

INTO THE PRIMITIVE

BY
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SYNOPSIS.

The story opens with the shipwreck of the steamer on which Miss Genevieve Leslie, an American heiress, Lord Winthrop, an Englishman, and Tom Blake, a brusque American, were passengers. The three were tossed upon an uninhabited island and were the only ones not drowned. Blake, stunned on the boat, because of his roughness, became a hero as preserver of the helpless pair. The Englishman was dying for the hand of Miss Leslie. Winthrop wasted his last match on a cigarette, for which he was scolded by Blake. All three constructed huts to shield themselves from the sun. They then feasted on coconuts, the only procurable food. Miss Leslie faced an unpleasant situation. Blake recovered his surveyor's magnifying glass, thus insuring fire. He started a jungle fire, killing a large leopard and smothering several cubs. In the leopard's cavern they built a small home. They gained the cliffs by burning the bottom of a tree until it fell against the heights. The trio secured eggs from the cliffs. Miss Leslie's white skirt was decided upon as a signal. Miss Leslie made a dress from the leopard skin. Overhearing a conversation between Blake and Winthrop, Miss Leslie became frightened. Winthrop became ill with fever. Blake was poisoned by a fish and almost died. Jackals attacked the camp that night, but were driven off by Genevieve. Blake constructed an animal trap. It killed a hyena. On a tour the trio discovered honey and oysters. Miss Leslie was attacked by a poisonous snake. Blake killed it and saved its poison to kill game. For the second time Winthrop was attacked by fever. He and Blake disagreed. The latter made a strong door for the private compartment of Miss Leslie's cave home. A terrible storm raged that night. Winthrop stole into her room, but she managed to swing her door closed in time. Winthrop was badly hurt. He died the following morning. The storm tore down their distress flag, so a new one was swung from a bamboo pole. Miss Leslie helped in covering Winthrop's grave with stones. Genevieve took a strong liking to Blake. On exploration tour they were attacked by a lion.

CHAPTER XXIV.—Continued.

The lion still his roars and crouched as if to spring, snarling and grinning with rage and uncertainty. His eyes, unaccustomed to the glare of the mid-day sun, blinked incessantly, though he followed the man's every movement, his snarl deepening into growls at the slightest change of attitude.

In his blind animal rage Blake had forgotten that the purpose of his lateral advance was to place as great a distance as possible between him and the girl before the clash. Yet instinct kept him moving along his spiral course, on the chance that he might catch his foe off his guard.

Suddenly the lion half rose and stretched forward, sniffing. There was an uneasy whining note in his growls. Blake let the club slip from beneath his arm and drew his bow until the arrow-head lay upon his thumb. His outstretched arm was rigid as a bar of steel. So tense and alert were all his nerves that he knew he could drive home both arrows and still have time to swing his club before the beast was upon him.

A puff of wind struck against his back and swept on the nostrils of the lion, laden with the odor of man. The beast uttered a short, startled roar, and, whirling about, leaped away into the jungle so quickly that Blake's arrow flashed past a full yard behind.

The second arrow was on the string before the first had struck the ground. But the lion had vanished in the grass. With a yell, Blake dashed on across to the nearest point of the jungle. As he ran he drew the burning glass from his fob and flipped it open ready for use. If the lion had turned behind the sheltering grass stems he was too cowardly to charge out again. Within a minute the jungle border was a wall of roaring flame.

The grass, long since dead, and none-dry with the days of tropical sunshine since the cyclone, flared up before the wind like gunpowder. Even against the wind the fire ate its way along the ground with fearful rapidity, trailing behind it an upwhirling vortex of smoke and flame. No living creature could have burst through that belt of fire.

A wave of fierce heat sent Blake staggering back, scorched and blistered. There was no exultance in his bearing. For the moment all thought of his own work. He stared at the self of leaping, roaring flames from beneath his upraised arm. To the north sparks and lighted wisps of grass driven by the gale had already fired the jungle half way to the farther side.

Step by step Blake drew back. His feet struck against something soft. He looked down and saw Miss Leslie lying on the sand, white and still. She had fainted, overcome by fear or by the unendurable heat. The heat must have stupefied him as well. He stared at her, dazed, wondering if she was dead. His brain cleared. He sprang over to where the flask lay beside the remnants of the lunch.

He was dashing the last drops of the tepid water in her face when she opened and her eyelids began to flutter. He flung down the flask and fell a chafing her wrist.

