the top of the heap have gotten much richer, and they have done so in ways that make the rest of America poorer.

We are all for a man making a fortune by his intelligence, efforts, luck, whatever he has to do. But there is NO guarantee in the Constitution for a man to become rich or to stay rich if he does so. That is a “Monarchy” which is what our society is formed in opposition to.

If a man breaks into a house and kills the family inside, then still is blood soaked and selling the family’s possessions in a yard sale in the front lawn, is he a businessman? No he is a criminal, a murderer, a thief. Is the policeman who arrests him part of a “Communist Conspiracy” to hurt the independent businessman’s right to make his fortune? No, most by far would say. He can try to sell what he owns or produces, but if he steals what he sells, he is a thief.



Modern business, especially big corporate business should only be respected in the same manner as the business of the “Sawney Beane Clan” was. To function as a society we need basic laws. Without these, people will be too busy either defending their territory/property or assaulting others for theirs to create a larger civilization. Yet too many laws and unfair laws are what we then must commit to be fighting.

Those that have gotten rich that have bled America have in the most part these last decades done so by betraying the social contract. This is no accident; this is a “Conspiracy” and not a “Conspiracy Theory”. It’s called “The Business Plot” and many of the most elite families approached a general to try to fund a private army for armed treason. They had too much power so were not executed, but president Roosevelt had the threat to hang over their heads so they did not oppose the “new deal” that made America the country with the largest middle class in history.

So they grumbled and sat back and waited. Waited for years, decades. What they couldn’t do with a coup they did by bleeding America slowly. One more illegal immigrant brought in at a time. One more job outsourced at a time. One more careful, slow “merger” that cost the country more and gave less. One price rose slightly and unfairly at a time. One wage stagnant. Drip Drip Drip, the traitors bled America.

We are nearing a crossover point where either the middle class disappears or we push back hard. Do NOT frame this in the garbage media LIES of “Left” and “Right” a pox on either house. They are both cartoon insults of any ideals held, designed to evenly, perfectly cancel each other out. There are NO sacred cows, save to be butchered.

Thus Man's Rage is doing research and reaching out. Any journalists interested in being published should contact this magazine by submissions@mansrage.com and while this is not a major publication we will try to arrange some level of compensation. No “hey, doood, publish here for free to get exposure” like even MAJOR MEDIA does these days, we are on a limited budget but we are not insane...

IMMIGRATION REFORM:

BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY!



Short Story by Maxx Feral and magazine article on the first step to saving America. The story is fiction. The danger is real. America is at stake and we must act now to save America and our way of life!

"Eeeyup, City, we's gonna go 'way from our troubles!" said Marty Joeb, who was an odd friend of Jake Markinson, a laid off systems administrator as he drove them in his truck into the badlands in the south western United States.

"Now, let's not argue here. Ah listen to yer leeberul stuff all the time, and I do listen 't it. Case in point, Ah now spends more in coffee than ever before, since Ah do like the fancier stuff better. But, today, you be a 'right winger' and help me hunt some vermin what ends up on mah property. Ah'm doin it fer you, you look pale, need the sun on your back and a gun in yer hands."

Jake just nodded weakly. He wanted anything to take him off his disappointment and the growing fear of his situation.

How did his life get this way? He breezed through school with straight A's, could program, fix electronics, got on well with most people, had one sterling reference after another. But, except for a brief surge in the 90s when he thought he was on top of the world, his life in the computer industry was a collection of boring, oppressive jobs that were unstable even before the recession hit.

He'd been laid off from the business he worked so hard for and made so much money for. The CEO had just bought another yacht, mainly from the business that he helped bring. He was trying to be of a 'forgiving' mood and just move on, but he noticed two kids just out of school were doing the work of four people, for less than a quarter of what he'd been paid. Even that was only because the customer base had insisted they stay in the USA, many other branches moved overseas creating the famous "Indian Tech support" stereotype. Why pay an American worker good money when you can maybe give a man a mouthful of food to live that day, and who cares about the customers when it's advertizing to ensure sales and bailouts to ensure profits? Was his previous employer slandering him on reference calls, or was this market just now so bleak that despite or perhaps even because of his skills and competence he'd never land another job in time?

"Hokay, 'nother ten minutes we'll be in what they called 'Devil's Pass' in the old days. Now, again I want you to chuck yer bleedin heart. Them Coyotes that cross here they take from my land, so like any vermin I'm gonna take 'em out, protected species or no. Now, please don't disappoint me, hear...?" He said, almost pleading under his macho veneer.

"Don't worry. Today is the coyote's day to be unlucky!" Jake said with a firm resolve.

"Alright!" Marty patted him on the back, "Let's get em!"

The truck pulled off the trail and parked in an abandoned and crumbling gold rush era barn. Not really much roof to fall on it, just a place for some slight shade and shelter from some prying eyes. Marty unpacked the guns, giving one to Jake and making sure he knew how to operate it. They pulled out a blue tarp to cover the truck inside. Jake noticed for the first time because his misfortune was distracting him that Marty's truck was carrying a modified trailer on the back that used to be a dwelling one but now seemed different.

"Uh, why the trailer today? We going to take anything from this 'national park'?"

Marty smiled wickedly, "Possibly. You don't mind, no?"

"Nope".

Both men moved out into the bushes. Neither was wearing, as one might imagine "Combat Gear" which if seen always brings suspicion. Instead they were wearing nondescript clothing and looked more like campers or surveyors than hunters.

It was hot walking out in the sun, even with taking the proper precautions one needs to read up on to dare go into such a wildplace, and Jake felt he was about to die. Still, he carried on not wanting to show weakness.

"Remember," Marty said tappin his canteen, "Don't let yourself dehydrate."

After what was not too far a walk they came upon a recently dug pit with a bunch of fresh earth to the side on top of another tarp. Oddly there was even a large patch of unspoiled topsoil on top of it.

"Like my work? Ah do some work for departments that do surveying so once in a while I can bring equipment onto public land without getting knee deep in shit if I'm caught using it. I might be a tough country boy, but work smart or work hard, don't want to hurt mah back shoveling for a day!"

Jake said, "Well I guess I'm being master of the obvious, but this is where we'll bury the Coyotes we shoot, and that patch of soil is so that nature covers it for us. Just move the top, push the dirt, cover it and it'll not be noticeable in days."

Marty replied, "Master of the obvious award received!"

He further explained that this was a 'back' trail not often used, and therefore more free of the government officials who'd protect the vermin who came into his land. They were using old rifles with no real good value, one's he'd gotten used in gun shows, so they could ditch them and not worry about a ballistics test. With the remoteness, they'd have a very good chance of bagging a number of animals and covering up the trail with no detection.

So the two men sat down to wait under a camo net in the pit which was covered in sagebrush. At first it was boring, but not so much to Jake who found great pleasure watching nature's beauty,

even in a more dry and harsh place. They kept their talk minimal after that to conserve water and avoid detection.

Twilight fell and it started to turn chilly. Marty was used to night but Jake used some telescopic night vision goggles he'd bought on a whim during better times, to almost never use. Just something worth a few thousand, but now these sold for a few hundred and those in his hands seemed to snicker at him about how little that meant to him way back.

"But now, mister goggles that laugh at me, you are doing work!" he smugly thought, grateful he'd told the pawnbroker eager to feed off his desperation that he'd deliberately smash them on the ground so he didn't get them for \$35 and turn around and sell them for \$225 right next to the cheap Chinese imitations of his good quality American made pair.

"Hsst.." Marty softly but firmly whispered, "Hokay, some are coming and any luck we catch them all. Now this is where you do exactly what I say. No deviance, follow my lead we'll have this work out."

"Okay," Jake whispered back, almost annoyed. Did Marty really think he was that "Flaming" a "Liberal"? Had his mind been fried watching those obvious corporate pundits pretending to be 'conservative' on Talk Radio?

But he looked to see if he could see what Marty was able to sense. He looked for coyote tracks and there were none. This area did seem to get more than a semi desert area should in traffic, though. Human footprints... And they weren't that far north of the Mexican border.

A chill went up Jake's spine.

Marty shot into the bushes.

"Immigration Control! Stand still or we will shoot you dead as you run!" Marty screamed into a megaphone. He pushed a button briefly that gave a police siren, then repeated in mangled Spanish: "Control de la inmigración! Todavía coloquese o le tiraremos los muertos como usted funciona!"

Marty looked dead into Jake's eyes with the most serious stare he ever had in his life; "Just follow my lead, be silent, and we'll be a lot richer for this. But don't mess this up. I'm trusting you but God help me, I do not want to kill my best friend! You'll understand after."

Marty and Jake ran 100 meters to where the shot had landed. Jake was in too much shock and his head was spinning with the adrenalin in his brain. It was almost as if he was watching himself take Marty's orders.

The site had one dead person and three live ones. The person they shot looked like a real backwoods person, even moreso than Marty, but was like his compatriots of Mexican ancestry. The three with him were women and looked more dressed for a street corner than the wild. He carried everything with him, so if they'd run they'd very quickly die of thirst.

"Control De La Inmigration!" Marty said again, flashing a fake badge and holding out handcuffs. Jake just stood quietly holding his gun on them. Marty handcuffed the women, then he had Jake take the man's backpack and put the contents of his pockets into a cloth sack.

"ACLU. I sue!" said one of the women. Jake smacked her hard and she fell to the ground and held the gun to her head. Her eyes held suspicion and fear where previously there had been arrogance and malice, "You no el Immigration pig!"

"Hispanic women are smart," said Marty, "and if they don' wanna join their Coyote, they do as they are told!" Marty had Jake march behind the women holding the gun on them. He was struggling under the weight, this tiny Mexican was stronger than him twice, or had been when he was alive without his skull split apart by a bullet.

When they got back to the pit, Marty tossed in the Mexican. "See, I told you we'd bag at least one Coyote!" he laughed, and said "But trust me, our fun is just beginning." They pushed over the dirt, covered it with the layer of grassy topsoil, and made one of the women, the one who'd mouthed at Marty, carry the tarp and cover. Marty explained it still could be exhumed and he didn't want his trick to sour that fast, which it would if they simply buried the tarps in it with him. That was also why they took the risk of taking ALL his gear.

Before going back to the truck Marty did a quick search of the gear. It was in the dark so Jake couldn't see the full contents, but he was finding cell phones. He had a detector he'd gotten over the counter, or perhaps online but delivered to a foreclosed property not in anyone but a bank's name, and he ferreted out two phones. One was the latest deluxe model, in the Coyote's bag, the other was a cheap pay as you go one, which one of the women had smuggled with her. Marty pulled the power supply out of them and put them in an aluminum foil bag. Jake was still in shock or he'd "Master the Obvious" again and say that was the reason why Marty had insisted they not carry a cell phone; an alibi and lack of incriminating GPS tracing.

Jake was tempted to assure him he didn't need to be that thorough, they could do it in the truck, for a cell phone probably wouldn't work this far out and usually they couldn't be traced to more than a "Node". But if they had GPS then the signal would end where truck tire tracks begin. Again not that important since this was a busy area and they'd quickly be on the road and surely Marty had made sure to have rather common tires on his truck. Still better not to give evidence or take risks.

He then moved the women into the trailer. Sure enough, it had been converted to be a soundproof secure cage that looked like an ordinary trailer from the outside. For mercy's sake, an air conditioner kept it cool, but he told the girls he could seal it and fill it with CO2 from the exhaust in a second if they started to scream when or if they got stopped or pulled in a gas station.

The man's pack also went into a locked box in the cage with the women.

Marty got more talkative on the way back,

"Now, take note I am driving just under the speed limit. All my plates are in order, my lights, my tires aren't bald. But, these days the Z.O.G. wants the Fuzz to stop you to look for a reason to fine you for any or no reason, so I took more precautions.

"I studied this area and the route home. Even though they tell people patrols are random, like saying the 'quota system' is false, it's just a lie. Even trying to be random, things fall into a pattern. And better yet, they use the 'stealth' police cars for traffic tickets so word gets around, especially with my silent witnesses..."

Marty pulled out some cheap but very useful remote recording cameras Jake had helped him rig up. "Yep. These helped me get smoky's pattern and lookin at mah watch the Fuzz done passed us on this road 5 minutes ago and another won't be by until 20 minutes to an hour more likely!"

They exited the badlands onto an interstate then merged into the late night traffic, making sure to be in the middle for it's the "Last speeder who gets the ticket" and then exited the highway going into Marty's ranch. Only once they'd seen police lights and that was on a side highway going the opposite direction, likely just the usual "Speeding, check for insurance, etc." attempt to rob

citizens like high profile bandits rather than protecting them from criminals, though indeed now Marty and Jake would be considered as such.

"Note that when you see a police car, be you guilty or be you innocent do NOT change direction, jerk in the car, do any weird watching them movement. This gets their attention. And, we'll go over this in detail later, but if you ever are stopped or questioned for any reason, just be polite and sign their dumb traffic ticket but if arrested just lawyer up. Don't say word one beyond invoking the first and demanding a lawyer. Lots of people got on death row because what they said got twisted by the fuzz, who didn't care about catching a guilty person, just getting "Points". But unlike the propaganda Z.O.G. TV shows, what you refuse to say is in no way usable against you!"

They pulled into the driveway and Marty pushed the button. Garage door opener. Nothing fancy, but Marty had in the past remarked about one as "being fer weakings with no time or city boys afraid of their neighbors." But now he found one quite convenient. They had moved from the danger zone

where a ranger could look into them for no reason, to a slightly lesser zone of danger where the police targeted law abiding citizens for fines and searches, to the home which was still tentatively protected by the "Castle" laws and where good reason would be needed for a search.



The adrenalin shock had worn off Jake and now he was just tired and numb. They first unloaded the women, still at gunpoint and moved them into a cell in a curiously refurbished basement. Still in handcuffs they sat on a bench.

Jake then pulled in the Coyote's gear as Marty prepared some lattes with an expensive machine. "That's a Italliato 3400", Jake thought, "I put off buying one before the dot com crash. How does Marty afford it?"

"Okay, fellow hunter, we got us looty and downstairs we got us booty. Now you ain't leavin mah hospitality till we get you a taste o' both!"

They opened the Coyote's massive pack in a lighted room with opaque curtains on the windows. It was amazing. Drugs. Guns. Money. Computer files on secure digital usb drives with the codes written in the bags.

Marty led the way in the dividing.

"First, let's here get rid o' this!" he said holding up bags of crack cocaine and Meth. "I ain't into this stuff, nor do I know anyone who is, and frankly if I tried to sell I might run into some of our coyote's business partners. So this goes down Doctor Krapper's miraculous invention, mmmkay? I mean, if you want it, I'll just let you have it, but I don't think it's anything you want!"

Jake shook his head furiously. Marty put it in a bucket that he'd later fill with acids, coffee grounds, baking soda, etc. to de-complexify the chemicals and mess up any tracing tests. He wasn't paranoid enough yet to believe that the ZOG tested the outgoing water from every home. Even in blatant drug houses the 'word' of a 'professional snitch' was always far cheaper. Still, better not to take unnecessary chances on being the first to find out when they started doing it. Marty didn't need

to explain how the honest rural folks hated Meth, the average country Meth lab killed quite a few cattle by openly dumping toxic waste in the topsoil that was absorbed by the grass the cattle ate. Jake had looked up Meth's formula, investigating such an incident for Marty and had winced at the idea of anyone putting that in their body. That was for some neighbors a few miles away, the police had refused to investigate because though they'd easily make a bust the "Assets Forfeiture" laws would kick into play and they'd get those people's property. Why avoid that? Because the county would be legally obliged to pay for toxic waste cleanup, so a few acres of dead soil and a rotting trailer not worth \$20,000 even in the property boom would cost \$3 million. So the report of the chemicals was ignored and Marty's friends were threatened into silence by the police.

"Now this here," Marty said, "Might be hard for you, and frankly it's somethin' Ah'm not preachy about either, but I think we should dump this too."

He pointed to some bricks of Marijuana, called "Square Grouper" by da Fuzz when they caught someone with it.

"This here is what they sell to the clueless of da College Kids at whatever they price can charge them. Now, I wouldn't care and might like some myself, but.." Marty pulled out a chemical testing strip and in a solution of water and chemicals tested the leaves. Toxic Mercury levels.

"This here is worse than what they call 'Ditch Weed'. They grow it openly in Mexico, and right next to places where big companies that used to hire honest, hard working Americans moved. They moved so that they could still charge as much but not pay an American a decent day's pay for a decent day's work. That and that there's no EPA to stop them dumping Mercury openly in the water. Ever notice, taking refresher courses, how the 'stoners' are getting more and more stupid? That's likely why, though ah'm no Sign-tist!"

Jake just shook his head, and Marty knew it was in polite approval/disapproval and moved the bundles to the disposal container.

They then cut to the chase and counted the money. There was more there than Jake had earned in his best three years combined when he was VP (and did all the real work) of a dot.com startup in the 90s. None of it seemed to be counterfeit. Marty smiled at Jake and split it 50/50. Jake was again almost dizzy. He was truly afraid of becoming homeless in another year and out of some cruel karmic punishment have to meet the handful of 'homeless people' he'd told to "Go get a job" back when it seemed anyone with brain cells and gumption could make a fortune.

"Why'd they smuggle money IN to this country?" Jake said. "Like I thought they came here to earn it and send it back...?"

"Beat's me," Marty said, "Ah don't have all the answers, but I think they are setting up more criminal operations in this country and with the terrorist fears international transfers are more closely watched. But frankly, just to tell you to make it double, let NO ONE know of this. You see, we've essentially robbed one of the Mexican Mafias here."

Marty continued, "What we have here is a transfer of currency. Basic Eco-nomics, currency naturally flows like water going to a common minimum denominator. But if you put energy into a system and move the water uphill, you again have value. In this case the currency is all mildly illegal in a very poor, near lawless land, and highly illegal in a too lawful land. But everything here is currency, or convertible or tradable to currency. I picked a low traffic route hoping for more than just illegals to fill a makeshift grave. I'm not that surprised we got this much, though I'd have been satisfied at 1/8th this take. But noticing the border guards seeming to try to avoid this

place-" he again patted a camera setup, "I figured it was a safe route to trust with more than a standard Mule's pack."

Jake said, "So they bribed the border guards to let them cross?"

"No, the border guards are too scared to do their jobs. The bribery, my friend, is at the highest levels of government. Remember those two border guards who got framed and tossed in a prison full of many illegal alien criminals? Convicted on no less than the testimony of the drug dealer they caught who continued his profession in between court appearances?"

Jake nodded, Marty continued.

"There was a chance we'd encounter a big troupe, with Mexican Military armored vehicles escorting them. In that case, we'd have hid, and if they noticed us I'd have shown my fake Ranger badge and waved them on."

"And, much as I'd love to bag 3 coyotes a week, I'm holding off on this for a long while. Within a week at most, they'll probably assume the mule got killed and scream for the corrupt men in Washington who are selling our country out to tell the border guards to watch that pass, not for illegals, but for vigilantes like us. I'd call them Fed Pig Border guards, but really they are Fed Chickens, just guys doing their job, knowing its wrong but knowing if they raised Cain as they should, they'd get fired, or worse and had little effect on the situation. Hey, Jesus forgave Pilate..."

They checked the memory sticks with Jake's 'netbook' computer, all flash RAM so no legacy on a hard drive to worry about. As expected, it was mostly child porn. Neither Jake nor Marty was into kids and just deleted it.

The remaining drive seemed to have some "Swiss account" information. Something to save and think deeply about looking into later. Jake had previously gone over various forms of net security and data encryption with Marty. They both made encrypted, hidden copies of this file and decided to both look into it later with Jake doing the tech work.

Moving to the Guns, Marty said "I hope you don't mind if I take most of these..." he made a move as if to push some of his money to Jake, but Jake just shook his head and hand and said it was OK. The guns were also multi thousand dollar stuff, like a spy or assassin would use.

Jake took one that looked like a plastic rectangle.

"That thar's a gun designed to fit inside a business suit or dress uniform. It's a machine gun that shoots a straight bead with 'bout no recoil. It's even got a type of plastic that acts to thwart metal detectors, but I reckon a modern airport body scanner would find it. It's worth \$10K, but have it, just in case you want to go postal!"

"Well, with the money, I don't plan to. Ever. And I just want to promise you, my bleeding leftist heart is buried right now on this issue. You are right, there is a much greater evil at work in the world and our survival as Americans trumps what should be compassion for those less fortunate than ourselves."

"That's a relief, Jake! I was going to insist you spend the night, though. And I mean for your protection. It's now past three and if you bump into a Fuzz this late they'll look for reason to fill their quota. You are a previously working honest white male, you are their prime target to avoid encountering anyone who'll fight back! And if you have that gun and that much cash..."

Jake smiled, and kind of blushed.

"Actually, and trust me my heart is bleeding foolishly no more, what about the women?"

"They are another form of currency. Human Trafficking. They would have been moved to a whore house, or sold as slaves. Since they are halfway pretty but not super gorgeous looking Mexican women, they'd have probably been ridden a dozen times a day by migrant workers, then in a few years they'd be too rotted and they'd just shoot 'em and throw 'em in the trash bin."

"Now, there's a network of vigilantes, what also crosses with other illegal markets, though we oppose the Mexican gangs. I can discreetly sell off these ladies, but I might have to Coyote them. Might be fun to keep one around as a house pet since I have enough room in the basement dungeon. Something you might consider also...?"

"But that's talk for later. We's a-gonna have us some fun!"

So with a hoot and a holler both men raced down to Marty's homemade basement dungeon for some fun better not said for decency's sake...

First, a disclaimer that should not be needed, but for these insane days;

The preceding story by Maxx Feral was FICTION. This magazine does NOT directly endorse emulating such behavior. Not just CYA policy (Cover Yer Ass) but that the "Coyote" scene alone wouldn't likely have turned out that easy. Most of them are ex-Mexican Military with the CIA "Advisors" training that rotten country's military to keep down it's revolutionaries so wouldn't likely blunder into such an ambush. You'd think he suddenly went to the bushes for a piss just before sniping him, then while you dumbly waited for him to emerge he'd sneak behind and slit your throat. Yes, these deadly criminals are openly let into this country, often with Mexican Military escort and open willful dereliction by the government. Look at the border guards framed for doing their jobs. Look at the countless "Tell all" books published by disgruntled ex-border guards.

Make no mistake, we as Americans must fight first and foremost the "Illegal Immigrant" problem. It is NOT a "Race" or a "Human Rights" issue. Illegal immigrants are used by the rich elite to suck our money. Note, I am NOT "Left" or "Right" with this statement. Should an honest shopkeeper "Compete" with a shopkeeper who's stolen his wares from someone else, so while the first person needs to make a profit the second one is dumping his merchandise at a low fee for nothing but profit? Well, likewise, perhaps from talk radio perhaps from personal experience you don't like the idea of "Labor/wage" laws and Unions and such, right? Well, do you at least think you should be able to barter for wages using how willing/able you are to work and what skills you've taught yourself? That, sir, is how the person who hires the illegal STEALS from you. The Illegal has no ties to this country, he's undercutting your lifestyle drastically to slightly increase his. The little money he earns is sent home, but most of the difference stays with his employer who steals from you and the illegal the "American Dream" just to enrich himself in the short term.

It's time to turn around their media LIES.

Those that hire illegals are NOT "Businessmen" in any respectable way.

They are THEIVES and TRAITORS to America.

We need to fight by any means necessary. Now, obviously obeying the law, we can't openly endorse violent vigilante actions. Frankly, shooting illegals crossing the border is both mean and pointless. The real target should be their employers. And, hopefully we can avoid having to resort to illegal activity.



I do not ordinarily like the idea of people using "Founding Fathers" to pretend they are saying what they say. With Ben Franklin whom I greatly admire, I'll say that he's on record for saying this: "-A Republic, IF you can KEEP it!". That is the real reason why America is crumbling. Oh, it's crumbling because the rich elite have 15 mansions and 25 yachts each and they'll steal the meat from your kid's mouths to get the next 16th and 26th acquisition. (or the \$ to buy it if they felt like it) And they've bought out the media and used it for a puppet show and those that also controlled the media did nothing as long as their agenda was not conflicted, more on that in a later issue don't ask here!

HOWEVER, we LET them do it. Drip drip drip A penny at a time, a job at a time, a service fee here and there more trouble to contest than to pay, an unfair zoning law... One piece at a time they took from America, the country that made them richer than any kings in history, even many GODS, all we were to them was an endless feeding trough and a toilet. We trusted that newspapers would print the truth, and ignored how one at a time they got bought out, how panderer presidents ended important ethics laws to prevent bias and propaganda being the norm. We were still so comfortable, so prosperous, we didn't want to raise our hands and get in trouble. Even the exception, the 60s generation largely scaled back once the Nam was over and the ladies started having kids. They kept their ideals the longest and IMO that's why the current situation of the 08 recession onwards didn't happen in the 80s, but still the "Convenient" 9/11 attack was used to trash the constitution and the pigs stole and stole and stole.

The larger issue is the "Slow Death of America" of which this issue points out the first part, and their biggest weakness; Illegal immigration. Illegal immigrants used to drive down wages for working people.

This is their weak spot, where they MUST be hit first and hardest.

This is why this article is in the first and FREE issue. It is the most important part to hit, the one to hit HARD and NOW and NEVER tolerate ever again.

Outsourcing is next, then the media/monopolies, government corruption last.

They've taken us for granted we've ate their poison lies, and they've been largely right. The "Leftists" consider it a racial/human rights issue and out of compassion for their fellow man, or fear of not fitting into the leftist groupthink and being ostracized do nothing other than aiding illegals. The "Right" so to speak is divided but many of them think they are "Capitalists" and if they suck up/get rich/whatever they themselves will be able to scab Americans out of their decent wage by using illegals. A few, to their credit on the far right do go "Border Vigilante" but they are marginalized and backstabbed by even the right.

BOTH false media constructed attitudes are designed to cancel each other out.

There should be NO question to "Illegal Immigration" and double plus to "Illegal Immigrant Labor".

It's illegal. It is against the law.

Why do we have ANY laws?

Why is it illegal to Steal? To assault someone? To extort someone? Because, while we certainly can debate some laws, the basic laws to protect life, freedom and property are necessary for society to survive.

The employer using an illegal worker is a break of that social contract. And it is treason, I argue above simple theft. It damages our society far more than any bunch of nutty terrorists or foreign army. The foreigners attack us, we unite and fight. But the "Businessman" uses the illegal labor pool to drive down the wages does untold damage. The American now no longer believes in America, he just wants to get rich quick by any means and only fears the law but doesn't believe in it, that it is only for those not able to afford a good attorney and only there to protect the fortunes of the rich elite. And the Illegal is a victim too. He'd heard all his life how great America was, but then he's denied the "American Dream" but allowed to come here to be a hated scab to the Americans. America is damaged far more than by any enemy army by the businessman who cheats the American using the foreigner to do it.

Thus the employer of illegals is both a Thief and a Traitor.

He steals from his country, from his countryman and from the foreigner he makes into a criminal. He causes hatred of man versus man, racial hatred due to the coincidence of the mostly-true stereotype of illegals being Mexican. He bleeds his country to enrich himself further. He steals from his country's future to enhance his present. He corrupts the government, the media to aid his crimes. He then destroys faith in America, supporting a LibertINE (versus "Libertarian") ethic of do anything for short term profit/gratification with contempt to those you hurt for or in process of said goals.

And illegals DO drive down wages. It's a "False Economy" beyond even the obvious. The number of illegals in this country is AT LEAST the number of "Unemployed". Though the controller's energy relies as much on outsourced jobs, if their racket of illegal labor ended, that alone would cripple them.

Now, perhaps you say "Oh, I wouldn't DO THOSE JOBS!!!" right?

Well, note that in the past someone, meaning an AMERICAN did do those jobs.

People used to settle for more humble jobs, and often made a career off of them. Anything for a MAN to bring food home for his family. And he used to be able to do that alone, even pumping gas.

The problem is that illegals were gradually moved from the limited barely tolerated niche of farm work to infect the "Labor" classes. Unions early on shoved it in the controller's face, welcoming foreigners and non-whites as "Brothers" in labor, making them part of the unions so they had no lesser wages. Thus non-union occupations felt this first, while the stage was set to ship jobs overseas.

So the laborers realized what was coming and forced their kids through high school and into college. The "You study every chance you get, hear!?" father stereotype. And so the colleges were flooded with students as the labor force was flooded with illegal immigrants. All the employers did was get more picky and more demanding and paid less for the so called "Higher education needed" jobs.

And paid LESS, let me say again. You now have to have college to maybe get a job that most high-school drop outs got and are paid LESS. And, really, for all the spew about "High tech training is needed", actually DO any of these jobs really need that? Outside high end engineering and medical work, most still have people right off the street trained in a few weeks or less, its only the degree to prove they are over-qualified as the barrier to employment, not truly needed for the work.

All making America more educated and better workers did was make more money for the traitors who are bleeding us dry. Traitors we made the richest men in the world, but they could never have enough.

Ask yourself; What should happen to traitors?

Now, CIA disclaimer, sadly this magazine can't directly advocate the obvious, though Mr Feral is planning another set of -pure fiction- stories of those that do. And, if in coincidence anyone is accused of such actions, this magazine will argue for "Jury Nullification" though it officially does not approve of such behavior.

BUT---

There ARE ways we as active patriotic citizens CAN help slow this tide.

Do NOT despair.

Evil only triumphs truly when good men do nothing. We've had decades of that to get us to this point, but now we are waking up and have seen the monsters the sleep of reason has bred.

Here are some things to do:

**** "A Republic, IF you can keep it!" ****

****-- again quoting Ben Franklin. ****

The first and foremost thing is to be active. And I do NOT mean mmmaybe vote at one national election with the small stuff based on sound bites you heard or didn't remember hearing. Politics sucks, we all hate it. BUT it is our duty to keep informed. And to take action. And we can no longer trust "The News" anymore. You have to educate yourself and keep informed, not just of national "Issues" but local ones.

Get RID of illegals

---not by violent vigilante action (hopefully we can avoid it) but by making sure that the local, existing laws are enforced. The government might be able to have a parasite puppet court overturn major new state laws on catching illegals and then say it's their derelict duty to catch them. Fine... You see, the source of this problem isn't illegals; It's the thief/traitor who HIRES them that is the real problem. Thus make it clear to your local officials by any means necessary (hopefully legal and polite) that you demand they check the books (hint "Health Inspector!") on any and all employers randomly and frequently and then fully prosecute those that hire illegals be it a farm or at an office. The average bust is usually \$6K in fines per head, 1 week closure, and then the business owner gets to go to court to see if he faces jail or just another \$1K-\$20K in fines on top of the \$10K minimum he's paid his lawyer just to get that far.

Pillory those that hire illegals:

Not kidding. Let's say the local authorities aren't too quick to help get proof (hire a detective if you can!) and then post it all over town. "This man is a TRAITOR! He enables

CRIMINAL foreigners and STEALS from America!!!!" Also, cops that refuse to bust any, prosecutors/mayors who ignore complaints. Be aware, make sure that you can prove this if you do this, it's Libel if you can't. Lots of detectives need money, talk with one, make sure you can afford a basic check-out of your suspect.

