

was to accompany it, and, after matters had been satisfactorily settled with the Authorities, he would return with Harvey to Idda.

That night Cox went down with a touch of the sun. The return to Bairan was thus delayed, as it was thought better for him to rest in the cool quiet of the palm hut, than be carried along in an improvised hammock in the sun. Said bin Ali assured them that three or four days would put Cox on his feet again, and advocated complete quiet in the interval.

Meanwhile the forest <sup>draw</sup> pulled Harvey; <sup>careless</sup> he could not keep out of it, and when Cox was resting, he <sup>would</sup> wander off, Paul in attendance, and linger on its edges, or ~~just~~ enter the outer fringe of trees. He was a keen shot, and as guinea fowl, partridges, and small buck abounded, he seldom came back empty-handed. Said <sup>bin Ali</sup> shook his head over these expeditions; ~~he feared for Harvey.~~ The spell that the forest had woven round <sup>Harvey</sup> ~~him~~ was so potent a lure that it would surely draw him on to his undoing. Would not the forest spirits take payment in full for these intrusions? As Said bin Ali became more anxious, Harvey became bolder; he had a peculiar feeling of elation whenever he entered the forest, and of depression and restlessness when he was away from it.

On the fourth day Cox was so much better that the return journey was fixed for the next morning. They arranged to carry him at first, and to start early in order to avoid the sun. Everyone was excited and busy: the head man was buying food from the Natives, the porters were washing and mending their clothes, the servants were packing their master's belongings. Cheerful noise and bustle pre-

vailed, and it was not until the boy announced ~~that~~ lunch ~~was~~  
~~ready~~ that Cox realised ~~that~~ Harvey was not in camp. Upon  
being questioned, one of the porters stated that "a long time  
ago", and "quite early", he had seen Harvey and Paul, both carry-  
ing guns, disappear down the forest path. Cox, hearing this  
statement, experienced a sudden feeling of irritable anxiety.  
He had imperceptibly become affected by the superstitions of  
the locality, and he did not like Harvey's persistent return  
to and wanderings in the forest. He waited half an hour and  
then lunched alone. After lunch and his siesta he sent for  
Said bin Ali and told him of Harvey's absence, asking if any-  
thing could be done. Said himself enquired of the porter as  
to the exact time of Harvey's departure, and his face became  
anxious and troubled when he realized how long the two men  
had been absent. As he returned to Cox and was about to  
speak to him a shot rang out - a shot from the direction of  
the danger zone. Before either of them could comment on this,  
another shot followed, and then a positive fusillade, each  
shot tumbling over the last - two guns shooting as fast as  
they could re-load. Cox sprang to his feet, now genuinely  
alarmed, and he and Said looked at one another speechless,  
afraid to give utterance to what was in their minds. One  
purpose they had in common, and that was to follow <sup>with the delay</sup> ~~as quickly~~  
in the direction of the shots, and to help - help they knew was  
needed. A few of the bolder men and the policemen announced

their determination of going too; and the party hurriedly collected guns and bush knives, a yacht signalling pistol of Harvey's, and, at Said's suggestion, all the available lanterns of the camp. A whisky flask and blanket were added by Cox. Thus equipped, the party, fear tugging at their hearts, set out. An occasional shot could still be heard, and the path was easy to follow. Harvey and Paul's daily wanderings had evidently been in the one forbidden direction, as the track was well marked. . . . .

~~And now let us return to Harvey~~ Realizing that this was the last day, <sup>Harvey</sup> ~~he~~ made up his mind to spend it in the forest; and almost unconsciously he decided to penetrate to the hidden City. He had previously reached its broken walls and tumbling gateways, and he was overwhelmed with the desire to enter — to enter the unknown, and face and defy the spirits who guarded the green aisles of his beloved forest kingdom. He had a superstitious feeling that if he could once accomplish this, and return safely from his quest, the spirits would recognise his superior strength and would bow before him, acknowledging him to be their Master. He never doubted the presence of the spirits, though whether they possessed visible shapes and forms, or whether they were merely a malign influence, he neither knew nor cared. They were there, and he felt if he could confront and dominate them, their ban would be for ever broken and removed from the forest.

