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TOWARDS THE DRAGON MOUNTAINS

I'm afraid we're going to have a storm. Professor Ellington glanced anxiously at the sky.

"I hope we can get through." Christine looked up. The sky, which had been a cloudless blue, had had a grey shutter of steel drawn suddenly over it. It had grown quite dark in a few minutes. The air seemed heavy and breathless. In the uncanny stillness insects made loud whirring noises.

Ahead of them, the Drakensberg mountains lifted their fantastically shaped peaks against the skyline. The hills were tortured into strange shapes, and appeared like the guardians of some secret land. Every detail of grassy slope and wrinkled rock stood out with startling clarity. The hills seemed so near that one could have reached out and touched them.

In reality, they were a good thirty miles away.

That in itself was a bad sign, a sure portent of a storm. Professor Ellington frowned.

"Are the storms very bad here?" asked Christine anxiously.

Ellington nodded. "I believe so. Normally there's very little rain. When it does come, it comes in torrents. The rivers rise by feet every half hour, and the roads are often entirely washed away."

"That's why I'm anxious about getting through to a hotel," he added.

"We've come too far now to turn back, and the hotel's our only refuge in the mountains."

Christine glanced back.

"Haven't we better stop until the others come up?"

He nodded.

"Yes. We don't want any of the party to get lost. It will be safer if we stick together."

The road wound away from them across a plain to the foothills. On either side stretched meadowy fields, in which the plumed stalks waved like limp spears.

When the other two cars came up the professor waved on them to stop. He got out and briefly explained the situation.

"We must all keep together in case one of us gets bogged, as may very well happen in the event of the rain arriving before we get to the hotel. Fortunately we're well equipped with tools to deal with any emergency."

He jerked a thumb at the implements with which the cars were loaded. These had been intended for excavation work on the site of the primitive men's camping ground that Rupert had discovered, but they might have to be put to a more immediate use.

The cars started off once more. The professor had taken the lead because once more on the road to the mountain hotel, there was no need for Rupert to guide them, there being only one road.

As they progressed the country grew wilder and more rugged. It seemed difficult to believe that only a short time before they had set out from Durban, with its huge white hotels, where bathers plunged in the surf or lounged on the golden beaches under the South African summer sun.

They might have been hundreds of miles from civilization.

Christine was reminded by the scenery of some of the remotest parts of the Scottish Highlands which she had visited.

They were travelling now in a sort of twilight, though the hour was not late. The sun failed to pierce through the

leaden shutter that had suddenly drawn itself across the sky like the closing of a gigantic eye.

The insects in the grass chirped loudly but there was no other sound, nor was there any sign of habitation.

Once a grasshopper, a huge fellow with a striped body and long, spring-like legs, jumped into the car, into Christine's lap. She screamed and jerked away. The professor laughed.

"The Rain Arrives"

"Quite all right, my dear. They're perfectly harmless. But they certainly can jump."

"Phew!" Christine fanned herself. "And to think," she said, "that if it hadn't been for you I might have married that charming South African, Mr. Forester, and come to live among all these creeping and crawling things!"

The professor smiled.

"You'll have got used to them. But I'm glad you chose otherwise, my dear. Once they saw a snake crawling across the road ahead of them. Ellington gave it a wide berth.

"More dangerous than your grasshopper. He's a mamba. Some motorists are foolish enough to try to run over them and break their backs. But what generally happens is that the snake winds itself round an axle or gets into the car. Then some unfortunate attendant is bitten."

Christine glanced up. "Here comes the rain!"

The rain came abruptly, and from the first it was in solid sheets.

In Rupert's car, Florence shivered.

"Rupert, did you have many of these storms while you were working up in the mountains?"

He nodded. "Quite a few. One gets used to them. Of course I couldn't abandon the diggings so I had to camp out in them. It was a little uncomfortable. Once I was isolated for three days because the river had burst its banks."

He spoke unconcernedly. Florence wondered why explorers should be regarded as romantic figures, scientists the reverse. Rupert had gone through as many hardships as any explorer, but he seemed to think nothing of it.

Dorothy, in Frank's car, started out at the rain.

"I've never seen anything like it! At least it can't last long."

"Oh, can't it!" he retorted. "You don't know your Africa, my child. It can go on like this for days—but I hope that on this occasion it won't!"

The road, which had seemed firm, was rapidly being churned into wet, sliding red clay by the lash of the downpouring water. The dongas on either side of the road, ditches four feet deep, which had been bone-dry, were now threatening to overflow.

The car skidded on the wet, loose surface, and Frank had to exert all his strength and his driver's skill to hold the machine straight on her course.

Then the lightning came.

It tore across the sky in great jagged flashes, and Dorothy huddled close to Frank.

Cartter grunted.

"Thank goodness there are no iron-stone koppies in this part of the country. Up north, in the Transvaal, if I'm told that the only thing to do is to lie flat on the ground and hope hard until the storm goes over. Scores of people mostly natives are killed by lightning every year."

Dorothy peered through the rain-swept windshield.

"The other two cars have stopped," she said. "Something's wrong."

The professor's car had gone into a rut and slewed sideways, hopelessly bogged. While the women sat huddled in the cars the men waded ankle deep in the mud and strove to get the cars on to firmer ground.

Every time the engine was started the wheels thrashed helplessly, failing to get a grip.

"No use," said Ellington presently. He was plastered with mud from head to foot, and even his black moustache drooped. "We'll have to abandon her temporarily. We simply must push on to the hotel. It would be decidedly unpleasant to be stranded here overnight."

