

ber that the Magician urged him to take a couple more men, saying if he was going far it was better to be four than two. But the Hunter laughed in his gay careless manner and refused. He said more men meant more trouble, that he only meant to go about four hours, and would cut into the caravan road again, and be with us before sunset.

We started about half an hour after the Hunter, and we followed in his pony's tracks for another half hour - they then broke off to the north of the road, and we parted from them. It was a difficult march as so many loose stones lay in the road, and our new camping ground was not a pleasant one. At about two o'clock, when the Magician was reading in his tent, I saw a man approaching, as nearly running as he could over the stones. I watched lazily till he was near enough for me to recognise him as the Hunter's gun-bearer, and then I started up and ran to meet him. He was streaming with sweat, panting and hardly able to speak. I thrust a water bottle into his hand, and after he had emptied it he regained his voice and told me the Hunter had met with an accident, and that he had come for help. I took him to the Magician's tent, and he told the following tale. // They had gone about three hours when they suddenly came on to the kudu. This was so unexpected a sight that the Hunter had only time to take a hurried snap-shot before the beasts were off again. The Hunter hit the big bull, but too far behind - he separated from the does, and went off at a good pace over a small hill. The Hunter jumped on his pony and galloped after his quarry, meaning to dismount before he reached the crest of the hill and get a second shot at the retreating bull. He spurred his pony forward, (the gun-bearer was running stumbling over the stones as best he could), but in a

few moments there was a crash and a groan, and the Hunter was lying on the ground, the pony on top of him. How it occurred the gun-bearer could not tell us - he had been too busy in trying to get along himself to notice. When he got up to the fallen pony he found that the Hunter had partly extricated himself; one leg, though, was still pinned down by the pony. As the Hunter tried to free this leg, the pony kicked out and struck him full in the back - this the gun-bearer saw. He dragged his master out of reach of the pony's legs, but found to his horror that the Hunter could not move - the kick had apparently paralyzed the lower part of his body. The Hunter was fully conscious and said he was in no pain. The pony had a broken fore-leg, and was still struggling painfully, unable to get up. By the Hunter's orders the gun-bearer took his revolver and shot the pony. This done, his master told him to get back to camp as quickly as he could and procure help. Before leaving he had propped the Hunter as best he could against the trunk of a tree, and had left food, water, rifle, and revolver all close to him. Most of this tale was told as we were going to the rescue, for no sooner did the Magician hear the word "accident" than he started off. We took medicine-chest, hammock, blankets, and lanterns, and fifteen men; and within a quarter of an hour of the arrival of the gun-bearer we were under way. For the most, we marched silently - danger was with us again, and our voices were hushed before his warning note. We could not go very fast, and we only came to the foot of the small hill one hour before sunset. // As we began to mount, the Magician called to his brother in a loud voice bidding him to take heart for we were at hand. There was no reply. Climbing on, we noticed a tree thick

with bald-headed vultures, and we bent our steps in that direction - we knew that the dead pony lay near the Hunter and therefore thought little of these birds of prey. Again the Magician called, and again only silence answered. The gun-bearer ran forward under the trees saying, " Here, here is my master." But before he had reached the spot a cry of horror burst from his lips, and he turned and ran back to us. The Magician and I pushed forward, and in the ~~already~~ fading light all we could distinguish was two black mounds on the ground. The vultures arose with angry cries as we approached and flapped back before settling noisily on another tree. Our eyes were fixed on these strange-looking mounds - what were they? Great Allah save us, they were moving heaps of the deadly siafu, and under these living moving insects, what lay hidden? We could now descry the outlines of man and pony clothed in this living death blotted to the ground. Hastily we plucked the grass and bush, and lighting the bunches began beating the insects from their horrid feast. In a few moments the angry ants separated under the sparks and smoke, and the Hunter's body lay before us. The men lifted him gently, and laid him at some distance from where he had met his death. His face was gone, but the Magician found a revolver bullet in his brain. We all praised Allah that death had not come to him from those dread insects - that he had not closed his life in a hideous agony as he lay helpless and unable to move. As well as he could, the Magician examined the mutilated form. The kick at the base of the spine had caused complete powerlessness to the lower part of the body and legs, and would probably have proved fatal. Did the Hunter, with that second sight which comes to the maimed or dying, realize this, and did he take his own life before the approach of that deadly mantle

of ants? Or did he watch the gradual enveloping and obliteration of his dead pony, and wait till the red shroud was at his ~~own~~ feet, about to be cast over him, before he loosed his own spirit and left his body as a feast for the insects? Who can give answer? Allah alone knows, Allah alone understands. For us, poor humans, what meaning is there in the brave and strong being thus in one moment smitten to the earth, made from helpful to helpless, beaten down and trampled out, first maimed and tortured - the end but death?