JURY NULLIFICATION.

One of the last bastions of our Republic is that if our government is taken over by malignant interest, be it agents of the crown or criminals from within, it becomes impotent if it can not enforce the unjust laws it pushes on the public... Thus make sure you are active for jury roles and vote your conscious.

- a. We Do NOT support or condone people doing the actions of the fictional characters in this story or other vigilance actions. We do not directly push to shoot illegals, to break into the house of the employer of illegals and with pliers heated with a blowtorch rip apart his skin and from his wife and children.
- b. We do, however, and we may choke on our word, but will keep it, that if some RI equivalent of Jake and Marty do their deed and later get caught... "Ooops... Forgot ta lock 'da door... boy can she run!" well yes we DO argue for "Jury Nullification".
- c. If they were not in this country illegally, no crime -in this country- could therefore be committed against them.. Simple, no? Even if they abducted illegal immigrants from CANADA. Or France.
- d. NULLIFY any "Crime" committed against an illegal, save that by an employer or trafficker. If say Jake and Marty bought the squeeze toys from El Coyote, convict. If they blew out El Coyote's brains and took them, "Not Guilty." If they take drastic action against a thief/traitor who hires illegals "Not Guilty." If someone takes and holds captives illegals in a basement dungeon (as long as he didn't buy them from traffickers or hire them to lure them) "Not Guilty. Your honor, please instruct the bailiff to return to mister Fred Kooger the videotapes of the films he made -legally- he is a man of modest means and this trial has cost him dearly. Let him sell these videos on the internet to recoup some of his losses." Long as Jake and Marty don't make their live blow up dolls sew jeans for nothing then sell the jeans, acquit.

By Any Means Necessary...

Due to Legal realities this magazine does not openly condone any "Next" steps outside the law, nor support them, nor seek to directly inspire them. Do NOT try to get us to "Join" any extralegal operation, etc. Now, if any brave patriots are busted by the Fed Fuzz for defending America, we will argue for "Jury Nullification" perhaps collect \$ donations for a legal fund and try to drum up support. But we'd much rather see public outrage actions against those that hire illegals... "This man hired illegals, I made some photos, I hired a private detective, he does..." then we'd HELP you pillory the parasite and celebrate you.

On the following pages are some suggested anti-illegal posters.

Feel free to print out, use, re-distribute, re-publish in your own Zines.

EXCEPT - in a publication accusing Man's Rage as "Hate Speech" or other negative attacks, re-printing these images is \$1000 as a one time fee though that grants your publication rights to print them and we will consider a lower fee or no fee if you include a full link/ad for our site so people can hear our side of the story!

I'd never do that kind of work! That's why I went to college!



That's said a lot. But guess what? Other people in America used to do "That Kind of Work". And they used to earn good money doing it, perhaps not as much as a doctor or lawyer, but enough to live a dignified life doing the dirty or hard work that needed to be done. But the people who were better off, who had skilled work or professions ignored it when manufacturing was sent overseas and illegal immigrants flooded the labor pool. And the people that did "That kind of work" realized they were only working harder and harder for nothing. So they forced their kids into college and went back themselves. And guess what? Your college now ain't worth half what a High School Diploma was a few decades ago, in terms of real money for effort it will bring you. And they keep shipping more jobs away and hiring more illegals. Less money in people's pockets and tax breaks to those that take the money bankrupt the government and the rich just scream for more and more. Want to take America back? The America where anyone willing to work can potentially get rich and at least not starve and those willing to go to college and put in regular work can have a prosperous life?

We have to get RID of illegal immigrants and end any and all work that could be done in America being sent overseas. Report any who hire illegals and report illegals. Boycott businesses who hire them and spread the word about them. No one has a "Right" to be rich, nor to live in this country illegally, but we do have the right for peace, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness!

Attention Human Corporate Repre—Excuse Moi, Mouinsuier Employer, I offer my services for data movement and assure I can do twice any of your wage servant performance and only ask half the compensation, but please minimize examination of my background papers!



It doesn't matter if an illegal alien is from Mexico, or from "France", the more illegal workers, the more labor available, the less salary you can ask.

Illegal immigration is NOT a "Human Rights" issue, it is "Class Warfare". The elites at the top are totally ungrateful for how rich we have already made them, and they seek even more even at the cost of taking back what little they had let us have in the past. The Left - Right 'debate' on this is just a lie they put out to get the public arguing instead of acting.

The man who hires an illegal is not a businessman, he is a thief and a traitor. He steals from you the "American Dream" by degrading your ability to demand fair compensation for your labor and from the illegal the "American Dream" by assuring him a place as a second-class citizen and making it much more difficult to be ever a citizen. He also makes his fellow businessman have a choice of either losing profits or hiring illegal labor also. Undocumented workers have virtually no rights, so other standards, such as even the most basic health and safety regulations are ignored, cheapening the labor further and causing flight from those jobs. Indeed, you wouldn't do "That kind of work"? Well, the people that did used to earn a decent living at it, but the illegals flooded them out and they forced their kids through college and went back themselves. Now they compete with you while illegals start to edge in on the non-labor jobs also.

We must turn the tide by making it non-desirable to hire an illegal. If you find an employer of illegals, report him to the authorities and make sure it is known he hires illegals. Do whatever it takes, boycotts, going to city council, politely pestering local officials, and so forth until the business is closed and fined and the owner prosecuted. "No one will do that work"? Well, if it needs to be done, and they can't find a legal worker, the wage is raised until someone is found for it, along with better tools and working conditions. That is "The Law of Supply and Demand", tell mister "Capitalist" how does he like it?

He No Heavy, He me Amigo!



Fellow Americans, perhaps you don't care that traitors bring illegal immigrants into America to drive down your wages by flooding the labor pool as they ship jobs overseas.

But, what about the **Bedbugs!?**

Yes, on most of these sad, desperate people is a legion of tiny fellow immigrants, eager to jump ship at a factory, a store, a construction site, a hospital, the bus stop, the restaraunt... And come home with YOU, costing you thousands to try to remove in a collapsing economy.

Fellow patriotic Americans. Do what you must to end this invasion and punish the traitors who betray us to enrich themselves by hiring illegals. Call the police on all suspected of hiring them and make it clear to your local city/state officials that they must remove both sets of parasites!

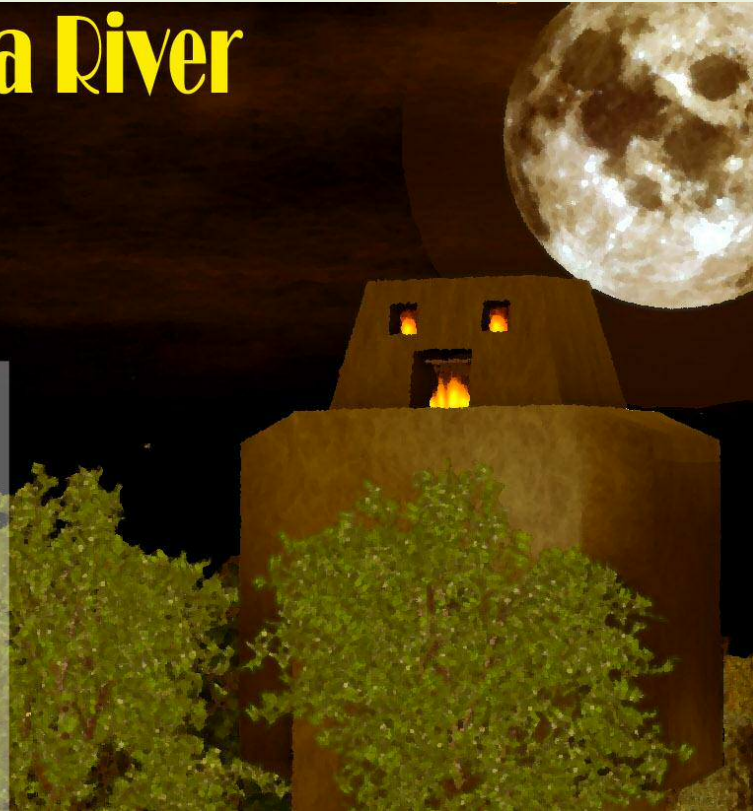
Death on the M'Kunga River

Feature story by -

Maxx Feral

The explorer Rexx Rhyder was hired as a guide, into a part of Africa no white man had dared set foot in yet! And now he is the only one who can save the expedition from being food for a satanic cannibal feast!

**In the cannibal filled jungles of darkest Africa, the screams never end as fanged teeth rip flesh from bone!
Dunga Dunga, Bunga Bunga – The Devil drums beat a dirge of Death, Death and the horror of flesh ripped from bone...
Death on the M'Kunga river!**



The Devil Drums beat a Dirge of Death. – Death and the horror of flesh ripped- White Flesh ripped living from bone by Black Savage Fanged teeth.

The blonde woman screamed and struggled furiously against her bonds as the Savage Dark Tribal Chief leered with lust over her nearly naked body. His corpulent frame shook and his fanged teeth glistened evilly as he waved his giant ritual snake in front of her. Tied and held tight by warriors, her father cried out in rage and despair over his daughter touched by these black men! The massive idol of the cannibals loomed in the background, it's fiery maw ready to receive it's next victim!

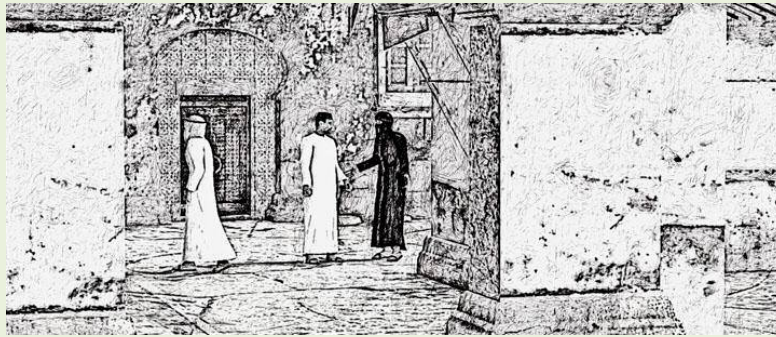


"How did I get in this mess!?" Rex Rhyder mused as he crouched in the bushes, ready to unleash his desperate gambit. - In his passion of fear and excitement, time became as one and he re-lived how he had grudgingly taken this fool's errand of a job.

--- Chapter One ---

--- Tangiers ---

It was a hot afternoon in the City-State of Tangiers, a pirate haven for centuries. The local mullah chanted the call to prayer and the city stopped. Foreigners in the open politely bowed or held their hats in respect for their customs and faith, and the faithful stopped and prayed. Then, a few minutes later, the city burst back to life.



The soukh, the marketplace was bursting with activity, with traders from all over Africa and lands beyond selling wares of all sort. Spices, exotic drugs, food, roasted centipedes on sticks-the strange black meat... On a dias a Bedouin showed a smooth, dark girl for sale. He lifted her burka to show her body to potential buyers, though he kept her veil about her face for decency. No worries to the buyers for the fabric was so thin and sheer they could see her face had no scars or blemishes. In the shadows of an alley, a human seller of lesser station chatted with an ordained priest of a major Christian faith, over an eight year old eunuch boy, though talk of the morality of slavery or emancipation was the last on the father's tongue...

In a coffehaus that catered to both foreigners and upper class locals, Rext Rhyder met with his client. He drank his thick, sugary Turkish coffee and listened to the effete limey speak;

"And so, by translating this document, the story of how I obtained it would be quite a tale in itself, I have uncovered the means for an unprecedented discovery; Both in the discovery of an ancient tangent of man's history and a treasure!"

Rexx looked around, this pompous Brit was openly talking about treasure in a port that still reeked of piracy! Indeed, evil eyes under thick turbans were looking their way, grasping daggers. White men who played in the city, spending money for drugs and other illicit pleasures were tolerated for the locals had gotten tired of "Gunboat Diplomacy". But white men looking for treasure... That was another matter, for if there was treasure on their land, who else should it be for?

"I sense some hesitation in you, mister Rhyder, and forgive me but I simply must insist you hear me out. Too many fellows like yourself were all gung-ho to head this expedition and share the treasure until they found out the destination."

By now, Rexx was ready to run. The entire room was listening. Those that knew English were translating the conversation for those that did not, barely pretending to whisper their intent. Half were going to follow to kill them for the treasure. The other half were going to kill them right now once they were certain the "Effete Limey Bastard" had the map on him.

"Sir!" Prof Winthrop said to the Bedouin who had said the "Effete Limey Bastard" remark, "I am both of legitimate birth and of noble birth. And, I might suggest instead of plotting to rob me you ask to work for me. If this scroll is correct it tells of a veritable mountain of gold in some obscure temple near the source of the M'Kunga river..."

As soon as the "Limey" said that name, M'Kunga, the whispering turned to sudden shouts, then silence. Many patrons of the establishment left suddenly and muttered prayers to Allah or local Animist deities. Of the cutthroats who remained, the one the professor had retorted to stood up from the table he was seated at with his friends. He was a black as night negroid, wearing a dark Bedouin outfit, leading a motley crue of some other men, a band of vagabonds and brigands. He towered over the British man like a giant, a titan of deadly strength and speed that could doubtless kill him with one blow!

"White man. Briton." He said in a booming voice.

"White man. Briton. I hate you. Ever since your kind went into my village on one of your vile 'expeditions' and killed my family I have hated you and killed your kind whenever I could. You British are thieves, looters, rapists who call yourselves civilized. Now, I hate you even more..."

"Oh?" Said Prof Winthrop, seemingly unaffected by this vicious taunt. Did he already assume Rex was in his employ and could easily defeat him and his crew?

"Sir. I did not 'massacre' any village nor have I even paying money for such services taken advantage of any woman outside my own country. I merely come here to trade, to explore and I certainly will take advantage of what lesser breeds of men have left lying in plain sight since at least creation. Let me tell

you, sir, that I am tired of whatever 'taboo' this river and hidden shrine have on it. It is SO hard to hire help to go there."

The Giant black man laughed.

"That, Briton, is why I hate you even more. For I was going to kill you, not even caring the treasure, once you left the city port. I cared not what map to a pirate's loot you had, nor the grave of some ancient king you'd want to rob, no I wanted to kill you. Kill you, make you bleed, make you suffer. But, Sir, you have chosen a death beyond horror. At the source of the M'Kunga river lies... Oh, yes, as one of your missionaries would say, it is the Gaping Maw of HELL. That, Sir Briton, is why we do not go there to steal the treasure, it is hell itself. The miser greedily clutching his gold has to leave it at the gates of Hell, does he not? No one sane even enters those jungles for at night scream after scream after scream comes from them. Those who live near there have tried to burn down the jungle in that area but it is too wet, a swamp. They try to live beyond earshot of the edge of the jungle, and shudder at night in thick huts with barred doors and closed windows on the hottest nights. And some of them disappear even with that.

"Briton, you have chosen a death far more painful and horrifying than even I or my men would have a taste for or have time to do. So, I leave you in peace and pray Allah speed you on your way to your...treasure."

And with that, he and his men finished their drinks and walked out of the coffehouse laughing. A chilly silence had gone over the establishment. A dancer/prostitute had thrown on her burkha and made a hasty exit.

"You! Stop right there!" The professor called to Rexx as he tried to sneak out in shadow of the belly dancer who had thrown on her burkha and was making a hasty exit. To his credit, the professor's noble ability to command others gave Rexx pause, and the dancer haste, so he was exposed as she darted out. Rexx shrugged and returned to the table.

"I want to know this instant what is so...taboo... about that place. I credit myself on being a man of great knowledge and thought myself quite brilliant to find out about a treasure. Yet all I have are scared natives and even adventurers are unwilling to help me. Please tell me what exactly is about this place that scares them so."

Rexx thought for a moment. Then he spoke as best he could.

"I think Black Bart, that pirate, told you more than I know. People ain't talkative about it. The best way to describe what I've absorbed is that there's some kind of very vicious and isolationist tribe up the M'Kunga river. Ain't Zulu, ain't Hutl, ain't any tribe anyone's heard of. The sort that don't leave their borders, but woe to anyone going inside them, or standing near the edge when they re-mark the territory. Eventually you Brits will carve 'em up, if the French or

Germans don't beat you to it. But they'll be one of the last ones to go. For now it's "Here be Tygers" Like on old maps.

"Thank you." Prof Winthrop said. "A straight answer at last. You are hired to lead the expedition."

"What!?" Rexx said, "Didn't you hear what I said? This isn't me telling you that in this village you can't stand in anyone's shadow, or you can't take a specific animal for your naturalist studies because it's taboo. This isn't me telling you that in one tribe you can get a willful woman for tuppence but in the next one you even look at one of their women they kill you. This is a deadly organized cannibal tribe. They see you, they see anyone, even black people not of their tribe, they kill and eat them.

"I did, sir, expect resistance, protection for such a treasure. Thus I have imported a small regiment of Indian soldiers. I am paying what to them is a King's ransom, and they are more foreign here than we are so I fear betrayal little. But I need a local guide. I do not intend to go in and massacre these people but if they attack they won't find us unprotected. Then I can claim the land for Her Majesty and I will certainly take the treasure. It's a pile of gold and artifacts that might well go back to Antediluvian times, such as legendary Atlantis. Before you scoff, remember Troy was also considered legendary and indeed Schliemann found GOLD there too!"

"Now, Sir, I am also not so much a gold hunter as a scientist and explorer. I fear revealing what I am actually looking for, for I think that what I might uncover there might well turn human history as it's officially known on it's head. The gold that is quite likely there will help re-coup the costs. That is a risk, but your pay is assured as is a cut should we find the treasure."

"I could have just called him a nutty Brit and walked out. That lady I was sneaking behind had nice hips and breasts. I could have easily had her, even with my funds dwindling..."

Rexx thought this as he still hid in the bushes as the Devil Drums played.

"Could have had a hot sweaty night with that plump dark skinned dancer. Then I'd have just taken that boring job with that new Photography magazine, Geographic something or other, at least those guys largely care about traditions, taboos, and such to write about them... But no, I was stupid. Wanted more money quick. Got greedy hearing him talk about the treasure."

Soon, Rex was pouring over maps and plans and contracts with Prof Winthrop and his team. Gunjah Singh was the head of the Indian regiment and he mostly stood at the professor's side. A rather unsightly man, Nevroy Shayock, who was the professor's accountant poured over the financial parts of it. He seemed

pleasantly surprised then almost worried that Rexx could do basic figures and had modified the contract for small but reasonable amounts. Most of it was boring, discussions on travel, food used, pay for the guards and bearers. Rexx proved himself quite worth his salt then and there, adjusting how the initial setup would be done, instead of large wagons they'd use wheel carts for the items too heavy for bearers and so could manage walking only paths and muddy trails.

Talking with the professor he felt more and more confident it wasn't a half-mad idea or one that he'd regret later. The natives knew well what guns wielded by well-trained men could do so a few warning shots could prevent massacre. Furthermore his presence to warn them away from Taboo could avoid the need for such situations. With any luck, he'd lead a relatively bloodless expedition, the professor would get his name in the journals, then he'd have treasure to be set for life. Danger and risk, but what could go wrong?

--- Chapter 2 ---

--- a WOMAN walks in ---

And then the professor's daughter walked into the room and was politely introduced to him.

Rexx was in denial. He said "I'll personally use my local contacts and arrange a safe stay for her with one of the local nobility. She'll be a princess, they are trying to adapt to the British way and they'll love her and the association with you."

"Thank you, but that is not on the agenda. I plan to bring her with us on this expedition."

Rexx shuddered with rage, remembering the moment. "A WOMAN, he brought a WOMAN along. And while some Irish gals I know could have been quite welcome on a mission, he had to bring some just of marriage age PRINCESS with him. And not some mistress either, his own DAUGHTER!"

"I should have walked out then and there." Rexx thought, almost saying it, a mistake that could well have cost him his life for they were hushed now with only the soft beating of the devil drums, preparing for the great moment.

What Rexx remembered was a heated exchange between him and the professor that did indeed nearly derail the deal. He credited himself for biting back his rage until she left the room, first talking about how the shopping was only mild in this tiny port city and there were few people of quality to talk to. She was giving Rexx looks and did the Professor not detect how averse he was he might have taken offense. When she left, if he had any fears of interaction between her and Rexx they were quickly dispelled.

Rexx warned at how the negroid man indeed does lust after white women, whenever he captures one if he doesn't rape to death the unfortunate woman then and there he drags her off to his tribe where it is hell on earth for her as one of his wives. The other women will mistreat her out of jealousy of being more desired but barely able to work.

The professor, however, would not be swayed. He feared leaving her in London, and as a lady of the noble class she was supposed to "See the World". In these changing times he feared that she'd have a scandalous affair and while a "Lover's Knot" surgery was available he still was old fashioned enough to not want his daughter to have such a hidden scandal that could haunt her later in life. And, of course as Rexx and any Irish man would point out; "England had enough Bastards." Why not leave her at home with her mother, or have her go on a trip around the world with her? Because her mother was constantly "Ill" and frequently saw a "Therapist" with a steam powered "massager". Rather than feeling cuckolded, he admired this man for keeping his wife from him and in a good mood. BUT, no way would he let his daughter be in the same building with that man. So, he literally felt safer with her next to him, even in the dark deadly jungles of Africa as long as he could have plenty of guides and guards.

As a final gesture, he pointed out that this arrangement was why he was paying so much and offering so huge a share of the treasure if it be for real.

Rexx gave in for his own funds were diminished. He'd already spent a good portion of the wage inside his head and was working out what the treasure might be. He finished signing the contracts and called a local magistrate to witness them. The Magistrate was a stern follower of Islam and cursed him and demanded more than his usual bribe for witnessing this he felt the need to break Mohammed's injunction against wine and so "The Infidel agreeing to such a Devil's Bargain must pay for my sinning also!"

Rexx learned over the next few days as he prepared for the mission just how popular he was locally. He'd thought that he was just a barely tolerated expatriate foreigner. One that was allowed in the "International Zone" as long as he had money to give them, as most British expats were. Instead he found out he was very much liked, especially by those that interacted with him, for they were throwing funerals for him.

They liked he was leading the "Devil Briton" to horrible death, but surely he would die with them. They didn't care this time he was even leading an armed treasure hunting expedition, whoever or whatever lived up the M'Kunga river was so feared and hated they endorsed the "Tommy Gun" negotiation with them. It was much as the natives of the Indian subcontinent hadn't openly hated the Britons that much for at least getting rid of the Thugee cult.

Rexx felt more awkward than ever with this. The shopkeeper he bought most with was distraught, offering to have him marry his daughter and help with his business since he had no son. The people who cleaned his house begged him to stay, for they depended on the small amount they charged him for much of their

income. He tried to look up the dancer from the coffehouse later, and her two sisters for a real "if I gotta go" night but they recoiled from him and ran, their business agent saying it would be considered "Necrophilia" and get them in much trouble and bring much misfortune.

---Chapter 3 ---

--- Up the River ---

The first part of the journey was upon two steamer vessels to the outpost of "Far Victoria" where the Queen's tenuous hold on the dark continent ended. It was originally a military outpost anticipating war with the Germans, but was so far out it was considered a joke and a waste, an artificial pretense of civilization in the Devil's lands outside of Hell.

They journeyed up the river, having increasing hostility as they passed the villages. The natives chanted hatred and curses and threw spears at the craft. The troops responded with rifle fire, though to the Professor's credit he ordered them to shoot to the sides or beneath the feet, scaring the natives away without injuring any.

"I did take to heart what that amusing scoundrel back in Tangiers said;" the Professor remarked, "And I do not want to be the inspiration for the next man like him if I can help it."

The arrival at the port of far victoria was ominous to say the least. The port was built up as if under siege. It had high walls around the barracks buildings and no permanent dwelling outside the fort proper. The tops of the walls were spiked and living Dudzu vines had been woven in along the top ridge, their poison tendrils to hinder climbers as if the many lanterns burning all night and gun posts were not enough.

Even the fields where crops were grown had a high fence, lights and armed guards. The civilized blacks who worked the fields did so in a hurry, but not for fear of an overseer's lash, the armed white men were watching the jungle while the blacks worked hard so their duties would be done and they could go inside. Around the fort the jungle had been cut and burned to one hundred feet, but still stood as an imposing wall.

The barrier of spikes and thorns extended even into the under-water around the fort and the expedition ships had to be guided carefully.

The Professor was not greeted at the dock but guided in along with Rexx and Shayock to greet the commandant, the Colonel Sir Alain Smythe of many

expeditions for Her Majesty, now due to some problems and rumors suppressed commander of this isolated post. He greeted the professor, but it was obvious he had been drinking too early in the day, though he still held himself with proper politeness.

Any judgment was put aside, for the professor and the commandant had been friends at the same boarding school decades past.

"So, Sir Winthrop, you intend to lead an expedition into the heart of the M'Kunga Jungle? That place is death. Literally."

"So I keep hearing", the professor said calmly.

"Treasure hunting again?" he asked.

"That too, but rather this is the one expedition I expect that shall solidify my place in the Royal Academy and put myself in books that mention Sir Darwin and Sir Charles Dodgeson as a pioneer in natural history. That is why I have expended so much for my mercenaries and planned this so well."

"I see..." the commandant said and rather unceremoniously poured himself another scotch. He offered, almost as an afterthought some to the professor and to Rexx who politely turned him down.

"I hope I do not offend," Professor Winthrop said, "For it is a dangerous mission and if you can send some troops, perhaps come yourself, you will be doing a great job for both an old friend but also for the science of natural history and even England herself. I shall see personally that that silly scandal way back is forgotten in light of this and you will get the post of honor back in the home country you deserve."

"Do you think I'm here because of that thing...? There's always some noblewoman's daughter wants a soldier for a brief love then cries rape when it complicates her arranged marriage. That I wasn't swinging in the air years ago is proof I'm past that. Oh, I DID come out here a few years to let things die down a bit, but at the request and compensation of her family who knew she was making it up. I stayed because ... I felt I had to protect the people out here. This isn't Africa where that jungle begins, it's Hell on Earth. And with or without the 'Devil White Man' these people who live on the edge of it are terrified. Its like there's evil itself inside of there, and it's preying on them. I thought we'd just burn and tommy-gun some civilization into 'em but I've lost half my men. Now I got mostly penal conscripts and deserters from other regiments. All we are good for is keeping them at bay.

"I'm sorry," he corrected himself, "I hope I haven't embarrassed you in front of your servants."

"No need to Apologize old friend," the Professor said, "Shayock is of deepest trust to my family and Rexx is my hired professional guide."

"I had a guide..." the Commandant trailed off.

They noticed a picture, him standing beside a negroid.

"Kinga. He was a good friend to me. Taught himself English of which I corrected to the Queen's English in return he helped me and my troops get around here, the silly to us but life or death taboos to them, helped us rule them in the Queen's name without them hating us for it. Not much to rule out here, though. The tribes mostly like us for we at least keep the monsters in that jungle from coming out as much as they did in the past."

"My condolences," the Professor bowed slightly. "Did you lose him recently?"

"He's good as dead. He knew not to enter that jungle alone, but he'd taken a wife and she went just a few feet into the jungle for a herb or something. Let her out of sight for a second, she disappeared. He was distraught and I was going to risk myself and my men to charge in there, but he knew we'd only get picked off by more guerrilla attacks so he went in himself, hoping his stealth would work where marching troops had not.

"It was a week ago. Surely he's dead now. We hear screams from that jungle, though I have not recognized his voice, I pray he went down fighting..."

The Professor suppressed anger, "Well then more so you should take me up on my offer! Your friend has likely been killed by some sort of savage tribe. With my men and as many as you can spare we can march in there with such numbers as it will be impossible for them to overcome. Let them make a foolish attack or shoot a poison arrow, they will face a wall of lead shot! You can take us in, gain fame and rid these poor people of these vile savages. Then you can either return to England or remain here but be a hero!"

The Professor was good at persuading people, as Rexx had learned to his regret. Indeed the impassioned speech seemed to stir, to re-spark some fire in this broken man.

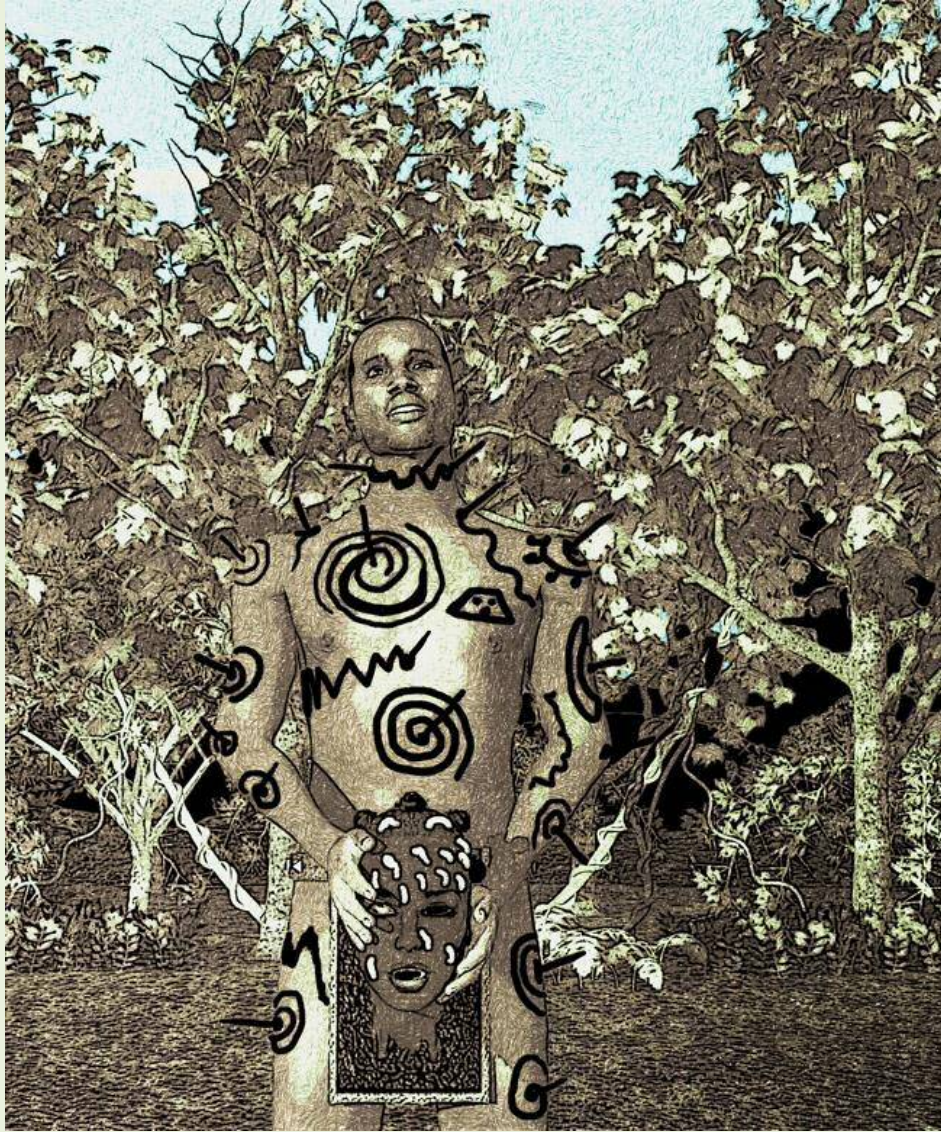
He opened his lips to speak, but then the siren sounded, one of the daytime guards was frantically turning the crank on the alarm siren. Someone was approaching from the jungle and it had warranted an alarm, so great was their fear of these hidden savages.

