

# Yaqui Gold

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE



Swinging around, Lorela hurled a rock at one of the attackers

**Start now this exciting story of the wild Mexican land where the war drums still thunder an ancient defiance**

**D**ON WAYLAND has been hired by a couple of smart promoters, Dennis and Ledgate, to fly a plane over savage Yaqui land in an attempt to locate the lost Tiopa Mine. But Wayland has been stalling in the town of Guaymas, convinced that the plane which his employers have procured for him isn't trustworthy.

Then, too, there's a strong attraction in Guaymas—namely Lorela Romero, who sings at a night club called the White Tower. She's a mystery, this fascinating redhead, and all Don Wayland can be sure of is that he loves her.

Eventually Dennis and Ledgate talk him into making the flight, and Wayland takes off, accompanied by Herb Keller, a photographer. Over the wild Yaqui region the plane is followed by buzzards, and this grim omen

is soon borne out by disaster. Wayland encounters serious engine trouble, and while he is attempting to land the ailing plane, he is spotted by a band of Yaquis. It is only after Herb Keller has been badly wounded by the Indians that Wayland manages to drive them off.

**A**FTER days of terrible suffering Wayland and Keller find refuge in the camp of one Gilbert Frayne. This shabby, middle-aged man Wayland has seen back in Guaymas; and now he learns that Frayne is also in search of the lost Tiopa Mine. Dennis and Ledgate, Frayne claims, have stolen from him important clues to the location of the mine, which he has been interested in for years.

Now Don Wayland, in the course of his disastrous flight, did discover the Lake of the Gods, a landmark in the trail to the mine. Frayne asks him to join his expedition, to lead the way to the lake; but Wayland refuses to doublecross his employers. So the two men, camped together in Yaqui land, are in a sense enemies.

**This story began in last week's Argosy**

That night the camp is awakened by guns down the canyon. Frayne orders his men—"tame" Yaquis—to arm themselves, and as he and Wayland set out to reconnoiter they hear, strangely, a woman's cry. . . .

IN GUAYMAS Dennis and Ledgate have learned that Wayland crashed in Yaqui land, but they are more worried over the fact that Gilbert Frayne may reach the Tiopa Mine before them. Dennis has been an ardent admirer of Lorela's, but Ledgate has become convinced that she is a spy for someone.

Probably Ledgate's hand is in the attempted kidnaping of Lorela, a scheme frustrated by the girl's valiant Indian servant, Tula. Afterward Lorela discovers that her room has been ransacked, and so now her identity must be known to Dennis and Ledgate. She is the daughter of Gilbert Frayne. There's only one thing for her to do now—to set out with Tula for Yaqui land and join her father. . . .

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROAD TO PERIL

THE road to Yaqui land was good—for almost exactly eight miles. That is, aside from heaps of crushed rock not yet spread out, and steamrollers parked without red lights, and a center line temporarily marked with squared stones destined for culverts, the road was navigable.

It had been officially open for some months, which meant that for some years traveling at night would be risky. The heaving and pitching of the *libre* flung Lorela and Tula against each other, against the front seat, and against the ceiling.

The chauffeur had a wheel to which he could cling. Tula was screeching, "Faster, faster!"

"Wh-h-h-hat is the hurry?" Lorela found breath to ask.

"That Ybarra. One seldom beats him once. One never beats him twice. Especially not two women."

Then the road became really bad. The driver protested. "This is too much. Figure it for yourselves, ladies. You need an ox cart, though a burro would be much better. This is mapped as very poor wagon road."

"You have a very poor wagon. Drive on," Lorela said. "I'm paying you extra."

In another hour, they covered eight miles. Steam poured out of the radiator. The stench of hot oil became plainer. Boulders dotted the deeply rutted road.

There were halts to hunt water, far down in deep ravines. Halts to let the simmering oil cool. Halts so that the driver's arms would not go numb at the wheel. Fenders, shaken loose, wove and rattled and thumped. A wheel came off, for vibration had loosened the lugs. These things all took time.

The driver became glassy-eyed, after ten hours of torment. Lorela said, "Let me."

