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ERRATUM

The reference to "the artist" on the limitation page is superfluous.

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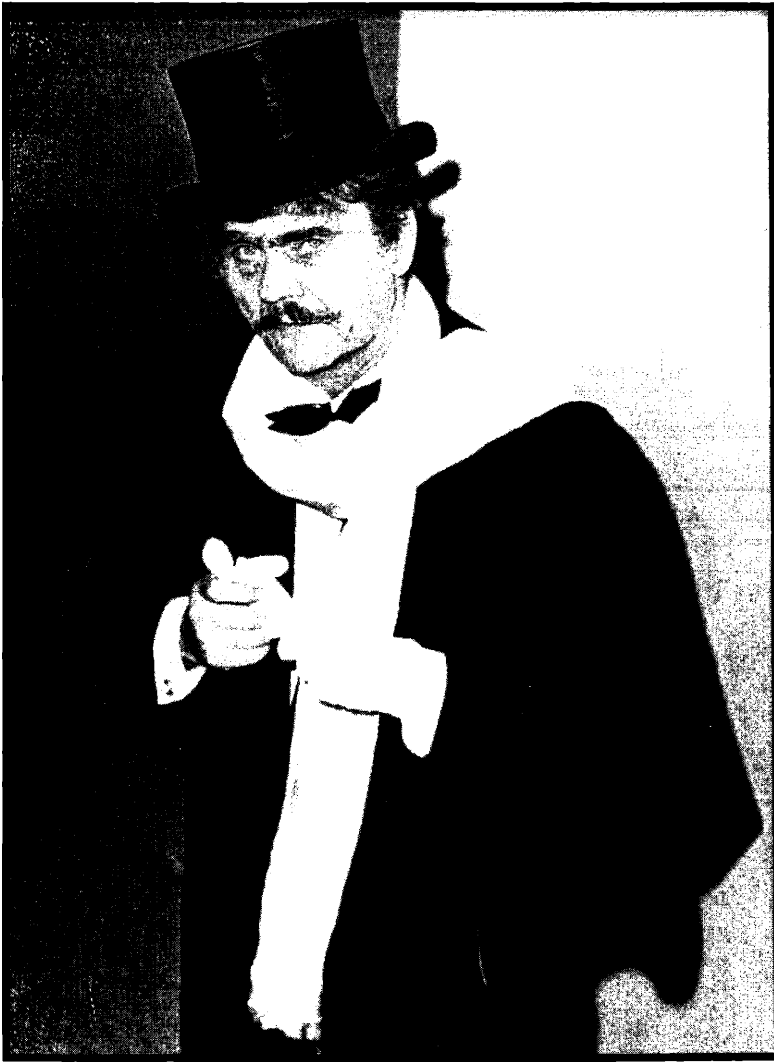
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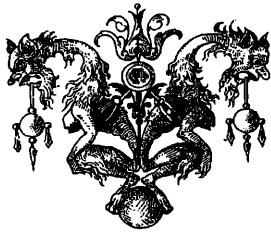


Hans Carl Artmann

Photo: Ferry Radax

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DRACULA DRACULA



ΔΡΑΚΩΛ ΔΡΑΚΩΛ

A Transylvanian Adventure

ΟΙ ΔΡΑΚΩΛ
ΔΟΔΜΗ ΠΙΠΙΕΡΩΛ
ΤΡΕΜΟΡ ΩΕΜΙΗΩΛ
ΗΩΗ ΒΩΛ ΥΟΧΩΛΤΕ
ΒΕΒΕ ΣΩΙ ΣΑΗΓΩΛ

*This saying is used in the region of Mandrak
to frighten disobedient children,
but it also causes the speaker to shudder
upon its utterance.*



Johann Adderley Bancroft, orphan of well-to-do parents, student of Transylvanian and Huzulic, and Edwarda Cornwallis, his fiancée, are journeying from Száthmár to Mandrak, a small town in the Carpathians. In their first-class compartment, crackling gas flames are burning behind blossoms of pressed glass. Night slowly descends on the passing landscape: steep jagged rock faces — the Carpathians in all their wildness!