He was well prepared even for violence; he and Paul each carried a <sup>12</sup>twelve bore shot gun, with a hundred cartridges apiece; and Harvey himself also had a small Colts police revolver, its six chambers ~~were~~ loaded, and ~~he stuffed~~ an extra handful of cartridges into his pocket. In addition he carried three blue lights, for he meant, if possible, after facing the spirits, to burn down their haunts, <sup>and</sup> thus finally <sup>to</sup> exterminate them and <sup>to</sup> destroy their habitation. Full of confidence, his decision to face matters had lifted a weight from Harvey's mind. // ~~Paul was a good shot, and Harvey had explained to him that they might have to do some shooting.~~

They reached the Main gateway of the hidden City without <sup>encountering</sup> any <sup>obstacle</sup> difficulty; though the bush was thick and close-growing it was easy to break, and they <sup>without difficulty</sup> easily forced a passage through it. It certainly was an eerie proceeding, so little could be seen in advance. Grey stone walls embedded in greenery, rose suddenly before them, blocking the way; trees, leaves, stems, mosses, grasses of all sorts and sizes, and, buried among them, houses whose windows gaped, and whose doors were no more; fretted minarets and turrets; wide verandahs, and yawning wells - an enchanted City <sup>and</sup> buried and done to death by the encroaching waves of the green forest. Silence was everywhere. Signs <sup>of former human occupation</sup> of the living were <sup>present</sup> possible: a couple of jars stood at the well, and on <sup>a</sup> the door-step, a grinding stone, or native stool of the house-holder. But no life stirred - a dim, pale green light pervaded everything, as in the depths of the sea through which

no sunbeam penetrated. Hanging over all, and increasing the deeper they entered, was a curious, half-sweet, pungent yet fetid odour. Harvey recognized, but could not place it. It was some animal smell, some smell connected with age, decay, and darkness. Every time it eluded him, and it was not until he turned to Paul and asked him if he knew what it was, and Paul laconically replied "Bats", that remembrance flooded his mind. Bats, of ~~course it~~ <sup>a certainty</sup> ~~was bats~~, but where were they? There was no sign of any living thing, in either the trees or the buildings, and the silence was profound. Harvey had been careful to cut the path of their ingress so that egress should be possible if flight became necessary. Both he and Paul felt uneasy; <sup>the</sup> ~~combined~~, dim, queer light, the silence, and, above all, the pervading odour, shonk them. They found themselves walking on tip-toe, and their voices sank to whispers. <sup>He moved stealthily along</sup> Paul ~~was~~ in front, beating down the grass and bushes with the flat of his knife, <sup>they</sup> ~~when~~ suddenly ~~he~~ found <sup>themselves</sup> himself in a cleared opening - a space some seventy yards square, and yawning with great black pit-holes. <sup>They had imperceptibly advanced to</sup> ~~Harvey joined him at~~ <sup>into abyssal depths</sup> the mouth of the largest hole, which appeared to go straight down indefinitely. It was not a well, for there was no masonry surrounding it; ~~besides~~ <sup>also</sup> it was irregularly shaped, and about twenty feet across. Here the smell was definitely located, ~~and~~ <sup>it</sup> it poured upwards, almost visibly, out of the dark depths of the holes. Whatever

had been, these holes must now be the habitation of bats. From far, far <sup>down</sup> below came a scuffling, shambling noise, and faintly also the shrill chattering of bat voices. Suddenly it ~~rushed~~ <sup>came</sup> into Harvey's mind that Said bin Ali's spirits must be these bats; the wave of horrid smell, the rushing wings, and the dark <sup>pinioned</sup> winged form which dropped on the dead man. Of course Said <sup>(bin Ali)</sup> stricken with fear, <sup>apprehensive</sup> ~~fearful~~ before he even entered the hidden City, with the vivid imaginations of a coloured man had visualized and distorted what really was easy of explanation. Unexpectedly to find life in this city of the dead, had obviously unhinged Said. But what of the three friends who never emerged again? What of the dead man with his torn throat? What of the wounded and stricken companion who died imbecile and in agony in the native village? These questions pushed themselves to the front and demanded answers. //