It was one man, walking alone and unarmed, so the guards pointed and waited on the Commandant's orders to fire or not. The Commandant, his eyes not too keen, pulled out a small spyglass and looked at the intruder.

"In God's name, that's Kinga..."

--- Chapter 4 ---

--- Message of DEATH ---



The Commandant rushed to the gates to greet his old friend who was staggering slowly towards the encampment. His body was covered with scars and Henna-Black markings over his brown skin, spirals, strange symbols stained and cut into his flesh. In the center of these strange tattoos small black darts pierced his flesh. His face was a bizzare mixture of pain of trancelike numbness but also of joy somehow.

In his hands he held what looked like it had been a negroid woman's head, though it was rotten and maggoty.

"Kinga! Speak to me!" the Commandant waved, but he dared not hug his friend or grab his shoulders to try to shake sense into him, knowing full well the darts sharp and envenomed hoping to kill more than just this man.

His lifelong friend barely seemed to recognize him. He spoke but in his own tribe's speech, a combination of clicks and deep vocals.

"Kinga. You know I don't know your tribe's language..."

On seeing it was Kinga, one of the 'civilized' tribe members had run over and translated for the Commandant as the man clicked out his message in a trance.

"Kinga says that he went to the tribe that calls themselves the Guardians of the Giant. His wife had entered the M'kunga jungle and was therefore food to them, as was he for following her. He begged for them to let them both go back. And so they did. He says he is thankful for them freeing himself and his wife and only asking the smallest favor in return, to deliver a message to England, to the Queen, to all who dare enter the Jungle."

"And what message might this be?" the Commandant asked.

"M'KUNGA!" Kinga suddenly screamed at the top of his lungs, then he fell down, dead.

"Sir, the message is-" the native tried to say-

"I KNOW what that word means at least, thank you. Careful not to poison yourself with those needles, but I want Kinga buried with full honors or what passes for them here. He was a better man than I..."

The native nodded and worked with other tribe members who went to weep for Kinga and to prepare him for burial.

"Sir Alain," Professor Winthrop said, "you have my deepest condolences, but that last message he said... M'Kunga... Is it not the name of this place, this river?"

"Yes". The commandant said, "And that name literally means Death."

The professor nodded in thanks. It would be pointless now to try to talk to the commandant about the expedition, the fires he'd so passionately stirred had been snuffed out again. Instead he turned to Rexx and Shayock.

"We shall rest here tonight in the Commandant's hospitality. Turn in very early for we shall be preparing to leave off at dawn's first light.

"My Jaw dropped so wide, I could have swallowed that whole bloomin' jungle then and there." Rexx thought, no the time was not yet right, the stress from the wait alone might kill him.

The Professor, perhaps, should have been commandant, for his air of nobility and force of will silenced Rexx before he could make a spectacle of himself expressing rage at the foolhardiness of going into such dangerous territory.

"I shall not brook any resistance from you, my trusted guide. While I sympathize with my friend and shall not speak ill of him, my will is only strengthened by that spectacle. You see, the man did a great favor to me. He confirmed they were the Guardians of the Giant. That, not so much the rumored piles of gold they have, is why I risk all for this venture. I have a Hypothesis that if true will turn Natural History on its head, and this God-accursed jungle is where the proof hides!"

So, Rexx supervised the preparations along with Gupta for the expedition and then they all turned in early.

Rexx woke early to a nightmare and embarrassed at waking up yelling in such crowded quarters went for a morning walk. He was far from the only one at this port waking up with some past trauma so he needent be embarrassed.

"Dreaming of Cannibals eating you?" One soldier asked.

"I almost wish, earlier war, one I don't want to talk about."

The soldier nodded and went back to catch another hour's sleep before his duties must begin.

Rexx saw Shayock up early talking to a native. The native he was talking to did not look so much like the tribes in the village a few miles away from the edge of the jungle, nor did he look much like the motley assortment of non-white laborers at the fort. The native handed him a sack and Shayock gave him a piece of gold which the native accepted but did not seem as excited about as he'd think he would be. Seeing Rexx the native hurried off.

"What brings you up so early, Goy?" Shayock asked. He looked nervous, his fingers twitched as he handled the sack.

"A soldier's dreams" Rexx said, "You?"

"Oh, just making some last minute preparations. The natives use various drugs to capture prey alive more easily and these can linger for weeks. I just bought us some antidote. More or less that man's village's entire supply, that's why he didn't look too pleased. Their taxes to British for this deplorable outpost are paid for two years by that gesture, but it takes weeks to brew."

Rex just walked off, didn't want to make a fool of himself anymore, but didn't that path the native ran off on lead right back to the Jungle? Well, he was the outsider here, even though he'd considered himself as "Africanized" as any white man dared call himself.

He was pleasantly surprised to find the professor up and early and had personally brewed the best English Tea for not just himself and the crew but the regiment. Rexx roused his professional sense and only talked about the trip, not his misgivings. The troops, used to swill, cheap and homemade alcohol and the lowest grade of tea were overjoyed by the professor, and that he'd brought along bundles of tea for trade and had generously left a few at the base. There was some small talk among the stationed troops and the professor's Indian mercenaries, as language permitted, but not as one would expect in a place so isolated. The troops knew many of these men could die and didn't want to become attached, but at least living in "Darkest Africa" for so long their British racism had been dented.

In short order, the troupe was assembled to enter the jungle. The commander went personally to show them off. It was the commander that spoke first;

"I know you still want me to go with you, and you can give me the white feather if you wish, half my men have it for one reason or another, won't hurt me at all here."

"Sir! You are an old friend of mine and have lost one of your dearest companions, I dare not judge you. I only hope you find it in your heart to rouse the courage and daring you had as a lad. If you change your mind it should be easy to trace us and I will share the discovery and the treasure if you arrive right to the end!"

The commandant nodded:

"God save the Queen!" he said.

"God save the Queen!" the professor retorted.

--- Chapter 5 ---

--- Jungle of DEATH ---

So they marched into the M'Kunga jungle, the expedition. There were some well-worn foot trails, plenty of traffic inside of it though to make room for the wheeled carts there was much work with machete to be done. Rexx led the team, taking turns with the Indian troops in cutting vines. The Jungle was thick and dark, the sun almost could not be seen overhead, so dense were the trees and vines.

It was peaceful, but deadly with all the poisonous flowers, animals waiting for attack and those that called this hell home.

The Professor and his daughter were in the middle of the procession, safe in a wheeled cart that had cushioned springs and had steel reinforced bamboo sides that could stand most small fire ammunition.

The first hint of trouble was a suspicious fork in the trail, it had widened on one branch, but looked suspicious, so Rexx gave orders to stop the cart and went with three guards to check ahead. The professor had wanted to get out of the cart but since if he stepped off the trail he'd be in dense jungle Rexx directly ordered him to stay in the cart. This time the professor bowed to Rexx's guidance.

The trail ahead looked better, but it roused Rexx's suspicions.

"I think this is a setup for an ambush. They've actually smoothed the trail and put sand over it. We should use the other trail."

"But Saheeb, please be reasonable." One of the Indians protested in his higher pitched and polite voice, "We are aching with thorns and sap from these vines we cut, and this trail is wide. That other trail is so narrow the hostile men could almost reach and grab us from the jungle. What will they do, shoot darts at us? We have guns, we will shoot back."

The man looked nervous, afraid he'd get in trouble for arguing with a white man, though Rexx was not so petty. He sprinted ahead down the clear path.

"Look! I run ahead, this trail is empty. If it was an ambush, we'd see tons of footprints in the sand as they moved into the jungle to wait for us. There are bandits in my land, too, and we can tell when they've quickly swept a trail, there are no such signs. This sand is smooth as if no man has crossed this way in years. There are a few small animal trails but they disappear..."

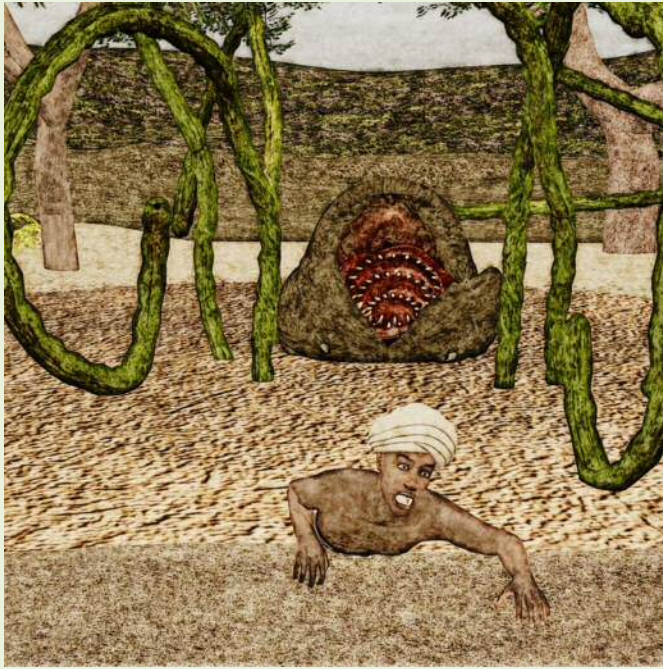
"Where you are standing!" Rexx exclaimed. The Indian trooper was sinking into quicksand. He started struggling and panicking.

"Don't struggle!" Rexx exclaimed, "You'll sink only faster. Slow! Slowly swim back to me, I'll pull you out!" To his credit while most white men would have panicked too much to listen, the Indian did not, he did as he was instructed and swam to the side where Rexx grabbed his hands.

"Please forgive me, I made a fool of myself sir." He said rather sheepishly.

"Ah, d'nae worry. I came close on my own to leading us all down this path, that'd be fun, me and you walking into this in front of everyone an havin to backtrack the whole troop after!"

The Indian smiled, but then as he was almost out of the quicksand he screamed as he was pulled back in!



From out of the quicksand pit a giant plant emerged, tentacles flailing blindly as it tried to pull the Indian towards its horrible maw! Rexx pulled out his Colt handgun and shot at the abomination, a tentacle vine swung with horrifying speed and Rexx barely dodged it, rolling his face into the sand. Two sickening "whudds" and the other two troops had been taken out, unconscious. The Indian screamed as he was pulled ever towards the plant.

Rexx fired again and the plant let out an alien scream and shot a vine in the direction it was wounded with blinding speed. The vine shot by Rexx as he rolled barely missing Rexx with what must have been a poisonous spike on a head covered with hook-like barbs that then reeled back into the plant's mouth. Guns of any caliber less than a land ironclad would only serve to tell it where to grab and it had more tentacles than he could hack with his machete in time, even if he could face it without being helpless in the pool of quicksand.

Rexx wanted to run, but he was not going to let three men die, the plant would be able to easily pull in the other two troops and the first one was soon to be in that horrible maw as might he if he did not act quick.

"I Ain't running, not this time..." he said.

He grabbed a flare from his belt pouch, pulled the ignition string and threw it into the plant's maw. It was wet but the chemical flare would burn even underwater. The plant screamed, dropped the Indian and submerged in the water to lessen the damage, to shake out the flare. Rexx threw a rope and helped the Indian out of the quicksand pit.

"Thank you, Sahib, I had thought that this life was nearly over!" he said. He'd lost half his clothes and was pierced by many thorns, but if he was envenomed he did not show it yet. The other two troops were coming around, one had a broken rib but the other was merely bruised.

Since the pit was too large to pass around and the plant might attack again, they went the other trail, hacking painfully through much denser jungle. The professor had wanted to spend time and go back and see the plant, after all a man-eating plant was legendary and some in the science community were trying to

say they did not exist. But the Indians also had their man eating plant, a horrible tree that grew in the driest regions and drained the water and blood from any man, woman, child or beast that went to see the one beautiful flower it grew. Thus they were panicking at the professor's suggestion, pleading him not to go, and so he decided to let this pass for now.

After a day's trek, when there was two hours left for sunlight, they set up a hasty camp at the edge of the jungle. Indian workers with padded steel gloves unwound carefully a coil of barbed wire around posts that others pounded into the ground ahead of them. Other workers unfolded a large bamboo structure, which was the professor's house. He literally took a house with him, though it'd be proper a small shack, lavishly decorated with the comforts of home in other bearers carts. He'd anticipated poison arrows at night, so there was also a "Common" structure for the troops to sleep in and armored guard boxes for those who had guard duty. There would be two guard shifts at night so those with the duty would have some sleep at least.

Rexx slept in the tent with the Indian guards, having a vegetarian meal they prepared. Shayock also slept in a corner of the shelter, talking little and keeping to himself. Until almost midnight he heard the music from the professor's record player, his insistence it not be an issue since reasonably the tribesmen would have to know they were here and there would be a meeting at some stage. After the professor turned off his music, Rexx was still awake, flittering in and out of sleep. He heard the din of distant drums miles away. A soft, rhythmic beating it was almost comforting after the baroque operas that were so unnatural and artificial to this savage land.

The blacks of Africa used drums to communicate a long distance, their beats and clicks were meant to resemble voice. White man had thought that it was a complex code when all it was was speaking, though it was a non-Latin non-written language with many dialects and hard for a newcomer to learn. But Rexx could tell what most of the beats said; "M'Kunga"

In the morning Rexx was pleasantly surprised to find no attacks at night. Did they have such a presence that perhaps they dared not attack? Did the cannibals not notice this invasion into their jungle, thinking perhaps poor Kinga and his wife had scared the white man away as easily as it did the blacks outside the jungle? Well, it would have scared him away, if not for the contract with the professor.

"And my foolish lust for gold." Rexx thought, in the present, in the bushes. He carefully opened slowly his box, fearful the slightest whisper would be heard... "And back then I soon thought it really couldn't get any worse..."

That Morning while the Indian bearers hastily packed everything, the Professor had Rexx accompany him on the side of the clearing. He'd set some nets and traps and busily grabbed and killed the small creatures in it, handing some to an Indian servant trained in taxidermy and lab work. The Professor, however,

an accomplished illustrator was the one to draw the sketches, later to become full illustrations in naturalist books.

"I say, this alone should be worth this trip. There are so many undiscovered species here, ones that while hostile like the plant you found yesterday and others that are simply unknown outside. Some might be found useful to man, but is it not our duty to document all of creation we were given?"

Rexx nodded. Though not trained in the sciences he'd picked up some of it from the other explorers he'd escorted. Were it not a rich man's hobby he himself could make in discovery of species at least, a name for himself, but he didn't want that for personal reasons.

"Sadly, I do hope there is gold at the end of this trip or I've come to a bad way. Oh, nothing like you would read in a Penny-Dreadful of losing the estate and going to debtor's prison, but I'd have to cut back for perhaps the rest of my life such expeditions. Shayock was simply furious with me; He'd turned some seed money from selling some land into a princely sum and wanted me to wait five years, that it would double again. But I fear my body will not wait that long, so I liquidated it to finance this trip."

"Don't worry, as I said I will have enough to pay you the minimum."

"I trust you for that, Guv'nor." Rexx said, perhaps about to say something sly, but then the woman walked by again.

"Good morning, father." She said politely. "Impaling more of those horrid, dreadful bugs?"

"Ah, just like your mother, you have her respect for science."

"Oh, no, Daddy, it is fascinating watching them squirm and flutter. Is it time for photography, yet?"

"Not for a day or so, my darling."

"Well, I simply can not believe how hot and moist it is out here. How DO these dark people tolerate it? And no stores, no buildings, I'm beginning to feel sorry for them. England shall civilize them soon, right?"

"As soon as they can drag the gattling guns out this far, my dear. Now perhaps you'll return to the carriage for I shall join you soon."

"Oh, I'll just walk for a few minutes first, it's so tiring to sit there all day, not that I mind your company father. Do not worry, I shall stay well within this circle, forget the fear of savage darkies or man-eating plants, I do not want to get my clothes any dirtier, I've only brought a dozen changes!"

And at that she trotted off, carrying her umbrella high to protect her from what little sun penetrated the clearing.

"Photos?" Rexx enquired.

"Yes, I have brought some camera equipment and do intend to take some photos, both of her and of natives, artifacts, impressive animals if you manage to shoot them. Don't worry, I shan't try it on that plant, it's reach is too far for a good focus. Then again, that alone I could snub some of my snootier peers from the Royal Science Acadamey?"

"But, it is mainly for a family purpose. A writer I like took photos of a young lady he fancied quite a lot. Wrote these amusing fantastic stories about her. Was lower in station so he couldn't marry her, sadly. Those were artistic nude photos, given what the gutter minds say about them I'll have my daughter merely go to underwear, you'll assist for I want no dark man's eyes to look at her as such."

The Indian helping the professor turned his eyes down.

"Oh, I'm sorry lad, I guess I should say except you for I do trust you and after all you will operate the camera as no offense I don't think Rexx can do so easily."

Rexx just resigned himself to what would follow. Pointless to argue. While if Rexx could have had his say they'd have run ahead full guns a blazin if necessary till they reached the 'treasure house' on the professor's map and did whatever it took to spook the natives away and ran off with the loot. But the professor wanted him to help along the way gather every little bug and bird he could catch. And to photograph his daughter so he'd have something to show off how far he went.

A shrill scream broke out. The Professor's daughter!

They looked and she was not in any danger, just pointing to the road ahead. Right in the middle was a severed head impaled on a spike, an Indian bearer himself was panicking for he was holding a piece of threadbare cloth he'd obviously just pulled off of the ghastly thing. His daughter ran to the carriage, the Indian soldiers quickly putting themselves between her and the head in case an attack came from that direction.

Rexx and the professor went closer to inspect. It was another member of the tribes outside the jungle, likely. At the base of the pole symbols were scratched in the mud. Though stylized from this tribe's isolation they matched the inter-tribal glyphs of warning and communication.

Rexx translated for the professor;

"The first has the open arms of Welcome. The second is the name of this jungle/place; M'Kunga."

"In short, Welcome to Death." The Professor said. He nodded and went back to ordering the convoy to prepare for the day's march. With the soldiers on

alert watching the jungle guns at ready, preparations took a half hour longer since they could not assist the bearers. Rexx almost threw the head to the bushes, but then had a laborer dig a small hole to bury the man's head and a few said a prayer with him.

--- Chapter 6 ---

--- The Jungle feeds on Men! ---

Within an hour, two were lost on the trail.

The first was a bearer who simply disappeared, but they found his load at the edge of the jungle a half mile back. It was as if he'd vanished into the thick woods, some small sign of struggle, but not as much as one would think.

Then another head on a stake greeted them in the road, again with the "Welcome to Death" sign.

It was slightly off the trail, now widening but naturally. Rexx had taken to tossing small stones and sticks ahead to detect more quicksand and other traps.

"Don't touch it! We shall simply pass it this time." Rexx said.

"No!" one of the Indian bearers said. "We must bury him at least and say a brief prayer. You may be our employers, but you are very barbaric, though the people here might be even worse than you!" The other bearers agreed with him, and fearing mutiny any day now Rexx nodded and was waving at the professor not to contradict him. While he silently argued with the professor, the Indian bearer moved to the head.

"No!" Rexx screamed. It was too late. Nothing fancy was about the severed head on the stake, but a small branch somehow out of place in front of it had been connected to a small woven rope of sprouting vines. And this was connected to a precariously placed larger piece of wood that when upset lost its tenuous grip on a larger vine. This had held back a tree trunk that was both carved with skull images and had many spikes implanted into it. And the Indian Bearer was horribly crushed and impaled into the head and the tree it was in front of.

Chaos followed as the Professor held back the bearers from running using the armed mercenaries, shouting to them that if they ran off they'd be picked off easily. Rexx struggled with surprisingly strong despite being short and thin fellow bearers not to touch the corpse. "Fools! The spikes are poisoned!" he shouted.

Men do not die easily impaled, Rexx considered it black luck the sheer force of the log had made the man unconscious, if he was struggling and screaming while impaled it would have been impossible to prevent most of the group from

running panicked. When they calmed down, Rexx and the bearers carefully pulled the man off the tree by pulling on the log with metal hooks and ropes. He then appropriated some of the lamp oil so they could burn the body and the severed head, covered by branches. The jungle was so damp, no fire could spread without fuel.

Progress that day, understandably, was horribly slow.

The natives laid many traps, and were good at not repeating themselves. Rexx saved the company from disaster when he tossed a rock ahead but while too light for a trap he noticed it bounced instead of skipping. Throwing a larger 10 pound rock revealed a thin layer of branches and leaves covering a large 5 foot drop in a pit of poisoned spikes. It even had a slope going in and slightly stronger covering at the edges to trap the most of a party walking over it. But he kept his paranoia and tossed rocks and branches at the sides of the trail, and sure enough another spiked log crushed down and would have impaled many this time if they had walked around the pit in its path.

They set up camp at another clearing and once the professor had had his "House" re-assembled, Rexx went in to talk to him.

"For the love O' God, Guvnor... I'm not saying abandon this mission. Let's just send your daughter back to Tangiers, get more troops, a gattlin' gun for one 'o the wagons..."

"I understand your concern, but sadly the answer is no. Indeed I should have arranged for one, but Shayock said the natives don't like dying as much as they like killing, hence the traps and fear tactics. One of those guns is worth an estate, it's a frightful price to one of even my station. If only I could have convinced the Commandant to accompany us.

"Besides, once I leave this jungle there is no way on earth I shall get these Indian bearers and Mercenaries back in there. And Indians are cheaper than Negroids, not that I could get any Negroids to accompany me to this "Taboo" place... I shall NOT accept failure for this mission. I will find that which I am looking for."

"I would suggest now that you get back to your duties, of preparing for more attacks and this mission. You've held yourself admirably for an Irishman so far. And I have something for you."

The Professor displayed a bamboo shield. A thin plate of metal covered by a thin layer of leather on the back, it was large yet light. The professor had a pile of them. He'd unpacked them from one of the hand wagons.

"This shall prove perfect against arrows and darts should they indeed attack, even a good spear would be stopped by this, and we have guns. Let them attack, we shall be ready."

Again, the professor's will had turned Rexx around. The man was so good at convincing people with his logic and manner and will. Rexx stopped just as he exited the house.

"How does Shayock know so much about this place?" He asked.

"Well, the man is my accountant who manages my finances. I sent him ahead to try to acquire local guides, see how much things would cost, silly things like that, and be ready for me in Tangiers. The poor man was so frustrated, the same frustration you saw when I first met you. He'd have had me hire local Negroids, and doubtless they'd run with our belongings at even the shadow of this place. Fortunately, a friend of mine knew to import these Indians as cheaper labor, for building a railroad across this Devil Continent. Quite a story in that, they had this problem with Lions eating the Indians..."

Rexx left and went to his duties. As the bearers had with great haste put up the barricade, they were now in fervent prayers. Prayers for the dead and for their protection. Rexx interrupted them after a while to show them the professor's shields and he and the mercenaries discussed with them ambush plans. One or two had obviously been bandits at one time, but this was not shame here, they'd need their insight to perhaps survive, to take their meager wages home so they'd not lose the land their families had lived in since perhaps the first days of earth to the British taxation. In their own land they had dealt with bandits who ambushed travellers, so they were not as afraid as the bearers, who'd mostly be protected by the mercenaries.

The real change in the marching order was that the bearers had ordinarily traded loads, so one would carry, or push, or pull and then someone would always walk hands free so exhaustion would take none. Now the one who walked carried one of the larger shields to the side of an armed man and they practiced how they'd react if there was trouble.

Again Rexx slept barely, in between nightmares. Many a common house he'd been thrown out of for waking others with his soldier's dreams, but the Indians were more tolerant.

"You lost a lot of friends because of one of these British. We shall doubtless share much in common by the time this journey ends." One said, the one he'd saved from the plant.

Again, he'd woke up at dawn, the Professor signaling with his bugle to get all right and working everyone. A look at Rexx for him to straighten himself up, that he'd better be a good example for all these others to follow, which Rexx complied. The others carefully reminded him the "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" sayings and Rexx had to try hard not to laugh.

Over morning tea and stale tack, Shayock approached Rexx.

"Are you getting worried about our prospects, all the dangers we've faced?"

"No, sir, this is too easy. Why haven't we had an ambush yet?" Rexx asked.

Shayock was surprised by this remark, he shook nervously and turned to the side to gather himself. "What do you mean?"

"Well, usually the hostile natives ambush. When we kill a dozen or so with guns, it's usually easier. I'm expecting a massive arrow/dart attack, as is the professor. That's why we are carrying these shields. A volley of arrows, hopefully we won't get many hit, then we return a volley of sustained gunfire. Then when we find their encampment we go in guns drawn to shoot through if necessary. I hope you have that antidote ready."

It was strange how nervous Shayock looked. He seemed to shake with fear, then regained his composure. What was he afraid of?

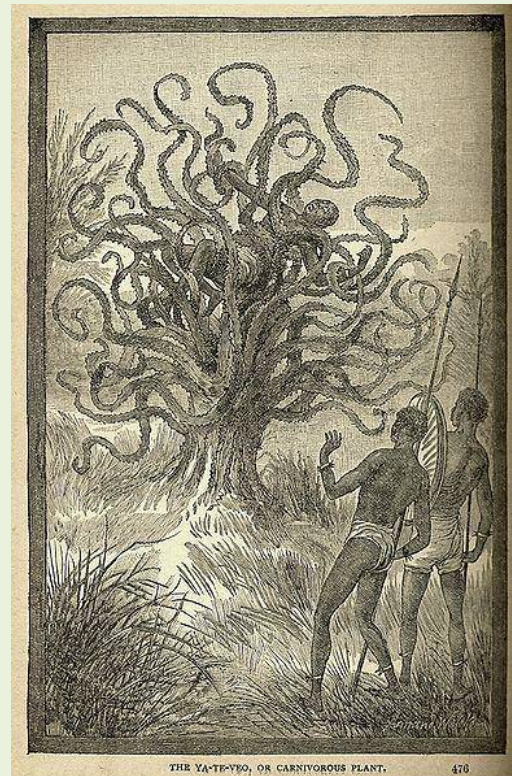
"Well, remember that the British troops in that fort sent many parties here, but they fell to the traps."

"And ambushes."

"Yes, Ambushes, which they returned with fire. The natives just used more traps and scare tactics. Imagine if a regiment had walked into that plant you described earlier, or several had approached that head? I'm sure they did, and ran home with their commander running after them, pathetically shouting orders. These people use fear as their greatest weapon, not just lives of men with primitive weapons fighting men with guns."

Another day's march. Another day of traps. The Indians had learned Rexx was so very good at disarming traps, so brave at discovering them, they stayed clear as he investigated for them. And he found them. Dead drops, pits of snakes, another plant pit on another side trail. Another carnivorous plant in quicksand, of all the traps the natives could repeat themselves on... Upon agreement they would say was a large pit trap -true enough- so the Professor would not make them go back and try to provoke it so he could photograph it!

"I have seen that illustration in his literature." one of the mercenaries said of the devil tree, "And I do not want to gain him some kind of award photographing me being devoured by this thing!"



THE YA-TE-YEO, OR CARNIVOROUS PLANT.

Rexx felt flattered by their admiration, but wondered if he should. He'd never taken their lives for granted, he'd have been crushed if he'd ran off at the first plant attack, but now they were so supportive but very eager to hide behind him while he undid the traps. But he was being paid a fortune and was a leaf in the wind. These men had families to go back to with their meager wages, families that might starve otherwise or be evicted. It was irritating that he had the most difficulty getting anyone to help disarm a trap, though he did not order or force them.

They found a large clearing where the trees thinned out to almost a pastoral area. Some men climbed a large tree and looked with the professor's spyglass. There was some evidence of civilization ahead, at the heart of the jungle. Fires and perhaps some tiny outline of some building, but at least two day's travel for the caravan.

This clearing was large so the professor had to make the camp a smaller circle within it, and this time made crude "Gates" with branches and the barbed wire. This time the professor personally supervised the camp's building and with armed escort checked the perimeter.

"Why so concerned now, Professor?" Rexx asked. "It's too open for a good ambush, the line of the jungle is past most arrow shot and few places to hide. Watch the bogs, but for fear o' mud and bugs, none of those devil plants."

"Indeed, this is a good place. And we are making good time. And so we shall stay here a day, for I wish to photograph and catalog the creatures here, before our arrival in the natives village complicates matters."

So they were spending a day in one place. More bugs in jars and photographs. If it were not for fear of traps or perhaps another plant Rexx would have run into the jungle and used many a vile oath.

--- Chapter 7 ---

--- Photography of Peril! ---

Another early morning wake-up call, by the Professor this time.

Prof Winthrop went around the camp at first light, banging on a saucepan with a ladle, calling all men up and extolling the virtue of timeliness and the work ethic. Rexx had learned many polite sounding Hindi sayings for "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" by this point. But the Professor held himself to his convictions at least, and also his daughter who was at no loss of words complaining about being dragged out of bed earlier that day.

"Daddy...!" she exclaimed. "Why must I wake so early? I need my proper beauty sleep until time to ride in the wagon!"

"Did you not hear me last night, daughter?" The Professor said, perhaps a little aback, "Today is the day I do my planned first phase of photographing this jungle untouched by man before we came upon it! I wish to also capture your youthful beauty in God's untouched savage wilderness in the flawless perfection that only the photograph can perform." He gestured and his small Indian personal servant carried the camera equipment behind them. They found a nice grassy spot at the edge of the clearing and set up furniture, and some tarps for privacy. More protesting the thought of having to do anything remotely called "Work" than embarrassment the professor's daughter removed some of her clothing to appear in still covering underwear that showed off her nice and young figure. She posed on the furniture, by animals the professor had killed to show their size, with her umbrella. Photography at the time was not "High Speed" so she had to stay in the same pose for a while.

Rexx was there as was the professor and the servant. The Professor after he was sure his daughter would cooperate made his leave; "I am going to go and do more cataloging of this area. You attend to the expedition, but keep an eye for I do not want any of the Indian employees looking at her!"

"Of course, Guv'nor!" Rex obediently replied. An easy order to keep, they were all exhausted and due to religious conviction alone none would leer at his daughter. They also rather disliked her for her open racism of them.

So Rexx just walked around the camp socializing with the troops and the bearers. They were all desperate men, and Rexx had to assure him he'd went over with the professor that they'd be paid, or if killed their families would be sent the money. The professor, elitist as he was, was good on his word, he assured them.