A howl rises to the pale moon. Is it a wolf? Is it only the hurrying train? Who can say . . .

“Yes, Edwarda, we are now only ten or eleven hours from our destination . . .”

“Oh Johann, dearest, I almost wish we had never set out on this journey!”

Johann Adderley Bancroft removes a slim, black case from the elegant luggage rack: two enchased pistols repose on yellowing velvet . . . “Don’t forget these, Edwarda darling . . .”



A man with a squint awaits Bancroft and Edwarda at the dawn-lit station of Mandrak: Maksiminiu, the count’s valet.

“Eo sum Maksiminiu, knezului servu . . .”

For the first time J.A. Bancroft hears Transylvanian words used in everyday parlance . . .

Maksiminiu picks up the bags in order to carry them to the closed-in carriage and pair.

“Acestu vol de portá prezonale!” Johann Adderley Bancroft calls as M. is about to take his black case. Yes, he intends to keep that one on his person. The travellers’ carriage rumbles through the deathly hush that spreads through the streets of the country town.



The two black horses suddenly take fright at the ancient cathedral of Saint Simeon; their demonic whinnying tears the early morning into bloody tatters, and Maksiminiu, seated on the coach box, has the greatest difficulty in

regaining control of them. Edwarda shudders in the depths of her soul: My God, where will all this lead to?

They proceed at breakneck speed; the muddy streets of Mandrak are already miles behind, and the menacing mountains begin to loom before Maksiminiu's squinty eyes . . .



A shout! Where did it come from? From the rambling vaults and corridors of the castle? From the bone-yellow of the wolf-moon which sails menacingly through the night-time clouds?

Edwarda starts from a light sleep, the French windows have opened, white curtains flutter in the dark room — sombre as a dead woman's bridal gown . . .

Edwarda screams: "John, my God, help, help!"

J.A. Bancroft rushes in from the neighbouring room in his pyjamas.

"Calm yourself, dearest, it was just a bad dream!"

Was it really just a bad dream?



I come, says the Count with a faint smile, from a very old family, and as if he is feeling a touch too warm, he turns back the violet cape from his tail-coat. Mould, thinks Edwarda with a shudder, and Johann Bancroft cannot remember ever having seen such a febrile red — the silk lining of *ADAKWA* top-coat seems to glow!

Bats set off from the tall windows, immersed in dream, their wings twitching at regular intervals like sinister toys wound up by some monster child.

You are probably wondering about the slightly salty flavour of the *café*, the Count asks Edwarda . . . What can I say, it's customary in these parts!



Dear Sirs,

Cstl. Nsfrt. 3 Oct. 18—

Climip ewfrom fasurcestionsorbab derllad denwoo niall cologlesodd tingslan cesin on was the reidvee away omorr (sic). Old Ziakeh offerlowney desiuth ringhea gionre srabnarap flectree valid owbere nungleap (sic).

Yours truly,

Johann Adderley Bancroft

"Here's a crown, my good man, and don't breathe a word about this letter to a living soul . . ."

The one-eyed post messenger takes Bancroft's letter and tips the peak of his disabled veteran's cap.

Will the enciphered letter ever reach the banks of the Thames?

VII

In the unearthly quiet of an autumnal sunlit afternoon, Edwarda finds a yellowed photograph in the castle gardens: a young girl whose features seem to have become blurred after lying too long on her back. Curious: stuck into the neck of the photographed girl are two tiny pincers from an earwig . . . Somehow the girl's face resembles my own, says Edwarda. Nonsense, darling, says Bancroft, but his smile looks forced. He removes the pincers with a pair of tweezers and places the photo carefully in the secret compartment of his attaché case.

VIII

May I help you, Mr Bancroft? asks the Count. J.A. Bancroft tries to master his enormous bafflement. He had not expected **АРАКЪА** in the castle, had thought he was at **САМРІТ**, the castle farm, when suddenly his host appears before him as if borne by wings and studies with interest the enchased pocket-knife which the Englishman is using to investigate the scarcely perceptible contours of the hidden door.