"Tom!" she moaned.

"Yes, Miss Jenny, I'm here. It's all right," he answered.

"Have I had a sunstroke? Is that why it seems so—I can hardly breathe?"

"It's all right, I tell you. Only a little bonfire I touched off. Guess you must have fainted, but it's all right now."

"It was silly of me to faint. But when I saw that dreadful thing—"



"The Man I Love!"

She faltered and lay shuddering. Fearful that she was about to swoon again Blake slapped her hand between his palms with stinging force.

"You're it!" he shouted. "The joke's on you! Kiddy jumped just the other way, and he won't come back in a hurry with that fire to head him off. Jump up now and we'll do a jig on the strength of it."

She attempted a smile, and a trace of color showed in her cheeks. With an idea that action would further her recovery, she drew her to a sitting position, stepped quickly behind, and, with his hands beneath her elbows, lifted her upright. But she was still too weak and giddy to stand alone. As he released his grip she swayed and would have fallen had he not caught her arm.

"Steady!" he admonished. "Brace up; you're all right."

"I'm—I'm just a little dizzy," she murmured, clinging to his shoulder. "It will pass in a minute. It's so silly, but I'm that way—Tom, I—I think you are the bravest man—"

"Yes, yes—but that's not the point. Leave go now, like a sensible girl. It's about time to hit the trail."

He drew himself free, and without a glance at her blushing face began to gather up their scattered outfit. His hat lay where he had weighted it down with the coconut. He tossed the nut into the skin bag and jammed the hat on his head, pulling the brim far down over his eyes. When he had fetched his club he walked back past the girl with his eyes averted.

"Come on," he muttered. Blake was waiting to close the opening. She crept through and rose to catch him by the sleeve.

"Tom, look at me," she said. "Once I was most unjust to you in my thoughts. I wronged you. Now I must tell you that I think you are the bravest—the noblest man—"

"Get away!" he exclaimed, and he shook off her hand roughly. "Don't be a fool! You don't know what you're talking about."

"But I do, Tom. I believe that you are—"

"I'm a blackguard—do you hear?" "No blackguard is brave. The way you faced that terrible beast—"

"Yes, blackguard—to've gone and shown to you that I—let you say a single word—Can't you see? Even if I'm not what you call a gentleman, I thought I knew how any man ought to treat a woman—but to go and let you know, before we'd got back among people!"

"But—but, Tom, why not, if we—"

"Not!" he retorted, harshly. "I'm going now to pile up wood on the cliff for a beacon fire. In the morning I'll start making that catamaran—"

"No, you shall not—You shall not go off and leave me, and—risk your life! I can't bear to think of it! Stay with me, Tom—dear! Even if a ship never came—"

He turned resolutely, so as not to see her blushing face.

"Come now, Miss Leslie," he said in a dry, even tone; "don't make it so awfully hard. Let's be sensible and

shake hands on it like two real comrades—"

She struck frantically at his outstretched hand.

"Keep away—I hate you!" she cried. Before he could speak she was running up the cliff.

CHAPTER XXV.

In Double Salvation.

WHEN, an hour or more after dawn the next morning, the girl slowly drew open her door and came out of the cave Blake was nowhere in sight. She sighed, vastly relieved, and hastened across to bathe her flushed face in the spring. Stopping every few moments to listen for his step down the cleft she gathered up a hamper of food and fled to the tree-ladder.

As she drew herself up on the cliff she noticed a thin column of smoke rising from the last smouldering brands of a beacon fire that had been built in the midst of the bird colony on the extreme outer edge of the headland. She did not, however, observe that, while the smoke column streamed up from the fire directly skyward beyond it there was a much larger volume of smoke, which seemed to have eddied down the cliff face and was now rolling up into view from out over the sea. She gave no heed to this, for the sight of the beacon had instantly alarmed her with the possibility that Blake was still on the headland, and would imagine that she was seeking him.

She paused, her cheeks aflame. But the only sign of Blake that she could see was the fire itself. She reflected that he might very well have left before dawn. As likely as not he had descended at the north end of the cleft and had gone off to the river to start his catamaran. At the thought all the color ebbed from her cheeks and left her white and trembling. Again she stood hesitating. With a sigh she started on toward the signal staff.

She was close upon the border of the bird colony when Blake sat up and she found herself staring into his blinking eyes.

