

DEATH MATES FOR THE LUST-LOST

The jungles rang to the shrill screams of Martinez and his cohorts as they turned the forest primeval into a charnel house for barbarous orgies of mutilation!



by
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THERE was something eerie about the unbroken line of trees along the shore, Miriam Daly decided, something forbidding, something frightening. She tried to shake off the uneasy awakening of apprehension and marked it down to fatigue, but as the cocky little launch wound its way down the murky river the feeling of uneasiness increased in intensity. She began to wish now that she had refused this booking, began to wish she had taken the counsel of more experienced minds.

"I don't know what kind of a place they're booking you into," Eve Gale had drawled when Miriam told her about it, "but I know this, when you're that far away from civilization and something happens—it won't do you any good to wave your Equity card in the face of those savages down there."

"Savages?" Miriam had chided. "Don't be silly.

There are no savages in the part of South America where I'm going."

Now she wasn't so sure.

She glanced at the other occupants of the launch, and read the same anxiety in their faces. Opposite her sat a young blonde with petulantly soft lips, and large liquid blue eyes that now seemed clouded with some nameless fear. The greenness of her eye shadow stood out in startling contrast to the pallor of her face, and she nervously rolled and unrolled a little kerchief in her well-kept hands.

Miriam leaned across. "I beg your pardon," she said, "but I wonder if you're on your way to the Martinez'?"

A gleam of hope lighted up the girl's beautiful eyes. "Then you're going there, too?" she asked in a husky voice. "I'm so glad. All this," she indicated the tree-adorned shore, "was beginning to get me

down.”

Miriam smiled sympathetically. “Yes, I know. Me, too.” She, too, felt strangely reassured by the fact that the girl opposite was also on her way to Martinez’. “What is it, a casino, or a theatre, or what?”

The fear crept back into the blonde’s face. “I—I don’t know. All I know is that I’ve been hitting a bad streak of luck, and then when an agent offered me this, I—I snapped at it.”

An invisible band seemed to tighten about Miriam’s chest. She turned to the other occupants of the launch, who had seemed to listen to the conversation with interest. “Is anybody else here going to the Martinez place?” she asked. Every one of them nodded. “Does anybody know anything about it?”

A mannish, heavy-shouldered brunette at her side grinned, showing even, white teeth. “I’ve been wondering myself what they’d want with an aerialist all the way down here, but,” she shrugged eloquently, “a job’s a job.”

An uneasy silence fell over the group, to be broken by the huge aerialist. “I don’t suppose anybody has noticed it,” she said, “but does it strike you as strange that there’s not a man in the whole group?”

“That’s right,” Miriam admitted, “but maybe the management wants an all girl show. There’s nothing very strange in that, is there?”

“Maybe not,” the aerialist conceded, “if it were for a floor show. I’m an air performer and nobody’s taken the trouble to catch my act. How about the rest of you?”

A hurried census of the passengers revealed that aside from Miriam, whose specialty was a tap-toe dance, the blonde was a blues singer, the drugstore redhead was a magician’s assistant, the nervous-looking thin woman in the severe dress admitted to being a concert pianist while the stout woman was a lecturer on public health.

“Rather a queer floor show our friend Martinez is planning, eh?” the broad-shouldered female smiled, but the coldness of her eyes belied the warmth of the grin.

DARKNESS hid the house proper as the boat snaked its way to the shore, but against the dark sky, Miriam could catch the faint outline of spires and a turret. On all sides was the death-like quiet of an unbroken jungle, and behind her in the

water she could hear the angry swirling of some large amphibian as it splashed its way past the boat.

“We’re on an island,” the aerialist, who had identified herself as Phyllis, told Miriam. She nodded, something in her throat making speech undesirable.

The little party, huddled together, followed the pilot of the boat up a winding path, through a heavy iron gate to the entrance of what appeared to be an old ivy covered castle. At a knock, the heavy door swung open, revealing a long, dimly lit hall.

The servant who bowed them in announced, “Mr. Martinez will see you directly in the library,” and turned to lead the way.

Martinez was a short squat man, tanned the color of old mahogany. His thick, sensuous lips were only half concealed by an untidy Vandyke that straggled toward his chest. His hair, combed in the semblance of a pompadour, was coarse and wiry, matched only by the fierce bristling of eyebrow that served to hide the pigginess of his eyes. His voice, when he spoke, was harsh and guttural.