He protested just a little. Then he took a long pull at a bottle of tequila, and curled up in the back seat with Tula. She said, "Pig, give me a drink too!"

The engine was becoming noisier. Or perhaps it was the increasing silence of the hills. They seemed to be holding their breath. Lorela became painfully tense, waiting for something to happen. She was more afraid of what was ahead than of the pursuit from Guaymas. Ybarra, she reasoned, could hardly travel faster than she had, and she had gotten at least half an hour's start.

She was afraid of Yaqui land. Afraid of the next range, which had to be crossed before reaching Tonichi and the Yaqui River. And perhaps for all this desperate haste, she would not be able to overtake her father, either to warn him or to take refuge with him.

After an hour's pounding, Lorela began to respect the driver of the sturdy hack. Her arms were ready to drop from their sockets. Pains shot through the back of her neck. The cramp in her throttle foot had almost reached her knee. "I'm scared," she told herself. "this isn't bad if you take it easy. I'm just scared silly. Tula!"

"Si, señorita."

"Pass me that tequila."

"But, you cannot drink. Not after this pig of a driver."

"Pass me that tequila, I'd drink after anybody."

Lorela pulled up, wiped the neck of the bottle on her skirt, and shuddered as she listened to the boiling water in the radiator. She shuddered more when she took a gulp of the tequila. But a second swallow took some of the kinks from her neck.

Lorela decided that she could not be lost, simply because there were no cross roads, no forks. The only way to get off the trail was to drive over the edge, and down perhaps a thousand-foot drop. Though to avoid this, she often had to keep the inside wheels cocked high up on the hillside.

THE sun was rising; dawn's first gray made the headlights pallid. Lorela found new life in that mysterious freshening of the air, the upswing of vitality as if the earth's self were waking up.

Then she hit the rock. The front axle cleared, but the oil pan fouled. The jolt awakened the passengers. The driver jumped out. In a moment he yelled, "You have broken the engine, the oil is running out."

Most of Tula's blouse plugged the leak. But a lot of oil had been lost, and the steepest upgrade pulls had to be made very slowly.

It was nearly noon when they reached Tonichi. The driver said, "I will have to stay here for a long time, I cannot drive back. I have to send for the new oil pan."

"Ship your car by train," Lorela said, "down to Cócorit. I'll pay the freight."

Tonichi was the end of the spur that branched from the main line which ran down to Mexico City. The trains, slow and infrequent, had not offered her any chance of quickly eluding her pursuers.

She could have taken refuge with the police, but that would not have warned her father. Sooner or later, Latin optimism would have called her story quite preposterous, and then the thugs would make a second attempt.

Lorela paid the freight. Luckily, she had just received her weekly salary, and in cash, which she had kept in the hotel safe.

The only hotel in Tonichi was the second

floor of a grocery store. There were three rooms, each with canvas cots. There were no closets, since anyone with clothes other than what he wore on his back would surely have sense enough, the natives reasoned, to stay at home.

A fragment of mirror, a washstand, a pitcher and basin completed the furnishings. And, as is often the case in mountain towns, the place was clean.

The town was scattered over steep slopes, and the Yaqui River roared past the outskirts. The biggest building was the railway station. From her window, which faced downstream, Lorela could see the tracks that followed the gorge of the foaming river. In the yards, an absurd little locomotive hissed and fumed.

"While you sleep," Tula said, "I go to find the friend of your father's *capataz*, that Santana Chayoga. Me, I had lots of rest while you were driving. And you should not pay the freight; that fool, it is his fault if he owns a *libre* that cannot climb over little rocks any ox cart can pass over."

Just then the old Indian woman who owned the downstairs grocery store came in to get the plates on which she had served *huevos rancheros*. "And how do you color your hair that way, *señorita*?"

Lorela laughed. "It grows that way."

The old woman was incredulous, but polite. "Just imagine such a thing! And how beautiful. Mine used to be black, but I would have liked red. Now go to sleep. See, I hang a *serapi* over the window, so!"