"You scoundrel, don't touch my stuff!" a shout broke the silence.

It was Shayock, shouting at a frozen with panic bearer.

He tore down a multicolored shawl that was hanging on the side of one of the wagons. "It is MINE! Do not TOUCH it! It is MINE!"

Rexx rushed over and got between Shayock and the Indian.

"Ok, what is going on here!?" Rexx said.

"He grabbed my scarf!" Shayock shouted.

"I . I . I. Am so sorry-" The Indian trembled. The noise had attracted the attention of the Indians, though the professor totally ignored the scene, suffocating some small creature in one of his jars. "Well, that was why he hired me.." thought Rexx.

"Calm down, man, calm down, I run things, you can explain to me."

"His... His scarf was dirty, I washed it and hung it up to dry. I did not steal it, why would I have hung it up if I stole it?"

Rexx looked at the scarf. Hand woven fabric but low quality, the sort of thing to sell to tourists, bright colors but not really woven to last a long time, from the souk in tangles, the part of the Bazaar most accessible to foreign tourists with English on the signs and the staff knowing it passably and the goods cheaply made and with inflated prices to milk the gullible tourists. Nothing that would last a long time. Nothing a cheap man might buy, especially one of Shayock's people who when they bought something bought good quality to last a long time then haggled furiously over the price. Nothing even a desperate poor person might steal, hard to trade even for a day's meal.

Rexx turned to the bearer, "Sir you should have asked Shayock to help him, but I do not think you had malice to him."

Then to Shayock, "Not everyone in the world steals from others. This man tried to do you a favor, please forgive him." He couldn't technically "Order" Shayock which was very lucky for the man, but Shayock apologized and walked off. The Indians nodded in approval and went back to work, many times in the past such an altercation could have caused the man to be whipped bloody due to lower social standing and the utter contempt of the British for them, then perhaps a bloodier mutiny especially in such stressful times. Rexx checked on the professor again once the commotion had died down.

"Splendid job, Rexx" the professor said, having done with a quick sketch of the dead creature and beginning to check the snares for others, "I so despise these petty trifles. Please check on my daughter so all is well."

"Of course, Guv'nor." Rexx said.

The professor's daughter was sitting on a small but padded stool, her frilly underwear still covering all but her forearms and legs to the knee, but now under her umbrella it felt rather cool. She blew Rexx a kiss.

"Simply awful what I must endure? I'd rather be going to parties and seeing the Kinematrope in London... But I must obey my father, and perhaps it will be good to have some real adventure. When are we going to see some of these natives, so we can start shooting at them?"

Rexx was taken a bit aback by this but any reproach would not be good, "We shall try to talk to them first, m'lady."

"Oh, drat. I suppose you are right. Still, my pen pals south of Austrailia in this island called Tasmania have the best trophies. There used to be this unique species of sub-human there. Used to be is the operative word, you handsome Irishman... But they went "Rabbit Hunting" one day and well they now have a few stuffed trophies to remember them by. Not that anyone couldn't have a stuffed 'black' for a tenth the cost of a gorilla proper, but perhaps a unique tribe?"

"We will just have to see, M'lady." Rexx said. Good thing the professor's daughter is so controlled around her father who at least believes that "Burden" thing for white men, he thought.

"M'lady! Please it being time for another pose?" the Indian servant said impatiently. "Only 3 more and we shall be done!"

"Oh, dear, back to work for me, Rexx. I shall have to think of England and endure."

Rexx went to the other side of the privacy canvasses and looked at the camp. The laborers were hastily setting up the fortifications for the night, good this peaceful day had not hurt their resolve. Rexx kept an ear on the canvas, the professor's daughter being the most problem potential.

"Mistress. Please lay down your parasol for just a minute or two. I need on this list a reclining pose without the umbrella. Do not worry there are some clouds overhead."

"Oh, very...well..." she pouted. "But do hurry with this exposure, for I do not want the sun to make me a darkie, no offense of course."

"No. No. Not offended anymore by you, m'lady. I will complete this as fast as I can."

The apparatus clicked. Rexx rolled his eyes at the sound of the spoiled brat who was now flirting with him. A few moments passed, a few minutes.

"Sahib? I am sure it has been three minutes now, for I have counted inside. You had better be done with this image, for I feel the sun on me now. Sahib?"

Rexx moved to walk away, but wait---! Why didn't the professor's assistant stay chattering to control the spoiled woman!?

A scream broke out!

The professor's daughter had opened her eyes to horror. The Professor's servant was gasping his last with a spear in his heart! And hands, BLACK hands, grabbed her with incredible strength!



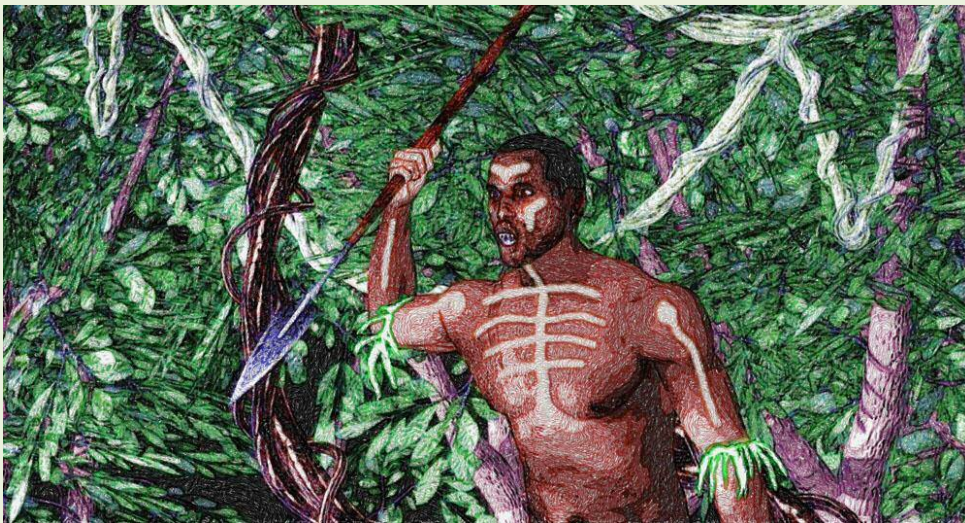
--- Chapter 8 ---

--- The Cannibals Attack! ---

Rexx kicked through the canvas privacy barrier. From the corner of his eye he caught the professor's manservant, gasping his last with a spear through his heart!

The professor's daughter was screaming, for she was being grabbed by a muscular black man!

A Cannibal!



Rexx beheld this chiseled image of savage fury. It was a black man, almost dark as night, but with white paint on his body to resemble an iconic walking skeleton. He was all but naked, save a skirt of grass and some leggings/armbands also made with bundles of plant material. He grinned a mouth of hideous filed teeth, his eyes squinting evil! He held the Professor's daughter as if she were a silly rag doll, laughing and becoming more excited by the moment by her struggles, but was the excitement to ravish her or to eat her flesh off of her bones alive?

He had a companion who had thrown the spear, who now pulled out a blowgun and fired it at Rexx. The deadly missile shot so near him he'd sworn it had taken some hair from the side of his head. He pulled out his pistol and shot the cannibal.

Still grinning wickedly, the other cannibal proceeded to drag the professor's daughter back to the jungle. Perhaps he thought Rexx would hesitate to fire, for fear he'd hit the professor's daughter.

Not at that range.

Rexx could hit the ace in a pack of cards across a 30 foot bar room, by knife, dart or gun - he'd won many a bet, many a drink and once a woman that way. He shot point blank into the black's head, splitting the skull with a torrent of blood and brains from each end.

"Father!" the panicked professor's daughter had grabbed her parasol with shaking hands and clutching it to her breast ran towards the central encampment. Rexx grabbed her with his left hand as he held his pistol with his right.

"Ambush!" he screamed.

This had taken not two seconds, but as he left the concealment of the canvas photography blinds, the whole camp was under attack. Several men lay dead and mayhem was breaking out.

"Close Ranks! Head to the center!" Rexx commanded.

"Woonga!" A cannibal screamed and threw a spear at him, Rexx barely dodged with the professor's daughter, hurling them both to the ground. Rexx shot the black in the chest, dropping him. The Mercenaries had recovered the fastest and were hiding behind the bamboo shields, shooting with their rifles at the cannibals. Rexx's first duty was the professor's daughter, and so shooting right and left and pushing her in front of him he got her inside the perimeter where servants rushed her to the house.

After a few volleys the cannibals stopped attacking and ran back to the safety of the jungle. They had lost several men on both sides.

"Is the professor alright?" Rexx asked Singh, the commander.

"Yes, Irishman. He was suffocating another poor creature in that jar of his and did not even notice the screams. Certainly not of his daughter, though he cares for her greatly. His daughter is always screaming about the lightest of things, but you know that. One of these beasts was about to club him with a stone axe, but I shot him. It is good that I saved him, for we need him to pay us, but it is good you saved his daughter for if she is harmed on this fool quest he will doubtless have our heads."

Rexx nodded and helped treat the casualties. He noticed Singh following him, though the man had to have more responsibility than him. He knew full well what would be asked, but was trying to ignore it.

"Irishman?" Singh asked him.

Another scream broke out from the jungle. Several. Almost a mile away, but still audible due to the pain the men must have been in. Rexx heard them speaking between screams, some were the same prayers he'd heard them say, some otherwise, but he did not ask for Singh to translate.

"They are eating them. They are cutting flesh off of living bones and cooking strips on a small fire. They are peeling out the intestines and men are

begging to die. One is now baring his fanged teeth and going for the man's neck..."

The language ended, though the screams did not. The jungle drums beat furiously and these largely vegetarian Hindu explorers were brought to nausea as the treacherous jungle breezes brought the scent of human flesh being cooked.

"Irishman?" Singh asked Rexx again. Rexx nodded. He had to confront the professor, to try to get him to retreat. Probably futile, and futile for Singh to try. He asked Shayock who was hiding in his tent the whole time, and again seemed nervous he was being asked anything, but no Shayock would not dare confront the professor either.

Rexx made his way to the Professor's house. It was, as mentioned earlier, a modular construction of bamboo, meant to be disassembled at a moment's notice and carried on a wagon or by several wheeled bearing carts. When assembled it was a small room that had proper room to work and sleep and resembled a small Victorian mansion, though of course not as expansive. The professor was impaling a suffocated insect as music played in the background, oblivious to the rantings of his daughter.

"I want one of them stuffed!" she exclaimed.

"I want one of these hottentots gutted, dried and stuffed! I want the one that grabbed me, so I can mount it in the living room and tell my girlfriends of the awful sacrifices I endured in the name of my father's science!"

"My daughter," the professor said not pausing from his work, "I fear I did not bring the proper setup to mount so large a beast."

"Last expedition you pickled a rhino in that Ether." She said.

"Formaldehyde, darling, and I had it shipped back. That was that expedition, we were equipped for it then." He replied.

"So you ARE after treasure this time." His daughter said, surprising Rexx she'd have any concept of anything other than her elitist personal desires, though any woman would be interested in money.

"I did not want your mother to spend it in her head before I found out if there was any, like she did last time. And you also, though you both are dear to my heart and almost every farthing my household spends on creature comforts is for you and your mother. But this expedition is for me, though the treasure should be very good if I am right." His daughter strangely stopped being so argumentative, doubtless over images of gold treasure in her perfectly makeuped bedazzled head.

"Excuse me, Guv'nor." Rexx said, trying to be proper.

"Oh, yes, Rexx, do come in. I suppose it is time for you and I to talk. Daughter, we shall discuss this later. I do intend to cater to your wishes for

the beast sub-men did touch you, but not now. But I do wish some privacy with my employee."

"Very well, father, I shall retire to prepare for bed." She left to go to a smaller private chamber for herself alone.

--- Chapter 9---

--- Whereas an argument ensues and a man's hidden past is revealed. ---

It was now just Rexx and the Professor, who sensed the tension in the man, in his expedition, but true to British Nobility held his emotions hidden. The Professor spoke first.

"I shall first say I commend you for rescuing my daughter and for your performance in this crisis and on this mission. However, I suppose you come now on behalf of the men who you seem attached to, I hope they aren't reading Marx again and want more money from me. Assure them if we do find treasure I shall be generous, much more so than the base salary I have promised them."

"I'm asking you to turn this around. We march back and leave your daughter at the fort, we've been attacked, we can demand the fort send troops with us--"

"Out. Of. The. Question." The professor replied, not even moved to any emotion by this.

"To begin with, my own daughter alone with a bunch of nothing-to-lose ne'er to do well rogues who are but one discipline above a POME to Austrailia... I think a few managed to have themselves sent BACK actually... Lover's Knot scandal, it'd be a blessing. She'd fall in love. I'd find her a year later in a flop house with countless of God's scourges upon the wicked and a bastard child. Then she'd want to come home, after her true love hit her right and left as the lower class are so wont to do, and I'd have the devil of a time marrying her to someone much lower in station and I'd have a bastard hanging around as a servant but wanting to be an heir."

"Afraid an Irishman will take your daughter's fancy?" Rexx interjected, for that story was the common warning to ladies of quality to not bed an Irishman, but did not give the professor a pause.

"But also, I have no illusions that my bearers and mercenaries would run for the hills once out of this jungle, willing to run across Africa herself to try to get home. This mission is too important."

"To risk ye own life an' that o ye bonnie daughter!?" Rexx almost shouted, his self-control nearly at breaking point, unable to discipline himself to speak the Queen's English proper.

"Yes. This expedition is for ME."

Rexx was aghast. He'd expected the usual arrogance of the British, but this went above it. With no further explanation in words for his shock, the Professor gestured to Rexx and uncovered one of the bodies of the cannibals killed in the raid. He peeled back it's lips, the body past stiffness and now going ripe in the jungle heat, showing the fanged teeth, several were missing.

"I have taken liberty to dissect the teeth with a dentist's saw and am sure of one thing; They are not filed. They are naturally this way. These natives are not human as you or I, nor are they as close to the Negroids they resemble, but this itself is a new species of man, perhaps from the "Killer ape" of speculation.

"This alone should ensure my name in Natural History, but my theories have been under attack and from my own peers in the Royal Academy. There is an old parable in classical Greek dialogue, one above your education but please try and understand. That, and this probably did happen, a group of intellectuals were trying to figure out how many teeth a sheep had. They talked for hours on how or why it should have that many teeth. One of them simply got a lamb since a herd was nearby but much to the surprise of the shepherd his borrowing was not for the purpose so stereotypical of Greeks and he brought the poor beast in the room and he gently pried open it's mouth and counted the teeth. Well his peers were aghast, ostracized the man."

"Now, again, this is far above an Irish man's education but do you get what I am saying?"

"They liked arguing about it more than finding it out." Rexx said. "Just going out and counting ruined their fun, though they might have done it when they got done drinking as I reckon they were and started betting over it."

"Yes!" exclaimed Professor Winthrop. "I knew there was good in finally calling you Irishmen white men, not just denying you reparations for slavery, bad as it might be we have to give it to blacks someday."

Rexx was in such shock he did not even think of hitting the professor as he might some other day. The Professor continued his lecture.

"And so while I have spent much of my family fortune travelling the world and bringing countless pieces of knowledge to Queen and Country I face nothing but contempt and mockery from those that do little other than sit at the university and pad their education merely built upon my work. Thus many a mollusk of a man has dryly written papers about this or that creature using my labors, but when it was time to publish my own theories, based on my vast knowledge, my work was outright attacked."

"So ye got a lot more bugs and little critters for the books, prof. Just stay in London and write more papers and defend yerself. That Shayock scoundrel would doubtless help you make your name and take it from those that said ill of it. Yea th' Bard said Kill 'em all but get a lawyer to take 'em to the magistrate fer libel, shake the shillin's from one o' th snoot's salary so he can't go to the bawdy house for a few weeks, will shut the rest up, Guv'nor..."

"No. I must CRUSH them! I must SHOW them! And I am at the door to victory. The door to HELL also maybe, but to gain much one must risk much and work far harder."

"What in God's name is so important in this Cannibal cursed land, then!?"

"You heard it yourself. This tribe calls itself 'The Guardians of the Giant'".

"That, Guv'nor is where ye lost me. Do you need to prove there are giants? Don't everyone know there are or were at least? Like I think it's in the Bible too, right?"

"Indeed. And that is why I am doing this." The professor replied solidly, "You probably take it for granted there were at least giants on the earth at one time?"

"O'course, Guv'nor. There were and might well still be giants." Rexx said.

"Do I detect some played down sarcasm!?" The Professor said, now on the edge of being angered.

Rexx matter of factly replied;

"I think me great great great grand-pappy had one as a crony. They was kinda a reverse of Robin Hood, him bein the little one but they took from the rich and gave to themselves and the poor a little. Didn't have no noble title to reclaim or bard trailin' 'cause they were bandits proper, so no stories in the penny dreadfuls or bein part o history. But he was a giant, not just a big guy, like twice as tall as most men. We had a bow so big ye could nae pull it if it was threaded 'cause both hands could be spread wide just to hold the shaft and string D'nae know if it was pawned or lost when you Brits burned our clanhouse though. But 'course there were and might still be giants, everyone knows that, save perhaps some o' the intellectual snoots that are ye mates at that university."

The Professor seemed to brighten up as if relieved.

"I must later get a good account from you on that man. This is part of what I face. Some as you say 'Intellectual Snots' that IS an excellent term for them have taken to making an undeserved career out of 'De-Bunking' many so-called old myths the folk wisdom. Yes, there is stuff that is false or so old it no longer applies, but many things do or did exist but are rare or gone now so they deny it. You yourself and others have seen, at LEAST one Man Eating Plant,

but since you refuse to photograph it and I can not blame your sense of self-preservation, any accounts from me reporting it will be attacked as lies, my impeccable name made worthless by this wall of false intellectual balderdash.

"But Guv'nor," Rexx pleaded, "They DO have skeletons of them giants. That American man Barnum has one. And didn't they have a Cyclops skeleton on display?"

The Professor pulled out a small paper, "The De-bunker" it said.

"See here, how they claim to have testimony of a man who says he was commissioned by the man Barnum bought the fossilized body from. And see now how they have re-assembled the Cyclops into a four legged beast? The Cyclops were, I hypothesize, the strongest proportionally of the giants. They had to have special holes in their skulls to attach the extra layer of upper arm muscles so as to hurl boulders at passing ships but not crush their heads. So massive and often primitive these creatures were, they used the bones of dragons as we would a spear! But, look, they claim now that there never were Cyclops, that they were merely more of the Elephant's earlier, furrier ancestors. That the bones of great dragons they used for spears were their tusks. They claim that the hole for their eye is that for the muscles of a trunk, that it was merely some massive elephant... And of course all the bones laying around the lair of a meat eater such as a Cyclops, they have any bones they need to add, or exclude..."

"If, Irishman, I can find strong evidence, and a tribe based around one's worship is, and dare I ask a favor of The Lord, a complete skeleton, tools, weapons, and so forth... I shall prove it, that giants walked the earth at one time, as if the Good Book, the word of our Lord is not enough."

Rexx thought for a moment. The treasure. Deadly risk, but what did he have to lose and all to gain. But he remembered the Indian laborers so poor and used as fodder by the British, so afraid and with desperate families and working so hard to just put off starvation, that so many had died and how many more would die on this quest. Were men all fodder for the British Empire's slightest whim?

"I'm sorry, Professor, but we need more guns than we have if we take on a large, deadly tribe in its home turf. Haven't you heard what the Zulu's did? Sue me if ye like, Professor, but I can live with that I'll ne'er go back to Britain or me homeland Eire, a paper saying I owe ye and am a scoundrel is nothing. I'm getting Singh and taking control and ye can either follow us or stay here with yer daughter and that Jew and try to talk your way out of their filed teeth and stewpot."

Rexx wondered if he should turn around, or if the professor while nothing to him in a fight might pull a gun on him, to try to order him.

Instead, the Professor said in a disappointed tone; "Is that how you always handle a dangerous obstacle? To turn on your commander and betray orders and run like a coward, Rexx Rhyder?"

"Or- Perhaps I should say, Sam O'Konnyay?"

Rexx froze as if in a block of the coldest ice.

"I had originally planned to use this to get you to join. You were not the first man to refuse me, but I had resolved you'd be the last of the qualified men I'd have to approach. Reading your court martial and death sentence in absentia I thought I'd have read between the lines to find an idealistic young man pushed by an inept commander not worth his station to desperation. I hoped he'd not be a craven coward, for it takes true grit to turn a gun on your commander and to his face no less. And to run off with the company pay roll, which you've doubtless frittered away in your shack on the edge of the International Zone in Tangiers, and between the thighs of these dark part negroid/part Arab women."

"There..." Rexx or rather Sam stammered out the first word over what felt like a minute. All the denials he'd rehearsed, all the backup plans he'd made should anyone come looking for him in places off the maps, all gone in not an instant by the Professor's intellect and will.

"There's a judge... In America's western territories. Says no horse ever needed stealing, but some people needed killing."

"Do payrolls need stealing?" asked the Professor.

"If they belonged to me mates the damn bastard fool killed, yes, Guv'nor." Rexx let out. Was this how the Authorities got the story from men they'd taken years to catch? Even after the rack and boot had been banned from use over casual offenses, or petty murder? Not that for his treason it wasn't. That they'd hid so long even facing death it was a relief to get it out?

"I was pressed into service 'cuz me Pappy could nae pay the interest on the loan we took out to pay last year's taxes and a few mouthfuls of food. Didn't hate it at first. The stupid drills were nothing compared to the labor I'd done and at least I got a salary that I sent most home, so I didn't hate you that much then. But then we went east, and were just given to this fool of a commander. He had us ride into villages, shoot up people, loot their precious few belongings and turned a blind eye to raping the women, some of the men did. But I just wanted to survive and send money back home, so I held in my rage, even though ye British were making me into the same type of man you'd been to my ken, takin' land that wasn't yours, killing people who'd have never been your enemy if you'd not come into their land guns a'blazing.

"But then the handful of people we'd been hurting learned to fight back. They set traps, they got guns from the dead, they used them. Why d'ye think I knew so well all the traps these blacks laid so well, Guv'nor? And the Commander

wouldn't let us defend ourselves proper, we still marched in formation down the roads, waiting to get shot at then shooting back while the enemy jumped into holes and ran through tunnels to escape. Lost so many of people who'd been my best friends, and we got new people in, who seemed like scared children and I realized I'd been that way too. And I got to watch them die also.

"And then it got to where there was just a handful of us, out of nae a hundred or so, not that he'd killed three times that. And we'd have to go out again and again, but now the tribes had bigger guns and the mess we'd made they'd gotten them help with military know how from other local warlords. And he orders us out again. And know what he says? He says he's been told he won't be getting any re-enforcements but he knows the rules and can demand a new regiment if down to four men so he tells us to go out there so one of us can get killed.

"And I shot him. And I made a pact with me mates we'd take our chances and not tell a soul and run for the hills. And I did take the payroll. He'd actually been fining us our pay for the most trivial of imagined offenses, there was nae a year's pay and me pappy had thought I'd been drinkin' it all and it was ok for him to start drinkin' his then. If he wasn't stuck out in some remote post with us, he'd have spent it. So I split it with me mates and we ran. Just ran. We put our uniforms on the bodies of dead men so we'd be counted as dead and hopefully they'd look for our dead fellows. We robbed some travellin' merchant nearly in the nude. That was a laugh! We robbed him but he was pleading poverty that we'd make his family starve, so we felt bad and paid him good money for the linens and he then told us how we were dressing wrong and how to dress right... But when he figured out who we'd killed we were heroes, and he shouted of it to his tribe, so they helped us escape.

"I'd have stayed there, but knew the crown would figure out we weren't really dead so we ran as far as we could. Doubtless you got one of my mates, or the locals told you, they were so glad our commander was dead. But they helped me get out. Arab hospitality, I learned from the Bedouins how to use it respectfully and one household at a time made my way as far as the House of Islam still went, to Tangiers.

"There I spent my money slowly, well the occasional woman now and again, and since it wasn't enough to last me life I started to hire myself out as a guide to tourists. Scientists like you, wanting to study Natural History and take 'scientific' photos of the hottentots and all that. I learned it from them, Natural History, and have been tempted to do some of it myself, but of course any reward as if they'd give it to an Irishman for a discovery would be interrupted by my drawing and quartering when I returned to the Empire to claim it.

"S'funny, really, Guv'nor. I did really die back there. Died to my family, no way I could send them any of the money, the crown would have hung them as bandits conspirin' w/ me. Me bonny lass married another man, I was fighting for the crown under duress so long. And I've just been living, under a lie, hiding.

I'm only amazed I did not take the Poppy's strange fruit till I died of it, but I've hated myself so much I didn't want even that slow death."

There was a pause. Rexx wondered why the professor was still listening. Why hadn't the man pulled out the gun he knew he had and shot him as a scoundrel and traitor to the throne? A dark thought crossed his mind.

"Well, why did ye hire me if I'm a known traitor? Perhaps to work me and then not pay me, me going to the gallows rather, if you are like my commander?"

"Before I say my intent," Prof Winthrop said, "I ask why did you not simply go up the chain of command on your commandant? We of the Empire are not so above you as to allow that level of abuse of Her Majesty's troops, even pressed ones."

"Yeah, and the last man who complained was scourged till you could see his ribs. Happened the first week we were with him. The guy above him in rank was scared of him like he was the lowliest bureaucrat in front of the Great Mandarin Emperor o' Cathay. Man, he must have been an upper royal put there since he was a bother at home. So, yeah I really wanted my skin off my back Guv'nor just to complain some guy who'd starve to death wearin' my shoes but was better than I'd ever be in the bloody British Empire due to wha dam wa he dropped from, was treating me bad. And if we replaced him, who else would we get?"

Professor Winthrop nodded sadly.

"His family is almost in line for the throne. And you are right, Irishman. He'd have been nothing if not for that, and to keep the name they forced him in, and paid his way through officer's school. Most such people sit back and take the credit but let the troops fight for them, but he was exceptional in his...inadequacy. Exceptional... I love how that word can be abused. I imagine in some future age it will take place of terms such as Moron, Cretin and Imbecile to describe the unfit for life if mankind rejects the profound science of Eugenics and does not euthanize it's inferiors as I fear it will."

"For the record, sir, and I did check into this, he was set to be institutionalized, the raving threats he'd made to try to escape his commission ensured it. If the payroll embezzlement had been discovered, his family would have had to pay it and a large fine to keep him out of jail proper, he had gone too far. Not that it matters to you, I suppose."

"So, professor, what d'ye think should be me punishment, then?" Rexx asked. Should he use his guns? The Professor had made no move indicating he'd draw his.

"As far as I am sure, any punishment you deserved was already given. It is thus; He now lies dead a hero to the Empire. Had you not killed him, though I will not say I would not have done such in your shoes, he'd have been disgraced. A Tom o' Bedlam or Debtor's Prison if his family did not bail him out to go to the madhouse. Had I all justice, which only our Lord has, you'd be pardoned and

with his family owing you a stipend for protecting their black sheep's undeserved good name."

"But I do not have all justice, but I can offer this: A letter of pardon, signed by the Queen for my indulgence. They don't really even make those anymore, but the existing ones still stand."

Rexx was shocked. "So ye'll save me from th' Gallows if I lead ye to the Gaping Maw of Hell itself?"

"Yes." Professor Winthrop said.

"In the name of our true Lord, who died for all man's sins, we all deserve forgiveness and a second chance. Even those vilest deserve our forgiveness, for are we not all sinners to him? Will we not ask him to forgive us? Where was our forgiveness for others? I care not you murdered one of my peers. He was not worth his salt and he gave you good reason and it was not your decision to be under him. This is an easy crime against the empire to forgive.

"Promise me that you will spend all your energy, including to threat of your very life to help us, to rescue us if things go badly. You will be pardoned. And be well paid. And, that last part, I do not care if you are Irish, if you can contribute to the study of Natural History which I also am passionate about I shall ensure you some recognition."

"But."

The Professor continued. More sternly this time.

"If you run from this, you should know that the sun does not set on the Empire. There shall be nowhere you can hide that we shall not be able to eventually find you. That I found you after mild research so easily should be proof of that enough."

--- Chapter 10 ---

--- Men's musings on plans and failures ---

Rexx stormed off from the Professor's hut and joined the men around the fires. They were trying to make merry to dull the sharp edge of terror they all felt. Unusually the accountant Shayock had joined the festivities; he'd been passing around candied bread treats assuring the Hindu soldiers and bearers that they were "Kosher" so they should be in accordance with their dietary taboos also. Living for months off hard tack supplied in complete contempt for their beliefs, the company eagerly accepted these.

"Oy, vey, Rexx!" Shayock exclaimed, "Would you like my own Matzoh mix? I baked these myself before this trip, to hand out when our spirits needed lifting."

"No..." Rexx said, in a deep, low voice...

"What ails you, friend? I understand you had an argument with our employer, are you quitting or have you been dismissed or are you still in the Professor's employ?"

"The last..." Rexx said again, "I'm staying on this expedition. That's why I'm so angry."

Again the accountant moved to offer Rexx the candy but he waved them away, forcing himself not to rudely smack Shayock's hands.

"You know, it is basic courtesy a host offers you food, you take even a small nibble."

"I know, and I'm sorry." Rexx said. "Just when I get mad, I can't eat anything. I'd vomit if I tried to even chew it. Sort of a counter rebellion since the British subdued us by starvation, but some defiant ones like me it made meaner. I don't drink much either, tho I'm far from rulin the world..."

Shayock looked surprised and disappointed but quickly put his friendly host mask back on. "Ah, I do accept your apology, and I am glad that you are still with us, for you are a valued member of this strange and dangerous journey!"

"Thanks..." Rexx said, a bit more relaxed.

"If it be any consolation, know that I have thanklessly served that man for fourteen years!"

"Fourteen years..." Rexx trailed off.

"Yes, and for much of it I have been like you, ready to quit almost every day, ready to storm out, but just keeping on a bit longer till I'd saved enough I'd likely not starve to death till my next job, then enough to make my own business, then... Planning to quit helped me stay the first five years and I could have later but... Well I was used to him by then. He is a brilliant man, the professor, but also foolish and arrogant and shall I say the sky is blue next? I was just a younger man, an accountant and he was the man who hired me despite or perhaps because of my background. And I have done good work for him. He'd have been in debtor's prison twice at least if not for me, but now despite his foolish expeditions he's richer than before. I made sure the books got published for a good royalty and invested the proceeds wisely. I managed the properties, the aged investments nurtured, new ones planted. I kicked out all the swindlers and grew hated among his household making sure his servants actually did their work and no one got paid twice. And what did I ask? Oh, he was kind enough with his wages and I am not a poor man anymore, but I asked a year ago if I could marry into his house. Not his daughter, of course, but one of his more

distant relatives. A nice widowed woman not too old who he always had me send money to, and whom I had developed a friendship with, was it too much to ask? Climb a bit from my station in the world? Enter at the tiniest of foothold of the nobility...? I never knew I was also so talented as a comedian."

