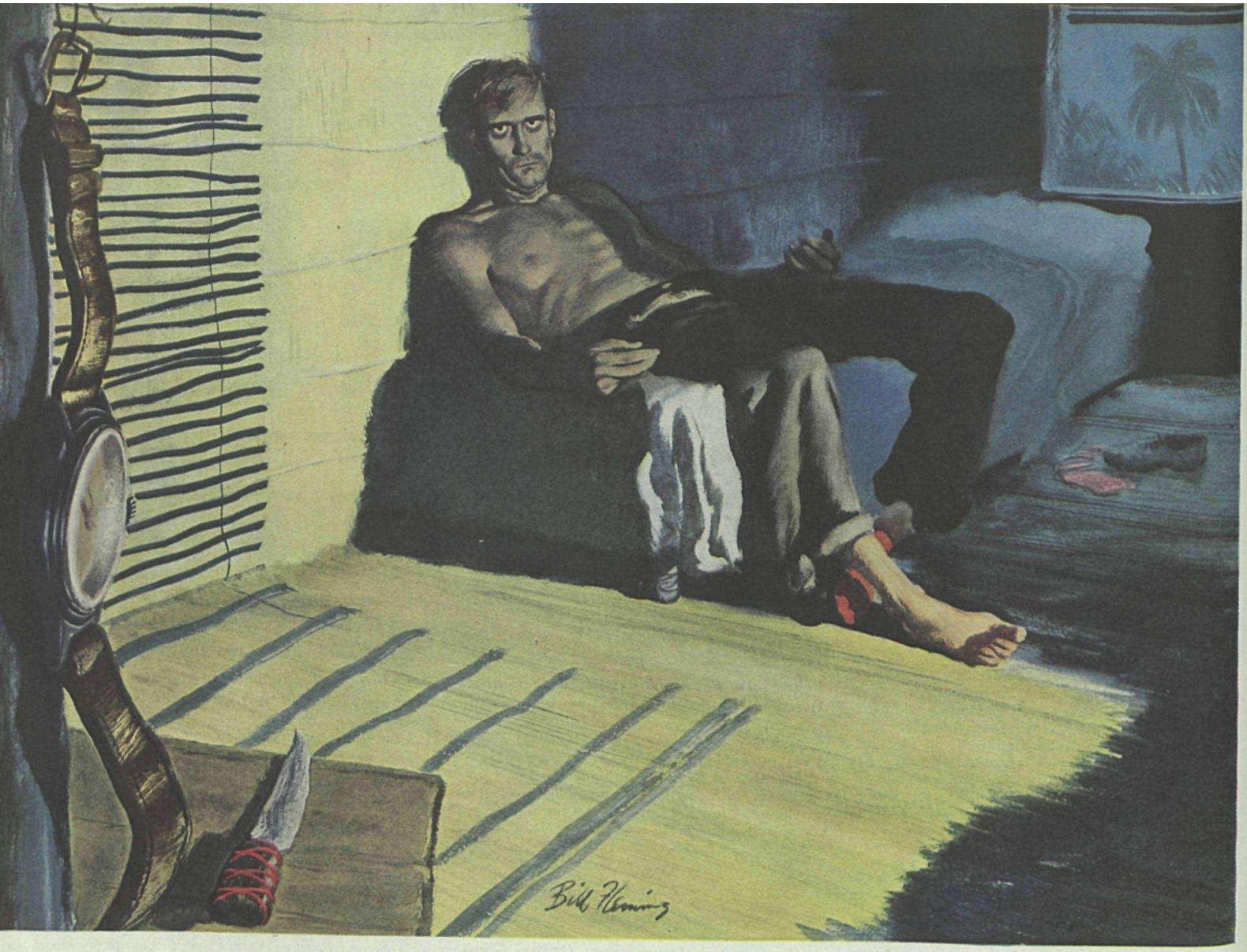


Only the watch stood between him and hideous death. As long as it ticked, he would live—

haunted by

The Silent Horror

By HUGH B. CAVE

THE watch hangs today behind a hotel bar in Port Moresby, alongside a picture Dorson painted ten years ago. The picture is one that led people to say he was "different," maybe a bit "odd." Nothing in it is quite clear, but if you look closely you will discover Dorson himself sitting blissfully, in rags, at a Papuan feast.

"The women had nothing to do with it," his friends will tell you. "Even then, that long ago, Tom Dorson knew what he wanted."

Perhaps. And perhaps not. To say a man knew, ten years before the act, that he would do a thing so drastic . . . yet it's not beyond belief. He was forever doing the unpredictable.

Witness the times he put away his paints and brushes and went off by himself, exploring, to be gone for months. Few men knew the South Pacific as he did. None knew more about the black heart of primitive New Guinea. Who's to say the painting was not prophetic?