<sup>While</sup> ~~As~~ Harvey stood silent, his thoughts rushing round in a circle, Paul wandered away and approached the second great hole. He lifted a stone from the ground and dropped it down the black mouth..... // The muffled thud of the stone as it struck the soft black earth was instantaneously followed by a series of angry screams. The whole underworld sprang into sudden life and sound. As Harvey, realizing that whatever lived in the holes had been effectually aroused into hostile activity, pulled himself out of his musings and turned towards Paul, he was struck numb with horror. Emerging from the black abyss was an object <sup>hideous</sup> ~~horrible~~ to behold; <sup>(a dirty black head)</sup> with a long sharp nose, glaring red eyes, and enormous

ears, two long pointed teeth protruding from ~~its~~ dark blue lips, was showing in the mouth of the pit. <sup>The creature seemed</sup> ~~it~~ appeared to be suspended in the air, but no sooner had it seen Paul, who stood stock-still, rooted to the ground with terror, than it dropped out of sight again. Its descent to the underworld was not of long duration, but it did not return alone - head after head of horrid ferocity and ugliness appeared where the one had been, and finally one great beast dragged itself over the rim and floundered on to the ground. It appeared to be about three feet long, and it suddenly ~~raised and~~ poised itself on an enormous pair of wings, rising about twelve feet in the air and hanging like an evil cloud above Paul. Harvey, seeing what was about to happen, dashed forward, <sup>and</sup> seized Paul ~~and~~ dragged him backwards. Before they could gain the shelter of the bush, the great bat with an angry snarl of disappointment, swooped downwards at them. It struck Paul heavily on one side, but Harvey was too quick for it; raising his gun he fired point blank as it was about to descend on Paul. The bat's screams of fury turned to screams of anguish - it fell <sup>prone</sup> its wings outspread, its teeth biting and tearing at the ground. The heads which had remained at the pit's mouth silently watching until now, with one accord pulled themselves into activity, ~~and a~~

~~fierce battle between man and beast ensued. The monster~~  
~~bats, seeing their comrade hurt and dying, were filled with~~  
~~rage, and made in a body, some flying, some scrambling along~~  
<sup>at the sight of</sup> <sup>an access of rage swept the monster bats</sup>

the ground, for the spot where Harvey and Paul stood. ~~Fortu-~~  
~~nately~~ The two men managed to reach the shelter of the trees  
before the onslaught, and once under the thickly interwoven  
branches, the bats could no longer use their wings. <sup>Bats</sup> Their  
numbers were overwhelming and increasing every moment; they  
swarmed out of the earth like ants, and moved, half-crawling,  
half running, at a surprising pace. Harvey <sup>had instantly</sup> realized that the  
~~one~~ chance of escape lay in preventing himself and Paul from  
being surrounded. The path behind them was fairly open, and  
if they could succeed in moving down it, side by side and  
backwards, using their guns as they retreated, they might keep  
their enemies at bay till they reached the open ground on the  
other side of the city walls. ~~Unfortunately~~ Paul <sup>however</sup> had ~~been~~  
seriously wounded by the blow from the bat, and though he  
could move along, he could only do so slowly and painfully.  
Harvey, therefore, bade Paul get behind him and proceed down  
the path as best he could, while he himself fired in quick  
succession at the wave of on-coming beasts. The shooting had  
roused the bats to greater ferocity and determination, ~~for~~ and  
though some of them stopped to rend and eat their dead and  
dying companions, the majority doggedly followed up the men.  
[ Even now there was a chance, for the path was narrow, the  
surrounding bush was thick, and Harvey was a good shot. They  
were almost at the gateway — safety was in sight. <sup>D</sup> But what  
spelt safety, spelt danger also: the bush was less dense, the