It was dark when Lorela awoke. She was not worried by Tula's absence. It took hours to hire horses and guides. They liked to haggle.

Later, a full-blown riot startled her. The old *tiendadera* cried, "No, you can't see her! She's tired, and it is not fitting anyway; she is a lady!"

"But I have to see the *rubia*! You old fool, do you want her killed in your house? Let me go up!"

Lorela went to the door and called down the stairs, "Let him tell me from the hall, while I dress. Maybe it is important."

It was the cab driver, "While I am at the freight yards to have my car loaded, I see two men at the station. They are asking everyone for a lady with red hair. One is an angry man with bandages over his face but what I can see is ugly enough. If he catches you, people will think that I, Jose Domingo Morales y del Rincón, took my passengers out and robbed them!"

Then his chest deflated. "And please, *señorita*, do not tell anyone that I warned you, this fellow has four *pelados* with him. Assassins, surely."

He hurried down the stairs before Lorela could question him.

AN HOUR later, Tula returned. She had an armful of clothes: a coarse blue skirt, rawhide *guaraches*, a shawl and a blouse. "Put these on. I bought them from our mule driver's wife. Come, let us go now."

Thirty minutes later, Lorela was riding a shaggy burro, not much larger than a Saint Bernard. Tall men who spoke a sing-song language went ahead; these, she apprehensively told herself, must be Yaqui Mansos—"tame Yaquis." Others trailed along behind, on foot.

The blackness of the gorge made Lorela instinctively lower her voice when she leaned over to speak to Tula. The *click-clock-clack* of the burros' tiny hooves seemed unnaturally loud.

For four hours they followed the narrow trail that sometimes was near enough to the river for the foam to drench it; sometimes a thousand feet above. Then came a halt, and a few hours of rest, with a *serapi* to keep out the chill of bare rocks.

Well before dawn, the *capataz* prodded his men to their feet. For Lorela's benefit, there was coffee. Cold tortillas and jerked beef were eaten on the march. Both made her jaws ache, and threatened her teeth. All morning the sun blazed down into the gorge. Mountains on either side cut off whatever coolness could have come from the distant gulf. That afternoon, Lorela could look down at the back trail. Horsemen were following. Dangerous work, for no horse

was surefooted as a burro; but in the better stretches, his faster pace did win an advantage.

"May the saints help us!" Tula said.

"My father," Lorela reasoned, "will be taking his time. We'll meet him before they catch up."

The following day, the enemy seemed to lose ground. Lorela's fatigue began to approach exhaustion. "Thank God!" She sighed, and looked back. "They're hardly in sight. You'd have to tie me to this burro pretty soon!"

Tula was dusty, and the grimness of her ugly face had become more pronounced; but otherwise, she showed no effects of the day and night march. Nor did the "tame" Yaquis. They seemed inhuman. The *capataz* wanted to lurk in hiding to ambush Ybarra and his crew, but Lorela insisted on advancing. "We've gained, don't you see?"

His slanted little eyes did not change expression. He turned, and the caravan went on. After all, it is hard for four men to make an ambushade to wipe out twice as many of the kind who followed Ybarra.

THEN, when Lorela was sure their swift progress had gained them some measure of safety, the attacks came suddenly. It was at night, and but for the vigilance of the *capataz*, Ybarra's unexpected arrival would have been fatal. As it was, the warning yell was cut short by rifle fire. Bullets zinged from the rock walls. The Yaquis answered with their revolvers and automatic pistols. They found cover where it seemed impossible for a man to hide.

The *capataz* yelled, "Get going, get going! You two, on the way; we'll hold them, we can!"

Lorela did not need a second telling. She gasped to Tula, as they escaped in a spattering of stray slugs: "How could they have fooled us?"

"My guess—I remember the old times, *señorita*—they picked up enough helpers to fake losing ground. You understand? Let the useless horses fall back, which

we see, and do not suspect. Then most of them crowded forward when they knew we couldn't see the backtrail. We are fooled, we are careless, no?"

The four Yaquis fought a splendid rear-guard action, but they were outnumbered. The rumble of the river had for a while drowned the boom and crackle of guns, but now Lorela could again hear the noise, the yelling, the combined voices of pursuers.