But the two women come into it as well. Rule them out and the whole affair becomes too simple. Dorson was no simple man.

Where and how he discovered Elizabeth is their own secret to this day. Once a year or so, when New Guinea galled him, he took himself to Sydney or Cooktown or Thursday Island—wherever the mood dictated—and her path might have crossed his at any of those places or at a way station between. A girl of her sort gets about.

In any case, it was a shock to Port Moresby when Dorson brought her, and an even greater shock when the town saw how wholly devoted he was to her. He was excused on the grounds that she was easily eight years his junior—and pretty enough, in knocked-about fashion—and this was his first love affair.

It wouldn't last, they predicted. A girl of her sort would never endure the respectable dullness of a tropical port like Moresby. Certainly not with a man like Dorson, a rather hopelessly ugly little man who might bury his nose in a painting for weeks on end. Even the house he lived in was a drab cracker box far out on the road to Hanuabada.

ILLUSTRATED BY BILL FLEMING

But, surprisingly, Dorson seemed happy. At least in a bewildered sort of way, as if he could not believe that such bliss was meant for him. For his birthday, five months after their marriage, Elizabeth gave him a watch, an expensive thing ordered from Sydney and paid for with pennies she had hoarded . . . or so she said, and so he proudly repeated. Then, soon after, the whispers started.

She had never been seen alone in the town before. Even when she came to do her shopping, Dorson accompanied her. Now, suddenly, she began to find ways of coming without him—not to the stores, but to the water front, where a disreputable shell boat from Thursday Island was laid up for repairs. And it was discerned, before too long, that the object of her furtive visits was the shell boat's captain.

Who was he? No one in Port Moresby knew the man or his background. The whispers, though, supplied many a plausible conjecture. Doucard was his name, and obviously he was someone she had known before Tom Dorson appeared on the scene. A former associate, perhaps. More likely a former lover. In any case, she saw him often. (Continued on Page 72)

THE SILENT HORROR

(Continued from Page 24)

How the word reached Dorson is not clear, but reach him it did, the night before the ship was due to sail. He had been working on a portrait of a prominent visitor, unaware of his wife's comings and goings. Informed of the facts, he must have gone home that night to find Elizabeth absent, and then walked to the town in search of her, struggling dazedly to balance his faith against the ugly rumors.

He found her. As luck would have it, he arrived as she was leaving the ship. On the pier she turned, holding up her hands in farewell, and Doucard, drunkenly boisterous, leaned from the ship to embrace her. She slipped from the embrace with a teasing laugh and vanished into the darkness by the pier sheds.

Dorson stood like a man in a trance, gazing into the shadows which had swallowed her. He went then to the hotel, where, in silence, he drank himself drunk. Long after midnight he stepped into the street, as if to go home. But he didn't go home. He disappeared.

Those who see prophecy in the painting behind the Moresby bar will tell you, now, that Dorson's affair with Elizabeth was only incidental. His retirement, they insist, was a long-contemplated act.

This much is certain: he knew where he was going when he left Port Moresby. There was no aimless wandering. By lakatoi he traveled directly along the coast to Deception Bay; by native canoe he journeyed up the Kikori to its headwaters; and there, alone, he struck inland into the mountains.

The rest of the tale we have to piece together from information supplied by Will Jonas, who followed the same track months later, purely by accident. Believe it or not, as you will. The fact remains that the watch now hangs behind the bar in Moresby, and Jonas, though by trade a gold seeker, is a man of integrity.

Dorson, when he left the river, had only the clothes he wore, the contents of his pockets—including a notebook—and the watch given him by his wife. No matter. He was a self-sufficient man, able to live on what the jungle offered, and he had traveled that particular route before. All, at least, except the last forty or fifty miles.

His purpose was to put his past behind him. To find aloneness in a native community where the evils of civilization were unknown.

For three weeks he trudged on. He put the seemingly endless rain forests behind and forced a way through the bamboo thickets of the mid-slope jungles. He entered the valley. He was probably the only white man in all New Guinea who knew about the valley. Will Jonas, who followed Dorson, was three days finding a way down into it.

Twelve miles long, this valley. Six wide. And all about it, sentinel fashion, stand tortured walls of rock with their bare knobs in the frigid clouds. People lived there, of course. Show your primitive Papuan a patch of arable land easily defended from his neighbors and, if he has to, he will tunnel to it through solid stone. But Dorson had no wish to be a hermit. Peace was what he sought. Forgetfulness. Not isolation.

"I'm Tom Dorson," he said, "come to live with you, if I may."

A risky thing to do. By the rules of the game they had every right to reply with clubs and have him for dinner. But something in the simplicity of his approach must have piqued their curiosity, for he was taken in hand, literally, and escorted to the community headman for judgment.