We buried the Hunter where he lay - a long task to dig deep enough for his great body in the hard and stony ground, and it was night when we had finished. The hyaenas were howling close to us before our task was accomplished - we could hear their stealthy footsteps on all sides as they approached nearer and nearer. The Hunter was safe from their great greedy jaws; the mound of stones and thorns piled over him protected him securely from all beasts of prey, but the dead pony would provide a feast for these vile scavengers. As we finally descended the hill we heard them quarrelling and snapping, and even the crunch of bones.

We did not reach camp till shortly before dawn. It was exactly twenty-four hours since the Hunter had started off so gaily on what proved to be his last hunt. Already he was wandering in the land of spirits, gone no man knows whither. Had he joined his brother, Gentle-Heart, or was his Spirit-land as far away from that of Gentle-Heart as their land of life had been? Who knows? We live but to die, though there are as many manners of death as there are ways of living.

The Magician, spent, weary, and sad, made his way to his tent. Lights were burning in the Hunter's tent as well as in his own, though the Hunter from now on must make his way unlighted. The

sleepy porters pressed close asking for news, and many were the lamentations when we told our dread tale. Sleep fled from the eyes of all, and excited talk burst from every tongue. Then occurred what I had feared, and fearing, hid, since that first day of our start when we found and scorned the sign laid upon our path. The ^{men} huddled in a group round the fire gave voice to what had been slumbering in their minds, and what but for the power and influence of the Magician would have been muttered many weeks back - they agreed it was an unlucky journey, and that it could not be continued. They had started with three white men and already the spirit of the earth had claimed two of these three. One only now remained, and him they must protect and preserve. We had failed to listen to the voice of warning that first day of our ill-fated journey - now we were reaping the harvest of evil we had sown. Africa, the unknown, is a hard and exacting mistress: she compels obedience, and from those bold spirits who refuse to listen to her voice she takes toll in death. The men, talking softly yet persistently, decided that they would proceed no further on this accursed journey, but would bow to the inevitable, admit their own wrong, obey even thus belatedly the commands of the earth-spirit, and return humble and beaten to the coast. // Just as this decision had been reached, and the men were rejoicing that it had been made, the Magician walked out of his tent. He came straight over to the group round the fire, his eyes glowing more brightly than the burning logs. As one man, all rose to their feet, but my Master signed to them to re-seat themselves. He waited silently till the group had re-arranged itself, and then for the first time since we had left the Hunter's grave he spoke. So well did my Master, who was indeed a Magician, understand the ways and hearts of

black men that he had no need to hear their words to know their thoughts. He fixed his piercing glance on the head-man, who shrank before it as from a blow, and in a voice quiet and stern asked what he meant by coming unpermitted to a decision in conjunction with the men, regarding the movements of himself and the caravan.

"Am I," he said, "either failing in mind or in strength that you, my children and followers, must decide my movements for me? In what have you suffered by these journeyings? Have you lacked food, clothing, medicine, care, or kindness? Have I, so much as by a hairs - breadth, broken my contract with you? And would you break yours with me? In my dealings with black men I have hitherto found them loyal and faithful, obedient to my commands, willing to follow me through dark paths and dread countries, listening to my voice, guided by my words. Yet you, here before me, who have in past days followed me thus faithfully, would now take upon yourselves a decision which concerns you not. For me, and me only, it is to say come or go; for you it is to obey. Sorrows have fallen on me heavily; my brothers have both gone before me to the unknown Land of Spirits - they have been taken and I have been left. I, here living before you, swear by Allah the living God I will accomplish my journey. I will force my way through to the end, yea even if the end prove only death. You, weak-kneed ones, may now decide for yourselves. If you would return to your flesh-pots, rise and be gone; if you would still follow and obey me, be ready in one hour from now to start forth with me"