path was no longer the only means of egress. Harvey, every faculty strained in keeping the advancing mass at bay, failed to notice two bats which had separated themselves from the herd. Creeping and wriggling through the thinning bush, they gained the path ahead of Paul, who was painfully stumbling forward, now dropping to rest a moment, now covering a few yards of ground. He had just reached the more open space by the gateway when he was seized and enveloped in a mass of soft and evil-smelling darkness. Two great wings were locked around him, and he was flung backwards. A wave of dread swamped him, and he only found strength to call "Master" as he went under. Harvey turned to the cry in time to see what he felt must be the end of Paul. He made a supreme effort to save his faithful servant, turned his back on the path and fired at the bat which was holding Paul down, not knowing that a second waited to take its companions' place. Instantly, as Harvey turned his back, the mass of bats jerked forward after him, and as he reached the gateway and his fallen servant, they surrounded him on all sides, their grinning jaws foaming with expectation, their hungry eyes ~~fixing and~~ gloating on their now certain prey. Harvey still pressing backwards, was engulfed and over-whelmed. . . . .

During these happenings, and from the time that the shooting had announced certain but undefined danger, Cox and Said bin Ali, and the main body of the men, had been advancing

as rapidly as they could. And almost at the moment that Harvey was borne to earth, Cox and Said bin Ali entered the gateway. Had it not been for the presence of a white man, Said would have turned and fled at the ghastly sight which presented itself, before them. Harvey lay on his back to all appearances dead, his arms spread wide, his gun still clutched in one hand. The bats were evidently deciding whose prey he was, for some of them were sitting stealthily watching him, and the rest were fighting viciously with one another. Paul was hidden under a dense black mound, a mound which moved and struggled and screamed, ~~and indicated where he lay.~~

So engrossed were the bats with their foul orgy and their fightings, that the rescue party remained unobserved. Cox in silent pantomime gave orders for a general onslaught, and before the men had time to realize their own fear, they were dashing through the gateway to save their fallen Master. Taken completely by surprise, and terrified by the numbers and noise, the dark herd plunged towards the refuge of the trees, tramping on and biting one another as they went. Even Paul's mutilated body was deserted, ~~and~~ Without a second's hesitation, Harvey and he were lifted up and carried into safety outside the City's walls. Once outside, it was possible to ascertain the state of the victims. ~~Paul was quite dead~~ The flesh ~~was~~ *had been* literally stripped from <sup>Paul's</sup> ~~his~~ bones: little more than a skeleton

remained of what only a few moments before had been a living, moving human being.)

(Harvey appeared to be unhurt, but on raising him to force some whisky down his throat, a dark blood stain showed at the base of his spine. Cox hastily cut away the coat and shirt, and found four deep incisions. The attack had evidently been from the back, and though his heart still beat, his friend knew that death was imminent, for the spine had been actually pierced. Tenderly they lifted him into the blankets of which an improvised hammock had been made, and in silence they carried him back to camp. As the procession was starting Said bin Ali re-entered the fatal gateway; he had previously deputed one of his porters to cut and collect dry grass and sticks, and these he piled on the spot where Harvey had fallen. Pouring the oil from one of the lamps on to the already inflammable mass, he set a light to it. The wind was blowing steadily from the gateway towards the hidden city, and the undergrowth was dry. In a few moments a fierce crackling followed, and flames forced their way upwards. As the grief-stricken party slowly wound away from the gateway, the flames rose and spread towards the hidden horror. Columns of smoke blackened the air, and here and there an eddy of fire leapt into sight. Suddenly a loud roar announced that the trees as well as the undergrowth were burning.

The guardians of the forest were doomed. One white man had fallen a victim, but through his death the way had been

inally cleared for others treading in his footsteps. White power had pushed one more dread out of sight: a new foot-hold had been gained, but Africa had demanded and obtained her toll. Will her great spirit, which bends before the white invasion, ever be broken to its yoke, and her evil powers be chained in their dark fastnesses? Or is Africa to remain for ever the lure of the brave - their doom, written before they were born - the great unfathomable grave which men jostle one another to enter, into which they willingly cast their souls as well as their bodies? Who can answer these questions? Who can say aught else than that the blood of white men is a perpetual sacrifice upon her Altar, while she remains unappeasable and inscrutable.

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