A highly embarrassing situation has arisen!

IX

On arriving in the village, Johann Adderley Bancroft engages a couple of the Count's Huzulian vassals in conversation:

"*Zam priu ot zamku АРАКЪА*"

"*Ot zamku?*" the words escape from blanched lips . . . The mention of that Camelot of wolves and flittermice sends the whiskers of these righteous souls flying in every direction of the compass.

"**ГОДА ЛОРА!**" exclaims the eldest, "*ot zamku КНЕЦЪА!*"

It is as if a deathly sombre crêpe veil were fluttering through the hearts of those assembled.

J.A. Bancroft knows one thing now: Bram Stoker, the writer and his fellow

countryman, *cannot* have lied, it *cannot* be an invention!

“A round of brandy for everyone!” the independent young Englishman calls to the bar. And Mordche Roitensteiner proceeds to the barrel.



X

The violin, bagpipe and *címbalóm* have been playing the whole day long. Oleana, the village elder's daughter, is to marry Irgor, a young huntsman and her childhood playmate; but what strange preparations are being made at Castle **ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ**, to which the shepherds and foresters allude in hushed voices?

Procopop, the village elder, is no longer so happy. Does the lord wish to lay claim to his ancestral right?



XI

According to ancient Transylvanian custom, the bride must enter the future bedroom on her own, where she dons the bridal crown that has been set out for her . . .

Since Oleana has not reappeared after an hour, the wedding guests force their way in and — find an empty room. Oleana has vanished without trace! But in the mirror there is an aperture, just long and broad enough to permit a person to pass through . . .

ΡΟΧΑ ΛΟΡΑ! we forgot to scatter garlic blossoms! Irgor exclaims in despair . .



XII

The so-called *fledermaus salon* in Castle **ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ**, *in veritas* though, an exquisitely appointed torture-chamber.

Oleana, in her white wedding dress, is strapped to the as yet still motionless rack. She seems paralysed, but her face reveals no sign of fear or horror, rather the quiet expectation of the groom . . .

The Count, aged by hundreds of years, is tinkering with retort glasses, dissecting-knives and suction pipes. A gleam of light from the sumptuous splendour of the flickering torches leaps into the dark shadows above the blood-red fabric of the drawn curtains. Somewhere in the castle a tape recorder is playing harpsichord music: the antique, measured strains of a *csárdás*.

The Count decides on a delicate, hooked instrument . . .

Early one Tuesday morning they find the forester's assistant, Irgor, a short distance from his smashed hunting rifle. What had happened? Who had felled this bear of a man?

When the doctor, Reb Prossnitzer, is summoned, he inspects the green-clad corpse in detail: he does not fail to spot the twin wounds to the right of the throat, incisions from the tender fangs of some beast of prey . . . Reb Prossnitzer remains silent and leafs grimly through a booklet written in Hebrew characters.

Here, here! calls one of the bystanders.

What's up?

Oleana's bridal crown was decorated with the same rowan berries that Irgor now holds clenched in his left hand!

The secret litany of the farmers from the area around Mandrak

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who stinketh of decay,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who always searcheth for prey,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who drinketh blood like cider,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who creepeth like a spider,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who curseth the trinity,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who liveth for all eternity,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who turneth eyes to stones,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who emergeth from catacombs,
spare us

ΑΡΑΚΩΛΑ who our women beguileth,

spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ who our women defileth,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ who over Mandrak flieth,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ who upon filth lieth,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ thou lover of pulsing veins,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ thou dragon of hearts and brains,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ thou maggot in stars benign,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ who spawneth an unending line,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ thou master of teeth and nails,
spare us
ΔΡΑΚΩΝΑ thou lord of blackest grails,
spare us
spare us
spare us



XIV

J.A. Bancroft: Damnation! I fear that my letters to Hussell and Pussell will not reach them in all their life-long days!

Three versts away in the mountains: Huzulian farmers and the policeman Apollodorus Jaksch are standing round a dead man in uniform . . .