He turned on his heel and returned to his tent. The men, cowed and crest-fallen, bowed their heads in submission to the Magician's will. It was true that neither suffering nor sickness had befallen them; they had been well cared for and generously treated. They

agreed in hushed and anxious whispers that the evil signs could only concern the white men, and that if the Magician was bent on continuing to ignore these signs, and to accomplish his journey, it was not for them to gainsay him. Having thus agreed to make no more difficulties, they quietly arose from the fire and made their loads ready for the day's march. As the sun burst on to the busy camp, the Magician came amongst us again, and calling the head-man to him asked what he and the men meant to do. "Follow you, Master," was the answer. The Magician nodded, dismissed the head-man, and calling me to his side told me to see that the Hunter's things were well packed, after which his loads were to be piled together and a small thorn-boma built round them. He behaved as if nothing unusual had occurred, spoke to a man here and there, and, finally, after a couple of hours hard work everything being ready, we started forward once more.

The next week slipped quietly by. The Magician hunted when meat was required, and Venus rejoiced. As we approached the country of the savages of the golden ornaments we noticed signs of a great drought. The land lay parched and burnt, and what on our last journey had been well-cultivated plantations now lay waste and deserted. The rivers no longer flowed, but the water stood in stagnant pools, and the small streams and water-holes were dried out. Villages, the huts roofless and in ruins, broken cooking utensils and grindstones left in the door ways, a scattered handful of bleached bones here and there met us on every side, but no sign of a living creature, or even of recent life. Famine had laid her heavy hand upon this country, and the savages were either dead or had fled to some more fertile spot.

We marched for four days through this silent and deserted land.

Even the air we breathed seemed heavy with the fumes of death. On the fifth day, as we neared our camping ground, we saw a thin column of smoke rising on the edge of a small banana plantation. Leaving the men to pitch camp, my Master and I pushed forward. Smoke meant fire, and fire meant human beings, and my Master was fretting with impatience to find the savages who had promised to lead him to the Land of Gold. // As we approached across the fairly open ground which joined the plantation, we were able to make out a good-sized village among the bananas, and figures working on the land beyond. We trod so quietly that we had almost reached the first hut before our presence was noticed. Immediately on our being seen a cry of warning and fear was raised, and this was taken up on all sides as the savages ran together collecting at the gate of the village. They made an incessant noise, shouting, and pointing, and stamping, running hastily backwards and forwards, and calling to one another. Their attitude was hostile and angry, and spears and knives glinted in the sun as the men pushed to the front, forcing the women and children into the centre of the village. My Master raised his right hand, open, the fingers pointing towards the men at the gate, in salutation - the form of salutation made among these savages when they are friendly - and continued to approach at a slow pace. As he reached the still excited group, an elder pushed his way towards us, and we both instantly recognised in him the Chief with whom we had made our compact the year before. He was a tall and imposing figure, and the young men shrank humbly from him as he advanced. Seeing my Master, the Chief saluted him gravely, and beckoned to us to follow him to his council seat under a large low-branched tree situated a few yards from the village. We touched hands and knees, as is the custom of these savages, and then all three seated ourselves on small

stools which stood ready under the tree. Venus placed herself between my Master's knees, and sat watching the Chief interestedly out of her bright eyes. This interest he evidently returned, for he ~~was so busy looking at her that he hardly gave us a glance.~~ During this time of mutual inspection on the part of Venus and Chief Mola, the inhabitants of the village, some hundred and fifty all told, approached and stood round us in an inquiring, silent circle. Looking at them we noticed that they no longer wore the gold ornaments with which on our last visit they had all been so profusely decorated. A glance at Chief Mola showed us that he also had discarded his golden trappings. ~~Seeing Chief Mola still so engrossed with Venus, my Master told her to give the Chief her hand, which she promptly did. He, on his part, was so astonished that he bowed low before~~ her muttering: "Magic, magic, a golden beast that knows the words of men." ~~As he still showed no signs of attending to us,~~ My Master addressed him formally, and asked him if he ~~still~~ remembered us and our compact. At the sound of ^{the} Magician's voice, a voice which always commanded immediate attention and respect, Chief Mola ~~took his eyes from Venus and~~ replied that he remembered everything. The Magician then told him of our journeyings, and asked what was the meaning of the deserted villages, Chief Mola was silent for a short while, and then raising his eyes he said:

"A curse has come upon me and upon my people. We, who were numerous and mighty, have become shrunken and weak. Look, oh Magician, upon this small handful of people - they are all who remain to me. Evil has been rife in my land - I who was rich and powerful am become poor and weak. When I beat my war drums to assemble my warriors, there is no answering call of drums, for my villages are

empty, my warriors are dead. When I clap my hands to call for my children or my slaves, no one comes to my clapping, for children and slaves are dead. When I send for my tribute of grain, gold, ivory, and skins, it is not brought - empty-handed and sad my messengers return, for all my land is dead and the dead bring no tribute. We before you, all who are left of a mighty race, live under the shadow of great dread - fear has us by the hand, death is our companion. Well do you, oh Magician, who know all things, know that as a people we who are black have no fear of death. The last sleep must come to all, and who are we that we should fear to sleep and rest? We think not on such things, neither do we complain when death takes us by the hand. What we now fear is the curse. We no longer die as men, fighting, working, or playing - we die by stealth, and from some dread magic. My people have fallen from the weaving of spells and we know not the weaver. Strong men, young women, small children become wrapped in unnatural slumbers, and thus slumbering, their spirits pass and they die. Their sickness is but sleep, yet even when beaten with sticks or burnt with fire, though still living and breathing, they will not wake. This is the evil which is upon us, this is the cause of my empty villages and uncultivated lands, this is the terror ever with us. Even as we speak together, one among us may be ~~stricken~~^{stricken} and sink down in a slumber from which there is no awakening. This curse came to us from the Land of Gold, and though we have cast all our golden ornaments from us the curse remains. Of my last caravan of two hundred men to the Land of Gold but ten men returned. Well do I know that the way is long and the dangers of that way are great, but my men are cunning in danger, and can pass the great water in safety, avoiding the dread beasts and

huge serpents, making spells against medicine, and weaving charms against the strange peoples and their magic. Until now my caravans have returned safely, the toll of dead men being small and not worth the counting. These ten men who returned told of this new magic against which spells and charms broke in pieces. Told of the death of their companions, how they were stricken one by one never to rise again, how sleep took them even as they walked abroad or ate. They said the Land of Gold was under a cloud of sleep, the dwellers in that land slumbered with those who came to trade. Of those ten men but three now live; the others slept to death a few moons after their return. Now, oh Magician, know that in this time of evil I must break my contract with you, for I have sworn an oath that if the sleeping death may but be removed from my people I will send no more to the Land of Gold. For two moons since I swear, no one has been stricken, and I dare not, for the sake of these my people, break my oath and again call down the curse. For you, I will serve you all I can. I will send with you to the shores of those mighty waters which separate my land from the Land of Gold, guides. These guides shall call you some of the fisher folk - no man's people - who live hidden in the reeds by the waters, and they, with their canoes, shall take you to those sleeping golden shores, I pray you, if you reach those shores in safety and if the sleeping hand touch you not while you sojourn there, that you will return not through my land, for if you carry gold with you my curse will be renewed. Those same fisher folk will direct you to the further shore lying out where the sun sinks away, and where men, white as yourself, live in houses built of stones. I will order that they take you safely to these shores - they obey me, for I and my people have ever been their friends.

I speak thus in sorrow, for you are a mighty man, and my heart goes out to you. Tomorrow before dawn my guides will await you. Farewell, oh Magician, and may your magic be strong enough to save you alive."

Chief Mola rose from his stool as he finished speaking, turned and was about to go. He then came back to the side of my Master and asked humbly if he might once more hold the hand of the golden beast. His last words were, "Sleep not near the waters of the Great Lake; it is there that the sleeping death lies hidden."