“Good evening, ladies,” he greeted them. “I trust you have had a comfortable trip.” His lips parted in an oily smile, revealing the blackened stumps of his teeth. “You shall be shown to your rooms, and tomorrow we will discuss what is to be done.” His tone was one of dismissal.

Phyllis, the aerialist, stepped forward. “I beg your pardon,” she said. “I wonder if you could give us some idea of what we are to do here. We were under the impression that we were to work in a casino or a theatre of some kind—”

“You are entertainers, no?” the bearded man spat out. “Have no fear, you will entertain me.” His eyes swept over the tall, muscular figure of the woman who had addressed him. “Hmm, you are powerful for a woman. Tell me, what is it you do?”

“I am a trapeze artist,” Phyllis said evenly.

The man’s eyes swept over the other entertainers, coming to rest on the stout figure of the lecturer. “You,” he shouted, his pig-like eyes becoming red with anger, “who sent you here?”

The woman started violently. “Why, why, I was booked by—”

He waved her explanation aside. “Never mind, never mind. I’ll hear your act tonight. If it fails to please me you will return by the boat that brought you. Yours, and,” his eyes again combed the group, coming to rest on the pouting-lipped blues singer

and the shapely magician's assistant, "you two stay as well. The rest of you had better get some rest."

A HALF nude servant led the way up a long, uncarpeted staircase to half a dozen rooms on the next floor. He opened each door with a key and motioned the women inside. A chill finger traced its way up Miriam's back as she heard the door lock behind her. She ran to the window, but there was a drop of twenty feet into darkness there. She sat on the bed and tried desperately to recover her rapidly ebbing courage.

She had no way of knowing how long she sat there before the tapping on her window brought her to her feet with a start. Stark fear squeezed the breath from her body and made her incapable of motion.

Suddenly a face appeared at the window! A strange face, yet hauntingly familiar. In a flash she recognized it to be that of Phyllis, the trapeze artist, but in some way it was different!

Haltingly, she made her way to the window and threw back the catch. Into the room bounded the half nude figure of a man!

"Surprised?" he grinned. "It's a long, long story of why I had to pass myself off as a woman, but since they haven't started yet, I guess you have time to hear it now."

Miriam nodded weakly and fell into a nearby chair.

"I'm really Phil Castle of the Flying Castles. My kid sister fell from a trapeze about five years ago, and though her body mended readily enough, she lost her nerve and she couldn't go back into aerial work. Instead, she found she had a flair for singing. She was doing pretty well at it, too, about the time our troupe went abroad on a tour. We were gone for about three years, and when we got back she had disappeared off the face of the earth. I've spent the past year tracing her, and the trail led here. I learned this Martinez wanted only women. I applied, and here I am. And here I intend to stay until I learn what kind of devilry this Martinez is up to."

The girl smiled a weak smile. "Well, I don't care why you're here. It's a relief just to know you are, and—"

The man clasped his hand over her mouth gently. "Shh, do you hear anything out there?" he indicated the open window. She listened for a moment, then nodded.

"Somebody's going out," she whispered. In response to a motioned request, she put out the light, then joined him at the window.

Below, the man who described himself as Martinez was at the head of a small party that was making its way into the jungle. At each side was a semi-nude native, dressed only in loin cloth and bearing a torch. In the rear, six other natives half dragged the three women who had been left behind. Just as the jungle swallowed the last of the party, the blonde blues singer screamed a loud, despairing cry that died down in a gurgle.

"Where are they taking them?" Miriam asked in a frightened voice.

The man shrugged. "I don't know, but I'm going to find out," he said. He opened the window and tested the heavy ivy growth that covered the building. "Strong enough for two," he said; "want to come?"

"I don't want to go," the girl admitted, "but I'm certainly not going to stay here." She shivered. "Do you think they're going to kill them?" she asked.

The man's voice was serious. "I think they're going to be lucky if they do kill them," he said. "Well, we're about ready to start, so you'd better get aboard." He knelt down and helped her onto his broad back. "If you're inclined to dizziness, you can close your eyes while we go down."

She gritted her teeth and shook her head. "I'm all right," she said.

When they reached the ground, he caught her by the arm. "See that red glare in the sky?" he asked. "That's probably where they are. Let's head that way."