Apollodorus Jaksch: Dear people, that's Velocipescu, the one-eyed post messenger!!

Everyone studies the bloodless corpse which is sleeping its last sleep amidst rosemary and edelweiss . . .

Apollodorus Jaksch also finds a stag-horn button from a huntsman's coat. The one-eyed messenger doesn't seem to have given up the fight that easily.



This black-bound book is the feared **HEPHOMIKON** written by the deranged Abu al-Hazred, Carmilla's new mother! . . . So **ΔΡΑΚΟΥΛΑ** turns out to be the father of his own villainous grandmother. Fine blonde hair flies like gold-flecked incense around the ungodly bubbling of red retort glasses. A scent of mould and fresh sperm wafts through the laboratory. Roses and abominable scorpions detach themselves from the tiles of the walls. The Count stamps on the one, sniffs the other . . .

Carmilla rises, naked, from her sarcophagus. Her flesh is still somewhat pale, the tips of her breasts have been pierced by desecrated needles . . .



Please allow me to introduce my niece, Carmilla, says the Count to his English guests . . . Carmilla descends the large staircase of the candle-lit ancestral hall. Her blonde hair has been combed back severely, she is wearing a chocolate-grey gown, an odour of mould envelops her like a costly perfume, none can tell: is it really mould or a rare, exotic drug? My niece has spent the last year in St. Petersburg, but now wishes to spend the winter in her homeland of Transylvania out of consideration for her health . . .

Maksiminiu serves heavy red Tokay. You are baffled, says the Count to Edwarda, but the slightly salty flavour is customary in these parts!



A swarm of bats infiltrates the bathroom, abducts Edwarda from the tub and flies away with her over the forest illuminated by the autumn moon. Johann Adderley Bancroft, alerted by the tinkling of breaking window panes, forces his way into the locked bathroom, slips on a piece of wet soap and falls flat. A merciful swoon overcomes him.

Take him to my chamber, **ΔΡΑΚΟΥΛΑ** says to his servant Maksiminiu, the young gentleman from England needs rest . . .

Outside, before the stalls, stands Carmilla in a pale hunter's costume. Harness the horses, Maksiminiu must drive me to the hunter's lodge in the forest!



Outside the hunter's lodge, Carmilla leaps from the carriage with a light step. Maksiminiu replaces the whip in its sheath, Carmilla hurries to the roughly

hewn door . . . But what is that? The vampiric huntsman's help, Irgor, leaps forth from the lodge, without a care for the shards from the shattering window pane. There are red circles round his eyes, his features are a cadaverous yellow, his green suit still bears traces of lime and damp earth . . .

МОА КРІВ! Carmilla curses in blind rage, he has beaten me to it, he has taken Edwarda in my stead, he knew the forest better than I! Inside Edwarda lies dead on the floor, white as a winding-sheet. Carmilla has Maksiminiu bury Bancroft's bride in the soft floor of the forest clearing. She will have little problem resurrecting, teeth fully fledged, at midnight . . .



Oh, I must have slept for all eternity! utters Johann Adderley Bancroft on waking . . .

But then: Now I slowly recall events . . . Edwarda! Where is Wedwarda, oh woe!

The castle is deserted, a sleeping beauty **ІМАНОР**, no Count, no Carmilla, no squinting Maksiminiu! Armed with his two pistols, Bancroft, petrified, investigates the halls and secret chambers of **НОЦФЕРАТ** the whole long day . . .

Might he have simply dreamt it all? No, not at all!



Twelve o'clock! The mighty pendulum clock in the ancestral hall strikes the hour in woeful, patriarchal tones . . . Plaster trickles silently down the walls . . . and, lo and behold, the late Edwarda Cornwallis, paler than a ream of paper, springs from the genuine oil painting of Carmilla the nocturnal bibber! And her three-metre leap to the floor is totally silent! A glittering hole yawns in her frightful countenance . . . Johann, darling . . .!