"The *capataz* has lost some men," Tula said. "He can't hold Ybarra."

She was all too right. The caravan chief came panting up the trail. Behind him, a pistol blazed. There was answering fire.

"Hurry!" he shouted in his guttural Spanish. "Can't stop them much more."

He staggered. He was wounded. He probably had few cartridges left. He gestured, knelt in a crevice he had instinctively picked in the gloom. His remaining men came blundering up the rocky trail, and tried to join his chief. But the *capataz* said, "Go, like I said. I hold this place. You see—up there—you find a place—hide the *rubia*, you fool!"

He lurched, and recovered. Lorela said, "He's badly hurt."

"Go on, go on." Tula whacked the burro. "You can't help him. Anyway he's a fighting man!"

From the rear, a familiar, rasping voice came through a lull. "Stop, we will not hurt you! You do not understand—we won't harm the *rubia*."

The *capataz*'s pistol cut into that. A man yelled. There was a loud splash. A horse must have reared and fallen into the river.

Lorela was so certain of capture that she was already resigned. Two men were dead or fatally wounded; the brave *capataz* was barely able to stand, and the final Indio not much better off.

"Tula," she said, "we'll just get our last two men murdered, and you and I can't carry on alone. We can't get out."

Lorela turned in the saddle, and called: "Don't shoot, we'll stop!"

Then Tula said, hoarsely. "Come, come! I see a light! I smell a camp. Men and animals and coffee and tobacco!"

Tula jerked Lorela from her burro. "On foot, we make it. See the light in the water. Smell the tobacco. Gringo tobacco!"

Suddenly, then, they were wet with new violence. Guns rattled up ahead, and someone shouted. The rush of men from behind was checked. And in that tumult Lorela heard a voice cry in English: "Down, damn it, down!" She made a dive for the rocks, slashing her hands and knees. Bullets zinged overhead. Heavy boots pounded down the grade, then men in *guaraches* came, silent and swift; they had knives. White men and Indios met Ybarra's group.

"Dad!" Lorela cried, sure of that voice.

She hurled a rock at the man whose white bandage made him conspicuous in the gloom. It caught his arm, deflected his pistol. Then came a shot from the side, and he doubled up.

That broke the raid. The survivors scattered frantically downstream.

Lorela saw the slight figure of her father coming quickly toward her; and then, as her hands went out to him, a voice said: "Wait a second, Prof. I got an interest there myself."

He was close to her then, standing big beside her father; and in a flicker of light she could see his amazed grin. "Don," she cried. She threw herself toward the two men, reaching for them, and laughing.

## CHAPTER VII

### A KNIFE AT NIGHT!

IN FRAYNE'S camp, there was a three-cornered exchange of explanations. That the prima donna of the Silver Tower was the daughter of a professor at Great Western University was too much for Wayland. "I still don't made it," he said. "Disguises and pursuits; daughters chasing after their fathers in the Yaqui wilderness."

Frayne chuckled. "This is my sabbatical year, and I decided to find the Tiopa Mine. For fun. For professional standing. And for money. Political upsets may nose me out of Great Western."



"I didn't know that," Lorela said. "Neither did mother."

"At all events, there was a lot of what you might call domestic opposition to this little venture. So I slipped out, quietly, to avoid argument. But not quietly enough to avoid the attention of those thorough-going scoundrels, Ledgate and Dennis."

"Being a guest," Wayland said, stiffly, "I can hardly dispute your opinion."

"You'd not want to," Lorela cut in. "As I started to tell you—I tried to tell Dad that night when I saw him at the Tower—I had come to spy on Dennis and Ledgate, and also to get word of him, and to talk him out of such an insane idea."

"Thanks." Frayne made an airy gesture with his pipe. "Now you've made yourself a lunacy commission."

She frowned at him; then she smiled, and continued: "You can imagine how it would have been if Corey Ledgate or Elmer Dennis had seen that unexpected meeting. You didn't know me, but I was so shocked at seeing you, and glad and afraid, that I almost made a scene. Where on earth were you staying? I looked all over and sent Tula out looking for an American of your description."