There were some two hundred men, women and children in the valley at this time, and the boss man, Ramabu, was by all odds the most formidable of the lot. He was taller than Dorson, twice as heavy, with legs like tree trunks and with the mind of a ten-year-old child.

Ramabu swaggered up to Tom Dorson, walked around him twice, peered into his face and demanded, "Where do you come from?"

"A place called Port Moresby, many days from here."

"In this place called Port Moresby you were headman?"

"No," said Dorson. "Nor do I have any wish to be headman here."

"You could not be headman here," Ramabu informed him. "With my hands alone I can squeeze the life from any man in the valley, you included."

"No doubt of it," said Dorson.

"I'll demonstrate," Ramabu said, and wrapped his enormous arms around Dorson's middle.

Dorson must have thought it was the end for him. He didn't struggle, even when every rib in his body seemed about to crack. He didn't cry out even when Ramabu whipped him high off the ground and whirled him in the air.

The headman plunked his victim down again, and thought it a great joke when Dorson staggered dizzily about like a sick chicken. Obviously such a puny fellow was harmless.

"Make yourself at home," Ramabu said, in effect. "As long as you behave yourself, you will be one of us."

So Dorson picked himself out a bit of land at the far end of the valley, and began to build a house. It was not the best site available—not near enough to the river to be entirely convenient—but it would do.

Those first few weeks were idyllic, really. He had no time to brood. Timing his activities by the watch, he devoted so many hours each day to gathering nuts, fruits and roots on which to sustain himself, so many to working in the garden which would insure him a steady food supply later, so many to laboring on the house. Nights, when he stretched out on his palm-leaf bed, he was a contented man.

Ultimately the house was done, the garden planted, and he had time to go up to the main village once in a while to get acquainted with his neighbors.

They were simple people. Abundantly provided for in their spot of paradise, they had few worrisome duties and spent most of their time amusing themselves. Blessed with an unending supply of water, they were clean and attractive. Especially the women.

Giri, for instance. She could scarcely be considered a woman, having not yet counted her sixteenth birthday, but she had a woman's ideas. She came shyly toward him one evening along the edge of the firelight, while he sat watching a native dance. He hardly noticed her until she was on the ground beside him, her cheek against his knee.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked, scowling, and learned her name.

"What the dickens do you want?" he demanded. And learned that too.

"No," he said emphatically.

"Every man needs a woman in his house," Giri insisted. "Are you different from other men?"

Dorson looked at her. Her brown eyes were soft and expressive. Her skin

had the full rich luster of youth. And, obviously, she was determined.

He stood up. "Yes, I'm different," he said, and hurried away, hoping his abrupt departure would not be noticed.

It was noticed by one. Ramabu, the headman, threw back his head and laughed as if at a huge joke.

Dorson was not to be rid of Giri so easily, however. Next day she turned up at the house while he was sweeping. Framed in the doorway, she made a face at him.

"That's woman's work."

"I told you last night I want no woman here!" Dorson retorted.

"Your water is gone," she said. And, taking the bamboo container, she went off toward the stream.

Dorson watched her go and made up his mind to be absent when she returned. He had been toying with the notion of searching the valley for rare edibles that might be transplanted to his garden. This, he decided abruptly, was a good time to make a start.

But when he returned hours later, he found her still there, squatting like a wood nymph beside his stone fireplace. "I've cooked some food for you," she said. There, laid out for him, was a tempting display of yams and roasted chestnuts, cassava cakes and star fruit . . . he was too hungry to resist.

She waited until he had eaten; then she said, "Why don't you like me?"

"I do like you," Dorson admitted. "But you're too young for a man my age." On an impulse he added, "Besides, I have a woman already," and showed her the words engraved on his watch. "See? This is her name, Elizabeth. And this is my name, Tom. 'Elizabeth to Tom,' it says."

Giri held the watch to her ear. "What is it for, this thing?"

"Well . . . it counts the hours. It tells me when the sun will come up and go down."

"How?" she demanded. "By magic?"

"More or less. You could call it that."

Giri solemnly gazed at him. "This woman is coming here?"

"No. Not here."

