THE TIGER TRAIL

by Edison Marshall — Illustrations by PAUL FREHM

Robin turns out to be Alexander Pierce, the detective.

Alexander Pierce and Inspector Freeman discuss the crime, Dr. Long feels that his visit at Southley Downs is coming to an end, and regrets leaving the habitat of the girl for whom he feels he has a hopeless love.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"But it seems you trusted every one else." I glanced toward Southley and his daughter.

"Naturally Mr. Southley knew it. I came at his invitation—and your own, of course, too, Long. Miss Southley learned the truth just this evening, and I consider it a distinct reflection on the ability of her father and myself to judge character that we waited so long in making her an ally. But I will say—its more her father's fault than mine.'

"You must remember that my acquaintance with my daughter was somewhat slight." Southley explained. "She has been away to school so much—only here a few weeks. Besides—she did know a few things. I'm sorry I didn't tell her more."

Father and daughter exchanged smiles. Josephine herself seemed changed. It was curious that I had not noticed it the moment I stepped into the room. There was a new light in her eyes, a rising of the delicious color that played ever in her cheeks. Again I saw the smile that I had marveled at that night in the drawing-room long ago. Evidently there had been developments in the mystery of which I was not aware.

"Remember, we will need your son too," Alexander told my host.

Alexander and I walked together into the drawing-room, and we had a minute's talk at the foot of the stairs.

"I'm going to my room now," he explained. "It's a maid's room on the third floor, but it fits my purpose perfectly. I have a few chemical experiments to make."

"Of course it was you who destroyed the evidence on the white stone."

"Not destroyed it. Merely gathered it up. I wanted to make some blood tests. And it pained me to cause you and the inspector so much disappointment."

"I imagined it would!"

Then we had a little laugh together. It was all to plain that a deep professional jealousy existed between such free-lance experts as Alexander and staff detectives like Inspector Freeman.

"But why in the world did you tear that piece from Ahmad's shirt?" I asked.

Alexander laughed again—a boyish, joyous sound that died quickly in the silence of the room.

"I'm afraid that is evidence of my quixotic nature," he said. "But I had to have a sample of the bloodstains; and I knew it would break Freeman's heart if I took the whole shirt. So I just tore out the price."

He sobered and became very businesslike. That was one of the marvels of the man. One minute he was the best of comrades—boyish, laughing irresponsible. The next, he was the cool-headed, tireless sleuth with every nerve and muscle alert.

"There's work for to-morrow," he went on swiftly. "You'll have your part to do. So will Southley have his part, and his two children. To-morrow I'm going to take the boat on a a little expedition over to the plateau. You are to meet me on the path at my return—just after nightfall. You can have the inspector with you if you like. Southley and his daughter will be close about, and they will know their parts. The hour to strike is almost here."

"And Vilas? What about him? And Ahmad?"

"Ahmad is the suspected murderer. I'm afraid Vilas won't do."

"But Josephine Southley would think otherwise," I told him with some bitterness. "You must know—that they are allies. You couldn't have missed that point."

"She's going to marry him—that's what I mean. And she's bitterly against me. Thinking that her lover might be accused of the murder of his father, she told the detective things that implicated me and got him to hold me here."

He turned and started up the stairs.

"Sometimes, Dr. Long." he told me slowly, "your mental grasp is quite astonishing — for its perfect and abounding aptitude to make a fool of yourself."

And he left me to ponder in the hall below.

Inspector Freeman—who had learned the truth at last—and I walked down to the shore with Pierce at eleven o'clock the next morning. The rowboat waited for my friend, and in it were two strong colored men to row. Alexander had put on hip-boots and was armed with a heavy rifle. And it was plain to see that Freeman was entirely contemptuous of the whole proceedings.

"You're a funny one, Pierce," he spoke jokingly—and at the same time meant every word he said. "In the first place, coming with all that stage scenery on yourself. It takes one of you correspondence school detectives to do stunts like that. I suppose you thought that the murderer would recognize your determined face from your picture in the newspapers—and make himself scarce before you could get out the handcuffs."

"Rather a different reason, my dear inspector," Alexander answered him as he began to slip the great cartridges into the magazine of the heavy rifle. "It wasn't the murderer I was so frightened of. In the first place, I didn't want you to leave the scene in disgust, as you might have done upon recognizing me. You were doing too good work."