The trip through the jungle toward the red glare was the most difficult thing Miriam had ever done in her life. She fought back the tears as branches whipped at her face and tore at her clothes. Twice she fell, and had to be helped to her feet by her surefooted guide. Suddenly, he stopped her with his hand.

"They're right ahead now," he warned. "Think you can hold onto my back while we do some fancy stuff without a net?"

She clenched her fists again and nodded. This time, disregarding her weight on his back, the man scrambled up a nearby tree with the grace of a cat. Then, cautiously testing the branches as he went, he traveled from tree to tree until he found a comfortable spot in the branches of a large leafy tree that overlooked the meeting place.

Miriam caught her breath at the sight below her. Seated around the huge bonfire was a score of naked, brown little men who watched avidly the argument going on between their chief and the white man from the big house. Finally an agreement seemed to be reached, and Martinez addressed the three white women.

“YOU were brought out here to entertain me,” he said, an obscene tongue licking at his thick lips. “And I propose to see that you do. Martinez, as you probably have guessed, is not my name, but that doesn’t matter. Years ago, I was internationally famed as a wild game hunter and devoted my life to tracking down the wildest of beasts.” He paused and mopped at his head with a handkerchief. “That palled,” he explained, “because despite the fiction that animals are shrewd they are no match for the brain of man. There no longer was any thrill in hunting them down, so I cast about to discover some form of game that could give me a run for my money. In you ladies I hope to find that sport.”

With a low moan, the soft eyed blonde slumped to the ground in a faint. Martinez continued to speak. “I have found by experience that the urge to exist is stronger in the female than in the male, and that the female, lacking the strength of the male and his stupid courage, is more likely to use her ingenuity in escaping from me—”

The stout woman lecturer stepped up. “And if we refuse to be hunted like beasts?”

Martinez threw his coarse head back in a loud, roaring laugh. “That, ladies, is your privilege. I had brought you out here to provide an example to the others of what would happen if they refused to play their parts. However,” he indicated the unconscious form of the thick lipped blonde with disdain, “I find you are much more desirable than she. You shall see.” He called the head of the tribe, who brought two of the members of the tribe to carry the blonde to a wide, flat stake in the middle of the clearing near the fire.

The two natives held the girl upright against the post, while Martinez, taking a long bow from the hands of the chief, carefully notched an arrow, took aim and let it fly its singing way, to lodge in the soft flesh of the girl’s shoulder, pinning her to the board. With another arrow, he transfixed her other shoulder in like manner.

From somewhere a drum started beating and the

natives were on their feet singing and dancing in mad frenzy. The noise and the pain brought the blonde out of her faint, and she screamed a heartrending plea for help that froze the blood of the two in the tree.

Suddenly the drumbeats died down and the tribe’s medicine man took possession of the girl. With rough tongs, he picked a piece of live coal from the fire, placed it on the girl’s flesh. The girl’s scream for mercy died in her throat with the coming of merciful unconsciousness.

Once again pain brought consciousness back to the blonde. Again the woods rang with a spine chilling scream that turned the stomach of the unseen spectators to ice.

“They’re—they’re barbecuing her,” Miriam said, with stark horror in her voice. “They’re cooking her alive.” She covered her eyes with her hands.

Below the body of the tortured girl was twitching with pain, her eyes glassy with the glare of madness. Again the medicine man approached, this time with a sharp edged knife, and his eyes were fastened on the softness of her white, round throat. . . .

WHEN Miriam awoke, she was in her room, and the man was at her side, washing her face tenderly with water.

“Did they—” she asked weakly.

“Just lie quiet,” the man urged. “You’ll be all right.” He tried to push her head back on the pillow.

She forced her way to a sitting position. “But I’ve got to know. Did they kill the others, too?” she demanded.

The man shook his head. “No, they agreed to play his mad game. He gave them an hour start, picked two of the natives to act as bloodhounds, took a little nap. That’s when we left.”

“Do you think—?” she started to ask, when a noise outside the house interrupted her. They crept to the window and watched. Suddenly they could make out the forms of Martinez and his two guides. Each of the guides carried a little bundle.

The man turned to her. “Do I think they made it? No. Let’s not worry about it until it’s our turn. In the meantime, try to get some sleep. We may need all our strength before very long now.”