And Johann Adderley Bancroft sees a row of pearly-white viper's teeth extend inside the mouth of his sweet bride, sees, too, the tiny *blesure* on her swan's neck . . . his pistols land on the floor with a thud, he turns on his heels, begins to run, runs, runs, runs into the dread night!



Apollodorus "Lois" Jaksch, the policeman, a German from Käsarck, the only policeman who refused bribes from Count **ДРАКІВА**, but in secret called him the deuce, lies dead in front of his old-fashioned signalling apparatus. The

small but tidy room smells of Cantonese patchouli and fresh earth . . .

Who was it, O Adderley Bancroft, who had once made a present of this perfume in Pesth?



For the seventh time it was explained to J.A. Bancroft at the police *commendariia* in Mandrak that Count **HOCTEPACTO** had been living for many years in **CT. ПЕТЕPCРЪП** with his family . . .

“Ah, noastre knezu! Moare cece tre anne cu phamiliia a Petrobourg! Nonnon, estimate doamne Bancrophtescu, voi situate-si n’erroare . . .”

J.A. Bancroft: well, that really puts the *iii* on the *zii*! But then the impression grows on him that, lurking about the lips of this Transylvanian carabinieri is, how should I put it? a lycanthropic look, the merest hint, but enough . . .

And, as if he was leaving the dangers of a cage full of wild beasts:

“Messieurs, I am eternally indebted . . .” And he departs.



What sort of a man are you, Johann Saltpeterley Bancroft? What devil in you decreed that you should abduct your own bride, the innocent, angelic Edwarda, to Castle **APAKHIA**, that Shangri-la of all evil? Do you consider yourself any better than this befanged, betentacled lineage of infernal Counts? More clement than **APAKHIA** himself?

Huh, be off with you, fly, fly! Make your way to **HAOMEP** and there try to forget, in the pure ethereal vales of **DMACHOCX**, what these gloomy Carpathians have done to you!



For Johann Adderley, the Golden Horn, wonder of Byzantium and the Turkish moon, is nothing but a pale grey shade which flits past him as he journeys through the Levant.

Across the Red Sea he reaches the Indian Ocean, Kashmir! In Karachi J.A. buys a ticket to Srinagar . . .



And there, concealed beneath bright foliage, enrapt in ghoulish dreams, Carmilla and Edwarda await him. It is autumn in these parts . . .

Assembly of the principal ΔΡΑΚΩΝ
from the line sinister of the ΠΟΡΦΕΡΑΤΩ

Anclam the Sucker, bishop of Szüthváry
Tyrant Kallimachus von Brod
Frederick of Drakkenstin
Landgrave Görödömfy
Mordazla, fairy of the Mongols
Aksü the proto-Siberian
Royal Stagshorn
Frau Szu
Lacadrü von Száthmár
Miss Giustina Faithful
Warlock Divisch
Herr Gordon Samstag
Irgor, the huntsman's help
Procopop the village elder
PC Apollodorus Jaksch
Reb Prossnitzer
Johann Adderley Bancroft

**ΦΑΡΑ
ΣΦΑΡCIT**

† † †

●

TOK PH'RONG SULENG





dear reader (be you male or female), a preliminary note: a hunter of werewolves must keep his shoulder to the wheel — for should he neglect to keep it there for but a moment, a dreadful *débâcle* results, for terrible is his sparring partner. pitiless, because lacking a soul in the moment of its deeds, fantastically sly, being a mixture of reasoning human being and beast informed by instinct, virtually invulnerable, for it stands under the protection of the moon* and her dark idols, it, the werewolf, steals — green-eyed, hair a-bristle, mischief in mind — into the heartland.

man and hunter, take care, be on your guard, beware!



“your papers, sir . . .”

“here, my good man . . .”

the customs officer wipes his sweltering brow beneath his sola topi and momentarily peruses de vere’s passport. then he flashes a keen look at him with his left eye:

“your name is mortimer grizzleywold de vere, sir?”

“not only is it my name — *i am* mortimer grizzleywold de vere.”

“you were born in 1850 in ballykernan, co. cork?”

“the same, the son of english parents.”

“and your occupation is also correct?”