A hint of sadness touched Shayock's face. But he continued.

"Past is past, what do you plan to do when we finish this venture? You should be quite well paid if, as I pray, there is treasure at the end of it."

"Hadnae thought much o' that." Rexx said, "But, hey, if I get a mountain of gold why dnae I do something like start me own brothel? Heck, I'd move to Macao and start a nice one and make it deluxe. That way I get money from men goin' ta loose women rather than spendin' mine on the lasses and I get me pick of them!"

Shayock was paused for thought.

Oh, great, had he "Offended" this seemingly super conservative Jew now? Not that he'd cared otherwise, most of the time at his day you could curse at them and throw rocks at them, but the ones with an ear to the landlord or other noble or official could get back at you, and they had a network.

Rexx wasn't going to admit he was worried he'd done something wrong. So he kept his attitude, "Hope I ain't offended ye?"

Shayock laughed.

"Shows how well you know me! My Uncle on my father's side ran one. He did quite well at it. Made a lot of money, too. Got killed in a pogrom a few years back though."

"So, then, how would I start one out?" Rexx asked, more loosely. "My condolences for your uncle, and I was just blowin' steam, but now I'm fancy to the idea."

"Oh, the first part is easy. Desperate women will sell themselves if prompted right, other families will just sell a daughter to you, you can buy them as slaves. The real trick is transport and arrangement.

"First, you have to know the local market. Almost every society no matter how 'moral' or 'conservative' has thriving businesses in the flesh trade. But some are how these union workers say a 'closed shop' where you have to already have connections to join in. I'll admit my uncle would have dominated his town for the flesh trade and made sure you had to be of my people to be in it there, though not all of us do such things.

"Mostly it's a business. Read up on how to run one first, Irishman. Research first, and if you can do the figures yourself, do them. If not, hire someone who can but carefully watch them. Perhaps you might hire one of my people? Not all of us are distrustworthy, most will be very good to you if you treat them right.

"However, the criminality or illegality depending on where it is an added complexity. It requires a lot of socializing and knowing the area, the people, and keeping up on it. You have to know what officials to bribe, which ones to avoid, arrangements to make with local syndicates. You can't rest on that or you'll find yourself raided and closed down suddenly. Not too much like any other business, but the criminality part makes it more maintenance than say a small but successful shop because rarely are any laws to defend your right to practice business. More incentive to save and hide assets, you might have to move.

"If you do start this far out, I'd recommend two things: First buy women from far away from that place, perhaps here. Black women can be bought for nearly nothing, but look exotic to Chinamen, almost as much as white women. You have an advantage starting out here. Second, keep them locked up on the ship and look into the local businesses. If you are lucky someone wants to sell out so will give you all the local contacts, what officials to bribe, what to avoid, and so forth. And a bag of gold is usually worth a brothel if it's not in the hands of one of my people, so many of them do not know how to run the books.

Shayock went on for what was possibly an hour on the ins and outs of the skin trade. Though he insisted he never perused his uncle's establishment, he was well versed in the running of such a business.

At last, Rexx felt to comment; "I was more blowin' off steam after talking to our employer, but now I just might do it. When a poor man runs into money he usually squanders it, and I feared no matter how much I hauled I'd be running out sooner than later. And that's a business I could like, that I could throw myself into. Won't say I will, but thanks. DO you want anything for the advice?"

"Oh, no... Well, perhaps you could let one of my people be the accountant. Or at least don't bar my people from your establishment if we choose to visit it."

"Done!" Rexx said, "Though one thing, the stuff involving people paying extra to torture the women, or sell children way way under any age ye'd think of havin' sex w/ 'm- or to do... what term did you use?'"

"Snuff."

"Yes, Snuff. NONE of that!"

"For my people?"

"For Anyone! But, hey I'll even give your people a small discount otherwise, if they are regulars and don't tell the other customers. But NO torture, kiddies, or snuff!"

"That is very generous of you, Irishman." Shayock said. "You may run your business how you wish, but I must warn you that those scruples might make it difficult to cater to the upper, upper class clientele. This world is changing and there are becoming people so rich you'd not believe, that the people the professor would bow to would bow to them. The new technology and transport

makes such wealth possible. But these true elites are not nobility as you know, money is their only god. Why not bend your moral scruples a little to get in with them? They don't care about race or class or social status, as long as you work with them. Could be an opportunity for classes the elites we know have put down, ey Goy?"

"Well, my house will hae none o' that!" Rexx finished the conversation. "Matter 'o Fact I may re-think it. Thanks fer yer advice, but maybe just some diverse investments an a few mistresses or a good bonny wife, no worry about a poxy from a doxy then at least..."

They sat back and relaxed, watching the campfire and the beautiful African skies that were visible in this clearing. Rexx noticed that hanging above a wagon there was the cheap cloth that Shayock had been so cruel to the Indian bearer over. Shayock noticed that Rexx noticed.

"Yes, I was so terrible to that man back there. I have felt so isolated and persecuted my entire life, and look how I behaved to others because of it. I personally apologized and paid the man I'd so berated to wash it and hang it up proudly. Cheap piece of cloth, I shouldn't have bought it either, but oh well."

This peaceful conversation was interrupted by sudden commotion, then a loud voice;

"TO ARMS!" Singh screamed!

The Cannibals were attacking again!

--- Chapter 11 ---

--- Betrayal amidst the attack of the Cannibals! ---

"To Arms!" Singh screamed again. Rexx realized that he was yelling in Hindi and he'd gotten so used to him he understood that. He also raised the alarm, pushing the bearers to safety and rallying the troops, but they were all sluggish, sick even. Some were heaving and vomiting, others were staggering or barely able to move.

"What's going on? Why is this camp all sick? You Hindis don't drink..?"

The Cannibals rushed into the encampment, screaming "M'Kunga! M'Bunga!" and blaring their fanged teeth as they grabbed near helpless men. No need to spear them, there were even gunshots but unlikely even one Cannibal was injured this time. A few with barely some nerves left were holding out, but they were being overwhelmed in a wave of devil men set on eating human flesh!

Rexx crouched behind the barrels of tack he'd sat on, protecting Shayock as he shouted orders and shot right and left Cannibals. Blaring his guns he shouted for them to run to the center behind him, where they'd have safety together.

"M'Kunga! "M'Bunga!" a great black man with a spear rushed for him with deadly fury, throwing it so it barely missed him, slicing a small cut on his arm through his shirt. His guns blazed a fury and the Cannibal dropped dead, his chest shot clear through!

Rexx wondered who he could save now? What of the professor, the bearers, by God he suddenly felt repulsed at the thought of his prissy daughter grabbed by black cannibal hands for a feast on her far worse than merely eating her flesh. And even Shayock?

CRACK!

Rexx's head exploded with pure liquid agony. His whole world turned unbearable blinding light with pain as he dropped his guns and plunged into welcome blackness. But behind him he heard feet wearing boots shuffling, not the softness of hardened black feet on the jungle. And a figure crouched over him, but filed teeth did not sink into his still living flesh, but rather felt over his clothes and picked his wallet from his pocket.

Shayock.

Of course! What a fool he had been! He had not questioned this man who was at first glance every bit as sneaky and distrustful as his kind were thought. His constant defense of seemingly routine activities. His interaction with natives earlier. His deep seated hatred of his master the Professor. God, even his pathetic behavior over that cheap piece of cloth just before the dawn attack and then his proud display of it...

"Take me for a fool!" he thought aloud, "That cloth was the signal for when to attack us. When he'd poisoned us."

The shame was such Rexx could not bear life, he truly wished for death. He feared it, and looked for a way out, which is why he allowed the professor to blackmail him rather than shoot him and run. But look at him now, just a sucker capped by a Jew.

"Serves me right to trust one of them." Rexx said as he mercifully faded into a brief blackness.

Shayock furiously ran around the camp, signaling to the Cannibals, shouting commands and code words he'd been taught by his contact. Most of the crew were rounded up, those he hadn't poisoned would be finished soon. Singh and the Professor and his Daughter still remained in their little quaint hut, but it should be a brief standoff and he'd BURN them out if necessary!

He took a brief pause to go through the contents of Rexx's pocket, a threadbare canvas wallet, so worn it nearly fell apart. As he opened it, a tiny moth flew out. A few paper notes of dubious authenticity, a few shillings... A lock of hair braided with gold thread, likely from one of his favorite prostitutes in Tangiers. Shayock shook his head in disgust.

"Serves me right to rob one of them!" he said in his native Yiddish, which he knew the Cannibals would not know, "If he has any money he's not squandered, doubtless it was sewn into his pants! Their only value is sold as slaves next to dark men!"

Sam O'Konnyay crawled across the mud in what had been the driest of sand if not for blood. They'd found the barrels the desert arabs had stolen, metal balls for their muskets and gunpowder. None had been stolen truly, just the contents combined so that when they got too close a lid under the sand got stepped on and pressed the dynamite detonator handle, unleashing the contents onto the men. Sam had only survived because he'd been in the back of the unit, but was thrown for yards. He crawled and splashed in the mud, and when he dared open his eyes to see if he was a blind man he saw what remained of his best friend, his hand pushing in his dead, pulverized face. He screamed.

But it was the adventurer Rexx Rhyder who finished the scream. How long had passed? Barely minutes, his head still hurt fresh from the blow and he still heard the screams and commotions. The Cannibals were winning, mostly capturing men for later meals, and one of his pistols had been stolen.

With a desperate rush of pure fool-hardy strength, Rexx grabbed his remaining pistol and ran to the only shred of hope left, the Professor's hut. On the way he reflexively felt between his legs, not just for his mighty sword but for the real wallet he'd kept what barely was left of his money from the payroll and the pay from tour guide jobs in case he was mugged.

The Professors hut had blacks dancing around it, but gunfire was coming from within, and several lay dead at the door.

--- Chapter 12, standoff against the Cannibals! ---

Rexx ran forward with a berzerker's might. He shot a cannibal full in the back, another in the face as he made a desperate flight to the hut.

"Professor! Let me in! We are not lost, yet!"

He wondered as he ran there if the Professor would perhaps think him a coward, or a failure or worse the traitor instead of Shayock. Would his rush to provide what little help he could at this stage be met with death from his allies?

But the door parted just enough to let Rexx inside. Singh rammed against the door with a giant's strength, breaking the hand of a black man who'd thrust a dagger after Rexx's back. He cut it off with a near invisibly fast swipe with his dagger.

"Hands to yourself, sir!" he said in his perfect British but with an Indian accent.

"Professor!" Rexx shouted, but panting.

"I know." The Professor said grimly, "We are betrayed by my most trusted servant. I would truly despair, but that my faith in you is restored! We shall somehow, God help us, find a way out!"

The hut was two layers of bamboo, and re-inforced with steel plates. Spears were blunted, small arms fire was stopped. But the hut was light and barely set in the ground and the Cannibals flung themselves against it in rabid fury, threatening to shake it off its foundation. Singh, the Professor and now Rexx joined in the desperate fight to keep enough of them away to stop just that. They risked life and limb opening windows and peep-holes and doors to shoot or stab at the hordes of fanged teeth horror screaming for their blood.

What was worse was that all but Rexx were sick, from Shayock's Poison, though they had eaten little. Just a small bite to be polite when he started passing it around. Singh and the Professor were each in their own ways of the "Stuff" that made Rexx so they could still fight, but it was not to be easy.

The professor's daughter was white with pure fright. They'd told her to stand in the middle of the hut, so should some savage break through he'd likely hit a man instead of her. Rexx had damned the Professor for a fool for bringing his daughter into the Cannibal filled jungles of Darkest Africa. Surely some daughter's affair could not be worse than having savage negroid hands defile her? Of course not, but the professor had thought that he'd only have to worry about her own choices and presumed his daughter was too racist to even lust for Rexx, much less a non-white. Rexx cared little for her innuendos to him, but he'd be willing to die to keep black hands off of her.

The fight went on for what seemed like hours. Hands were blistering with burns from guns that would be useless when they cooled. Breaths were raw and raspy. Arms and chests bled from bits of spear and bamboo shattered in the fight, from near death missed by an inch.

At last, the attack seemed to stop.

But was replaced by drums and chanting.

"M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga!" a deep voice shouted, and the drums played in earnest as the dance began around the hut. The very earth shook in rhythmic horror as the dancers danced their devil dance. "M'Kung! M'Kunga! M'kunga m'bunga m'kunga m'boonga!" It beat on and on and on and on. "M'Kung! M'Kunga!

M'kunga m'bunga m'kunga m'boonga M'Kung! M'Kunga! M'kunga m'bunga m'kunga
m'boonga M'Kung! M'Kunga! M'kunga m'bunga m'kunga m'boonga"

At last a voice cried out;

"Professor Winthrop! Why don't we discuss terms of your surrender?" a sly, evil voice said.

"Shayock!" The Professor shouted in anger and indignation, "You have betrayed us to these flesh eating savages! Call them off if you have any honor left!"

"Call off my new friends? Who do not think less of me, or rather that I am least of all men because I am of the Tribe of Abraham? You had so many chances to give me the least of true thanks for all that I did for you and your family! Now I shall feed you and your family to the tribe that has adopted me and grow much richer. They do have more gold than even the Queen herself has, but they have no use of it!"

"You fool!" The Professor retorted, "They have no use of gold for they know nothing but eating of human flesh! Surely you will be their victim too! Traitors burn in Hell, you know, starting with the Jew Judas."

"Better a victim than a fool!" Shayock said.

Perhaps the professor should have shot Shayock as a traitor, but he closed the window, drained.

Shayock smiled smugly.

A Cannibal jumped up and down "M'Kunga! M'Kunga!" waving his spear, urging his traitor friend to lead the attack.

"No." Shayock said, in a guttural clicking trade language he'd learned, "I promised our king I'd capture as many of them as I could with few casualties on our side. That fool who washed that signal cloth and now your assault on that cabin has put my word in peril."

The Cannibal shook his arms and opened his eyes wide, "How DO we get them, and alive?" his gesture clearly meant.

"Fire. We smoke them out." Shayock grabbed a torch. Tittering like some fiendish girl he trotted to the hut, to a space he noticed wasn't as defended as he'd watched the attack, and tossed it on the roof of the hut. He gestured for the others to do the same.

"You think my kind should burn, Professor as traitors? Well I'll send you to Hell ahead of me!"

He waved and told the Cannibals that if they smoked the hut long enough they'd lose consciousness and then they could just push in and grab them. The

cannibals went wild with frenzy. They beat their drums and danced, one brave after another took the dare of approaching the hut, dodging the few remaining bullets the defenders had and tossing the torches on the hut. It was a devil game and they cheered the bravest and booed and mocked those Rexx and Singh and the Professor managed to wound or scare away.

Inside the Professor and the others smelled the smoke. Strangely, the professor was undisturbed. He quickly unpacked a contraption and attached it to a large drum of water in the center of the shed, extending a tube into a pre-cut slot in the roof.

"Did he not think that I know Bamboo is flammable when dry?" Professor Winthrop scoffed, "I have both treated this with a resin of my own design and I have brought this along in case of flaming arrows or some servant -sorry Irishman- who leaves his pipe lay while lit!" The Professor then began cranking the gears rapidly, his fast movements turning into slow but powerful pressure, forcing water up the pipe into a thinner nozzle that simulated rain. The torches had their own fuel in the wrapping, but the water slowed their burning and stopped the fires.

Still, it was a desperate last standoff. The Cannibals continued to throw torches, the grisly game only prolonged. Shayock even risked a bullet a time or two to throw more himself, to assure status among his fiends or rather friends, as the case may be. Inside the hut it was gasping hell for they were short of breath and the smoke still got inside. The professor's daughter had pulled off her shirt, while still wearing a decent undershirt was covered with sweat, she was gasping for breath and as ill-advised as it was the professor gave her some of their precious water.

Rexx and Singh made a desperate plan to break free. They had some grenades in a locked box under the bed. They would throw these out the window in a certain direction to blast through the natives, to do damage with the shrapnel that hopefully the hut's armor would absorb. Then they'd run using the rest of their ammo to the Professor's travelling cart. They'd put the professor and his daughter in it and run like mad. Dawn was nearly coming, they could shoot their way back to safety, for more guns were in the cart and both were hardy men who could keep going for days. The Professor agreed to the plan and assured Rexx that he'd see the Queen's letter used to pardon him if he managed to at least save his and his daughter's life.

They did not notice the professor's daughter as they made this plan. She'd nearly passed out and had nothing good to stand on, for if she leaned into the center of the hut she'd risk her hands getting cut in the gears of the professor's apparatus, or worse them getting dirty with some kind of oily grease. She paced back to the boarded up window, resting to it's side, gasping breath as her not unimpressive breasts heaved up and down with her chest.

From outside, the window was pulled open and a Cannibal reached in and grabbed her!

"Black!" she screamed as the lusty paws grabbed her in an iron grip as a skull painted face smiled a hideous mouth of fanged teeth and beady eyes glistened with simian lust.

Rexx swung his pistol and shot the Cannibal, who fell out the window with a gurgling scream. The Professor's daughter rushed to her father's side, crying. Singh rushed over to the window and another Cannibal trying to get through had a dagger pierce his heart.

They had no time left--the Cannibals had assumed they'd smoked them long enough and were breaking through now! The sides of the hut deformed as dozens of Cannibals kicked and pushed. The hut shook, the walls began to break as hands holding spears and daggers hacked through and through the holes hideous Cannibals leered, mouths full of sharp teeth ready to eat human flesh!

Rexx pulled his gun to shoot them, but was out of ammo. He reached to blister his hands again to load them into his red hot pistol, but too late. A cannibal had jumped up and down on the roof and with the fire and shaking a hinge had failed! A piece of roof collapsed on Rexx, flattening him to the ground and the cannibal kept jumping up and down. Singh turned to stab the Cannibal but three of them leapt on him and took him down. The walls were torn asunder and dozens of Cannibals effortlessly overpowered the Professor and took his daughter captive. Rexx, pinned flat and unable to breathe, again welcomed the loss of consciousness as the Cannibal who'd pinned him jumped up and down on the piece of hut over him shouting "M'Kunga! M'Bunga!"

--- Chapter 12 ---

--- City of Death! ---

The troupe was marched straight to the Cannibal's city. It was nearer than they thought, and took not from the morning to noon to get there. Most of the bearers were tied to yokes tied together, much like black slaves were. The professor and his daughter were confined in their wagon while Rexx and Singh were yoked and force marched near the sides. Shayock took the lead, walking and talking and even making business plans with an amused war band leader.

A few of the bearers, sick with the Poison that Shayock had fed them collapsed on the trail, but the cannibals didn't kill them. They tortured them with sharp plant spines covered in some kind of venom or resin that caused them pain beyond belief. When this failed to snap them out of their "Illness" the Cannibals then carried them, for meat was too precious to kill and waste, even in such abundance...

However, they cared little as long as their captives marched. Rexx looked back and forth for landmarks, should he escape, that he may trace his way back through the jungle. If they noticed, they did not care, they acted with much arrogance now that their prey was caught. Also, Rexx was surprised they did not brutalize or torture himself or Singh, but they had no malice that he'd killed so many of them.

The Cannibal city was much larger than a simple tribal village and it was both primitive and advanced. At one time, this city was surely a wonder of the ancient world, but now the city had decayed under time's arrow and the inhabitants had more crudely patched walls and covered what once were ornate roofs with thatch and sticks. Rexx had archaeological and natural science skills, as he'd said to the Professor, self-taught by exposure. He was awed at how ancient the buildings were, granite steps clearly once almost sharp at the edge and perfectly straight now worn so smooth one could slip climbing them. It made the ancient Catholic cathedrals look like the latest buildings. This city was built perhaps when the standing stones of his home Eire were new, perhaps before.

"I say," the professor said from the wagon, "Irishman, do you know what a Planned City is?"

"Yes." He said, in awe despite terror of the situation. "This city was planned. It did not start from simple huts then grow, like Rome. Like Jericho. People just decided to build it and planned it in advance. Like Rome's later cities, London's planned colony settlements. A clear, orderly plan, and all around that central mound."

They were marched towards the center of the city. It was built around a huge crater, like an ancient volcano, but no it was a meteorite impact crater! There was but one building touching the crater, a temple. The god was clear, for in the center and rising above it there was a horrible idol; an iconic image of a giant man, blocky with a flat pyramid head of which two eyes that were openings for fire and a large, dark mouth with fire inside. A rickety bridge led up to the mouth of the idol, one that had been repaired for aeons with vines and bits of wood that had re-grown, an organic path now with dirt on it even.

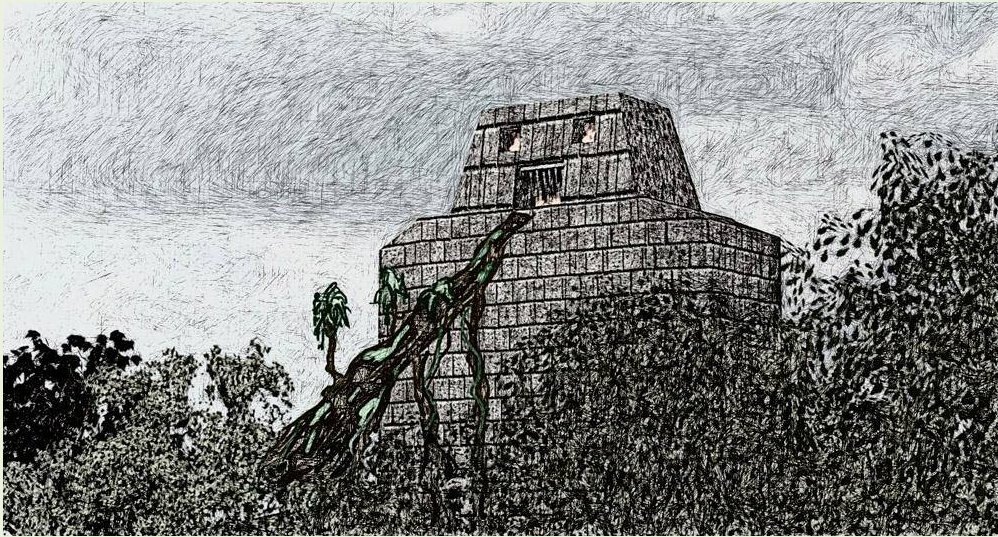
The warriors that led them back to the village were greeted with much praise. They jumped up and down with them and told of their battle. A few women heard the news of their men who died and went to mourn. But before this the man that was likely the friend of the one that had died placed an ornament from him on her arm and talked kindly to her. Perhaps a system of ensuring widows would be cared for, like in the faith of Islam that a man will take his brother's wife if he is killed as Ali Baba did in Burton's Arabian Nights tales.

But why did the women not attack them? Why did they not scream at them? Spit at them? Attempt to hurt them, only held back by the men to save them for their satanic dinner? This tribe was so old, so ritualized; it was all part of their way of life... And their victim's way of death!

As they were being marched to the temple, the procession stopped. There was some commotion and in conversation with Shayock one of the bearers was led away. He was the Indian who'd first been accused by Shayock of stealing, then "Forgiven" by him. The traitor Shayock had singled him out? Was this Jew so vile and petty?

The man pleaded and struggled. Wait, he was not sick with poison! Shayock had sent him off to "Wash" his cloth then hang it? But why did he feel the need to single this man out? Surely they'd all die horribly at the hands of the cannibals...

"I say, Rexx" The Professor interrupted, "I am amazed at how unique the old architecture is. It is as if some more advanced and earlier culture had an outpost here and it was not the source but rather a branch from the one that inspired the ancient to us cultures we know of, such as the Ancient Aegyptians, of which it is closest to. I wonder how in the world this place has survived so great a city so secluded for so long, but remained essentially unknown. I struggled my life searching for anything to find even the most glancing rumor of this place's existence."



They heard struggling and screaming. Not Hindi, not one of the bearers such as the man Shayock singled out. Another black from the civilized tribes.

They could see up the ramp and they were tying him to a metal grate that came out of the idol's mouth. The tribe chanted and drums played.

"Boonga M'Kunga!"

"Boonga M'Kunga!"

"Boonga M'Kunga!"

Some hidden mechanism was activated and the man was drawn into the fiery mouth! He screamed and screamed, but then they saw the metal spikes were attached to a plate that some other hidden mechanism lowered. With an even more blood-curdling scream the man was impaled and crushed before the fire could end his life!

The crowd went wild. They screamed and jumped up and down and chanted more. They waved grisly trophies made with human bone and skulls! A young boy who was well fed, on the edge of obese caught their eye. He wickedly chewed on a cooked and salted part of a human hand, evilly demonstrating what would happen to them.

Rexx replied to the Professor's query in a manner not hiding his Irish accent in the least for sarcastic effect;

"O' Golly Gee, Guv'nor, I wonder WHY!?"

The celebrations soon calmed down and the expedition was brought into the temple or palace at the base of the crater that surrounded the giant idol. The professor and to a point Rexx were amazed, looking at the pictures and hieroglyphs on the walls. The Professor tried to stop to read, but the Cannibals pushed them on.

At last they entered a large chamber, it's roof mostly gone but with leaves and sticks over the vast roof to provide some shade. Again the walls were full of pictures, language, such stories to tell.

But taking their attention was a large and obese black man, sitting on some ancient throne that was draped with animal hides for comfort. This man, mature, full of power was obviously their chief. Around him, many dark women stood, from young nymphs budding into sexual maturity to ancient wizened women. Also children ran around, including the boy from earlier, and a dozen goats. He showed his wealth and prestige to the guests...

The Cannibals conversed with the chief before he spoke, though surprisingly not to Shayock first but to the professor.

"Professor Winthrop Greatlord." He said in a booming voice, "My brothers tell me that you are interested in our history."

"Indeed." The Professor said, straightening himself out. His curiosity was overwhelming him, but perhaps he could talk himself out of this situation. He said his greatest suspicions out loud;

"Great Chief. Is that idol your god, or does it represent your god? And if it does, has he always been a spirit or was he flesh once?"

The tribal chief smiled and clapped his hands. He opened them in a gesture of love and welcome, though his men did not loosen their bonds nor drop their hold.

"Our tribe is named nothing other than the Guardians of the Giant! I shall show you, for you are our guest here!" and he rose from his throne and gestured for them to follow.

The next room was locked with giant doors, red but an odd hue of some tree that perhaps was not present anymore. It was ancient and heavy but had been made with such perfect natural technology, like Ancient Roman roads and Aqueducts that it swung on a counterweight with ease. An amazing sight greeted them inside this chamber.

It was a room that was filled with gold and treasure. A dragon's hoard of legend was laughably small in comparison. Indeed, the forty thieves of the Ali Baba story from Burton's book would be envious of this loot. Gold coins of empires ages past, bars of gold and lead and iron. Countless weapons and armor of Rome, of Greece, of Kush and Egypt. Of... Armor of a design something like Rome or Greece but with waves and water symbols... Even a Gae Bolgar the barbed "Bellow's Spear" and a Torc of a Warrior from Rexx's isle of Eire from a time far and past...

"The Treasure of Kings?" Singh said.

"More like the Sawney Beane Clan." Rexx Replied, "They know it's valuable but don't have much need to spend it..."

But the Professor was not staring at the gold that if, unlikely now as it seemed, they survived this venture would ensure he'd recover many, many times over. No, the Professor had found his true treasure. When Rexx noticed it, he was struck white with shock, frozen with horror and fear.

The thing on the throne in itself was enough to scare a man not prepared, to awe a man even prepared. For it was indeed the skeleton of an ancient giant. Not like his distant uncle's friend who though he did see his bow thought it some Blarney tale to put him to sleep at night when he was a laddy. This giant would have dwarfed that man, he was easily 25 feet or more high when he lived. The bones were thicker, not just bigger, but they'd have to be for that size, and even that wasn't most disturbing.

It was the teeth. The giant's teeth were all fangs. This being might have looked human, but all he ate was flesh, likely that of man as readily as any beast! It's head wore a giant crown, a rather simple and non-ornate crown compared to all the gold literally lying around this room, simple compared to Kingly crowns of centuries past, but with an immense jewel in the center.



"For there were giants in the earth in those days..." the Professor said in awe. "When the sons of the gods came down unto the daughters of men."

"And after!" boomed the Chief, "For once upon a time it was an age of Giants and heroes! And from when beings came from the sky and bestowed gifts on mankind!"

"Please tell me of this one, mighty chief."

The chief nodded and he sat down on a small throne at the base of the giant. He petted the snake that he wore over his shoulders. The children sat down to listen to what was perhaps their favorite tale.

"We were not always like this, Briton. Once we lived as animals and we were white too, but with long furry hair!" He pointed to some carvings on the wall, showing man-ape creatures much like the yeti of myth.

"This land was not like it is now, Briton. For once this land was cold and high. Almost all over the earth was ice, save a narrow band north to where the bottom of Britain is, yes I do know of the outside world, and south to the city of Sale more or less. And the ocean was much shallower. We lived as animals, those of our tribe, hunting with our brute force animals and indeed other men.

"But then the earth changed. To us the ground shook and shook and shook, but to others it was more terrible, for the waters rose."

"And drank Atlantis?" The Professor interjected.

"Yes. That was a great and terrible empire. We feared it, though we lived on the roof of the world. Most who came near us were food, but we had heard they could send death from afar, so we hid from most of them that came our way.

The cold drove them back, most of them." He pointed to the ancient armor that was like but unlike Roman armor.

"But the earth changed. And we noticed many coming from the lowlands fleeing what had become of their lands. On many we feasted, but we feared we would be overrun."

"Then came the Giant."

"How did he survive the Deluge?" The professor asked.

"And After, does not your holy book itself say?" The Chief replied to the reasonable query, "He simply headed for higher ground when the waters rose, though he himself nearly drowned. Many more than those in a large boat with their livestock survived that time, though the death was so great many would think that the whole world had perished but for them. How did we survive, after all? But for higher ground. And he was not the only giant after that time, though there were much fewer. I have heard tales of a King Og for instance..."

"At first, he was not our king, but one of our enemies. He fed on our people and other men too. One of us vowed to defeat him, for it was bad enough that we faced other men. Those were strange and terrifying times. The world was becoming hotter and much grass was beginning to grow, trees were growing. All that we knew had vanished, so we then knew the fear of those who fled even into our arms. But they had weapons and technology and knew war."

"So the hero watched and waited. He saw that even the giant had to sleep. And so he waited till the giant went to sleep, and it was a powerful sleep and not birds on his head, not a rhino pushing his shoulder could wake him. He could have killed the giant easily, but decided not to. So he waited and waited and waited till the giant woke though it took three days. And when the giant woke the hero was there with a spear he had taken from an Atlantean."

"And he spoke in the little Atlantean the tribe knew; I could have killed you but I did not. You eat us but also other men. We eat other men, and could you, but the other men seek to kill us both. Do not eat us, but help us, and we will guard you when you sleep and we shall both eat of men."