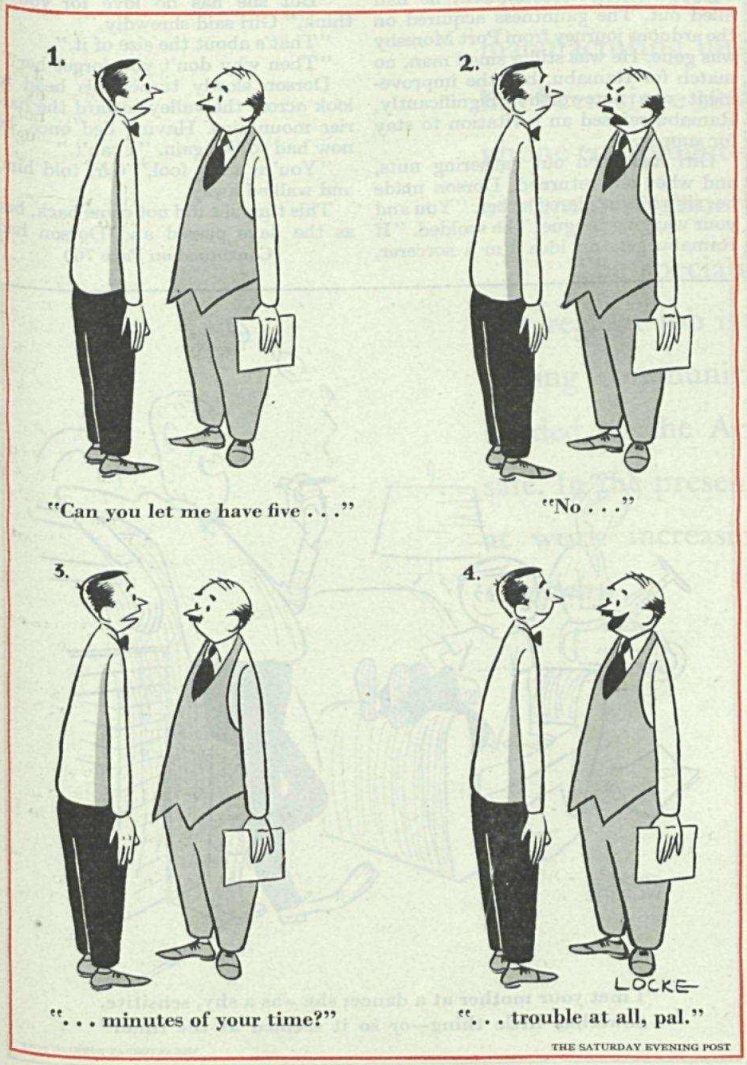
"Then she is no good for you. I stay."

Dorson lost his patience. "Stay here? The devil you will! You'll clear out this minute and leave me alone!"

"I'll be back," she said, making a face at him, "tomorrow."

When she had gone, Dorson pondered the problem. There was but one solution. Determined as Giri was, she would soon tire of coming if she found the house empty and had only herself to talk to. Meantime, he could be putting the days to good use by getting better acquainted with the valley.

He learned much in the ensuing days of hide-and-seek. The valley itself, he discovered, was a good deal like a fortress. The encircling mountains were wickedly steep on all sides, and the one means of ingress—the pass by which he himself had entered—was dominated by Ramabu's village. Ramabu's people need fear no surprise attack by outsiders, but by the same token a man who incurred their displeasure and wished to leave would find himself a prisoner.



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He learned, too, that he might be able to do something about his water supply. Clawing up the cliffside one day to investigate the stream above his house, he found himself standing on the edge of a major discovery.

Here the stream arched from a cleft in the rocks high overhead and fell straight toward him, and the foaming pool at his feet was nothing less than a natural reservoir. Bamboo large enough for a conduit—all he would need of it—grew reasonably close by on the mountainside, and the downhill distance to his clearing was not great.

But though his walks taught him much of value, they failed to discourage Giri. Invariably she was there at the house when he returned.

He worked out a compromise. She could come every morning and stay until dark. His nights were to be his own. So, for better or worse, he acquired an adoring, soft-eyed companion who saw to his every comfort and laughed when he scolded.

But she was a woman. She had a tongue. And one day, inevitably, Ramabu came calling.

"What is this thing that counts the hours?" the headman demanded.

"Only a watch," Dorson said warily, producing it. "Giri has told you it's magic, I suppose, but of course you know better."

"Of course," Ramabu said, knowing nothing of the sort.

He looked about him. It was his first visit to Dorson's place and he saw, perhaps to his surprise, that the house was one of the best in the valley. Almost as good, in fact, as Ramabu's own. As for Dorson himself, he had filled out. The gauntness acquired on the arduous journey from Port Moresby was gone. He was still a small man, no match for Ramabu, but the improvement was noteworthy. Significantly, Ramabu refused an invitation to stay for supper.

Giri had been out gathering nuts, and when she returned, Dorson made her sit while he glared at her. "You and your wagging tongue!" he scolded. "If Ramabu gets an idea I'm a sorcerer, he'll want me out of here! Are you trying to get me banished?"

She hung her head.

"I was a fool to let you put a foot inside my house!" he shouted.