“why shouldn’t it be correct? admittedly it might seem eminently bizarre to you, an official to the queen, but it is quite correct.”

“oh, you mustn’t imagine that the opinions of an official to the queen must always be so generalised — my questions are purely routine, sir.”

“thank you, officer . . .”

the official hands back the passport.

“i thank you, sir.”

mortimer grizzleywold de vere crosses the harbour forecourt with two hired native servants and makes his way by hansom through the appalling monsoon rains to the railway station.

* luna, -ae, the moon; (poet.), meton., the night.



“don't say that, sahib, jammu lies on the indus, and, by comparison, the thames is but a piffling little brook . . .”

“but london? london, the metropolis of the world, with its bridges, cathedrals, palaces?”

“a city, i concede, that is no less beautiful than it is imposing, but what is it compared to india with its ten thousand wonders?”

might not this talk of ten thousand wonders be somewhat of an exaggeration, not least numerically?

“consider, on the one side boundless wealth, on the other the bitterest poverty, entire regions left fatalistically to sink or swim — indeed, abandoned to starvation.”

that is all well and good, but not everyone has the fortune to hail from a temperate zone, came the riposte.

“perhaps it is also religion which differentiates our peoples, a touchy subject, i admit, but on no account a matter to be overlooked.”

the conversation with ali mirza endures for hours, the young prince is highly educated, has studied at yale.

“england is an old country, it has almost stepped beyond the end point of its history. the united states of north america, yes, the future belongs there.”

a great young nation which is poised to enter the 20th century!

the prince does not appear to be well informed concerning the superstitious notions held by his people, or at least he acts as if he were not.

“i have every concern for my people's weals and woes, but not, mark you, for their whines and worries.”

mortimer grizzleywold de vere smiles at this word-play. meanwhile, night has fallen. tomorrow he will embark in the company of the prince, an enthusiastic balloonist, from jammu to leh — a foolhardy venture when one considers the mountain range that intervenes.

“so, good night then, sahib.”

“good night to you, prince.”



a fully grown cobra in the bowl of an english water closet, no, such is outside the normal run of things! admittedly lord dansawney once recounted an extraordinarily similar occurrence to the navigators club (whereby the cobra apparently gained entrance through the ventilation system, which is not

particularly feasible), but his lordship is a writer and a poet (an opium eater?) and is accustomed to inspire himself to work by means of such fictions. but such reflections would be quite out of place in the present circumstance, lightning reflexes being all that count now.

mortimer grizzleywold de vere grasps the situation in the twinkling of an eye; before the dark coil can rise to its full height he slams the open w.c. door shut and informs the director of the alahazrat hotel . . . one doesn't have to be a nat pinkerton to connect the sudden appearance of a venomous snake in a w.c. that is locked to all-comers with a dastardly assassination attempt. but who the devil could have discovered de vere's intentions? no one except prof. handendoek in münster knows of de vere's plans in the karakorum — and this quiet, aged scholar, this distinguished german scientist, is above all suspicion.



six weeks earlier:

during his extensive studies in the field of lycanthropy, mortimer grizzleywold de vere stumbles across an interesting khanchuli manuscript from the 18th century. de vere takes it home with him, pores over it all night — and the following morning travels to philadelphia, where he books a cabin on a steamer of the north german lloyd company. twelve days later he disembarks at bremerhaven. after a brief visit to prof. handendoek in münster, he continues to karachi. the final destination of his journey: dhaulmoong, a small river valley to the north-east of leh in the karakorum, that is not to be found on any map.

here is the most crucial passage in the manuscript:

“ . . . schنالونج. srâp. gurng. gok. byâr
gok. nang. sriptim. din. brör. teil
khaulmeng. drurhon. srâp. gurng. i
ngrilâl. ph'rii. kbrem. meng. byâkk
döpsang. gok . . .
ankhrap. ph'rön. bri: dhaulmunggrir
gok. ma. nu. sha. bbukk . . . ”

the deuce take him! mortimer grizzleywold exclaimed at this juncture, can it be possible?