Christine and he climbed into Rupert's car.

Frank, as the most experienced driver, elected to take the lead.

"I Must Go To-Night!"

"Follow in my wheel tracks as closely as you can," he advised Rupert. "Then there'll be less chance of your skidding." Rupert nodded.

"Right."

"They left the bogged car and struggled on.

It was a very bedraggled party which, some hours later, staggered into the mountain hotel. The river which normally could be forded had been a raging torrent, and the cars had got through with difficulty.

Bad news awaited them.

The man in charge of the hotel greeted Rupert with a worried look. He addressed a few hurried words to him, too low for the rest of the party to catch, and Florence saw Rupert start.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing," said Rupert nonchalantly.

"But you'll have to excuse me. I've one or two things in connection with the excavation work to attend to before we set out for the place. Of course we can't possibly go there to-night. We'll be lucky if we can make it to-morrow."

He spoke jerkily. Florence was suspicious.

She watched him go out of the room, and then took their host aside.

"What did you tell Mr. Featherstone?"

"The rains have got at the diggings," he replied. "The Basuto whom Mr. Featherstone left to guard the place has just come in. He's afraid the whole place will cave in. The excavations must have loosened the soil."

"What does that mean?" she demanded. "Won't they be able to clear it again?"

He shrugged. "It's possible. But unless some sort of support is rigged up there now, without delay, there's a chance that the traces of the caverns will be simply washed away."

Florence's fears were confirmed. Swiftly she told Professor Ellington what she had learned. He frowned and tugged at his moustache.

Report for May for the District Children's Aid

The following is the report for May by Mr. A. G. Carson, local superintendent of the District of Cochrane Children's Aid Society:—

Table with 2 columns: Category, Value. Includes Office interviews (82), Interviews out of office (96), Complaints received (10), Investigations made (10), Children involved (25), Mail received (95), Mail sent out (230), Children in Shelter (6), Children boarding out (63), Wards visited (35), Court attendance (2), Juvenile cases (1), Children on probation to court (10), Wards returned to Shelter (1), Wards placed in foster homes (1), Adoptions completed (2), Official warnings given (2), Mileage travelled (675), Meetings addressed (1), Children placed in foster homes (no; wards) (2), Children admitted to Shelter (no; wards) (1), Children given assistance in their own homes (9), Investigations for other societies (5), Cases under the Unmarried Parents Act (4)

married! Bah, I'm as fit as either of you. No, the three of us will go. But we'll have a good tuck-in first. We'll probably need it."

Presently they sat down to a feast of venison, paw paw and coffee—the men's laced with brandy.

Each of the women sat and watched her man.

Outside, the rain lashed down monotonously, and the jagged flashes of lightning revealed the towering mass of the mountain, black and seeing angrily to brood.

One thought was uppermost in each woman's mind.

Would her man come back safely?

Finally the men dressed themselves in appropriate clothes, long rubber boots such as Rupert had been wearing, a turned down hat, and a mackintosh. Each carried a stout stick and a knapsack in which were provisions and some brandy. There was no real rock-climbing to be done, fortunately but the path, especially in the storm, was winding and treacherous, easily lost in the darkness. Once off the path and a man might wander for hours, in danger of falling down a crevasse and injuring himself seriously, or worse.

"I hope you are not trying to insinuate," he rumbled, "that I am too old to go out in the rain. Hang it, man, do you realize that I am shortly to be

old bones somehow!"

He turned to look at her. Then he felt for her hand.

"Thanks, Florence! You're a darling!"

She felt a little thrill of happiness run through her.

"Back in the comfortable living room of the hotel, before a roaring fire, they held a council of war, while a hot supper was being prepared for them.

"Now then!" said Ellington. As he often did, he had ceased to be the professor, and had reverted to his war-time role of company commander. He glanced round the circle of intent faces.

"Rupert knows all about the diggings, and what chance of their holding out are," he continued. "Rupert, will you please explain the position?"

Rupert spoke with his usual precision.

"The position is this. The rain has got at the foundations of the old camping grounds. There is a chance that the cave where I have been carrying on my main work will collapse altogether. But I do not think that very probable."

District Governor Thompson was presented with an electric clock by Dr. M. J. Kelly on behalf of the club. Maurice Williams asked club members to attend the drumhead service being held on Sunday, in a body. Other guests were Michael Wernick, North Bay, Lions Club, and Don James, of Timmins.

Misses Joy Fitzgerald and Elsie McFadden entertained with two dances. Deputy District Governor William Wylie, of Schumacher, offered a toast to the charter members of the Timmins club. Of the twenty-nine original members of the Timmins Lions Club, seventeen remain, it was pointed out. In view of the fact that the Porcupine is a mining camp with a shifting population seventeen was seen as a large number of original members.

"Chip" Ball replied to the toast to the charter members.

Slight Variation

"When there is spring-cleaning to be done," says a housewife, "men take good care to keep out of the way." For men will shirk and women must sweep.—Star.

Photo-Nite at the Palace Theatre this week will offer \$125 to the person whose number is chosen at the Thursday evening performance.

On Thursday of last week, Mr. J. W. Latimer, of 17 Wilson avenue, was not present at the theatre and therefore forfeited the right to offer his photograph to the management for the amount of \$105. Mr. Latimer's number was 7495, and was chosen by L. Windrow.

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They were travelling now in a sort of twilight, though the hour was not late. The sun failed to pierce through the