"And so he led back the giant to the tribe, but as a friend. We were of course terrified at first, for had he brought back the enemy to eat us? But the giant was peaceful with us and soon when a small army of Atlanteans attacked us, he helped us defeat them. He hurled giant rocks and he had learned our language and knew theirs so he could shout orders to us for when and where to attack and flee, and though they had better numbers and weapons they were defeated and we feasted well!"

"Then he led us to this land, he had known it in days even past our memory for he was very old. The crater marks where first the fallen angels, the Sons of the Gods came forth on earth to mate with the Daughters of Men and it was a sacred place to the Giants in the Earth. It had been a desolate icy plain then,

but now was becoming the jungle we know today. We were suffering, for we had still our fur and it was hot. So he called his friends from the stars and they came and we do not remember what happened but soon our fur fell from us and no longer children had fur on them, but beneath was our beautiful black skin that protects us from the sun and the heat. And he taught us how to build houses and how to read and write and how to live as he knew. He became our god, and the hero that brought him to our side our first chief."

"He lived for a thousand years after the flood, or the time of warming to us. We worshipped him, he protected us, we brought food to him. And he died for he too was mortal though he'd lived from man's earliest days and saw so much. And we keep and guard the M'Kunga jungle, in his name; M'Kunga!"

A chorus of "M'Kunga!" went through the great room.

There was a pause, and of course it was the Professor who spoke;

"This is amazing. Revolutionary. This will turn Natural Science on its head! But why have you not forged your empire like other tribes of men?"

"That is the law." The chief said, "We own the M'Kunga jungle and do not leave it, save perhaps for a hunt or so. But all who enter it are food for us."

"How, then, do you know so much about other cultures?" Prof Winthrop asked.

"Once in a while we do hold off on a meal for a while. We have had travelers from all over the world come here, but all of them ended up eaten by us or the earlier ones our god. Oh, a tiny few escaped and that is why there is any evidence of us though scarce. And we have fought off and devoured armies their tales sent to us, but we do not wish to do that often."

The chief pointed to one of the sets of bones around the throne.

"This was a Catholic priest who visited us some years back. He taught us Latin and English and French. We actually considered keeping him here, not eating him if he promised to remain, to never leave. But he spurned the wife we'd selected for him and tried to have a sinful and unnatural relationship with one of my sons, well before he was of any marrying age."

A healthy muscular adult black man nodded. He turned to his side and pointed at his rear and said "Ow." The Chief shook his head.

"We wondered then if we should even eat him but merely kill him, but he tasted like all the others."

"So, will you eat all of us, or put us in that fiery idol that no doubt represents the giant?"

"It is our law." The Chief replied, "We do not hate those outside our tribe though they always come to kill us. But all who enter the M'Kunga jungle are food for us!"

Most men would panic at this, but the Professor held his ground;

"Surely, great chief, we can work out a deal. Yes, especially my empire has been brutal to those in Africa. But now we face competition from the Fracs and the Hessians and the Portugese. We need local empires friendly to us and award titles to those that bow before the throne. Your tribe would do great wonder to the science of natural history, and yes I do seek my own fame for discovering you. I could get you peace under the Queen!"

"Would she let us still eat those that enter the M'Kunga jungle, if say we let Britons go?" he asked.

"No. I fear not. I shan't lie to you, though even white man does eat another on rare occasions such as starvation, it is overall abhorrent and taboo to us. We would make sure you had tons of cattle, camels and so forth for flesh, but not men. Not even other Negroid men or those from the Indian subcontinent."

"Thank you, white man, for not lying to me as they say all your kind do. If I had a choice I would make exception for you, even perhaps work out a deal with your queen, but all I can do is guard the traditions of my tribe. All are food for us, who enter the M'Kunga jungle."

"So, then you'll just eat us tonight?"

"Not tonight. Not for a fortnight. Your traitor, Shayock of the Tribes of Israel, fed you the K'Gunga venom. It made you easier to catch, despite your guns and tricks, we lost few. But it is taboo to sacrifice to eat those that are poisoned with it for a fortnight for that is how long it takes any trace of it to be gone from your flesh. Our god himself set this law."

"Was it unholy to him?"

"Not unholy. He simply hated the taste of it. We learned it would set him into a rage and two weeks was the time needed for the body to remove it. It does taste quite horrible in human flesh though it goes into most foods unnoticed."

"You are wise, great chief", Shayock said, "to just eat this Briton. His kind have done so much harm around the world. They kill and enslave everything they touch. They turn proud people into slaves, such as the Irishman and the Indians, all oppressed by them, now foolish willing slaves. My kind, they stole all their belongings, killed most of them in England and expelled us. Then they let us back in, but only to balance their books and sell Irishman as slaves next to

black men. But as was made so clear to me, I still am less than them, less than even an Irishman! Work with me and we shall turn some of this gold into tons of weapons. The arms dealers do not sell good weapons to black men, but they do to Jews since many are Jews! We will bring you tons of weapons so that you may repulse the white man. All I require is but a small piece of this great treasure so I may have my true fortune at last as was our deal!"

"That is true. And that was our deal with you." The chief said, "But you are to be our food tonight."

There was a long silence. The sudden fright on Shayock was profound. He had truly believed until this instant he would get away with his treason.

"You promised! I can tell when a man lies! You were not lying! We had a deal!"

"Yes," the chief boomed in a firm but grim voice, "We had a deal. And we keep our word, most certainly the Chief of this tribe. However, our tradition is above all things. Were it not for our tradition I would indeed honor our agreement, giving you bags of this gold for using the rest of it to buy weapons, cannons and such to fight the increasing numbers of whites invading Africa, who threaten even our remote jungle. It makes more sense to do it that way, we will have to step up raids on the outside to seize more guns, surely. But it is law, all who enter the M'Kunga jungle are food for us."

"Besides, Traitor," The Chief sternly said, "Is it not fitting that one who betrays his companions to us deserves no less a fate than to be eaten himself? And you did not take the K'Gunga venom yourself, no? Besides the man you selected for us, and the bodies of those we killed earlier in the day, we have only you. He shall feed our god. You shall feed us. Brothers, prepare this man for tonight's feast!"

"Noooooooo!" Shayock screamed and tried to run and to fight. He was of course only dangerous clubbing the man who tried to defend him and had his back turned to him, or to others that had trusted him. The Cannibals subdued him with ease, laughing at how pathetic he was trying to fight them. He flailed and screamed and cried. Granted that when men face any death and certainly one so horrible one could lose the composure, the bravery one tries to have facing it, but his was beyond pathetic. Perhaps he was so pathetic they might have questioned if they should eat him, like the servant of Rome but for a different reason?

Any sympathy they might have had for him, the Cannibals or his former friends he'd betrayed was ruined by his next outburst.

"The Irishman!" he screamed. "Rexx Rhyder! The Irishman! I did not manage to poison him! Eat him first! Eat him instead of me! Please! I'll do anything for you!"

All eyes were on Rexx then. The Cannibals all looked at him, eagerly, their mouths opening to show their sharp teeth as they imagined eating him, perhaps alive then and there. What a prime specimen compared to this whining shriveled traitor. And Rexx truly trembled with fright a second before he caught himself. The Chief looked at Rexx hungrily.

"This is indeed good news." He said, "But still you shall be tonight's feast, I have so decreed! What else could you do for us? We have already sent a messenger recently." The other Cannibals showed some slight disappointment in the Chief's words, for Rexx was large and big and healthy and there were many cannibals in the tribe. Shayock was near hunchbacked, small and frail and sickly. He would indeed make less of a meal than Rexx, but the chief's word was absolute. But that treacherous betraying Jew had ensured that Rexx would face his last day sooner than later, in a pathetic bid to save his worthless life, to stave off the death he'd so deservedly brought upon himself.

--- Chapter 13 ---

--- The Feast of Horror! ---

"I really thought I'd seen the ultimate horror then and there. How wrong I was Rexx thought. He opened his stone ember box and softly blew on the bit of charcoal, feeling the heat and the dim red glow in the dark bushes. Some unknown insect crawled on him but he risked a bite to avoid thrashing and let it pass over him.

They were crowded in a large cell by one of the buildings near the palace. From there they could see the statue and the central social area of the tribe through ancient bars of an unknown iron alloy that had resisted rust in this heat and damp for millennia. According to the Indians there was a giant ancient iron pillar that was made of such metal. It was crystalized iron, but of such strength that even if they had a mattock it would but deform trying to hack through and the stone was again treated by some ancient science to make even the actions of desperate men futile. The walls were almost polished smooth from scratches, and blood seeped in, and fingernails could be found. There were guards watching them every second and were warned they could summon hundreds in case they tried to escape or to kill themselves. After this they would be moved to smaller cells but they had a "Right" to see the "Great Ritual".

Up the steps of the path there was some commotion. The bearer Shayock had singled out was led up the path leading to the giant's mouth. There he was tied to the tongue like steel grate and left ready to face the sacrifice. It was now



two hours from sunset so they waited, adding fuel to the fires in the giant for the eyes and the hellish steel maw.

Shayock was led out of his separate cell. Were it not for the horror of the situation they'd all have burst out laughing. He was led out naked and tied to posts that were great elephant tusks. His pathetic shriveled body was indeed a sight that perhaps would make even a cannibal think twice about eating him. Luckily for Rexx they were so bound by tradition they could not change their minds for now, though they clearly told the ghastly fate he and they all awaited. Women came forth and pasted mud on him. Pudent mud, full of spices forming a clay-like paste. Rexx had not counted but he was sure it was the women who'd lost a mate in the fighting. No wonder they felt no need to attack them when they were brought in the village!

Shayock's appearance was made even more pathetic when they affixed a hollow wood gag into his mouth and smaller straws into his nose and ears, lashing them with some kind of twine. This did get a chuckle from some of the captives.

The women then led him to a metal post that they bound him to, so his arms were tied behind his knees and his feet together. They then pushed a metal bar through this post and two men lifted him. The women pasted on more mud in places it had fallen off, and then they applied a second formula of pudent mud over the first. Finally colored sand was blown on the mud to form a dry layer that was ornate. The men then carried him over a central dias under which a fire burned.

They started slowly rotating him, all covered in mud, around and around slowly. Shayock kept saying the same thing over and over again, though garbled by the gag.

The Professor shed light on this issue.

"I believe it is what those of the Tribes of Israel call a Shiva, but nothing with Hindi faith, but the Judiastic one, to try to guarantee a place in heaven. Poor devil, it's his only hope now."

This spectacle continued, becoming rather boring for another two hours. The sun went over the horizon and dark fell. The natives brought out torches for tonight was celebration of the hunt. Looming over the tribe was the giant stone idol, its eyes and hellish maw ablaze with fires, the praying Hindu bearer tied to the grid about to be devoured.

The air was soon filled with a faint stench like burnt pork, the scent of man being cooked, mixed with spices. Not just Shayock, they were preparing the men who'd been killed earlier, their bodies had been preserved with salt for later, he could see strips of flesh being smoked, heads and hands and other body parts mixed in a great pot of Satanic stew... Rexx wondered, should he ever survive this, would he be able to stand certain recipes or would he panic and vomit, remembering this? Already many a home he got thrown out of with his soldier's dreams...

The members of the tribe began to dance as devil drums were played. The men danced, the women danced. They sang in ritual, they wore masks and staged dramas from their mythology. Savage and primitive as they were, this tribe was living history that had pre-dated the Deluge itself, if only they were not so isolated much of man's lost history would be recovered!

The dances went on for two hours, one group one act one drama after another. But always the devil drums beat a din of death for the White man, and the chant:

"M'Kunga! M'kunga! Boonga M'Kunga! M'Bunga M'Bunga M'Bunga M'Kunga!"

The sun had now set an hour. And the moment had been reached. The chief had sat at the throne watching and guiding the spectacle, but now he stood up. He raised a staff, one with a human skull on the end and many feathers. He pointed at the statue and said;

"M'Kunga!"

And the tribe chanted; "M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga!" over and over again and the drums reached a fever pitch. The dancers grew ecstatic and jumped up and down, many beat their chests and screamed "Wooonga! Woonga M'Kunga!"

The signal was sent and by hidden mechanism the metal tongue on which the hapless Hindu bearer was withdrawn into the fiery maw. The man repeatedly said prayers to Hindu gods for a quick death and a more fortunate second life and started to scream as the flames burned his flesh. But he would not die by fire, nor by smoke. For the metal grate started to slowly lower onto him. It was hot from the fire so when it touched him the spikes started immediately searing his flesh causing him to thrash and scream in blind panic as his life was crushed from him!

Then the crowd went wild and chanted more as a wave of smoke was blown from the mouth and the sudden sickly smell of man being burnt was overwhelming. Many, especially the largely vegetarian Hindus choked and threw up, and it took all their superior breeding for the Professor and his daughter not to join. Rexx and Singh were hardier men, but still it sickened them to the core.

But the Cannibals went wild. They leapt and chanted and beat their chests, they licked their lips and bared their fanged teeth and they salivated visibly.

Their god had fed.

Now, they would feed!

The Chief moved from his throne, taking another skull topped feathered staff with him. He held both of these in outstretched arms as he moved to the center. Two black men lifted the mud encrusted Shayock from the fire and put him on a stand over another dias. The Cannibals stopped chanting and circled around the steaming lump of clay, hungrily.

The Chief in pure ritual raised both skull staves and then at the same time brought both down, a loud clap on the marble. The sound was sudden and shocking. The two cannibals who had brought Shayock forth then picked up maces of wood with metal balls for the end. They each struck the clump of mud, breaking it open.

Shayock literally poured out of the cracked clay ball!

Though he was bound tightly to the metal frame, once the shell had hardened it had cooked him inside and he poured through his bonds. A sickening horrific mess, but still a man, though his hair had not remained, doubtless absorbed into the lump of clay. The smell was overwhelming and much of the captives went into near panic.

The Cannibals were rabid with lust for devouring human flesh! They each grabbed a handful of the man, the flesh ripping off the bones effortlessly.

"Great, now I'll never be able to eat Hobo chicken again", Rexx thought, "though at least we twist the poor bird's neck first, not that anyone could survive being cooked like that... He'd suffocate or fall asleep."

No! Even that horror was not spared!

Rexx and the Professor and Singh and the Professor's Daughter caught poor Shayock's melting face! The man's eyes were moving! His mouth tried to scream! This hideous ritual had not killed him; it was not designed to. The spices, the herbs the strange mud that had liquefied him had preserved his life just long enough...

ALIVE!

Shayock was being Eaten ALIVE by slavering fanged teeth cannibals!

The tribe of Cannibals jumped up and down with frenzy, eating the feast of horror. The cannibals guarding them were looking with disdain, fearing they'd miss that meal, but one of them brought in an arm they all shared. The flesh peeled off the bones as slavering fanged teeth swallowed it like sweetest candy.

The Professor's Daughter lost all composure again and began to scream and scream and then fainted mercifully. Knowing he'd be likely next Rexx almost panicked himself.

The Professor knelt in prayer to the Lord.

"Oh, Lord Jesus, please forgive this traitorous fool. Though he be of the race that betrayed you and rejected your salvation, let him find your forgiveness, for all of us are unworthy of the gift that you bestow freely."



--- Chapter 14 ---

--- The wait for death! ---

After the feast, Rexx was taken from the cell. He fought like mad to stop from shuddering, from pleading or panicking. The biggest black men of the Cannibal tribe held him tight. He was determined not to go lower in the British eyes, Irishmen were made of stuff as stern as they were!

He was led back to the presence of the Chief, curiously in the room of the Giant again. Oh, obvious, the Chief wanted to make an informal proposition to him. Some things never changed.

"Know, Irishman, I take no joy in Shayock's last words. He sours this feast with his betrayal and his dishonor. Know that you fought most valiantly, that you killed the most of us. We do not hate you, for you are a great warrior and by eating you, hopefully we will absorb your spirit somewhat."

"You gonna cook me now, then Guv'nor?" Rexx said.

"No. We need to capture another man to feed our god first, but it should be a day or so. It will be a long two weeks waiting for the poison to wear through your companions."

"But," he continued, "I am sickened by the dishonor of this. So I shall grant one request. No. To be released is NOT a valid choice!"

Rexx thought for a moment, and really was thinking he was going to die made perhaps a foolish request.

"Could you send me one of the women here? I promise before God himself who I shall soon meet I will not be cruel to the lass nor do anything like trying to hold her hostage or kill her. But I'm really loaded up and would love some fun before I go. If you want my spirit in you, maybe I'll give her an Irishman's son? That'd help your tribe, he'd dance and fight and work and hunt with the best of you. And since you said you used to all be white, though it was fur, you'd not care if the kid had lighter skin?"

The Chief sadly shook his head.

"Alas, our tribe has a code that forbids mating outside it. If that priest had not ruined it for at least a lifetime I would let you join our tribe, then we would select a woman to be your wife. I am not sure you would take us up on or offer, or help kill your comrades and eat their flesh, but we decided to put off adding others for now due to that incident. I care not your skin, but that it is our tribe. Please understand."

Rexx might have just said something impolite that would end this conversation, but a plan formed in his mind. The frustrated lust he had giving him energy to think under such stress. And he had some tiny power over them, if he could but realize it.

"Then I ask to be in a cell alone."

"Not possible, you will merely kill yourself to try to spite us, or perhaps you wish to escape. I bear you no malice. But this is not tradition, merely common sense as your kind calls it to not let any of you alone."

"Then hear me on why I ask." Rexx said, his mind racing to form a plan.

"Speak. I will consider if tradition allows, even bend tradition if it is one that I can bend."

"I would be an utter fool not to escape if opportunity presented itself. However, let me in a cell alone, perhaps give me some plain food that doesn't have anyone's flesh -especially Shayocks- and leave me to compose myself. I ask not for the opportunity to escape but for privacy to compose myself. The British enslaved my kind long before they dared chain a Black man or go on a rampage around the world, looting India, selling drugs in Cathay... They even made Shayock's people above us and will keep treating us like dirt, even after they end up having to pay reparations for how they treated the rest of the world when their empire falls. The professor blackmailed me into this fool expedition, and I did under duress and for what he offered me gave him my word. But I will go to my end peacefully when I face it."

The Chieftan moved to speak, but Rexx interrupted with urgency.

"Hear me out, great Chief. I shall not promise I won't try to escape, though with all your tribe around that's unlikely. But if at the end of the time you hold me and I'm in the cell when you come for me and just come with too many guards for me to have any chance of fighting through, I shall go peacefully. I'll have at least one victory, showing calmness that I bet the Professor, and certainly his daughter will not have."

"I d'nae know how much the Padre taught ye before he messed wit yer laddy, but ye should know if he taught ye right suicide is no-go to us. Me killing myself to spite ye, out of all me companions should be the least ye worry about."

"But" Rexx continued in the same ominous tone the Professor had used,

"I know that Human flesh is liken to pork. Ain't cannibals in my family, least not ones that admitted resortin' t' it in the most dire of times, but I do have some professional Pig Killers in it. Know that we gotta treat the pigs right and keep them well fed and calm and kill them quick and clean. If the pigs are screaming seeing one of their pack cut up half alive as cattle are the pigs struggle and their muscles tie up and their meat takes cookin and cookin and cookin and is still not as good."

"Deny me a private cell and just tie me to a post and I'll struggle and fight for a whole three days straight and even being cooked in that thing I'll keep struggling. Yeah I know ye probably have drugs that wouldn't ruin me taste to calm me, but you've never likely in a thousand years tried to drug an Irishman? Just ask the Professor on how much liquor alone we can take and keep going! If you put enough in me to drug me, you'd all be fast asleep after eating me and me crew would escape. I'll burn up all my energy or spirit or what not and I'll taste worse than the JEW! Now that's a boast that'll take some doing, but I'll manage it somehow, for what ha' I got ta lose, Guv'nor?"

The Cannibal chief was impressed by his bravery for he smiled and applauded. He paused for thought.

"The lone cell. Or the Lass. The latter you'd guarantee you'd have me nice and ready for a peaceful end, are you sure the lass part is tradition?"

"Regrettably, yes. Our loss, for we could use your blood in us. But I admire your bravery and trust your word. You shall have your private cell and it shall be the best!"

They led Rexx past the main cell of the prisoners, down deep into the building. They pulled a lever outside, much to huge and heavy for any prisoner made apparatus from inside to trigger, and a massive stone door swung open. Other cannibals quickly cleaned the room for it was choking thick with webs and layers of dust. They brought in blankets and some of the non-human flesh food they also ate. One of the women looked at Rexx for a minute, but the Chief ordered her away.

"But for tradition I would, and not had to order a woman to please you, you should know."

A Cannibal walked up to the chief and bowed and said something in his language. It was one of the Chief's sons, the one that he mentioned had the problem with the Padre.

"My son is selected to lead the next raid. He warns you he rarely returns from a hunt empty, so make your peace in a day. He also says he honors your bravery in the fight, and he was the one who brought you down at last."

Rexx hadn't really seen the one who'd brought the roof literally down on him, but nodded to the man. Perhaps he'd beat him in a fair fight, but if he'd had met him face to face in the jungle he'd have shot him before he could come near so the roof thing wasn't anything to be angry about.

"Know, Irishman, you have the King's Cell. It has not been used in a thousand years. It was made by one of our first tribal chiefs to house a king by law should he be found faulting in his rule. Over the long passage of time we have simply not used it, rarely having enough prisoners to need to fill it and knowing it was for royalty only which we rarely have. Perhaps we should also put the Professor and his daughter in there after you, they are royalty?" Rexx Nodded. "Yes, we will, but this cell is yours for about a day."

"I shall trust you to your word, for it is only your great dishonor and our mild disappointment if you break it." The Chief finished, "But if you hoped to somehow use privacy to escape, know that this is the deepest of the cells and has the thickest walls and even if you did reach that lever you'd pass dozens of our tribe who would be a match for you and could call dozens more with a shout."

And with this the cell door closed and Rexx was left alone in an ornate cell covered in decorations and hieroglyphs. It had a soft light from crystals charged from the sun above, some ancient technology, but these were hard pieces of stone not removable.

Rexx had bought himself a day of privacy at the cost of his word limiting his escape options. It seemed a hopeless situation. For a while he buried his face in his hands and tried hard to suppress his sobs, so no one would hear.

--- Chapter 15 ---

--- A Daring Escape! ---

For a while Rexx gave in to despair. But he remembered how he felt he was a failure and still was determined to fight it.

He remembered being alone in Tangiers. He had enough to live on for years in that economy, he should have been overjoyed. But he'd lost all his friends, he was dead to his family and a wanted criminal. All he could do was hide and live to spit on the throne.

There are many ways to die, and to be merely alive is not the same as to live. In the houses he frequented to drink coffee and later meet tourists to hire himself as a tour guide, an explorer, he saw men who had chosen the death of the strange black drink.

It was a drink mainly composed of Opium, the Poppy's Strange Fruit that grew abundantly in hot and dry regions. It also had coffee and tobacco and cane sugar and a witch's brew of strange spices. The end result was a black drink, though if you had it in a clear glass you could see through the edges so it always looked like a ball of pure blackness. The first glass killed a few but not many. Most it took a year to kill, or three. Towards the end they would die without the drink and could take no food but the drink which sustained them.

Some had drank it first as a "Medicine Drink" it was meant to be. But over time it was known as the path to oblivion masked in the comfort of the drug. It was banned, of course, but in that day and age and in such places as Rexx hid on, forbidden by law merely added to the allure and the price.

While he hid, he saw the "Progress" so to speak of many a man who tried it. Drop out artists. Despairing poets. Some well off but wastrel Britons like his former commander but without the family clout to have them placed on the backs of men like him. Locals drank this black oblivion too- Ungrateful, self-destructive sons of the wealthy. Merchants were were losing everything as changing times and imports ruined them. People at the end of life where every movement was pain so that drink made it not too sooner and more merciful.

In that age a popular drink not too far north was "Le Fee Verte" the Green Fairy of Absinthe, said to be a gateway to vision and perhaps madness by the literate crowd, though critics cited "Ye Elephante of Pinke" as more a factor. But this strange black drink was the beautiful lady of death herself, of which an Ancient Mariner had glimpsed.

Rexx remembered once ordering it, noting the price was what a foreign "Devil" like him would pay for a woman. Indeed they called it "The embrace of Death" most that he talked to. He stared into it for what must be forever, but had pulled himself back. He'd have thrown the drink away in disgust, doubtless causing some rebuke for waste was a sin, though waste of this substance debatable. But a beggar tugged at his pants, and the beggar was an oplate wastrel, ruined in everything and given to despair and begging strangers for just enough for more of the substance. So, Rexx gave the man his drink, and the man was happy and was found dead the next day. It might be called murder in most "Western" lands, but it gave him the mark of a generous foreigner there.

Rexx pulled himself back to reality.

"I denied one dark lady, and the chief refused me another. I shall find a way." He said with determination.

He quickly and methodically went through the cell. It was more solid than the earth. He doubted if he had a steel mattock he could cut through the walls or door in time. A metal slot was placed over the bars for privacy and he knew from seeing the lever outside there was no way he could rig some setup to trigger it. And as the Chief had warned him, though more to protect one or two of his tribe from death, the way out was too well guarded and would just lead to the center of the city.

The cell had lots of ornate carvings all over it. He'd been a dabbler in the new fields of natural science and archaeology as he'd told the professor, absorbing it from others he led on less foolhardy expeditions and letting them take the full credit because he was outlaw. The bed was a soft woven grass cot on a solid stone bench that was part of the walls. The lights were fed by crystals and mirrors, but as he saw earlier no way to break through them.

In the end of the room, it was really interesting. There was built into the stone a basin and a hole was in the wall. Also another basin in the corner. He fiddled with it and found that if he pushed a stone button above the basin, water would flow into it! The other would also put a larger amount of water, flowing down.

By God, these "Savages" had running water from their ancient history. That was something lost since the days of Ancient Rome, and recently a man, Sir Thomas J. Krappier had been knighted by the Queen herself for inventing the automatic cleaning urinal... He doubted that any of them knew how this was built, some automatic system hidden and done with such efficiency it had stood working for thousands of years.

"Think, Rexx, do not give in. You are just about to find out what this is about."

Rexx now sweated with stress. He assumed every stray sound was cannibals coming down the hallway to take him to his hideous death. And now he was so close. He studied the Heiroglyphs. A root language of all languages, and not the natives but that the giant spake. He had no time to decipher it, but pictures illustrated it. It was an old tale, and one mirrored in many cultures, the prince fooled by his brother/uncle/enemy is banished and finds some magic means of redemption. Nice myth to amuse a King that had got too big for his britches and broke too many taboos with a jealous brother wanting the throne, no?

"This is the King's cell." He heard the booming voice of the chief in his head, "And it has not been used for a thousand years..." What ELSE did he say?

"Built by one of our first kings as foresight should a king be found wanting in his rule... We rarely use it, rarely enough prisoners... We forgot why it was not used..."

Rexx Smiled. He could almost hear them coming, though feet on polished stone was a shuffling that could be anything.

"If a king built it at the height of his reign for some future king, meaning his descendants or worse him... It wasn't for luxurious punishment, if he was a king early in a dynasty. No, those early in a dynasty are those that earn power and keep it. He'd seek not luxury, but escape..."

He felt for and found a number of stone pieces that could be pushed, like the buttons on his sink and self-cleaning chamberbot!

But, it can't be as simple as one button or they'd have triggered it just cleaning the room. He pressed one, above a man playing a lyre or some such instrument. And, wonders, a soft, haunting tune could be heard. He could turn this on and off with the button. How could this be? Was the ancients technology from before the deluge that advanced?

He was now sure that he heard the men shuffling down the hallway, to take him to be stripped and covered with mud and to die a death of horror. He was too close to success and failure always gripped him by the throat and strangled him.

But NOT THIS TIME!

Rexx pushed the button and stood back and just let his mind relax. It was a nice tune, he wondered if it could be adapted for an Irish whistle or a fiddle. He knew he'd drive himself mad and might lock up trying to find the mechanism. But he realized that of the dozen or so buttons in the hieroglyphs, they matched the music. If he saw the big picture, it was several lines of notes. Far back the wizard/scientist Pythagoras had codified music, and many say he got it from other sources. The music and the keys to press matched. Two lines of music but with many false buttons, he just pressed them according to the song!

A door swung open! It was so precise he hadn't even found it, it was half the wall of the cell. He then went into the dark passage and the music luckily shut off as the door closed behind him.

Perhaps behind him he heard a panicked tribesman swearing he'd not taken any bribe to an enraged chief, but for all he knew it was still half a day before they came to fetch him. He entered the darkness below without fear.

He felt his way through a dark passage, and almost fell off some kind of cliff, but then came to another place with natural light pumped through the internal network of crystals and mirrors. There was a table that had a knife, a sword, a breastplate, a crown and a sealed metal tube. The metals were a strange red metal, still shiny after untold years down here, and the blades had edges

still razor sharp. He opened the metal tube and found it a map of the area. Centuries had changed it, but it was amazing how it outlined the city and the roads leading to it, many of which he knew had been turned into death traps and the jungle deliberately overwhelmed them to confound invaders and trap food.

There was another metal box that contained preserved food, but he declined the idea to eat any. He was amazed at the technology these savages had had at least at one point, but even then what did they eat? There was even a chair for resting, and a bag to carry belongings, neither of which had suffered more than dust... A small jeweled pendant, but wait it was an ancient compass!?

He could wait now, but this wait would be for a king escaping a coup. He had more chance of fleeing if he did it sooner than later. He brought the pendant and the dagger. The sword and the breastplate would be of little use to men with superior numbers who'd laugh if he said he was their king and took the crown also. But the knife! That he could use!

He followed the tunnel for a short while, and carefully opened another hidden door when he saw light. It led right into the treasure room! He both gasped with luck and cursed himself for a fool. As they knew when they got to the city it wasn't too sacred to use, they dumped the treasures of their meals there in tribute to their god after all. But, if he had run would they think he'd go to the treasure room first after seeing Shayock's hideous and deserved demise? No. No one was there save the skeleton of their god.

In a way it was good he didn't have any explosives, and was still so much in danger or he'd be tempted to vandalize the remains of this hideous ancient being who'd turned a band of vicious arctic apes into a tribe of the worst kind of men so he could hold onto whatever power he had before the flood. But the professor would doubtless go back on his promise in rage if he did such a thing.

What Rexx did do was stuff a lot of gold and jewels in the sack. Not the "Full" sack one might expect, gold is heavy after all, but enough to be many times the payroll he'd stolen years back. And he carefully but quickly did it so as to not betray it had been stolen easily, or where it had been taken from. And he went back into the passage to close the door behind him that like the door in his cell was so precisely made it somehow cut the bricks in half but when closed you could not see the scratch even.

And he made his way through a tunnel that was not dug but had a roof of placed stones and more dim lights in an arch for not too long a while until he emerged about a mile out of the city of the cannibals, and in the direction of the path leading back to the outpost.

He gave thanks to God for his escape, and for the foresight of the ancient King in covering his own royal behind that he a proud commoner had taken advantage of!