"Hello!" he mumbled, drowsily. He sprang up wide awake, and flushing with the guilty consciousness of what he had done. "Look at the way—way up! Didn't mean to oversleep, Miss Leslie. You see I was up pretty late tending the beacon. But of course that's no excuse."

"Don't!" she exclaimed. There were tears in her eyes; yet she smiled as she spoke. "I know what you mean by 'pretty late.' You've been up all night."

"No, I haven't. Not all night—"

"To be sure! I quite understand, Mr. Thomas Blake! Now sit down and eat this luncheon."

"Can't. Haven't time. I've got to get to the river and set to work. I'll get some jerked beef and eat it on the way. You see—"

"Tom!" she protested.

"It's for you," he rejoined, and his lips closed together resolutely. He was stepping past her, when over the seaward edge of the cliff there came a sound like the yell of a raging sea monster.

"Siren!" shouted Blake, whirling about.

The cloud of smoke beyond the cliff end was now rolling up more to the left. He dashed away towards the north edge of the cliff as though he intended to leap off into space. The girl ran after him as fast as she could over the loose stones. Before she had covered half the distance she saw him halt on the very brink of the cliff and begin to wave and shout like a madman. A few steps farther on she caught sight of the steamer. It was lying close in, only a little way off the north point of the headland.

Even as she saw the vessel, its siren responded to Blake's wild gestures with a series of joyous screams. There could be no mistake. He had been seen. Already they were letting go their anchor, and there was a little crowd of men gathering about one of the boats. Blake turned and started on a run for the cliff. But Miss Leslie darted before him, compelling him to halt.

"Wait!" she cried, her eyes sparkling with happy tears. "Tom, it's come now. You needn't—"

"Let me by! I'm going to meet them. I want to—"

But she put her hands upon his shoulders.

"Tom!" she whispered, "let it be now, before any one—anything can possibly come between us! Let it be a part of our life here—here, where I've learned how brave and true a real man can be!"

"And then have him prove himself a snail!" he cried. "No; I won't, Jenny! I've got to think of you. Wait till I've seen your father. Ten to one he'll not hear of it—he'll cut you off without a cent. Not but what I'd be glad myself; but you're used to luxuries, girls, and I'm a poor man. I can't give them to you—"

She laid a hand on his mouth and smiled up at him in tender mockery. "Come, now, Mr. Blake; you're not very complimentary. After surviving my cooking all these weeks, don't you think I might do, at a pinch, for a poor man's wife?"

"No, Jenny!" he protested, trying to draw back. "You oughtn't to decide now. When you get back among your friends things may look different. Think of your society friends! Wait till you see me with other men—gentlemen! I'm just a rough, uncultured, ordinary—"

"Hush!" she cried, and she again placed her hand on his mouth. "You shan't say such cruel things about Tom—my Tom—the man I trust—that I—"

Her arms slipped about his neck and her eyes shone up into his with tender radiance.

"Don't!" he begged, hoarsely. "Tain't fair—I can't stand it!"

"The man I love!" she whispered.

He crushed her to him in his great arms.

"My little girl!—dear little girl!" he repeated, and he pressed his lips to her hair.

She snuggled her face closer against his shoulder and replied in a very small voice: "I—I suppose you know that ship captains can marry people."

"But I haven't even a job yet!" he exclaimed. "Suppose your father—"

"Please listen!" she pleaded. There was a sound like suppressed sobbing.

"What is it?" he ventured, and he listened, greatly perturbed.

The muffled voice sounded very meek and plaintive: "I'll try to do my part, Mr. Blake—really I will! I—I hope we can manage to struggle along—somehow. You know, I have a little of my own. It's only three—three million; but—"

"What!" he demanded, and he held her out at arm's length, to stare at her in frowning bewilderment. "If I'd known that, I'd—"

"You'd never have given me a chance to—to propose to you, you dear old silly!" she cried, her eyes dancing with tender mirth. "See here!"

She turned from him, and back again, and held up a withered, crumpled flower. He looked, and saw that it was the amaryllis blossom.

"You—kept it!"

"Because—because, even then, down in the bottom of my heart I had begun to realize—to know what you were like—and of course that meant— Tom, tell me! Do you think I'm utterly shameless? Do you blame me for being the one to—to—"

"Blame you?" he cried. He gazed to put a finger under her chin and raise her down-bent face. His eyes were very blue, but there was a twinkle in their depths. "Oh, yes! It was dreadful, wasn't it? But I guess I've no complaint to file just now."

THE END.

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