Frayne answered, "I made it a point to have Ledgate or Dennis see me every day, while Chayoga was outfitting this caravan, but I would hardly be around your flossy hotel. And as for that Silver Tower, do you think it would be such an attraction? I finally did go in, and you finally didn't talk me out of going into the mountains. And then what?"

Lorela said, "After Don's plane cracked up, Elmer Dennis must have suspected and ordered Uriel Ybarra—that's what Tula calls him—to try to kidnap me. So, I've got to go with you. If I were kidnapped, they'd use me as a lever to pry you out of the mountains."

Wayland's face had become longer and longer. Finally he blurted it out: "It does look as if I've been working for crooks. But everything is contradictory. You, for instance. First, you didn't want me to fly, then you egged me on."

Lorela nodded. "That's true. I came to Guaymas to find my father and beg him to give up his crazy plan. At all events, to help him if I could. Elmer Dennis is a mining engineer, and we've had trouble with him before. So my dancing and his new enterprises with Corey Ledgate all clicked. I'd heard of him, but he'd never seen me."

Frayne interpolated, "That was in Bolivia, when I'd left my family at home. Dennis was roughshod and tricky, but I never suspected him of attempting kidnapping and murder."

"So you made a chump of me because I worked for those guys?"

She started to say no. Then she met Wayland's eyes, steadily, for a moment and at last said, "First I wanted you not to fly, because you might find the mine before Dad possibly could. Remember, I did not then know just where he was, and if he had left Guaymas already, I wanted him to win."

"Then I wanted you to fly. After I had met him at the Silver Tower, and I begged him to quit and go home. He refused. So I wanted you to find the site, quickly, before he got too far into the mountains."

Frayne chuckled. "Idea being that I'd have sense enough to retreat?"

"Of course; isn't it simple?"

Wayland rose. "I've gotten the run-around very nicely. This lovely creature played me for a dope right from the first day I met her. You tried to herd me into partnership with you, saying that if Keller could live till I got him to the railhead at Tonichi, he could as well survive on the march inland. Now, it seems Tonichi, according to your daughter's story, is not far downstream."

"Very true, Wayland. I did take advantage of your fatigue. You didn't know how close you and Keller were to Tonichi. Say, three days, the way you were traveling. I took advantage of you because I am not becoming younger, my tenure at the university may end, and I have a family to consider. But I was really taking advantage of Dennis and Ledgate."

I am sorry that you had to be their employee."

Frayne's dignity, and his candor pulled the teeth of Wayland's wrath. Here was a man well past middle age, and he went out alone, calmly and unafraid, to get a fresh start.

Wayland said to Frayne, "Let's not wrangle. We've all had a long day. But tomorrow, I am going downstream with the Indios who brought your daughter up from Tonichi."

Frayne had noted how carefully Don and Lorela were ignoring each other now. But he smiled to himself, and said to Chayoga, the caravan chief, "Fix up shelters. Use tarpaulins if you can."

"Yes, *amo*."

"See if the wounded guards are comfortable. I owe my daughter's life to them."

"They are all well taken care of, *amo*. But Ybarra escaped, we had no chance to finish him."

Wayland faced Frayne. "Good night, sir." Then he turned to follow Chayoga.

LORELA and her father sat for a little while by the dying fire. But soon the camp was asleep. The *tamenes* were stretched out about the dying embers. One squatted in a crevice in the rocks. His head drooped, his rifle was across his knees. But despite his posture, he was watching. He had never been able to understand the white man's insane habit of marching back and forth while on guard. His father had bushwhacked enough soldiers and *rurales* to convince him that military precision is idiotic.

Yet there was one thing that the watcher either did not see, or else saw and ignored. A man was worming his way through the further shadows. He moved only as a Yaqui can. There was a glint of steel, now then, as he headed toward the tarpaulin which sheltered Wayland; it was arranged tentwise.