--- Chapter 16 ---

--- The return to the base ---

It was still a situation a man in Rexx's shoes might be in dire danger. Only his clothes, a knife, a compass and an ancient map. But Rexx was an explorer, who'd learned of survival in desolate areas and this jungle while deadly was not so strange to him. He'd led a troupe in the hard way, avoiding all the traps and were it not for Shayock's betrayal they'd have arrived in this city with enough guns to repulse the Cannibals. Going back would be the easy part.

Rexx moved quickly and silently through the paths he'd traversed. He did not know how long he had till the chief's son returned, nor how long they would politely check on him not in suspicion but for courtesy to bring him more food. Perhaps a subtle reversal of "Tradition" some woman he'd caught the fancy of since he'd expressed interest? He felt sorry he did not meet the chief in better circumstances; he was indeed a good host and a true fatherly African tribal image of a wise chief.

He was wary in treading the paths, though. This was home to them and they had a thousand years of ambushing travellers and invaders and chasing those that tried to escape. How much surprise did he have on his side? The moon was full this night, so he could carefully go in the night and not nursemaiding an encumbered procession and sniffing for traps every mile he could make fast pace. To sleep would well be to die.

He was nearly back to the outpost when he did hear noise in the distance behind him. The fatigue had almost made him delirious. So delirious he paused at the edge of a quicksand pit that held a worse horror!

He almost comically screeched to a stop, and a cup fell from his bag into the deadly silt where it stayed near the surface. And behind him the cannibals were getting louder. Not dozens, but a few, they had doubtlessly sent a search party that had split up among the varying trails.

Due to all the recent activity there were tons of footprints all around, so he quickly pulled off his boots and walked on the edge into the thick of the jungle and put them back on. The noise was getting louder so he climbed a tree carefully with a vantage point a ways back.

Soon, his pursuers neared. It was two cannibals, both with spears and running. They knew of the trap of course, the man-eating plant that hid in the quicksand. They looked at the bootprints leading to the edge of the sand and the

cup lying in it. The cup was not valuable to them, but it indeed looked like he'd tumbled into the pit and been devoured.

No.

They were shaking their heads. The plant was vicious and messy and the sand would be disturbed. He had to have made a crude attempt at faking his demise to fool them, and they indeed were looking at the footprints around the sand. A man who wore boots or shoes his life had a different footprint than a man who went barefoot, they would find his ruse quickly.

But Rexx had anticipated this.

He had not made a pathetic attempt to hide.

He had set a trap!

As they were arguing and fidgeting and then started tracing the footprints, he carefully tested and cut a vine at one end. It was a perfect moment, one Cannibal had argued they should go back and report to the chief. The other had smacked him in the face for a fool, or worse a coward, that he obviously was hiding in the bushes and going back to report his death would admit to their chief they'd personally let him escape and make fools of them! Rexx did not understand their language, but this was obvious.

But they did not have time to go into the jungle thick and find him and perhaps one spears him while he stabs the other, or they both spear him running away. Or, if he escaped them they'd see where he went so they could "Cut him off at the pass" with the help of their tribesmen. No.

Rexx swung on the vine to both of them. Before either of them could turn to stab him, he gave a mighty kick with each leg and sent them sprawling. By itself this move would be suicide for they were both tough trained warriors and would just roll with the punch and spear him.

But the kicks pushed them into the quicksand!

And awakened the botanical Horror that Prof Winthrop's "Intellectual" contemporaries said was a "Myth"!

The Cannibals knew well this creature. It was a liability to them, for it ate what they ate and was a danger to them also. But still one of these would send an army regiment panicking as it devoured several members and while the rest tried to kill it and lost a few in the process many would desert and be able to be caught easily. And if they destroyed it, another would grow in a year.

But they knew well the horror of falling into it's clutches one of the few things in this Jungle of Death worse than theirs. And so panic overwhelmed them. They should have swam out carefully and if necessary used their spears to cut the tendrils if any caught them. Instead they thrashed and the unique quicksand fluid pulled them closer to the thing and told the eyeless non-intelligent thing

exactly where they were! They were immediately seized by too many tentacles to cut, spiked ones that crushed their limbs to their bodies and dug into their flesh. Then it slowly pulled them to it's hellish "Flower" full of not teeth but hollow spines to drain their blood! They screamed in such horror and fear and then in such pain Rexx shuddered.

But, he regained his composure and grabbed his bag. He noticed the gold goblet was still floating on the edge of the pool. He almost left, but then quickly fished it out with a vine on a stick, out of the creature's sensory range since he knew not to shoot at it now as if he had his guns. A tiny risk, but he wondered why he did that. He ran to where he knew was the outpost now at top speed. He thought perhaps they might be waiting, but no the way the two had searched for him, they were hoping to catch a runner not lay in ambush.

"Heh, Shayock must be haunting me." He said running down the trail, "I forgive ye, ye foolish old Yid, you got your punishment for betraying us fair and yer death worth a dozen or so hangings!"

Rexx heard no sounds as he reached the edge of the jungle. He was running on steam now, but he carefully hid the bag in a hollow of a tree, filling his pockets with coins and gems first. The Cannibals would not be looking for the gold, but he wanted to cover his bets in case the commandant proved hard to deal with.

With triumph he ran into the clearing, bearing the bright gold cup he'd foolishly fished from the pool. He was a white man of course, and bearing gold they did not instantly shoot him for again they were under some kind of paranoid lock down and the gates were closed and guns pointed at the jungle.

A soldier told him to come in, and they opened the gates, a frayed rope almost breaking, and he entered the compound. A crowd had gathered to see him, his gold cup being a source of amazement. He smiled in triumph.

The Commandant had walked out still wearing his nightgown at the commotion and news. Rexx gave the goblet to the Commandant, and spoke;

"I bring you urgent news from the Professor..."

Rexx dropped unconscious.

--- Chapter 17 ---

--- A brave and foolish choice ---

Rexx did not dream nightmares this time. He should dream horror of screams and monster plants and cannibals and men dying in traps and foolish battlefields. But no, he dreamed of the beauty of his homeland and his love who'd

left him since he was pressed into service long ago. But he could rest now truly, the Soldier's dreams were gone.

He woke and found he was in the quarters of the Commander himself, a guest cot set up on the side. The goblet and the contents of his pockets, including his hidden wallet were on the table. His clothes had been patched and washed and were ready for him to wear.

The Commandant was there. He poured himself a whiskey and this time Rexx accepted the offer, but for one small glass.

Rexx reached for his clothes, noting the patches were obviously done by the natives. His simple Khaki now had lots of ornate decorations in bright tribal threads. Every time there had been a tear or a burn, it had been stitched with colored thread and some pattern had been woven into it. It was not too garish, should he need stealth, but was dressed up now to be decorative in a personal and functional way. His hat string clasp was now a clasp that was a face of beautiful carved African wood, not some cheap tourist gimmick but something with real work put into it and lacquered to last almost a lifetime on the trail. Still fresh, it had been carved for him. He recognized it as a heroic symbol not used lightly, not all the "I am a devil goblin meant to invite evil into your house you foolish white devil!" junk trinkets they usually gave the Britons.

"Mary is the lady's Christian Name proper." The Commandant said, "She cooks and also does the soft trade for my men. So the Mary name should not mean the Mary but the other one perhaps, but she is nice outside the bed as in it. She was overjoyed when I asked her to fix your gear, and refused payment, I hope you forgive her enthusiasm. You went into death itself and emerged with treasure. You are a man of power to them."

"How long was I out, Commander?"

"Three days." He replied. "I take it you are the only survivor, then?"

Rexx re-told the story of his departure from the base, the trip, the foul betrayal of Shayock and the horror of the Cannibal's city. He also told of the treasure that the Professor was indeed right they had, though indeed it was the connections to pre-deluge civilizations that had made him risk so much to get there.

"So, on this tunnel out of the city you saw a barred window and were able to reach a handful of gold and jewels from the room they had the treasure in?"

"Of Course." Rexx said with a nervous smile.

"You lie poorly for an Irishman, I think. I think you are lying, and doubtless buried more somewhere along the way, to fund another escape. Yes, my friend told me who you really are."

"So, will you arrest me since I've not returned with the Professor and his daughter and his pardon then not a deal?"

"No. Look at this." He pulled out a letter from the command. This was written in proper British formal language, but Rexx knew well how they'd say one thing and mean another. It read that since he'd failed to subdue the tribes of the M'Kunga jungle he'd be replaced. They would do this right now but other commanders are threatening to desert or mutiny if given that post. That he has a year or he will lose his command and his pension will be modest at best. And that he doesn't deserve even that. Then his replacement will by rum, sodomy or the lash beat his disgruntled troops into shape and then march them in one expedition after another into the jungle to subdue it. Till he himself became sick of losing men to traps and arrows and spears and horrible bogs with devil plants. Of hearing the screams as the Cannibals carved up victims, sometimes tearing flesh from bone with their teeth. Till, like the three commanders before him, he became a drunkard holding onto a regiment of the Empire's worst, more concerned at how many diseases his men traded as they chased local camp followers than any victory.

"Given this thanks for my years of service for the Empire though I am still loyal, I am inclined to think you the Adventurer Rexx Rhyder and let you be on your way. I am clearly incompetent so if I make a judgment that is perhaps an error, well I shall then live down to expectations if I cannot live up to them. But I will be in need of a retirement fund. Give generously and be truthful to me and I shall see you on your way. I recommend hiding in the pacific since there are many islands and friendly natives."

"I am actually inclined to go back and rescue the professor. That on the table is like pebbles on a rocky shore in a room full of treasure. And I can show the way back. D'nae worry, I do have more gold and will share with ye if you do not hinder my choices."

The Commander was shocked now. But he just shook his head.

"You must be tired. Eat at the mess hall all you wish. Tell no one of this interaction. The most I shall take from you is the goblet, you offered it to me after all. But think about what you plan to do and talk to me later."

Rexx ate enough for three men. Still he didn't fill his belt, as much energy he'd spent on the trip. He then slept another full day.

He sat later in the mess hall. He was a fool for what he had planned. He could give the commander some of the gold and indeed be on his way to the pacific with lots of gear and gold left to last him a long time. Settle on some tropical isle and have a few native girls. Maybe at eighty, far longer than he'd have lived if he'd remained in Ireland with all the hard labor and starvation, a British steamship might find him and arrest him, but he'd be laughing his way back to England. He'd not let the last few years ruin his enjoyment of his life, the adventures he had, the countless fun with various women and now a bunch of

Irish mixed with well whatever running around to carry his bastard legacy on the world... And with any luck he'd inspire the crew to mutiny and they'd kill the captain and become pirates. Likely shot by the captain as he stabbed him with a saber screaming "Death to Britain!" would be a good way to go if he had to!

But-

He did promise the Professor, the one Britain who'd never treated him like an animal or a criminal. His daughter was a spoiled brat, but the professor loved her. And all those Indians the professor had taken on this fool venture, they didn't deserve to be a feast for satanic fanged teeth. No man deserved to die that way, save Shayock. He'd be "Free" in the corners of the earth the British Empire did not grasp fully yet, but he'd be a hiding coward again. No wonder the elites dreaded the "White Feather" more than almost any other social punishment among them.

So, that was his choice; Adventure and Glory and possible horrible death. Or "life" and modest luxury and indulgence and hiding and lies and fear... He would be more likely to live longer in the latter, but would he truly be alive?

He was still in the mess hall and had been staring into space a whole day. He hadn't noticed a civilized Negroid woman, "Mary" as the Commandant had said her Christian name was had been massaging his shoulders. There was beer at his table and he had not touched it. Rexx got up and thanked Mary for her offer, luckily she knew basic English and gave her a coin of gold, but he had to get up early in the morning and had much to do. She was not insulted but kissed Rexx good night, he noticed some mulatto children peering in the doorway and he'd fed them for weeks.

It was morning and Rexx was packing. He was at the commissary and supply part and had stacked a bunch of equipment. He'd replaced his guns, sadly with inferior revolvers but they'd do. He had some dynamite and fuses. He had rations and water.

The commander approached him, and the troops were all a buzz.

"Commander. I plan to go back to the M'Kunga jungle and rescue the Professor and his Daughter and as many of the troupe as I can. We have a week now before the poison wears off and it is not taboo to eat them. We should arrive just in time. I have drawn you a map showing the pitfalls and traps, you should arrive soon."

"Now, perhaps that handful of coins is not enough for the supplies I've asked for, so please wait them here and let me out and in again."

Rexx ran into the jungle, the tree he had hid his loot in was just inside the trail, and retrieved the bag. He then went back to the camp and dumped the bag in the middle. Gold plates and art and coins and jewels spilled over the ground. The whole camp was in awe.

"I swear in the Good Lord's name there is a room that is mostly knee-deep in this treasure. That of thousands of years of them preying on people. But there are not so many now that you could not overpower them, they rely on you getting lost and falling to traps and ambushes."

"I care nothing for the Empire. But I made a promise to Professor Winthrop that I'd at least return him and his daughter from that hell or die trying. I go to try to rescue them, and might well die in the attempt. I can nae order ye to go into hell after me, but know that the Cannibals now know of the outside world. They will venture farther out, and steal guns and cannons from arms dealers! Soon you won't face traps and ambushes but armed groups that meld into the jungle like the smaller apes and their city might oppose a real army with cannons! But if we all go there we end this scourge, this evil, we emerge heroes and rich!"

The Commandant still stood there, silent. Perhaps he was expecting Rexx to insult him for cowardice or something so he could lock him up. He'd not dare now shoot Rexx or try to bar his way, he'd lose the little respect he'd ever had from his men. And the local "Civilized" blacks. They saw Rexx as a Man of Power now, and stood silently watching not just Rexx but the other white men to see what they would do.

"I am going now. We have little time left. Please follow me and we all have glory! You have a friend that needs you, and another one to avenge!"

And Rexx Rhyder now walked triumphantly into the M'Kunga jungle to make a foolish and desperate attempt to free his employer. The Commandant and troops looked still stunned at the treasure. It would be a full half hour before they picked up the gold and started counting, but felt hollow instead of rich.

The Commandant paused to pour himself a drink, but felt no taste for the Scotch.

And the Civilized blacks stood there, watching.

--- Chapter 18 ---

--- The Jungle is a State of Mind! ---

Somehow, Rexx did not care if the troops were shamed into following him. He was full of energy. He'd found his determination and foolish as this seemed he had a plan to rescue the troupe. But the time left to save them was too short, and what if they gave into despair and found a way to kill themselves?

No!

They would hold out to the bitter end like he would!

And the traditions of the Tribe that called itself The Guardians of the Giant were that the "Lesser" members of a group captured would be eaten first, saving the "Elite" for last so they could learn more from them and the world outside their jungle.

He moved almost like a gazelle, taking double pace down trails he now remembered well. Oh, they had changed some traps, but had anticipated nothing new this way this soon, he could see easily all the earth disrupted, smell the leaves under dirt to cover spike pits fermenting a bit before dehydrating. He even found new blossoms of the deadly plant planted in shortcuts he used, but would not be deadly to anything larger than a cat for months at least, and he saw the markings they had made, from patterns of shrunken heads to marks on trees that he knew were different and to warn each other of the traps. He had to take nothing for granted; they clearly knew he escaped and so might plant false markings of warning. They had re-trapped the shortcuts he used, after all, just perhaps not thought that he would be back as soon.

The question was, really, did they expect him back at all? They did not expect the troops back, they had killed so many of them. But would Rexx later somehow convince the troops to attack or lead his own band back, not to save the Professor but for the Gold? The gold indeed served them much as the perhaps mythical dragon's hoard did, indeed. Although a dragon is said to produce such acids and venoms that it would be uncomfortable without sleeping on a soft material that could resist the bile, the hoard served the purpose of attracting foolish men in search of easy gold. Thus these Cannibals occasionally let people go, screaming with terror and horror and death, but also of the gold. No army would have gone there, the few that did were defeated, but there were always foolish or desperate men, Bandits, Rogues, exiled princes looking to regain a crown, ruined merchants needing gold to repair their fortune, and the tribe needed food. Their Jungle could feed them indefinitely, but they desired the flesh of men!

But, did they expect him back? Shayock had doubtless told them that Professor Winthrop had blackmailed him into service, which was what he had confirmed to the chief. He did not tell the chief of his loyalty or inner motivations, not sure of them himself. The tribe had to know how much value even a small bit of that gold was in the outside world, Shayock had no doubt educated them. Thus, if they knew how much even a handful, much less a bagful was perhaps they thought he had just run for the horizon. He made it clear he hated the British and was already an exile. Why not run over to some other land then, and maybe perhaps tell someone, someone he didn't like of how he got his "Treasure" and the tribe would have a few foolish men at least?

He encountered but avoided two patrols, each of two men with a third trailing them. So they could easily ambush any small group but if overpowered the third could raise the alarm. They passed him by, ritually chanting and carrying their spear, bearing their fanged teeth in hopes of a meal. But they were not alert, the jungle had fed, no tribesman from the surrounding areas would

go near for anything for months. The troops were too cowardly to avenge their countryman, but they'd keep all guns turned on the edge. Patrol duty to them was a pointless ritual, but one out of honor and fear of shame they accepted.

When he got to under a day's travel from the city of the Cannibals he took his riskiest move; He had to sleep. Just one day's full rest and he could go for two or three days even if he had to. That was what had saved his life escaping, but he'd need all his strength to have any chance of rescuing them.

So he carefully took off his boots, swept behind himself lightly and randomly with a leaf he pulled from the bushes and walked into the thickest jungle, ignoring the vile insects that crawled on him who's venomous carapaces raised welts on his flesh just touching it and the vines that touched his skin and brought pain to make him want to scream. He pushed through carefully, not breaking any and risking the horror of stepping right into a carnivorous plant.

He was inside a twilight jungle now, a jungle within a jungle. Luminescent fungi gave an eerie glow in a world of perpetual twilight to which the sun overhead only changed the patterns. Here the shadows crawled and could be death! Still, Rexx was undisturbed by this, it was so peaceful he almost considered going to sleep on the ground, but no that would be foolhardy.

The trees were thick and covered in mosses and vines, and he had both a bedroll and a tarp. He tossed a rope and used it to climb up with as little scraping to the tree as possible. Several branches knotted together and formed a depression he could sit in. He spent a little time positioning the bedroll and weaving bits of hanging moss into the blanket. The hanging moss was venomous mildly and could be used for hallucinations if combined right with other substances, but they were meant to protect the tree from insects and animals that would chew it's delicate and non-toxic water providing bark away. He took bits from here and there, making sure the tree looked undisturbed and could grow it back easily. He did not want the tree covered with feeders in an area, that would crawl on him and warn any tribesmen should they decide to explore. But the bits of moss in his blanket would camouflage him in the dim twilight and protect him from bugs and other vile things crawling on his skin, if he could stand the pine like smell.

Rexx would rest a day here.

A full day's rest.

He simply had to. He would eat in this tree, use up his food here and most of his water. He would urinate into an empty wine bottle and seal it with a cork. When he was gone he would leave the bedroll and tarp here, maybe only crudely hidden. Anyone here would either be looking for the Cannibal's city or running like mad from it, finding evidence of him would do little to help any pursuers.

And thus through the evening into the night and the night into the day Rexx slept. He was quite vulnerable for he allowed himself to sleep. This would have been impossible for him until recently, but he had made peace now with his past and had no soldier's dreams, only the sleep of the just. He was roused once by a Cannibal who paused outside, but he moved on without incident. No need to try to kill one man when this would be risk and then the others would wonder what was happening in the area their tribal brother disappeared in.

He briefly saw a time years ago before his arrival in Tangiers when some caravan he had hitched a ride with had travelled farther south than he had wanted to go. But this was a tribe that insisted they were not nor never were cannibals, they raised cattle and loved the arid grasslands they called home. He was a curiosity, a babe in the veldt, but had not the arrogant exploitive malice the British had. He lusted for women, but was polite and when it was made clear it was impossible unless he officially joined and committed to the tribe, he refrained, again putting him above the British that insultingly to them he looked like. The stories of how he hated the Britons and what they'd done to him gained him many friends there, including the chieftain who took to him like a father figure and told him much about the land. This had helped him survive and function in his self-made career as a "Guide/Explorer".

He remembered the drums, too. Different drums, distant drums. These drums sang across the vast savannah and were mostly songs of life, not death.

As evening fell he roused himself, and started to carefully pack his things and hide the blankets. He'd have to be much more careful now, but he could reach the edge of the Cannibal village by nightfall next day. He did a few stretches so he'd not sprain an ankle or get a cramp on the trail.

Then, he heard noise from the trail!

Cannibals were bunching around the edge of where he'd entered!

Rexx froze in fear. He listened to the rustling outside, he could see their shadows on the edge of the trail. They weren't tracing on the ground, either, they were around where he had plucked the feathered leaf to sweep his trail.

And they were laughing!

He had fallen into one of their traps!

Of Course! It was so obvious! He'd explored these marshes himself, and was into Natural Science. He should have noticed. These dark leaves grew by pools of stagnant water, but they were dotted on the edge of the trail haphazardly. It was an old trick to try to cover your tracks by sweeping with grass, especially plants that are naturally large and fan like versus grabbing a branch. Easier to notice a branch broken and harder to get versus a large weed. But this weed grew normally by ponds, by still stagnant water and to protect itself from being eaten had a bitter pungent sap. It hadn't felt poisonous on his hand, but it smelled terrible.

So obvious now.

They deliberately pulled up some of these and planted them along the trails for this reason. How many men had tried to hide in the deep jungle to escape them for millennia? All they had to do is remember the smell of a broken one and they knew where to start looking. Their prey would see the scout pass by and relax, thinking he'd eluded them when really they would be bringing back help! And now five fanged teeth cannibals entered the deep jungle, easily within a hundred feet of his tree!

They grinned with their savage flesh eating teeth and were still laughing at the foolishness of the prey falling into their trap! They wore little but grass skirts and ornaments themselves in this sweltering tropical jungle of Darkest Africa, but they also painted their near ebon black skin with white paint to imitate the Skeleton that was left when their teeth tore off the flesh of often still living human prey! The paint appeared semi luminescent in this twilight jungle, as if five living skeletons were sent by death to claim him!

Rexx knew well their behavior, how they were checking carefully for signs of disturbances, for footprints for other warning signs he'd likely left... They would be on him in a dozen minutes, perhaps half an hour at best since they were taking their time. They also kept themselves paced so if one got attacked the other could either help or just yell and run.

Rexx could shoot them, but they were quick and deadly with their spears and at least one had a blowgun. He could take on most of them hand to hand, any one if he got the drop, but two, three would overbear him for they were savage and strong and deadly. Five there would be no contest. He could shoot them and run and hope they were not good with their spears in the dark, unlikely at best, but what then?

Was he that foolish? If only a few of them could find him so easily, what hope did he have of taking on a city full of them? He had to somehow find a way to overcome all five without alerting any more or suffering a wound or he would be committing foolish suicide trying to rescue the professor and his daughter and the other captives.

But this was not the first time he was able to find a solution to an impossible seeming situation by letting go and looking within!

He had dreamed of the non-cannibal African chief he'd stayed with. His lectures on living with the land. Rexx, being raised Catholic had been allergic to the things the chief had tried to teach him, on absorbing the spirit of things to learn from them. The British called these people "Animist" not willing to recognize a "Pagan" especially a non-white tradition. But "Animist" was not unfair a description for they believed that life existed in all matter, in the stuff of the universe itself, that all together was the very breath and body of God himself.

"God as you call him is the sky, the earth, the world. He is in it and beyond it, in everything. You do not invite demons into you doing this, I have told you to banish them first! But to understand a lion, a rock, a stream you absorb it and be it." He remembered the Chief chiding him.

But, there was no savage jungle cat ready to pounce. If there was, doubtless he'd be the thing's meal before the Cannibals had even got here!

But, he'd surely imperil his soul worse than literal suicide if he absorbed the horrible cannibal and then he'd merely be an equal to them. What, in Rexx's desperate move that might be his last was bigger than the Cannibals of the...

The M'Kunga Jungle!

Could it be that simple? He was trying to hide, to make a last desperate fight if they likely found him, nothing to lose. He let go of the fear and began the ritual. No drums, drugs or incantations, those were window dressing. Just to let the mind go and call on the spirit of the thing.

"Jungle! Enter me! Become me!" Rexx shouted in his head. He reached out and repeated the call, going quiet and still as death.

He could now hear the Cannibals moving around looking for him. They seemed loud, but it was not terrifying anymore, they seemed clumsy, stumbling around the jungle in the dark, used to their city and nice warm fires to sleep next to. Their garish body paint looked now unnatural and silly when it had looked terrifying earlier.

Rexx felt the beating of his heart, but now it seemed to match the jungle around him. He could feel the movements of the insects, small animals that - wisely- hid from "Natural Scientists" but scampered around hunting for insects and hiding from other predators.

And one of the Cannibals was looking up the tree, straight at him!

But the Cannibal just looked elsewhere and passed on!

He had done it! He had let the Jungle enter him! His camouflage was perfect. He had instinctively positioned himself so that he matched the natural patterns of the trees and the leaves so in the dim jungle he looked like any other part of the background.

But, he wasn't just going to hide!

No. He had to make this work or he'd never rescue the Professor.

He could tell where they were now, and move silent or rather as noisy as the creatures scuttling in the background now. They were almost bright lights in his senses and he was the dark blue background and could now move with it.

Rexx almost leapt down from the tree, sounding merely like a small animal crashing. He then walked softly over behind the cannibal and grabbed him, in one quick move pinning him down to the ground and killing him with his knife. It was so quick the only "Strange" sound was a rustle much like other noises the Cannibals made loudly thrashing through the Jungle as they licked their lips and grinned with fanged teeth hungry for human flesh.

But, they were a war party, one of them called out for their brother and was not answered. Two quickly came over and called out again to find him. And, find him they did, dead on the jungle floor. They moved to shout out the alarm.

Too late!

A spear that had belonged to their tribesman flew full force into the throat of the one about to shout the call! The other had stood ready with his spear for an attack, but he himself was stunned at the sudden savagery of this man! Who, but them were ghosts in the Jungle that sprang like great cats and preyed on men!?

He had no time, for now Rexx was upon him almost as fast as the spear he had thrown! He stabbed him repeatedly with his knife, the one he had taken from their holy temple that perhaps had belonged to a refuge of Atlantis or one of the earlier pre-deluge civilizations! There was no mercy, just a sudden primal viciousness! He was dead before he could even begin to truly feel the terror!

The other Cannibal had thrashed and gurgled, trying to breathe with all his blood choking his throat and trying to scream but mustering only gasps. His last view was Rexx stabbing his tribesman friend repeatedly and he caught the savage gaze on Rexx's eyes meeting his, before Rexx ended his life with a stab through his eye into his brain!

The savage and sudden attack was nearly silent, but the alarmed gurgles of the man with a spear slashed throat brought attention. One Cannibal shouted a call to the other remaining Cannibal. He was going to check out where he heard the sound from and his tribesman need be ready to run in case their prey was more than one man. He walked towards the sound, his spear held high and ready to throw. He scanned the dark jungle right and left, ready to spear the smallest creature, but he could detect not a footfall of anything unnatural.

Getting scared, the fifth Cannibal started to move out of the Jungle and towards the trail. If he got back on the trail he might warn others. But there would be none of that! He was grabbed and pulled into bushes just before he reached the trail!

Spear raised high, the cannibal called with a shout for the fifth to run, but had no answer. He moved forwards, ready to strike at what must be a hiding man waiting for another ambush.

A chill ran up his spine.

Rexx had indeed absorbed the Jungle, he could casually move with stealth that spies and assassins and elite military troops would envy. But it was more than camouflage, it was his presence. He could hide it and he could make it known!

The Cannibal turned behind him fearfully.

Rexx was just standing there! He had a savage grin on his face, the primal energy he was about to spring was undeniable! Rexx was fifteen feet away from a Cannibal holding a spear. But it was no contest now, and they both knew it.

Rexx was holding his knife outwards in his hand but he spun the blade to be held ice pick like, deliberately trading more maneuverability for more deadly striking power. He grinned even wider, his straight teeth every bit as savage and fearful as the fanged teeth of the Cannibal.

The Cannibal almost turned to run, but he knew there would be no chance of escape, no mercy. He shouted and raised his spear to make one deadly throw!

Too late!

Rexx moved with speed almost super-human and the Cannibal dropped his spear as much as threw it! Rexx plunged his dagger deep into the Cannibal's heart, his scream also his dying breath, mixed with blood from his ruptured lung!

"Die, Black Dog!" Rexx shouted!



The Cannibal crumpled to the ground, the force of the blow rendered him unconscious as he bled to death inside his body. Rexx retrieved his dagger and looked around, strangely calm after being on the edge of death and killing five men.

He was overjoyed. Not that he'd killed but he did not regret it either. The rest of the trip to the Cannibal's city now would be easy. He would move like a shadow and if any got in his way he would kill them without remorse or mercy or discovery. If he wished he could sleep in any tree in such a way as to not be detected or disturbed by great cat or by cannibal. He now had a good chance of rescuing the Professor and his Daughter and with any luck much of the troupe.

Rexx had now truly become one with the jungle. He had before been considered one of the few white men who had adapted even remotely to this dark continent. But now he had become more "African" than the Cannibal natives of one of its darkest corners.

He was not just "Lord" of the Jungle-

He WAS the Jungle!

The Jungle is a State of Mind!

--- Chapter 19 ---

--- The present, the desperate Gambit! ---

Rexx made it quickly and stealthily back to the Cannibal's city. He carefully avoided detection as he set up the preparations he'd made for his plan. There was not as much traffic in and out as he'd expected, most were planning for something big inside the center of town, where the ghastly feast had been had. Doubtless now the poison Shayock had fed them had worn off and he knew not who they had eaten already. But now he'd have to race to save any of them!

It should have been just under a fortnight or two weeks. A desperate escape to the base. A time of resting near death. A few days to reflect. And now the solitary trip back. Had the soldiers decided to brave the jungle? Well, damn them for cowards if they did not.

And so Rexx found a tree with a good vantage point and rested like a cat waiting for night to fall. It was easy to hide in, it was covered in bones and preserved heads!

Night fell, and the festivities started. Rexx thanked God that they had not been preparing anyone for a ghastly feast. What was to happen was in way worse, however.

The tribe danced and did their rituals. Human flesh was being cooked again. Rexx looked at the remains on the fires, they were negroid, clearly more tribesmen they caught from other tribes. In a day or so they would feast on the Professor's expedition. Rexx shuddered seeing them greedily peel flesh from bone with their fanged death and dance and leap with relish.

The Chief was there on the dias as he was when he oversaw the feast as Rexx and the party had witnessed earlier. But his hair was newly done and he was covered in especially bright body paint like a big and corpulent skeleton.

There was a woman screaming, the Professor's daughter!

She was being dragged to the stage with her father behind her.

"What are you doing with us? Get your black hands off of my Daughter!" the professor shouted in rage, though trying to hide fear and tears.