leh^o lies as abandoned as if it had been ravaged by a cholera epidemic in the

^o a town locatable in square 46/47 G6 of the map of india in m.g. de vere's portable atlas.

merciless heat of the midday sun. but even this oven-like heat is reasonably tolerable on the shady veranda of colonel algernon towdy's bungalow. and the well-chilled whisky also does its bit to add to the visible contentment of the three people present*, not to mention some dozen native servants who manage to dispel the heat with ingeniously contrived systems of fans. a provisional plan is being drawn up for the expedition the day after tomorrow to the scarcely known valley of dhaulmoong. the colonel slaps the palm of his right hand none too gently on the table top:

"quite frankly, de vere, if it wasn't for the fact that a lady is present, i would tell you another thing or two about this shady rascal ali mirza!"

de vere had just pointed out that it would best suit their cause if they took the young prince along with them, not least because he had volunteered to act as pilot during the balloon journey to leh — and who knew the region better than he?

"madam," blustered the rather irascible colonel, "i will make no guarantees if this fellow joins our party!"

"but by local standards he is a gentleman . . ." mistress carruthers remonstrated. maud carruthers — widow of the tiger hunter inigo hazlebitt carruthers who died under such bizarre circumstances a few years ago — is a beautiful and utterly desirable woman who need fear no comparison with her deceased husband when it comes to courage and stamina; she too hunts tigers . . .

"a gentleman . . . hmm, he by no means makes a slovenly impression, he is well educated, studied in the states if i recall correctly, passed masses of exams, and even looks outwardly like a roman, but i simply don't trust these khanchulis an inch! if you ask me, they are worse than the wazeers and afghans!"

de vere slowly drains his whisky before replying with modesty but firmness:

"believe me, colonel, in my heart of hearts i'm also far from fond of these foreigners, as i am sure would be your expectation, but the way matters lie and given our total ignorance of the valley that we must traverse, i can only endorse ali's offer!"

he raises his empty glass before his right eye, blinks, and listens to the gentle chink made by the left-over ice.

"yes," he said, "s'help me god, we have no alternative!"

"fair enough, but on your head be it, de vere. i've warned you . . ."

* good honest white horse whisky, the retired artillery colonel's favourite brand.

“dear colonel, i bet 100 pounds to an old hat that none of us, neither mistress carruthers nor you nor yours truly, will bag our game should we decline ali mirza khan’s kind offer to guide us . . .”

mortimer grizzleywold de vere concludes by saying that he has a few letters to attend to, and makes his farewells for the day.

“do tell me, dearest colonel: what is the actual prey our mister de vere is hunting?”



the whipcrack of a pistol shot cuts the silence of the night, echoes several times from the nearby bluffs — and already the camp is awake and on its feet, trigger fingers alert.

mistress carruthers stands erect, her winchester still smoking in the silky-pale light of the moon; her blouse is torn at the front, as if by the sharp claw of a beast of prey; her comely bosom protrudes, white but for a slight trickle of blood . . .

a confusion of voices. what was that? a tiger? here? that’s quite impossible! are you injured, mistress carruthers? did you hit it? questions swim round maud carruthers like reverberations of the echo.

“it would be the first time i missed,” replies the slightly denuded amazon, “i must have hit it.”

“what a cold-blooded woman,” thinks mortimer grizzleywold de vere. “was it a wolf?” his thoughts follow, breathlessly. “it might well have been a wolf, if it wasn’t an orang-utan . . .!”

“by george!” the colonel utters in astonishment as he too arrives, “what has a wolf in common with a monkey?!”

he seems to be totally dumbfounded as he stands there in his long johns in the diffuse light of the silvery moon.

“the creature that attacked me seemed like a mixture of a wolf and an ape. what’s more, it ran off on its hind legs . . .”

“in which direction?”

mistress carruthers motions with her winchester towards the mountain pasture that is glistening in the moonlight . . . de vere looks intently in this direction:

“in that case it must have fled to the cave we rode past yesterday evening; it’s no more than a few hundred paces from here. colonel, look after mistress carruthers, she’s injured. i’m off to inspect the cave!”

de vere screws his monocle into his eye, brandishes his pistol above his head and storms off through the brushwood to the cave entrance. only now is

ali mirza's absence noticed.