She nodded and he was gone out the window in a flash. Sleep eluded her, and when it came, it was

filled with nightmares of blood-drinking man-hunters and cannibals. She awoke in a cold sweat to find it morning.

She dressed with shaking fingers, to be interrupted by a knock on her door. "Food ready below," was the accented announcement. It was punctuated by the insertion of a key into the lock and the squeak of falling tumblers.

Finished her dressing, the girl found her way down the uncarpeted stairway to a large unfurnished room off the hallway, where the rest of the little company was gathered for breakfast.

Phil, the aerialist, was there in his female makeup; the concert pianist was fluttering nervously as she came in. "Where are the rest?" the pianist asked. "This young lady here," she indicated Phil, "told me they were sent back last night." She shivered, pulled her jacket about her thin shoulders, and looked about nervously. "I wish I'd been sent back with them. I don't like all this."

The conversation was cut short by the entrance of a native waiter with a steaming dish of food. "Where is our esteemed host?" Phil asked him. "I see the place set only for three people. Doesn't he eat with us?"

The waiter showed sharp, filed teeth in a wolfish grin. "Master no eat now. Him sleep all day, him no sleep all night. Him not hungry now."

The short meal was a silent one. Neither Phil nor Miriam felt inclined to discuss the night's discovery in front of the nervous pianist, and the latter seemed too engrossed in her own thoughts to start a conversation.

At the conclusion of the meal, the wispy little woman scurried to her room, leaving Miriam and Phil to make the most of each other's company. They walked out into the bright sunshine, and found their way down to the pier. The boat was no place in sight.

"What were they carrying last night, Phil?" Miriam asked, her voice tense with emotion. "Was it—"

"I don't honestly know what it was," the man admitted, "but I intend to find out. You'd better get to your room, and I'll—"

"You'll do nothing of the sort," the girl interrupted him. "I'm in this with you, and I want to know everything that's going on. Besides, I may be able to help—"

He smiled and squeezed her arm. "Good gal. I really didn't think you'd allow yourself to be

shanghaied that way," he admitted. "Just thought that maybe you'd like to take a nap—"

"There's nothing I'd like less right now than a nap," the girl admitted with a shudder. "Everything about this place drips horror. I even get the shivers at the thought of going back into that house—even in the daytime. Where are we going, by the way?"

"While you were sleeping last night I did a little bit of snooping. There's some sort of a room under that main hallway that faces out back toward the woods. They went in there last night, but they were out of the range of the window, and I couldn't see what they were doing. I want to see that room. Are you game?"

The girl nodded hesitantly. "Y-yes, but what about Martinez?" The very speaking of his name sent chills up her back. "How about the two natives he brought back with him last night?"

"Think nothing of them," Phil whispered. "They went back to the woods shortly after, and Martinez is probably sleeping off a drunken stupor. The only one in the house is the native who served us breakfast. We can take care of him easily enough." He took her hand in his. "Not scared, soldier?"

She nodded. "Scared to death. But that's not going to stop me. Let's go." He patted her shoulder, and winked.

THE iron grip of fear turned her stomach to water the moment she entered the shadow of the house. In the daylight, she could see that it was a rambling old, ivy covered building that had apparently stood on the island for at least a century. Its towers were notched, evidently to give refuge to defenders if the need arose to repel an attack. Inside, horror was a real thing, its chill fingers falling on her heart like some slimy leech. She fought down a wild desire to scream and obediently followed the lead of her companion.

He walked with cat-like sureness, covered the entire length of the hall, then motioned her back against the wall. Peering across his shoulder, she could see the native padding about the dining room clearing away the remnants of breakfast.

Waiting until he had left the room, they followed the wall to a half hidden opening behind some drapery. Beyond was a flight of well worn steps that led down into the musty rooms below. The stairs were well worn and slimy, and Miriam had to stuff her fist into her mouth to keep from exclamation when she stepped on a scurrying rat or

some other subterranean animal that had scurried under her feet.

At the foot of the stairway was a passageway that led to a worn old door that was fastened by a stout padlock. The darkness of the corridor was suddenly split by a pocket flashlight that Phil pulled from under his skirt.

“Just our luck,” he muttered. “Doesn’t look as though we could break it open, either.” He bit his lower lip savagely in vexation. “I’ve got to get in there, Miriam, I’ve just got to.”