"You needn't have been afraid of that. The man was already in my hands. And I'm glad you appreciate the work I have done."

"Perfectly, Freeman, perfectly. It was particularly clever the way you found the shirt."

"Of course. I wondered what you and my good friend Long were going to do."

"I suppose you know that the shirt is going to put the noose about Ahmad's neck?"

"One can never tell, inspector."

"Its a piece of evidence that cannot be questioned—although I admit the final tests as to the authenticity of the stains has not yet been made."

And beside, Freeman—there are other reasons why I thought it best that certain occupants of this house didn't recognize me," Alexander went on seriously. "It would help out in the end. I confess I don't care for disguises as a rule. And now I must bid you good day, and go search yonder jungle for the murderer of Hayward."

Freeman laughed uproariously.

"With a rifle, too!" he exulted. "I'd think you were going elephant hunting. Of all the quixotic enterprises! You can't believe that the murderer is still at large—but I couldn't see what it was because a rubber tarpaulin had been thrown over it. But I did see Alexander's face. He held the lantern up to look at us, and it showed his features plainly. He seemed curiously intent.

We walked up the path, and three shadows made black streaks across the light that the lantern threw. They were of the three Southleys, who had come out of the house to meet us. They also seemed grave, determined. Something gleamed in the old man's hand. As Alexander held the lantern high, I saw what it was. It was a pistol.

"What's this?" Alexander asked.

"Vilas's pistol," Southley replied. "You told me to get it."

"How did you do it without arousing suspicion?"

"Took it from the drawer in the library table. He keeps it there in the daytime. Usually carries it at night. Ernest and I left him with the excuse that we had to talk to some of the colored laborers at their cottages. Josephine just slipped away."

Alexander turned to Ernest. "How about the candles?"

"Two burning in the library. All the others have been misplaced, as you directed."

"And the servants?"

"No one in the house but Ahmad."

The inspector suddenly gasped. "But I tell you that isn't safe," he cried. "He'll get away. Alexander, you promised to keep a watch out for him. He'll be gone when we get to the house."

"I promised I'd see that he didn't run away," Alexander answered wearily. "He'll be there when we come. Don't fear, inspector." He turned to the others. "Then everything is ready. Miss Southley—if you will go with Inspector Freeman. His arm is strong and his aim sure. Southley, you and Ernest can take the south windows. You, Long, will be an unprejudiced witness. But you've got to know how to walk silently."

"I know how. I've stalked deer in the forest."

"Good. Then you'll come with me. And now—out goes the light."

He lifted the lantern and turned down the wick. Then he blew out the flame. Of course I understood. In our present position at the base of the hill, it would not be visible from the windows of the house. It would be visible as we approached the house.

And just as the shadows fell a hand touched mine. It was a warm hand, and soft, and the fingers rested a single fluttering instant in my palm. It was a little hand, too, and I had in a single instant of never-to-be-forgotten knowledge of its power to soothe and hold, and a tenderness beyond all reckoning. And I knew whose hand it was.

"Maybe you can understand after this," she whispered. "Perhaps you won't condemn me so."

Then like a squad deploying in battle, we started climbing up the slope of the hill.

We soon left the others in the darkness. Alexander and I crept to the postern door.

"One sound will spoil the play," he whispered to me in the instant that we waited at its threshold. "Keep your ears and eyes open."

Then we crept through into the little hall. The door into the library was open, but scarcely any light came through. So deep was the shadow that Alexander was at once invisible.

We lay down on the opposite sides of the hall, so that we could look through into the library. But we left the passage open, as Alexander had instructed. The reason was simply that he thought the man we had come to watch might want to make an escape through the doorway, and it would have spoiled the plan for him to see us on the way out. Lying close to the walls, it was likely he would pass us by. But after one glance through the doorway I felt sure that no such attempt would be made. The darkness of the hillside where Hayward had died would, in this man's mind, seem more terrible than the room itself.

The library at Southley Downs was tremendously long. It had rows of windows at one end, and the other opened into the hall. The tapestries and furnishings were rather dark, after the manner of Victorian libraries. At one side was built the great fireplace, now cheerless and cold. There were rather many curtains that wavered when the wind blew. The wind was blowing now. We could feel it, damp and strange from the marsh against our faces.