For days, Giri spoke only when he spoke to her, and laughed not at all.

She knew now, did Giri, that Dorson was no ordinary man who could be won over with a sly smile of invitation. He brooded. The long walks he took were not solely for exercise, and the hours he spent in meditation were not hours of relaxation. Mistakenly she thought he hungered for the woman—and she wept for him.

After Ramabu's visit, Dorson stayed away from the village, hoping the talk about the watch would die down. To keep Giri's careless tongue out of circulation as well, he built a lean-to and ordered the girl to live in it while he tackled the task of enlarging his own residence to accommodate her.

This should have been no great job, had not the artistic impulse seized him. He labored for three weeks and at the end of that time he had a four-room house complete with veranda; without question the finest structure in the valley. By comparison, the headman's residence was a hovel.

But when he informed his companion she might henceforth have a room inside the house, she shook her head.

"This woman in Port Moresby," said Giri. "You love her?"

Dorson, bone weary, frowned at her as she stood before him, slim and brown in the sunlight. He wavered, but was not ready to cast aside his one weapon of defense. "I love her," he lied.

"But she has no love for you, I think," Giri said shrewdly.

"That's about the size of it."

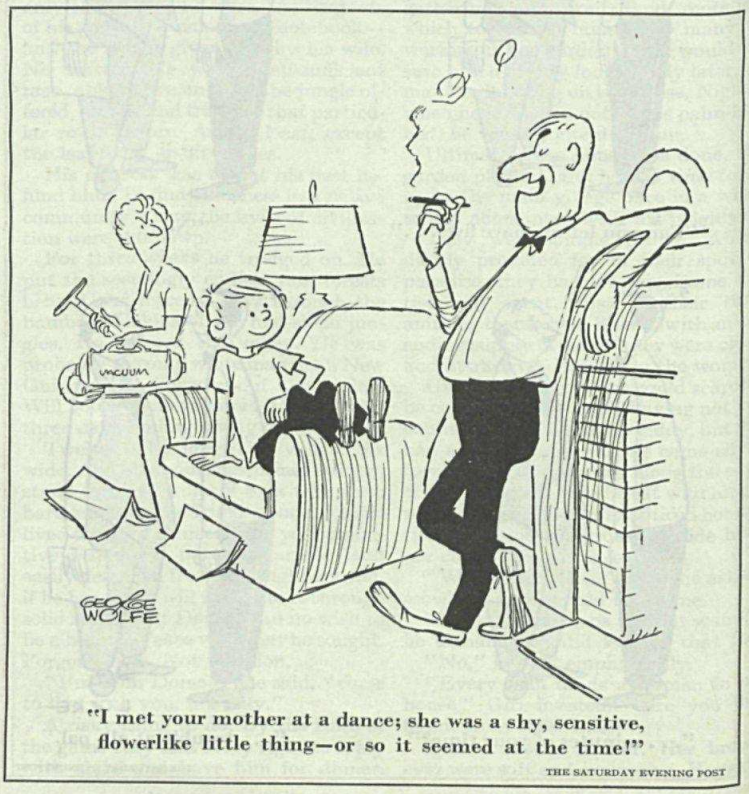
"Then why don't you forget her?"

Dorson slowly turned his head to look across the valley toward the barrier mountains. Having lied once, he now had to lie again. "I can't."

"You're a big fool," Giri told him, and walked away.

This time she did not come back, but as the days passed and Dorson had

(Continued on Page 76)



"I met your mother at a dance; she was a shy, sensitive, flowerlike little thing—or so it seemed at the time!"

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only the ticking of the watch to listen to, the empty rooms of his big new house began to get on his nerves. He worked in his garden; that was no good either. Troubled, he took himself up the mountain to begin his pipe line.

That was a job! For more than a month he stuck to it, cutting bamboo, moving boulders, clearing brush.

He had few visitors. Now and then, someone came with a polite request to look at the watch, but no one stayed to chat. Their attitude toward him was wary, and his loneliness increased.

Never mind, he told himself. *When the pipe line's finished they'll come in droves.*

He was right about that, though he first had to go to the village and boast. For days then, Ramabu's people struggled up the cliffside to examine the installation at the pool and followed the bamboo snake down to the house. In the house itself, where the water spilled impressively into an open trough and traveled the full length of the kitchen before passing through an outlet pipe to the garden, they behaved so like children that Dorson had to laugh.

"It's real," he assured them. "Put your hands in it. Drink some!"

Ramabu came, too, and looked. And he went away without comment. Dorson thought this amusing also.

He discovered his error the following evening. The tone of the drums in the village should have warned him, but when he recognized his peril, it stood squarely outside the door.