The following morning we started before dawn. Chief Mola's village lay clothed in silence and in sleep - neither man nor beast was stirring. Mounting the sloping ground beyond, we turned once more to look, knowing full well we should none of us return whence we came by this road. As we stood facing the west, the sun rose behind us and shot his golden rays on to the village we had just left. From dimness and shadows the world blazed into light and life, and, looking, we saw the tall form of Chief Mola standing in the gateway of his village, his arms raised above his bowed head as he greeted the sun and bade us a final farewell. He remained thus bowed and motionless, yet supplicating, as long as we were within sight. Many times turned we always to see him a dark sad figure in the golden sunlight.

For eight days we travelled before the great sweet water was reached. Our road was always upwards, and we wound and climbed through neglected and overgrown plantations, and past empty and decaying villages. It was a country empty of all human life - the only voices and footsteps of men were our own, and they indeed sounded dim and faint in the heavy silent air. A great wave of sorrow and foreboding seemed to engulf us all; we were powerless, though strug-

gling, as it beat us back and forth. I noticed that my Master walked and lived almost in a trance - he ate when food was placed before him, and he walked as firmly as of old, but he lived with unseeing eyes and unhearing ears. He was looking inwards, and hearing but the voices of the past. Venus alone could rouse him: she would jump on to his knee and talk, for speech it truly was, and caress him till he tore his thoughts back to this world, and the strained look in his eyes softened and became living again. I should have thought him ailing in health but his body was strong and vigorous. Yet I remember that the day which brought us to the great water he told me his neck pained and was somewhat swollen; he must, he said, have twisted it sleeping.

On the eighth day we reached the summit of the rising ridge we had been working along, and as we came on to the flat grass-covered crest we saw below us, spread like a great silver carpet, the boundless and quiet waters of the inland sea. Sea and sky were one, united with a line no human eye could detect - a melting, shining, unending expanse, fused each in the other. Looking at last on these great waters, a sigh of relief passed from my Master to the last porter. We had succeeded - here we were, the silver carpet which led to our golden land at our feet, unrolled, waiting to bear us on its glittering surface to our goal.

My Master signed to the men to descend, and himself remained behind, still gazing at the water as if spell-bound. So ^{motionless} ~~moveless~~ did he stand that I almost feared. Suddenly he threw out his arms, and in a strained and hoarse voice he cried, "The price is great, oh God; grant that the end may be worthy of this price. I have fought my way through death and danger; let my reward be rest and

happiness. Peace, grant me peace of mind, for I am weary." Having uttered these strange words he moved slowly, almost reluctantly, forward as if some unseen cord drew him surely to the waters.

The camp was pitched at some distance from the thick fringe of reeds and papyrus which edged the waters with their emerald brightness, for we remembered the words of Chief Mola. Even so the flies tormented us, flies without number, and of all sorts. Towards evening they became almost unbearable: they rose in great clouds like smoke from the surface of the waters and overwhelmed us. Our tents, cooking and water utensils, yea even the fires were full of them, and still they increased and multiplied, the noise of their wings being like to the sound of a rushing, roaring torrent. We fell on our faces before them and let them pass over us as a wave.

At about sunset our guides, who had gone to seek the fisher folk, returned, and at the same time as they reached camp two small canoes, each propelled by a couple of men, sprang up on the water before us. The canoes were run into the reeds, and the men themselves came on shore. Fortunately they understood the language of Chief Mola's people, so we could ourselves speak with them. The guides told us that they had great difficulty in finding the fishers and these latter informed us with great calmness that nearly all their tribe was dead. They seemed a curious people living an almost solitary life along the shores of the Lake. No villages have they, and very rarely do more than five or six of them live together. In spite of this they are all, for many many miles, known to each other, and a sort of brotherhood exists between them - they may use one another's canoes, fishing baskets, or traps. They said that they were willing to take us to the Land of Gold, but that they had only these two canoes, and unless we would wait for them to search

for others we must decide to leave nearly all our caravan behind. This was a great blow to my Master, but finally, after much talk, it was agreed that the Magician, Hamis (he who had been gun-bearer to the Hunter) and I, with a few necessary loads, should go in the canoes. As it was impossible to leave the caravan thus miles from food or help, Chief Mola's guides offered to take it to within two days' march of where the white men were making a station. The caravan could then proceed alone, and my Master gave them letters saying who they were, and that he himself would arrive among the white men before many days had passed. The fisher folk promised that they would not only take us to the Land of Gold but that they would wait for us there, and when we were ready would conduct us close to this same station of white men. We could, they said, journey in canoes to within twelve hours of it. Hastily Hamis and I sought what was most necessary for my Master - a small tent, food, blankets - for the fisher people said we must start before the sun. We all slept but ill that night; the men talked excitedly, the thought of so soon being among their own people in a station again, filled their minds with pleasure. But they also felt distressed at leaving the Magician, and it was only his assurance of joining them ^{without delay} ~~so soon~~ that gave them peace.