The Professor's daughter was tied between two great elephant tusks. Her father struggled but was held by the strength of two cannibal tribesmen.

The Chief stood up from his throne, and he walked over to them.

"Professor Winthrop" he said in his deep and booming voice, "I have decided we shall not eat your daughter."

There was a pause, as if it was not obvious his intent.

"Instead, she shall become one of my wives." He said smiling with bestial lust.

The Professor's daughter gasped. Trembling she pleaded, the pleading turning into screaming;

"...a... black... a... black... not a black... Not a Black... Not a Black!!! NOT A BLACK!!!!"

"As chief I shall take women to be mine as I choose and I have the right to take from our food to add to the tribe, though that custom has not been used in centuries."

He made a nod to some of the tribesmen and they began the ritual chants. He took his great snake, a unique breed of python from around his shoulders and rubbed it. The snake perhaps trained or by instinct went rigid and near straight. The chief then danced slowly around the dias, holding the snake in front of him, the symbol of his power.

"M'Kunga! M'Kunga!" the tribe chanted to the devil drums.

But, Rexx could see some dissatisfaction in them. The chief's rule was absolute, none could disobey, but there was much discontentment. The Chief's wives were wearing angry expressions. Jealousy and hatred. Doubtless this pale woman would become his favorite, and any children he had with her be made the chief's favorite child above the accomplishments of others. And this woman clearly couldn't work, they would even have to wait on her or face the Chief's wrath. It was indeed what Rexx had warned the Professor what might happen if she fell into the hands of a black man. Worse than being raped and killed, she might be made the wife of one of them!

Some of the tribesmen were jealous, too. They'd wanted to cook her alive, to cut off and eat her tender white flesh! But now she would be in front of them all day and they would not be able to eat her! The ritual had not the passion of the frenzied Cannibal feast he had witnessed earlier.

Rexx too had lost much of his respect for the Chief.

He had plenty of wives, of children, of goats. Why would he want more? But the black skinned man could not control his lust for white women. Well, Rexx was forward thinking himself and did not mind "Dark Meat" or rather would take near any female company he could get. And the chief could have THAT "White Woman" for all Rexx really cared for her. Of all the "White Women" to lust for, that spoiled princess... It'd be punishment enough to let him marry her!

But he had promised Professor Winthrop that he'd bring them back alive from this Jungle of Satan or die trying. And he might well do the latter, but he had a newfound passion for life and was not going to go back into hiding and waiting to die.

"M'Kunga! M'Kunga!" the Chief said in his deep voice. He danced slowly around, his powerful and heavy frame almost shaking the dias as he lifted one leg at a time up. He held his snake in front of him and approached the Professor's daughter. She screamed and desperately twisted to try to escape her bonds as the waving tip of the hideous snake was in front of her! Barely audible were the panicked shouts of her father over the din and devil drums and screams of the woman.

Would the Chief just complete his ritual and bring her to his hut, or would he consummate the "Marriage" in public in front of all his tribe here and now? Rexx would not wait to find out.

Now was the time for his move!

He carefully removed the burning ember from the box and lighted one fuse. Then he moved to another area and lit another one. The tribe was so engrossed in this ritual he needed no stealth.

He then waited.

The professor's daughter had fainted from stress and terror at the giant snake being waved in front of her. One of the Chief's wives used this to try to stop the ritual, arguing it was an omen she was unworthy to be his wife. She was clearly his dominant wife and he was unable to simply smack her down so he argued with her, millennia of taboo and tradition being on trial here.

Shots rang out!

The whole tribe was startled. Shots were coming from the west, roughly in the direction of the British outpost!

The chief shouted an alarm. A good number of the tribe rushed to the west to seek out and meet the attackers! They were not so stupid as to rush headlong into armed troops, but as in the past they'd meet this attack before it arrived and rout it from the jungle, arrows and spears and traps and melding in and out

of the thickness of it at troops only capable of moving along the trails. But never was it this close to their city!

People were running all over as much of the tribe emptied out of the central ritual area. They would meet these attackers head on in their chosen field of battle, the Jungle, before they reached the city!

But then, more shots rang out!

From the North-east! In the distance drums could be heard, but not their tribal drums but the ugly to them military drums!

Had the army meted some two-pronged attack? Had some other force attacked at this time? Perhaps the betrayer Shayock had informed the arms dealers he had connections with of their location and they worked with some Arab lord to attack for their gold?

The chief shouted for a double-defense, half would defend from the west, the other half to explore the new attack.

The Chief now was sweating with stress. His tribe was under two attacks and one of his women was still shouting at him and bringing up taboo in jealousy of a white one being added to his harem.

Rexx gave thanks to God, for his plan had worked!

He had bought gunpowder and shot and fuse at the base. And some drums. He had set things up so that when he lit the fuses it would one at a time light smaller fuses, setting off bits of powder in bamboo tubes. Though associated with the east, bamboo does grow in Africa and most of the world, especially in jungles. Thus Rexx had many small one-use "Rifles" to rig up in short time. Randomly the rifles had shot, sounding like an army shooting right and left. At the end of their firey path the fuses had burnt out a small bit of moss at the bottom of a funnel Rexx had made from huge leaves. Thus the remainder of his shot dropped down a few at a time to a surplus drum!

The Jungle in him had helped him set this up without being caught, but his civilized mind had conceived such a plan. And it had worked! He had truly panicked those that thought themselves the Terror of the Jungle!

Rexx sprung to the attack! He leapt from his perch in the trees. He was too far away and too high to land safely, but he had strung a vine to another tree. He swung in a large circle and hit the chief! The Chief was not just fat but massively strong, but this blow which Rexx added to with his legs felled him unconscious!

Immediately Rexx pulled out his gun and his Atlantean knife. He held his gun on the few Cannibals left in the central area of the City. These were largely the women and children. Most near to him were the Chief's wives. They looked savagely beautiful and most were slender as gazelles. But, not

surprisingly they made no move to attack or overwhelm Rexx as he cut loose the Professor and his daughter.

They had not a second to spare if this plan would work!

Rexx burst for the jail cells just near the ritual area, that had been placed there in ancient times so their captives could witness their hideous satanic rituals of murder and cannibalism. The professor too made haste, though he had to carry his still unconscious daughter along.

Rexx still in his heart embracing the Jungle leapt for the first guard who was shouting for others to come. Rexx stabbed him full force in his chest, cracking it with his Alantean knife and bathing himself in the spray from his heart. Another guard screamed and ran to him with his spear, his mouth wide bearing his hideous fanged teeth. This spear barely missed Rexx who turned at the last instant, slicing again his shirt! The guard then leapt on Rexx and struck him as he tried to stab him, sending his revolver spinning on the stone floor.

The Cannibal struggled with Rexx, screaming incoherently in his native tongue as he tried again and again to bite him with his maw of sharp fanged teeth! Rexx dodged his maw and brought his Atlantean knife into his abdomen, spilling his steaming guts all over. The Cannibal still fought like one possessed, but several more stabs and he went down.

Rexx rose to his feet but three Cannibals with spears rushed to him, from the deeper dungeon.

Three shots rang out.

Professor Winthrop did know how to use a gun quite well, and Rexx had dropped his. He nodded in thanks to Rexx as he still held his daughter, now coming out of her faint.

From the first guard he had killed, Rexx grabbed some ancient keys and with not too much fiddling managed to open the cells, freeing the bearers and mercenaries. They grabbed the spears from the guards Rexx and the Professor had killed and took to the front, slaying several more Cannibals who rushed them.

"Did they put our guns in the treasure house?" Rexx asked.

"I surmise it is so." The Professor said, "That is where I agree we should risk our lives. There is no way we have a chance otherwise."

And so they made a desperate rush inside the building which was connected to the palace. They would reach the treasure house at all costs! Rexx and the professor took to the front, with Singh and his lieutenant. Others took the spears and took up the rear to protect the remaining bearers.

They raced through the palace, shooting when they met resistance, taking up a few more spears from Cannibals they killed. A few frantic minutes passed that

seemed like hours and they reached the treasure room. The doors swung open easily, for the Cannibals did not value gold as they did so there was no need to lock it. Inside there were their rifles in piles and along with most of their stuff from the expedition. It seemed out of place, in a corner of the great, glistening room, a rude intrusion of modern times on this ancient place.

The mercenaries rushed to their weapons to get them working.

"Singh," Rexx said to the top Indian mercenary, "Do you think they've figured out how to use these?"

"They know how to fire and how to load them, but not how to aim them. We convinced them that before each day's use they had to be adjusted, so they are lucky they haven't exploded in their faces from all the abuse they put on them. We are also lucky they were not going to start using them in earnest until after the ritual eating of us, upon which they would start attacking the peaceful tribes to force the soldiers to come after them then would use the rifles on them in the jungles."

"Clever trick," complemented Rexx, "Were they so trusting?"

"No," Singh said grimly, "One of my men pretended he was me. They were brutal to him, and he did not survive."

"I'm Sorry." Rexx said.

"He died for the greater good. These fiends must not get true use of rifles and then use rifles to get cannons and Gatling guns. Until I came here I thought nothing was worse than the British and their power and I questioned my actions daily in serving them, but I was wrong. If this tribe has victories over the British they will receive much support from other empires and quickly use this to capture the world as the British have. The British are barbaric pompous fools but think they have the White Man's Burden to carry the world to their so-called modern age. In their hearts a good many of them are nice people. To this tribe everyone else in the world is food."

Within minutes they had a dozen working rifles and were prepared to shoot their way out. They took some gold, though the real object would now be to return with a full military force to conquer this tribe properly.

Emerging from the palace, there was an unpleasant surprise.

The entirety of the tribe, headed by the Chief was outside the doors, waiting for them! A few of them had rifles from the expedition, but most held their traditional spears. The group crowded back inside the palace but Rexx and the Professor stayed at the door. The Chief approached to speak, raising his right hand and bearing the left to show he had no weapon. Though sore tempted to, it would be true dishonor to just shoot him, so they lowered their weapons and let him speak.

"I salute you!" the Chief boomed to Rexx. "I was amazed that you escaped us, you are the first in three hundred years. And I thought you dead in the jungle, though when two of our tribe disappeared in chasing you perhaps you had escaped. But I thought from your traitor that if you did escape and with some of the treasure you would just run off somewhere and hide. Perhaps in drink you would tell others of where you got your gold, ensuring us a steady supply of food. But, not only did you come back here, but you scared all of us and you struck me a powerful blow!

The Chief held one of the tubes Rexx had filled with shot. His chubby son played with the surplus military drum a bit, smiling with his sharp teeth.

"Of all the ambushes attempted on us, I have never seen so stupid an attempt... Yet, it was so stupid that we did not think it a trick and were really under attack. You almost had us running here and about the jungle all night, looking for troops attacking our city. I believe that many, many years ago one of the few who came to us from your island before the British conquered it tried something similar, though that too did not work and history has lost the story."

"Now, I must ask you all to return to the cells. I promise that we shall not punish you for this! You have proven yourself of such valor. We shall kill you quickly and painlessly and eat all of you so we may absorb your valor!"

"I'd be a fool to surrender even then." Rexx said, "I'll go down fighting, ye understand?"

"Excuse me!" Professor Winthrop interrupted, for he was, technically the head of the expedition. "But why do you insist on eating us? I came here for your treasure, yes, but also I am a student of Natural Science. You are an uncontacted tribe dating back to before Noah's flood. We could learn much from you and I could protect you from being totally wiped out by the Empire's expansion."

"No." the chief said, "We have our traditions and laws. All who come to the M'Kunga jungle are food for us and our god. That is unbreakable. The outside world now knows of us and is more advanced, but we have your guns and Shayock told us much of other weapons, other types of guns. We shall seize these so that when others come to attack us we shall be able to fight as we have but with their weapons. Then we shall defend our borders and expand, to protect our jungle and take food from outside our jungle. M'Kunga's name shall spread across Africa! Perhaps the world!"

There was nothing more to be said then. They closed the doors and retreated into the palace. It was a large, cavernous palace with many holes in the walls and ceilings. Thus the Cannibals threw spears and arrows and shot at them with their few guns. As Singh had said, they were terrible at using them, but this was closer quarters so they were still much more likely to hit, though recoil kept casualties to a minimum. At last they were pushed back into the treasure room that they barricaded. They still had to keep watch on the holes in

the ceiling there, but a few marksmen kept the tribesmen from leaping in or shooting there. One even tried to hold his rifle with just his hand and shoot them, but a mercenary shot into his hand, causing the rifle to drop. Sadly, it broke on the floor, it being a drop of 30 feet, but one less gun in the hands of the Cannibals was a good thing.

Then, the attacks stopped suddenly.

Had the Cannibals gave up, with them in the room with their very god? They peered out through visibility holes in the doors, ones protected by metal slots and saw the hall full of Cannibals just silently waiting for them. On the roof, Cannibals waited for them. Rexx carefully looked at the hidden exit he had used, but alas a number of them with spears ready was waiting. If they hadn't figured out how he'd escaped the cell, doubtless they'd traced his tracks back to the hidden exit!

So they waited, wondering what to do. Perhaps they'd starve them till they could not put up a fight? The water and rations had been taken, quite likely eaten by the Cannibals, they did eat other food when no human flesh was available and salt tack meat would be a treasure not to waste in a room full of gold that was clutter to them. They were waiting outside to hold them inside, would it not be easier to just leave and let them make a run for it, dozens against thousands?

Night fell, and while most slept a few kept watch to prevent a night ambush. But would they wait day after day until they weakened, so the cannibals could just walk in and pick them up?

No, they heard drums beating and a chant.

"M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Kunga!"

And many steps approached them, heavy steps.

The door shook with a loud boom! And another! And another!

The Cannibals had felled a large tree and were using it as a battering ram! Within minutes the door would be down and the Cannibals would swarm in, overwhelming them with sheer numbers! They would lose many in the process but this was their shrine, not for the gold but for their God! They would lose favor in his eyes if they let him be violated by outsiders that should be food for them all!

One bang after another the ancient wood of perhaps an extinct species of tree gave a bit more. They were all armed now, many with weapons of ages past. There were even a few weapons of ancient India, and the mercenaries showed the bearers the basic use of them. They would all go down fighting. But they all would die!

"I'm sorry, Professor..." Rexx said.

"Do not be. You tried to talk sense into me, but it was my own arrogance that led us all down this path. You nearly did save us and at least we won't die in the horrible manner Shayock did, for if he had not betrayed us we would have arrived here much better armed and likely able to repulse an attack. No, Irishman, you've earned your worth and kept your word and truly deserve to be called a white man!"

The Professor's Daughter went over to him. She held an Indian Katar, a dagger meant for thrusting that was held in a straight grip so it could deliver a full stabbing force with a punch and could be swung with the arm as a short sword. Tears were in her eyes.

"Daddy, please kill me! Please kill me! I do not want those Blacks to touch me again!" and she handed him the Dagger.

"My Daughter..." The Professor said. He turned his eyes to Rexx.

"Y' Cannae ask me o' that, Guv'nor!" Rexx said in reply to the question he feared, "She's your flesh and blood, ye ha' to wait till the last moment when all hope is lost, then strike straight and true! And D'nae let despair take ye even for a second, for y' must use your guns to kill as many of these black Cannibal savages as ye can take with ye!"

The Professor took the dagger with one hand, holding one of his pistols in the other. His daughter tearfully undid the top buttons on her shirt and showed her breast though not to her nipples. The Professor grimly raised the dagger back.

The door boomed and boomed and boomed again. At last the ancient wood started to give way to the onslaught.

Rexx again went deep into his mind to bond with the jungle again. What a talent long lost, like the legendary battle rages of his ancient kin, only to be lost again! But he would attack most savage of all, he would only be forgotten in centuries as doubtless the wanderer of his isle who came here many, many years past was. He could again feel the jungle, almost every tribesman moving outside, their primal energy as they leapt and hollered getting ready for battle and ripping human flesh of bone with their sharp teeth...

But, in the distance, there was something out of place, something disturbing even this.

The great doors started to give way.

Rexx swung his hand back and knocked the dagger out of the Professor's hand just as he was about to strike.

"Professor, forgive me if I'm wrong. Retreat to the corner, behind the Giant's throne, that'll be the last safe place! I think we might just have the ghost o' a chance!"

The Professor collected the dagger and with his Daughter did as he said. The doors broke so that they were forced open and there was much room on the sides. Immediately the Cannibals poured through, met by gunfire and the weapons of the mercenaries backed up by the desperate bearers. Rexx shot with deadly aim as his Atlantean dagger slashed left and right, killing one Cannibal after another. The door's ancient hinge was burst by the damage, opening but not fully and now its immense weight making it as hard to move as the ancient stone walls. Perhaps even that was some ancient feature of lost technology, so invaders could not push the whole thing open wide but rather had to push through a narrow funnel into waiting defenders. But, like the standoff in the hut, it was endgame now and truly. More and more Cannibals rushed in, their sharp teeth glistening in their grinning mouths as the defenders were battered and exhausted and falling.

Behind the Giant the Professor again raised his dagger to his tearful daughter. He would stab her in the heart! Better she die than be despoiled by these satanic black cannibals!

But, before he could do an act of dread sacrifice, there was a great commotion from outside, even above this din. The Cannibals in the front were being shouted for by the cannibals in the back. They pulled back from their attack, leaving the defenders alone again.

And they heard what sound it was that drove them away.

Gunfire!

But this was no backup trick of Rexx. It was real! The soldiers from the regiment had been shamed at last by Rexx, who had provided them with directions and tips on many of the traps. Though none of the troops were mounted, the "Cavalry" had indeed arrived!

--- Chapter 20 ---

--- The Troops arrive! ---

Just when all was seemingly lost, the troops had arrived at last!

They had fast marched through the Jungle shortly after Rexx had left. If he'd only waited he'd have heard the commander call him back. But then again he'd have been too late to stop the professor's daughter from being savaged by the Chief. Whatever, seeking gold and lost honor and revenge the troops rushed into the Cannibal's city, catching them almost completely unawares with the siege of the treasure house so hot on their minds.

In the jungle, the natives were the terror of any regiment, certainly this semi-penal one. In the Jungle, they could shoot a few darts, throw a few spears and blend back into the thickness of it. In the Jungle, deadly traps they knew

how to avoid caused such misery to troops. In the Jungle they could actually grab a man from the bushes and rush him away and start to butcher him alive without his men knowing he was gone until they heard his screams!

But this was not in the jungle. This was a city with lots of wide open spaces and while ancient a predictable structure of buildings. Here, troops could fight shoulder to shoulder, they could see what they shot at, they could take cover without the enemy constantly being "In Cover". Here, their bayoneted rifles were deadly weapons at far and close range, not a liability they cursed the crown for having to carry.

And they could use their light cannons and the Gatling Gun.

The natives fought furiously, but they had no chance, nor would there be any mercy from the troops. They had suffered too much at their hands, known too much terror. The few with any rank had been stripped of it or put in a shameful disgrace of a career if they had not already been so being sent here. They were seen as cowards, unable to shoot a single hottentot if their lives depended on it. They had dreamt nightmare filled nights and when supplies arrived found barrels of limes delivered half-short saying they weren't worth the not-so-liked name "Limey" as further insult.

With full force the rag tag troops tore into the Cannibals. Guns and bayonets. Shooting and stabbing. Many natives tried to rush them en-masse, but the Gatling Gun mowed them down. A few troops were wounded as natives jumped off of roofs and trees growing in the ancient city to bite them with their fanged teeth! But these quickly recovered, stabbing and bludgeoning the Cannibals to death and fighting on, just pouring some of their cheap wine on the wound to prevent infection. Today they would not be the Mud but the flower of England!

Most natives died fighting the British, the men mainly. But they showed no mercy to the women or children, either. Many had crowded into buildings, and into these they shot cannons or threw lit sticks of dynamite, laughing at the parts which had once been perhaps human flying out.

Fearing a possible standoff they turned their cannons on the larger buildings.

Cannibals were now running for the jungle, pursued by troops ready to catch them. Any that escaped would find the "Civilized" tribes ready to kill them on the spot once they left their Jungle.

In the ritual center of the city the Cannibal Chief waved his skull headed staffs and screamed in his ritual tongue to the statue.

"M'Kunga! M'Kunga! M'Bunga! M'Kunga!" he screamed, tears rolling down his full face as he tried to invoke the wrath of his pagan devil god.

There was a loud boom! The soldiers had shot several explosive shells at the statue, destroying its hideous head as they prepared more shells to ruin the

body. But the destruction of the head was fantastic, the explosion so terrible that a piece of it flew at the chief!

He was smashed beneath the remnants of the "Maw" of his "God"! As he had consigned countless men in a millennia long Satanic tradition of ritual murder, so he now was impaled and crushed on metal spikes that were still hot from the flames of the last night and singed his flesh. But the spikes had missed his spine and head, though the force had crushed his intestines through his mouth as well as his torn gut. So his last minutes were indescribable agony as his flesh seared, torn and crushed by the teeth of his god as he saw the soldiers take captive his wives and children!

Inside the temple the noise was dying down and Rexx and the Professor had started to admire the hieroglyphs again, not now fearing hideous death. But, the building rumbled! It was a weak building already, with holes in the ceiling, and now it was being bombarded by shells!

"No! I must catalog-!"

"No time, Professor! I promised I'd get ye and yer daughter out o' here alive and I will do that in God's name!" Rexx shouted as he dragged the professor away just as a piece of roof fell and would have killed Prof Winthrop had Rexx left him! They ran like mad from the temple, seeing it crumble behind them.

Outside, the Commandant was with a few of his trusted lieutenants.

"Professor Winthrop, I presume?" He said, nodding to his friend who with his hired help had at last stirred his bravery again.

"Is that where they had the treasure?" He said to the Professor. "Don't get me wrong, we will pay my men and me plenty but we won't show them how much is really there. Have to send some back to the queen so we ourselves aren't fugitives like our Irishman friend was, but let's make sure we can all retire!"

The Professor let but one solitary tear escape his eye. Not for losing a share of the treasure, but that he'd had lost so much in the destruction of the buildings and the massacre of the Cannibals. Still, being a proper British Nobleman he restrained his emotions excusing the tear as sweat in this jungle heat. He worked with Rexx and the rest of the Indian regiment to quickly contain the treasure to not let the troops see all of it in the rubble. They would hastily make use of any crates or barrels they could find, walling some of it under rubble or in non-collapsed rooms for later if necessary.

As outrageous as such actions sound, they had no trouble doing this for the troops were now amusing themselves on the Cannibals still alive. Men that had surrendered or not been killed. Women not killed but captured. They would play cruel games on the men and abuse the women in front of their husbands and even their children! These were desperate pathetic soldiers pushed to the edge of any civilization they'd learned and beyond it. Compared to their savagery the Cannibals were as nothing!

Now it was the Cannibals turn to scream!

The screams continued through the night of the violation of the women and the torture of the men. They drunk and celebrated and raped and killed! Some groups of soldiers sat around bonfires on which men burned alive. Others played "Russian Roulette" with live men for purposes of betting.

Even in the morning, still hung over and still drinking they amused themselves. In one place they had a Cannibal tied to a tree and took turns cutting off bits of his flesh! Another band of soldiers brought out a pregnant woman and cut out her baby from her belly! Though the baby was already dead from repeated brutal rapes and beatings of the mother, they still laughed as they stomped it and stabbed it before their eyes! They laughed like loons as they then smashed her head in with the butts of the rifles.

Even the Children would have no mercy!

One trooper put his hands on the shoulders of a tearful young and plump boy, the one that had mocked Rexx and the Professor's expedition by eating in front of them when they arrived. One of the Chief's sons! He was now pale and bloody and missing a few teeth, his face bruised terribly.

"G'On ye little bastard!" one of the troops yelled into his ears. The Boy was too terrified to even run.

"O'ye little darkie! I thinks to meself he wants to play Royal Captain and Cabin boy like we did las' night, d'ye think me mates!?" his men wickedly laughed.

At the tone of this, the boy ran off with desperate haste! Once he reached fifty meters the trooper aimed his rifle and shot him! He fell down, dead, blood spurting from what was left of his head! The troops laughed uncontrollably, then brought out the next child...

"And we called them savages..." the Professor said, watching the spectacle from not too far away. He remembered how the Pirate Black Bart had proclaimed his hatred of the British back in Tangiers, for what they had done to his people and he a child. But this action would not spark any new Black Barts, they were too thorough this time.

--- Chapter 21 ---

---Aftermath, the end of the story ---

--- and the beginning of others ---

Professor Winthrop shook his head sadly over the remains of the temple and the giant skeleton. They were still pulling out a lot of gold that would make

them all rich, gold even the greatest pirate kings or the emerging international corporations would consider an immense sum.

It was utter victory.

And it was utter failure.

The Hieroglyphs were gone for they had been made with some kind of plaster that had lasted millennia but had crumbled to bits when the walls shattered. The tribespeople were dead, dying or being butchered and killed by the troops. He regretted not anticipating his daughter's selfish desire, for if he had brought some large quantity of formaldehyde... But now the pictures showing the teeth would only be dismissed as "Yes, fanged teeth cannibals, plenty of those in places the Queen's army has not yet civilized!"

He stared at the remnants of the Nephilim skull. Its face was crushed in and most of its bones were shattered. Still, while it had had two eyes in life, it now could be a Cyclops, except.

"Say, REXX, could this make a wonderful Woolly Mammoth skull? After all, they tied my daughter to its tusks, a little plaster and I can make a good stone age pachyderm that these primitives worshipped as their god and sacrificed people to...? One that they thought was a Cyclops but that we civilized men know was a Mastadon, or as simple Irish like you say a Woolly Mammoth..." He enquired sadly. He sat down and almost sobbed.

"Oh, we do have much treasure. I shall be set the rest of my life, as shall you be if you find a way to carefully manage your money. But no, I shall not even say that I discovered anything here, save the few unknown flora and fauna I cataloged on the way. I would be the laughing stock of the Royal Academy."

"Did you hear what they did over Schliemann?" The Professor continued, "He endured much mockery in that he insisted that the city of Troy from Greek and Roman history was real. Why not look for Atlantis, they told him in between laughs and insults to his face. Eventually he found it, the real Troy sacked in that great war of the Ancient World.

"But what he got for his perseverance? He is now mocked by academia as the Worst Scientist in History they call him. They note besides that he ran with much of the gold for profit, for he'd nearly bankrupted himself looking for Troy, he destroyed much. He dug through seven cities and the real Troy was still two cities down. Who cares that without him the Intellectual Snits as you called them would have forever denied Troy's existence, save for speculative fiction, and when and if they found that ancient site they'd have been too unwilling to admit their theories wrong... He'd found a thing they'd denied, so they had to find a way to smear his reputation. The brilliant men who were so angry at the man who decided to just count the teeth of a sheep.

"My actions here make Schliemann's look like the works of the most competent, professionally supported scientist. He messed up some pots and remnants of buildings, appropriated some treasure, at a time when it was dig and loot and pillage as the norm. Now, I found a tribe with a rich history and legends and historical proof pre-dating the Deluge and it's all gone. Another species of man as profound as the Piltdown man Sir Dodgson uncovered, they are all butchered. The very skeleton of one of the Ancient Giants in the Earth and it's smashed to bits..." He choked back a sob, "No, I dare not face them now, I'll just get more bugs in jars and name this or that like I am the Biblical Adam and be content to be a footnote in Natural Science naming new things.

"Gov'nor...I'm sorry, but-" Rexx started to say. The Professor interrupted him.

"Do not worry, Sam O'Konney or Rexx Rhyder or whomever you choose to call yourself, you went back into the very Maw of Hell to rescue Myself and my beloved daughter at what almost was the cost of your life. That alone, even if this venture had ended in both financial and intellectual failure, has earned my promise of a pardon. You are a free man. I would advise against boasting of your crime, justified as it was, but do not fear the policeman or agent of the empire."

"Thank ye, Guvnor." Rexx took off his hat and nodded, "And I have something for ye, though please keep it to your ears."

"D'Ye know why we Irish never gave up? You Brits conquered us before you went on your rampage around the world. You tax us, starve us, conscript us, enslave us for debt so we are sold next to a black man. But we keep on fighting, even after being defeated. Deep inside we know that we have to live and that to give up is to truly die. We'll keep on fighting and fiddling and loving till the end of time, far past your empire just to spite ye and be sure to win in the end. In a way, it's kind of like what Shayock's people have, a determination to survive no matter what just to make a rude gesture to whatever force in life loves to keep 'em down.

"Now, Professor, I'm telling ye this because you've truly earned my respect. Plenty of issues I had w/ ye but that's past. I'm sorry too, I'd have loved to get me name in the Geographic now that I dare use it, but look at this gold we have. We have life and gold and ye have your daughter, o' and I assigned Singh to guard her personal and not let her near the troops. Don't let this partial triumph lead you into despair. You are alive and better off in the pocketbook for it and this world still has lots to discover elsewhere.

"And please D'nae tell any of your Brit friends what I said, nor double tell an Irishmen I told ye that! We largely hate you and want you all to die, and they'd hunt me to the end of the earth if I told you that secret! But you I d'nae hate and want to die anymore."

Some fire lit in the Professor's Eyes.

"I say... You have me speechless, Irishman! Good show!"

An embarrassed pause.

"So, what will you do now, once this is over?" The Professor asked, "I am too old for new expeditions, but I shall defend my reputation with vigor and perhaps shall finance others, though done much more carefully. This one, please forget it with me. But do you plan to return to Britain, to Ireland?"

"No," Rexx said, "I'm still dead to there. But if you could send some of the gold to my family, if there are any left there, not dead or went to the Americas?"

"I shall personally deliver them funds. And if any are seeking work I shall try to get them hired for decent pay. But if you are not going home, what then will you do, with your fortune and the rest of your life?"

Rexx replied, "I've been thinking of investing some of it. In several different banks so as to take advantage of and not be taken advantage of by this Interest thing. Shayock, rest his soul, told me a lot about it. Glad I didn't convert to Islam, it's forbidden to them. But, I think I shall head to Egypt, re-visit some friends in Cairo, a few locals who took me in. I might settle there, but if not maybe later I shall go to the Orient.

"I doubt I myself shall leave England, but I too have friends in Cairo, of the natural history profession. With my references I could have you appointed to do field work and then you would be published with credit going to you under my name.

The professor pulled something from a box of damaged but too destroyed artifacts he'd collected while helping hoard the gold. It was a booklet of several jade plates, Chinese characters engraved into its translucent crystalline stone pages, partly smashed but enough still remaining it could be fit together.

"If you are going to Cathay, then... I think this document points to a legendary lost city... Perhaps this will interest your studies? As I said, I shall ensure that you are published for your discoveries. Science is a new force on this world, where a man is supposed to be recognized purely for his intellect, his works, his discoveries regardless of race or station in life. If you pursue this I shall partially fund the expedition, but please give me some credit at least..."

And so Rexx Rhyder and Professor Winthrop sat down for a long discussion on what would end up being their next great adventure...!

--- The End and the Beginning! ---

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