Dorson stood up, his gaze passing in near panic from Ramabu to the others. His trim little yard was packed with humanity like a native market place.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Ramabu had a speech prepared. "I come to find out," he said in effect, "if a man who can build a better house than mine, and move a river to it to show his cleverness, can best me also with spears. Or clubs. Or bare hands. I have been headman here a long time. My people expect this of me."

Say this for Tom Dorson: he was a brave man. A lesser man would have argued, surely, and might have pleaded. Having sized up the situation, Dorson paused only for a last look around the house in which for more than six months he had sought contentment, then walked outside. He hadn't a chance of besting Ramabu in combat, but he paced to the center of the yard, halted there, and said with a shrug of resignation, "All right, let's be at it."

A murmur swept through the onlookers as they formed a circle about their headman and his victim. Even Ramabu himself eyed the waiting Dorson suspiciously. There had been a good deal of talk, remember, about magic.

Tom Dorson gripped the earth with his bare feet and waited, recalling how Ramabu's hands had whirled him before. The waddling Ramabu came to him with arms wide, circling, and Dorson turned with him. The Papuan rushed and Dorson sidestepped, slipped, and was flung aloft.

But not whirled. Not slammed to the ground. Helpless in Ramabu's mighty grip, he heard a voice screaming at the headman to halt, and looked down to see Giri hammering at the Papuan's chest with her fists.

"If you kill him, the thing that tells the sun to come up will stop!" she wailed. "He told me so!"

Ramabu tried to push her away with an upthrust knee.

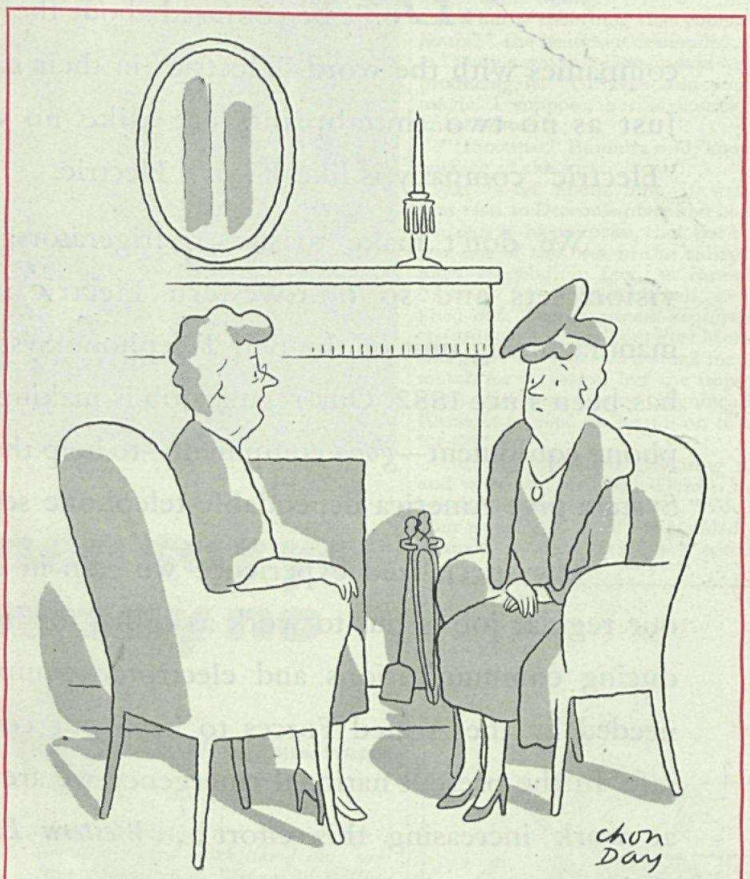
"There will never be a sun again!" she shrilled. "Only night and darkness!" She spun to face the crowd. "Make him stop! All of us will die!"

Ramabu did his best. But the people there in Dorson's garden had been working up to a mere killing, and this was better than a killing. They surged with the rush and roar of a released flood. Ramabu hadn't time to hurl his victim to the ground before, quite literally, there remained no patch of ground in his vicinity big enough.

Thus, a second time, Tom Dorson won a reprieve.

Not quite a reprieve, though. A day later, Ramabu came calling.

"We have some big fools in this valley, I think," he said. "If I were to balance a stick on a sharp stone and start it rocking, it would rock for a long time, but in the end it would stop. I think there is something like that inside this thing you call a watch, and eventually the watch will stop too. And the sun will come up as before. But you will not be here to see it." He took a broom from beside the door and broke its tough handle easily in his fingers. "I am a patient man," he said, and left.



"I don't believe in shouting at a man. You can do so much more with a low, nerve-racking whine."

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The girl came. Dorson thanked her unsteadily and said, "I owe you my life, such as it is. Whatever you want of me, you can have."