When I say that Vilas Hayward sat alone I do not mean that there were no other occupants in the room. There was one other, and it is true that at first I didn't see him at all. He kept at the very edge of the candlelight, and he moved so softly, so unobtrusively that it was very easy to ignore his presence. It was Ahmad Das.

A white face is always comparatively visible in dim light. That is why soldiers going on to No Man's Land at night darkened their faces with lamp-black. But Ahmad's face was naturally dark, and it blurred in our sight. Sometimes I saw the whites of his eyes when the candlelight shone on them. Vilas Hayward was not trying to read; and the fact that the light was too dim for easy reading had nothing really to do with it. He was watching Ahmad Das out of the corner of his eyes.

The lighting effect was one in which a great artist would have rejoiced. It was yellow and dim, of course; and perhaps it had a quality of unreality. The atmosphere of candles at any time is distinctly medieval. Then there was the gradation of shadows—dusky close to the fireplace, but shading off to a deep, intense black. The light from the two candles met at the very extremities, leaving a dusky path between. Vilas's head and shoulders cast a distinct shadow on the wall, blurred, however, by the effect of a candle across the room. The shadow gliding and dusky and dim against the curtains of the windows.

(Continued next week)

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It was after nine when I saw the flash of a lantern across the water. Thin clouds were in the sky, and the moon had not yet risen. Then whole wilderness world was blotted out by the shadow, and the soft light over the water brought a queer flood of thoughts. I welcomed its approach. At the moment is seemed the only reminder that life still existed about this great, bleak estate of the Southleys. Without it, it might have seemed a realm of death, where human beings never came. And besides, the great Alexander Pierce was returning from his expedition, and I did not know but that this gleam across the wastes was the breaking of the light of truth in the darkness.

I heard a step behind me. It was Inspector Freeman.

"I see he's coming just at the time he promised," he said with a note of wonder.

The boat drew up to the shore, and the colored man got out to make it fast. The lantern light was dim, and I could not see plainly. It seemed to me that something was huddled in the bottom of the boat—something rather

WATER IN LAKE REGION HIGHEST IN MANY YEARS

Heavy Rains Cause of Present Condition in Resort District, Report

It has been many years since the water has been so high in the lake region as it is at the present time and in fact the resort operators have been seriously hit by the high water which in some cases has reached the point of about 32 to 36 inches above normal.

A trip into the lake region shows that most of the piers are buried far beneath the water, that the water has crept up into places along the shore where ordinarily there is large parking place and the resort owner have a downcast look because they declared it has ruined their business.

Actual data shows that the water has risen 30 inches in the last ten days. This means that many piers cannot be used by the resort owners or private homes which have them built so they stood just above the water in normal conditions.

HIGH WATER DELAYS MOSQUITO ABATEMENT

Continued delay in the fight against mosquitoes in the north shore mosquito abatement district has been caused by the surplus of moisture during the last few weeks. The water had receded somewhat in the Skokie district the early part of the week, but the workers were still unable to get in where the water was above their waists.

Blasting work for the new ditch now being dug by the Sanitary district will be resumed as soon as the high water recedes enough to make the work possible. When the ditch is completed it will be possible for more of the surplus water to be carried off in times of excessive rainfall.

Mosquitoes are very thick in the Skokie district, according to information from Mosquito Abatement headquarters. They breed not only in the marshes, but in pools of water on private lawns and on improved property where it is impossible to get rid of them by the use of oil, which destroys grass and plant life.

LAKE COUNTY TEACHERS PENSION FUND TOTALS

Amounts Paid in During Year And Those Receiving Benefits

Annual report of T. A. Simpson, county superintendent of schools, to the state showed that Lake county teachers paid $5,327 to the pension fund in the past year and that eight teachers new retired drew $3,200.

The eight under pensions and receiving $400 annually are: Annie Hallowell, and Lucy Burke, Waukegan Nellie Courtney, Barrington; Estella Grace, Wauconda; Emily Kettell, Zion; Cora White, Grayslake; Annie McCreadie, Millburn; and F. O. Hartleb, Gurnee.

A number who taught in the county but who are scattered throughout the United States also received their annual checks but the money does not show as credited to Lake county, Mr. Simpson explained.

Of those contributing to the pension fund during the year 449 paid in in Class 1 at the rate of $5 each, 83 in Class 2 at $10 each, and 76 in Class 3 at $30 each.

As retirement nears, he explained, the rate of payment to the state is increased in proportion.