Her voice almost stuck into her throat. “The native. Maybe he knows where the key is. Maybe you could make him tell?”

The flashlight went out, leaving the passage again in dank darkness. “You’ve got an idea there,” he said. “I’ll go get him. He’ll talk, if he knows anything,” he promised.

She felt him press the flashlight into her hand, then another cold metallic object. It was a gun!

“Just in case I don’t come back,” he said. “Don’t be afraid to use it. There are six shots in it. Be sure you only use five.” He squeezed her shoulder reassuringly, then she heard him feeling his way back toward the stairs.

It seemed like ages that she stood there alone in the damp, cold darkness. It seemed like an obscene wet black blanket had been dropped over her head, and she gasped for breath. Fingers seemed to be groping from the walls, and in her mind’s eye she could see the blistering, cooking flesh of the blonde girl as cry after cry was wrenched from the pain wracked body that had once been a poem in curves, soft breasts and white skin.

Then she heard a sound. At first it seemed like the scurrying of a rat, then it had more substance, like some large creature crawling along the walls, bat-like. She fought down panic, but loneliness and the darkness had left its mark, and she could not long resist. She pressed the lever on the flashlight and a thin beam of yellow light cut through the darkness. A glad cry escaped from her throat.

Phil stood there, blinking in the light, holding by the throat the little native. He lifted him from the floor and shook him like a terrier with a rat.

“Where is it?” he snarled, exposing his even white teeth. “I’ll get it if I have to tear your arms out of their sockets and bash your head in with them.”

THE dark face of the native became a dull maroon, and his eyes threatened to pop from his head, but he stubbornly shook his head. Suddenly, he lashed out with his feet and caught Phil in the pit of the stomach. The aerialist gasped and relaxed his hold. In a moment, the brown man was on him, his fingers searching out the larger man’s windpipe, while his other hand whipped out a large knife. He bared, his sharp teeth in a snarl.

Terror transfixed the girl. She felt unseen horror strangling her. Subconsciously she knew she must do something, but she lacked the power to command her muscles. Suddenly, almost as though impelled by some outside force, she felt herself lashing out with the gun. The first blow caught the little man across the side of the head, laying the bone bare, while blood gushed out and ran down the side of his face. He had barely time to turn his face when her hand descended again, this time crushing in the top of his head like an eggshell. His hand fell from Phil’s throat and he collapsed into a heap at the girl’s feet.

Nausea gripped her, and her senses started to reel. She leaned against the wall for support; it gave way under her and she fell into what felt like a bottomless abyss. Some large black hand blotted out consciousness, and when she awoke, once again Phil was at her side, bathing her face with water. She sat up with a shuddering sigh.

“Guess I’m not much help always passing out like I do,” she said. “I’m sorry I’m such a sissy.”

“Not much help indeed,” he smiled. “You only saved my life, that’s all.” He brushed her hair out of her face. “Feel better?”

She nodded. “Guess it’s because he’s the first man I ever killed,” she said. “He is dead, isn’t he?”

“Couldn’t be deader,” the man agreed. “For a minute there looked like it was going to be me, and it would have been if it weren’t for you.”

The girl sat up and looked around. “Where are we, and how did we get here? Did you find the key on him?”

“No,” Phil told her. “I don’t exactly know what this room is. After you conked him, you got a little dizzy and leaned against the wall for support and evidently touched some kind of a hidden switch. That door over there opened and here we are. This isn’t the room I saw last night, though, because this has no windows in it and that one had.”

“Maybe there’s another secret door?” the girl suggested.

“THAT’S what I’m hoping,” the man admitted, his eyes running over the rough hewn wall of the room. “I figure it must be over on that side, and lead into that chamber that’s padlocked.” He got up and ran his finger over the rough rock. He put his shoulder against the wall and pushed, but nothing happened. At each interval of two feet he continued to push against the wall, and as he came to the corner of the room, he felt the wall give.

His voice was strange when he turned to the girl. “I’ve found it,” he said. “I’m going in. I think you’d better stay here.” He pushed the door open and stared into the black void beyond.

The girl was at his side in an instant. “You’re not going in alone. We’re in this together. Even if I did turn into a Fainting Fanny, I think I’ve been a little help.”

Phil patted her hand. “You’ve been more than a little help,” he said. “That’s not the reason I don’t want you to go in there. I just want to spare you the sight of what I think we’re going to find.”