"Do you still love the woman in Port Moresby?" she asked.

"No, nor any other woman." And, tired of the game he had been playing, he told her how things were with him, and why he could never again let a woman into his heart.

"Not even me?" she demanded.

"Not even you."

"Then I wish I had let him kill you!" she said. But he saw a tear in her eye as she flung away from him.

He was alone again, yet not alone. Unfailingly, at sunup each day, Ramabu came to perform one simple task—to learn if the watch still ticked—and departed without comment. Like a ghoul daily investigating the heartbeat of a man on his deathbed.

Dorson found this amusing. Then not so amusing. Finally terrifying. Too well he remembered the awful power of Ramabu's hands. The ticking of the watch became more important to him than the beat of his pulse. He awoke in the night, listening for it, and could not close his eyes again for fear it might stop while he slept.

To calm his nerves he kept a diary, methodically setting down each day's thoughts and activities. He dated it from the day of his arrival in the valley and searched his memory to fill the early pages. It was an excellent diary; he was honest with it. But still he listened to the ticking of the watch.

He heard it as one hears the beat of a drum, a ceaseless drip of water. The sound was torture, but he dreaded silence. Had Ramabu been a man with a gun or a gallows keeper, he might have faced the future with the equanimity of resignation. But those hands ——

He had always worn the watch on his wrist, but now, fearful of damaging it, he hung it by a loop of fiber on the wall near his bed. Yet he could not let it hang there undisturbed, even between windings. Time and again he took it down to examine it for the first trace of rust; to listen for the first telltale fluctuation of its song. It was a good watch. Perhaps good for years. But she had given it to him and, like her, it might be faithless.

Then Giri came again to visit. It was late of a rainy afternoon, and through an unmended hole in the thatch, drops of water fell like sand grains in an hourglass. Seated on his bed, head in hands, Dorson heard a sound at the doorway and leaped to his feet.

She said, "I am to be Ramabu's wife if my father accepts the marriage gift. Do you care?"

"If you were my wife," Dorson muttered, "you would live in dread of being a widow."

"There are other villages beyond the valley."

"And how would we leave here? Ramabu watches every move I make. He will know you are here now, and will not be pleased."

She nodded absently, gazing with concern at his gaunt face and wasted figure. For days the ticking of the watch had tortured him and he had eaten scarcely enough to sustain life, and the change in him was shocking.

"A man and woman might climb the cliff by the waterfall," Giri said, "if they had the will to try."

Had she come to him two weeks before with such a proposition, Dorson might have been tempted. Not now. He was ill.

"Marry Ramabu," he told her. "Leave me alone."

A week later he heard the marriage drums in the village, and knew they would continue for three days before the feasting and dancing swept to a climax. The sound saddened him. Loneliness sat beside him.

He lost track of the hours. It seemed to him that he never slept, yet he must have, for Giri came to him with food and begged him to eat, and wound the watch for him—a dream, of course, for she would never visit him at such a time. But when he slept was a mystery. The drums and the watch tormented him seemingly without respite.

He tried to think, in his misery, where and how he had made his mistake. He had come to the valley in good faith. What had happened? How had he failed? The watch was responsible for his present predicament, to be sure; yet without the watch he might have died long ago.

If there was an answer, it eluded him through the three nights of drumming, and on the third night, when the valley was quiet at last, he fell asleep from exhaustion. When he waked, the night was not yet over and something was wrong. Something or someone had crept upon him through the darkness and lurked now within arm's reach, ready to pounce. He sat up, straining to identify the menace. Its name was silence. The watch had stopped.

Dorson knew what he had to do, had known for weeks. Barefoot, all but naked, he went straight from bed to door, out of the house and across the yard. Daylight found him at the pool, winded and bloody from his climb up the cliffside. He plunged into the cool water, drank to refresh himself, and with a desperate backward glance into the valley, began to climb in earnest.

They would see him, he knew. Frantically he dragged himself upward to be beyond reach of their arrows when the pursuit began.

There was but one possible ascent of that terrifying wall—the almost-perpendicular crack from the crest of which, high above, the waterfall flung into space. It offered in the beginning only the merest toe holds to sustain him, and invisible finger grips for the heaves that raised his weight. Higher, it yawned wider than his spread-eagled legs, and with the far wall beyond reach, he climbed by means of a dangling vine. It was impossible, yet inch

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by inch he lengthened the abyss below him and reached at last a ledge where he might rest. To thwart pursuit, he tugged at the vine until it tore loose and fell.

Then, looking down from this giddy perch through the glittering mist of the waterfall, now all golden in sunlight, he saw a commotion in the village . . . and something else.

Yes, something else, nearer. Giri!