While it was still dark the guides and fisher folk carried our loads to the canoes, and the shadows of night were ~~still~~ lying whispering on the water when my Master said good-bye to his faithful children and embarked on the last stage of his journey. The porters came to the very edge of the water, yea, some waded in by the side of the canoes, so loath were they to leave the Magician. Tears were in many eyes, and my Master himself was much moved. Thus we sorrowfully departed, and the shadows soon lay between us and the land we

had left - our comrades were blotted from our sight. So still were the waters that long after we had ceased to see even the reeds that edged the land we could hear the voices of our comrades; they were borne to us like the dim voices of ghost-people, and they drifted round us in melancholy tones.

For three days we travelled all day, save for a two hours rest at noon. The fisher folk showed no fatigue and sang in droning voices as they paddled. Close together were the two canoes, and at night we ever pitched my Master's tent for him at some distance from the water. The water lay calm the whole time, not a ripple stirred its surface - it seemed dead. The fisher folk told us that often it was shaken with great storms, and waves lashed its surface - waves so angry and wild that no canoe could ride with safety on them. He who is thus overtaken knows full well that the spirit of the Lake has claimed him for its own.

A great peace seemed to have fallen on my Master, clothing him as with a garment. He sat quiet and dreamy, hardly speaking. Even Venus caressed him in vain, though occasionally he would rouse himself and pass his hand gently over her head. He did not seem to be sleeping: he seemed remote and apart, and with an effort he brought himself back to us. Sometimes he wrote in a small book which he always carried with him, but oftener he sat silent and unoccupied, his eyes fixed on the distant shimmering waters of the Lake.

On the fourth day the shores of the Lake altered. We could see green slopes and large trees; lilies lay in purple and blue masses on the water, and the fisher folk had to use their poles to push the canoes through the floating flowers and their long fleshy stalks. Slowly we went, and it was noon before we reached the shores of the Land of Gold. Our canoes ran up on a shining sandy beach, and we

stepped ashore, deep emotion clutching at our hearts. My Master looked round him; then, as if he knew the place well, he strode forwards. The reeds had been cut back from the shore, and unhesitatingly my Master stepped on to an old and nearly overgrown path. The ground rose gently, soft green grass grew fine and thick spread under the trees like a velvet mantle. Flowers of all sizes and colours dotted the grass, and every tree and bush was burdened with great brilliant blossoms. So bright and dazzling were the colours that the place looked as if it had been decorated for some great festival. Beautiful, many-hued birds and butterflies hovered around the flowers, and delicious soft scents filled the air. Joy and beauty lay on this wonderful land, a beauty so startling that we seemed walking in a dream and I feared to wake and find it vanished. For my Master he looked neither to the right nor to the left - his eyes were set in front, seeing what was hidden from me. Up the slope we hurried and down the other side, where, flowing slowly and proudly, the river of gold lay before us. Its waters covered a golden floor, and on the further side of the river great pits full of shining gold lay glittering in the sun. The remains of an old hanging bridge spanned the river, and with difficulty and some danger we crossed it. On and on, past the pits to the dim shadows of the trees beyond, where we could descry a village of many huts. Not a sound was to be heard, no smoke rose among the trees. We had passed old and rusted implements lying near the pits, and rotted baskets, only their framework remaining, the rest consumed by white ants. But no human being had we seen, and no voice or movement of the living had we heard. As we entered the shadow of the trees, a great fear clutched me and I begged my master to halt. Impatiently he waved me away, and unfalteringly he entered the village. If the land we had come to was a dream