"where's the prince?" asks mistress carruthers, who has now completely freed her injured right breast and proffered it to the embarrassed colonel.

"a harmless scratch, thank god," says colonel towdy, "not too deep, an isinglass plaster will do the trick . . ." and at that moment ali mirza, khan of the khanchulis, appears from a shimmering somewhere.

"good heavens," he shouts in concern, "has something happened to the memsahib?"

"see for yourself! but where have you been all this time?"

"i'm frightfully sorry, colonel, but i was sleeping like a log!"

colonel towdy casts an aggravated look at the silver-tipped gala shotgun which the young prince holds in strangely hirsute hands . . .



"dammit, ali mirza, you can stick that old-fashioned shot-gun of yours under someone else's nose, but not mine!"

the colonel inveighs against him, but cool as a cucumber, ali mirza simply flashes his dazzling teeth and laughs:

"have no fear, colonel sahib, it won't go off, it's not even loaded!"

what on earth was going on in the young mountain prince's head? what's happening inside of that asiatic adonis?!

"never will the likes of us really grasp the essence of this race so alien to europe," thinks mistress carruthers as she hands her winchester to her boy. yes, there are no flies on the mem when it comes to shooting, she won't meet her match in a hurry . . .

meanwhile mortimer grizzleywold de vere has not wasted his time; he has explored the mysterious cave with a hurricane lamp and made a most remarkable discovery: an almost new khaki jacket which is missing its bottom-most button, a case of surgical instruments of german provenance, an undamaged dress of the type worn by the local women of the upper classes (pale blue with gold stripes), as well as a wallet containing rupees.*

"ah, here he comes at last!" observes mistress carruthers, and the colonel approaches her with no little emotion.

"golly, you didn't half worry us! have you found anything? . . ."

hadn't he just!!

* 25 ten rupee bank notes.



two days later, deeper into the mountains.

“tell me, colonel, do you know strong’s book *the man-eater of madras*?”

“i’ve read it, de vere, it’s in my library back home.”

the small troupe is filing through an alpine landscape, void of any trails. ali mirza, sporting breeches and turban, to the fore, followed by the three khanchulis and the pack horses, then mistress carruthers on an arabian stallion (a loan from the prince — she had refused to accept it as a present), and shortly behind, the colonel and mortimer grizzleywold de vere. de vere it is who picks up the thread after a lengthy silence.

“a highly illuminating book, don’t you think, colonel?”

“hmp, if it’s not just a pack of lies, like most such books . . . i can’t help it, but it seems highly improbable to me that this tiger-man is supposed to have had a taste only for white nannies . . .”

“well, *de gustibus non est*, as we know, *disputandum!*” de vere sighs.

“and above all: it goes quite against the grain for me to believe such things — although i must admit that i have come across any number of marvels in my 35 years of service, crikey, when i think of the incidents back there in choohalore . . .”

“what was that, then?”

“another time, de vere. d’you see the fortress on the mountain over there, rising to the left? it’s reputed to have been built by akbar the great in the seventeenth century, as a defence against the northern tribes. it was lost later to the moguls during the sikh imbroglios . . .”

de vere screwed his monocle back in place and studied with interest the massive walls and turrets, which shimmered under the raging noonday heat like some silvery-grey fairy castle in the distance.



one of the khanchulis has made a terrible discovery this morning. a stocky man, some 25 years old, who clings to his master’s side, named ali, but his companions refer to him simply as zorâwar, the strong one. wishing to relieve himself, he had taken a spade and dug, for sanitary reasons, a small hole several hundred yards from the camp — when he made the hideous discovery: something buried in the ground . . .

ali mirza khan is no longer in the camp. no one saw him ride off (his horse is likewise missing), so there is some likelihood that he had already departed after midnight. a plausible reason for his mysterious disappearance has yet to

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