Even on her wedding night she had slipped away to satisfy herself that all was well with him. Just as she must have done on these previous nights when Dorson had thought himself alone and despised and dreaming.

He cried out to her as she began to climb. No use. Had he hurled a thunderclap at her she could not have heard through the shattering roar of the waterfall. The urgency of his own need was forgotten. He himself was safe for the moment, perched beyond reach of any arrow or spear that might be launched at him, but for her . . . already the footpaths of the valley were alive with running shapes, and the seconds ticked her life away.

While he watched, she reached the cleft where the vine had dangled. There was no vine now; he himself had torn it loose. In vain she sought a substitute ladder, while below her, leading the pursuit, Ramabu appeared at the pool.

She had no chance. For those men who could impale a bird on the wing at that distance, she was an easy target. Dorson saw her sway backward to look up at him, saw her lips moving, shaping his name, as the first arrow gleamed in the golden mist. Then she let go and, with both hands upflung toward him, fell into space.

He could look no more. Rising on the ledge, he began his struggle again. At the top he stumbled away from the cliff's edge into oblivion.

Well, not quite oblivion. But where he went, what he did in the interval between his escape from the valley and his return to civilization are secrets that not even Will Jonas, who followed him into Ramabu's domain, was ever able to solve.

Tom Dorson departed the valley in September. There is no record of his thoughts as he fled from the cliff's edge—whether he realized then the immensity of his loss and the real tragedy of his flight, though certainly he must have. He turned up in Port Moresby the following July, a gray and silent man whose eyes mirrored an abiding anguish and whose ears were deaf to questions. He had come back, he said, to put his affairs in order.

That was a laugh. He had no affairs. His wife, he learned, had sold his paintings, all of them, and gone off with her lover, leaving him penniless. Only his house remained.

He seemed not to care. He moved into the house and was living alone there when Will Jonas stepped into the hotel one evening with the watch and the diary. And at three in the morning, when Will had told his tale, some of the faithful went to fetch Dorson.

The two men faced each other, Dorson incredulous, the gold hunter wary. "This is yours," Jonas said at last, handing over the notebook. "You'll excuse me for reading it."

Dorson thrust the book into his pocket, unable to speak.

"You'll be pleased to know Giri isn't dead," Jonas went on, "though she was bad hurt and took a long time getting over it. Ramabu's finished—lost face over the affair and got turned out—and the girl's living alone in your house below the waterfall. I spent many an hour talking to her."

Dorson, white as the wall, held his gaze on the other's grizzled face.

"And I've brought your watch," said Jonas. "She gave it to me. Said you valued it." He laid the timepiece on the table, giving its stem a turn as he did so. "It runs, you'll notice. Never was anything wrong with it. She kept it running those last few days when you were near out of your mind; then, when her pending marriage didn't shake you, she let it stop in desperation, hoping you'd quit the valley and take her with you. But you went alone."

That was the moment. The whole tale, of course, will be told in Port Moresby as long as there remain a narrator with a thirst and a hearer with money enough to anchor him to a bar, but that moment, brief as it was, will ever be the nub of the matter.

Whiter than white, Tom Dorson sat statue-still, the watch timing his resurrection, and not a sound in that place except the gentle noise it made while mocking him. Then all at once he stood up. Without a word for anyone present, he lurched about and flung himself at the door, and the door hung open behind him, creaking in the breeze, letting in fluttering moths that made for the lamp above the table where the watch lay; but no one moved to close it; no one stirred until the sound of his hurrying footsteps was gone.

Then, with a shrug, Will Jonas palmed up the watch and went to the bar with it. "He don't want it, I guess," Will said. "Might at least have thanked me, I should think. Well, I'll trade it for a bottle."

So there it is . . . the watch that hangs today behind the bar in Moresby, unwound and silent, but ready to tick whenever some curious customer eyes the picture hanging beside it, of Tom Dorson sitting in rags at a native feast, and asks a leading question.

The question comes easy. The answer's a different matter. The faithful, you see, will not be shaken from their insistence that the picture is prophetic—that Tom Dorson would have done such and so, eventually, no matter what. While those of a more romantic turn of thought ——

Well, never mind. One thing is sure, regardless. Dorson went to the valley this time with a clear mind and a clean conscience, not to escape from something, but to find it. And since it was there waiting for him, he found it, without a doubt.

THE END

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GUMSHOE GRUMBLE

By Arthur Frederic Otis

I'm one of those grubbers
Who always wear rubbers;
I'm wife-trained to do as I'm told;
I'm scoffed at by others,
The strong office brothers
Who claim that they never catch cold.

But I find it irksome
And dislike the jerk some,
When I have his work to do, too—
The guy who goes hatless,
The rubberless Atlas
Who's home for two weeks with the flu!

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