of beauty this village was a reality of horror. It was as a village of the living, with all those things, great and small, the living use and need. Grain lay rotting in trays and baskets; half-ground flour lay mouldy on the grind-stones, cooking pots, half-filled with stagnant, evil-smelling water, were ready placed upon the cooking stones; stools stood at the doors of the huts, and partially rotted garments lay on the ground. But were they garments? And if so, what strange heaps they lay in, and what strange shapes they made! I approached one of these heaps, and touching it with my foot, the weather-rotted garments fell into shreds, and disclosed a dried and shrivelled skeleton. Horror held me fast - I felt we had intruded into some forbidden place. We stood at the threshold of the Gate of Death. To enter this village of the dead was to give ourselves over to that which the living may not seek - a crossing of that boundary line, which lies unseen of most but felt by all, between the spirit and the body. My Master at the sight of the skeleton had stood as if transfixed, and I, turning towards him, fell on my knees and begged him to turn back before it was too late. His glance, kind yet remote, fell upon my prostrate form; he stretched forth his hand and raised me to my feet. "Simba", he said, "for me, as for all mankind, there can be no going back. We are driven forward and onward by the fire which burns within us - many of us know that we are being driven to our own destruction, but none the less we are compelled to press forward. Well do you know, my faithful follower, that to turn back is impossible. Each life, great or small, has its goal; the weak fall by the way, and the fearful turn back only to perish. The strong look up and push on, never flinching and never fearing, fighting till the last, their goal before their eyes - the goal which no man reaches, but which leads and guides him through this life and

touches his hand as he passes through the gates of death. My goal has touched my hand; my time has come, and I am about to bid you farewell. The finger of death was laid upon me when we crossed the boundary of Chief Mola's country - I have fought and struggled against it but it avails me naught. The magic of the sleeping death has woven its spells round me, and I have not the strength, nay nor even the wish to break them. As we landed on this unknown shore, the way lay as a map before me, and my footsteps were guided by a force other than mine own to this place of the dead. The river of gold I have crossed, the gates of deep shadows stand open before me, and I must now enter them alone. Allah be with you, Simba, and give you a safe return. Take with you the letters that are on me, and comfort and tend my loving Venus "

As he finished speaking my Master, who had been standing firm and erect sank forward. The light had already gone from his eyes, and he moved his hand as the blind do, seeking for the form of Venus. She, who was never far from him, felt he was passing from us, and rained warm caresses on his tired face, pressing herself into his arms and creeping close to him. As my Master clasped the small, living body of Venus, a smile of perfect peace settled on his face, and with a sigh of relief he sank to sleep

The journey from the Land of Gold remains confused and dim in my mind. One thing only stands out clearly: when Hamis and I buried my Master, when tenderly and sadly we were about to lay him in his grave, Venus attacked us with fury, and finally jumped into the grave and began licking my Master's dead face. With great difficulty I drew her out, and bound her to a tree as we filled in the grave with earth and stones. Twice she bit through the thongs, and rushing at the newly-made mound began digging out the earth, crying all the

time. She dug and cried until she was exhausted, and I then picked her up and carried her down to the canoe.

The fisher folk landed us as near as they could to the station the white men were making - it was but a two days' march. I know nothing of it but that Venus fell ill and I carried her in my arms. Heavier and heavier she became - I have no memory but for that deadening and increasing weight, and my struggles not to sink beneath it and so fail in my Master's dying behest. I heard the voice of Hamis faint and far as at a great distance, reassuring me, his arm stretched out to help me - and finally a great, black sea of emptiness

Many days after I woke to find myself in hospital. There I remained for many more days. I had reached the camp of the white men, and, reaching it, had fallen unconscious at their feet, Venus still in my arms. She died the following day; the doctor said flies had bitten and poisoned her - well do I know that she died for love of her dead and gone Master, as I also would gladly have died had Allah so willed it."

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Simba sat silent, his eyes fixed on the burning logs, his heart far away in the past. After a few moments he rose to his feet, and as he turned to go he muttered to himself: "Great is Allah, great and wonderful are His works, before Him we are but as dust. Oh Allah, All Powerful, grant that I may meet and know my Master when I too reach that Unknown Land, when I follow the great dead through those silent gates to the Shadows beyond."