“I want to go,” the girl said simply.

“All right,” he agreed, “but I hope I’m wrong about what I expect to find—” He took the flashlight and pressed the button. The long finger of light split the black of the chamber beyond, revealing a long, roughhewn table bearing a lamp. Keeping the lamp focused on that lamp, Phil led the way into the chamber.

He paused a moment before lighting the lamp, then with a deep breath he bathed the chamber in light. Miriam let out a squeal of fright, then buried her head in his shoulder.

Along the wall, mounted like the heads of wild animals in some sportsman’s study were the heads of over a score of women, staring glassy eyed into the room below. Two new plaques had recently been added. From one glared the head of the stout woman lecturer, from the other a head, with the drugstore reddened hair of the magician’s assistant, grinned inanely.

Miriam felt insanity closing in on her in a black cloud and fought it off. She straightened up and kept her eyes from the ghastly display on the wall.

“That’s what they brought back last night,” she said in a low voice. “The beasts, the insane beasts! They murdered those women in cold blood, then mutilated their bodies for this mad display of cruel degeneracy.”

PHIL walked slowly down the line of trophies, then stopped before the head of a once beautiful brunette. Her long hair hung limply from her bodiless head and fine dark eyes stared sightlessly down at the man staring at her.

“That was my sister,” Phil said quietly. “She was lovely. I’ve come all the way to this fever infested hell-hole to avenge her, and now that I’m certain what her fate was, I’m going to carry out that promise.”

The tears stood in Miriam’s eyes at the vision of a brother standing before the desecrated body of his sister swearing vengeance. The horror of the situation was never more apparent than at that moment.

“Avenge her or join her?” a voice from the doorway asked. Both swung around to see the hated face of their host in the doorway. “So she was your sister, eh? She was a fine specimen. Gave me quite a chase. Through treetops and all. When I finally sent an arrow right through her, she fell to earth like a mortally wounded bird—”

With a roar Phil sprang at his tormentor. The narrow room rang with the sound of a shot as he charged. Miraculously, it only creased his shoulders. He was on the bearded man before he could squeeze the trigger again. A big hand closed over the gun hand and crushed the gun to the floor. Then with a mighty swing he hit the big game hunter flush on the fat lips with his fist. Blood spouted in all directions and he hit the wall with a dull thud and slid to the floor. Phil pulled him to his feet again, and there was the dull crunch of shattered bone as he hit him again.

As Martinez sank to the floor, from another pocket he pulled a second gun. “You shall yet die to join her on my wall,” he said with difficulty, the blood cascading from his badly mutilated mouth. “Or maybe I turn you over to my faithful Wasiri, and we watch while they eat your quivering flesh?”

He started to pull himself to his feet. When finally he had gained his feet, he fell heavily back against the wall in exhaustion—and then the miracle happened!

The plaque bearing the head of Phil’s sister fell, and the base of the plaque sheared the hunter’s skull neatly in two.

Phil and Miriam ran to the man’s side, but he had been killed instantly, and the head on the plaque, the lip torn away from the teeth by the jar,

seemed to grin at them.

“We’ve got to find where he keeps his ammunition or dynamite to blow this Satan’s headquarters back to the Hell that spawned it,” he said. “You find your way to the pier, and I’ll join you in a little while.”

The sunlight seemed like a clean breath of heaven and Miriam sat limply down to await Phil’s coming.

Suddenly a black spiral of smoke came from the old house, and from deep in the forest came the beat of drums in ever growing volume. Over the deep throated rumble of the drums she heard a new sound, a motorboat. She said a silent prayer, and then she saw it feeling its way around a bend in the stream.

“Hop in,” Phil shouted. “The Indians have seen

the smoke and they’ll be here in a little while.”

“How’d you do it?” she panted. “The fire, I mean.”

“Looking for some dynamite I came upon a hidden dock for the boat and there was plenty of spare gasoline—”

Not another word was spoken until we had left the House of Horror far behind. “I thought you were never coming,” Miriam admitted. “I thought we had jumped out of the frying pan into the Indians’ fire.”

“One thing I had to do was to see to it that my sister got a decent burial. I know she’ll rest better now—”

Far behind the sky was black with the smoke of the fast burning house, but ahead, the sun shone and the sky was blue—