He was wrong in assuming that the American could at once shake off the tension of the preceding days. A Yaqui can relax the moment flight is over, and thus

the prowler made the mistake of judging Wayland by himself. Wayland was half-dead for lack of rest, but his tortured nerves would not permit him to sink easily into a deep sleep.

Suddenly he sat up. In his half-sleep, he had been yelling a warning at Keller. Bit by bit, he realized that the cry had not actually reached his lips. It had echoed only in his mind, else the camp would be in an uproar. He sighed, wiped sweat from his forehead. But he did not quite relax into the contentment of newly found safety.

There was a scent of native tobacco. In the gloom, a moment later, metal gleamed dully. The utter absence of sound made this uncanny. Wayland was still shaken by his nightmare. Instead of waiting, or fumbling for the pistol under his head, he moved by instinct which is as often wrong as right.

The intruder expected a man sound asleep. He was caught off-guard. There was a grunt, a thump, then breath sharply drawn as they grappled in the gloom, and toppled to the hard earth.

Wayland warded off the descending knife. The surprise had failed, and he had a chance, now that the tarpaulin was kicked aside. He knew already that this was a Yaqui. The corded muscles, the wiry frame, the very odor of the savage made that clear. Wayland was surprised that no bones snapped when he wrenched the fellow's wrist and at the same time dropped back to make the most of his weight.

Metal grated across the rocky floor. Wayland's pistol, unlocked during the skirmish, let go with one of the few remaining cartridges in the spare clip. That aroused the camp. Wayland kept the persistent knife from getting home, though it raked him, time and again. Twice he missed a chance to drive his knee home for a blow that would settle even a Yaqui.

Frayne was shouting, "Chayoga! What's going on?"

Lorela cried, "Dad, are you hurt?" She darted from her A-shaped tarpaulin, and Tula came after her, calling on the saints.

Porters and drivers yelled. The burros

brayed and squealed, and the goats taken along to supply meat on the hoof began bleating. Wayland's assailant broke away. The confusion helped. He was gone before Wayland could recover his pistol, or regain his feet.

A FLASHLIGHT blazed. Frayne shouted to his daughter, "I'm all right." He gave Wayland a hand. "What happened?"

"Turn the light on me a bit, and you'll see!" His shirt was blood splashed from shallow slashes. "You have pretty reliable helpers. He didn't do so badly for working on me in the dark."

Lorela had pushed through the crowd. She heard Wayland's bitter words and flared up. "That's a contemptible thing to say. After dad pulled you out of the river and doctored your half-dead photographer!"

Frayne said, calmly, "He was attacked in my camp." Then, to Wayland: "But do you really think I'd be responsible for anything like that?"

There was a pause, and then Wayland said quietly: "Sorry. I lost my head. But it must have been one of your men. Could an outsider have slipped into camp? If one had, would he have picked on my little shelter; or would he have gone to your tent, the most important thing in camp? I owe you an apology, but I still think you have some zealous men who declared open season because I'm working for your enemies."

Lorela's eyes softened, and she caught Wayland's hand. "Don, let's forget about it until morning. I'm glad you weren't hurt. And I wish you would go with us."

She did not wait for an answer. As she left, Chayoga came up, and Frayne asked, "Who did this? Is one of your men missing?"

"I will see, *amo*."

Frayne paced about, sizing things up by the light of the gasoline lantern which one of the men had brought him. "Wayland, I am sure this wasn't an attempt to murder you. Judging from the way the tarpaulin is cut, it looks like petty thievery. Someone

tried to snatch your pistol. When you jumped him, he became desperate."

"Maybe so. Every Yaqui is a born thief, and after centuries of oppression, I can't blame them, I guess."

Chayoga returned to set up the flattened shelter. "*Amo*, it was Baycuri. He is gone."

Chayoga's left leg dragged a trifle; no one would notice that slight limp except from close and suspicious observation. Wayland was not convinced that Baycuri was guilty. And when he found the crescent-shaped bit of metal freshly chipped from a knife blade, he palmed it and said nothing. Things had to be thought out. First of all, see if Chayoga's knife had lost a half-moon shaped fragment from slashing against the rocky floor of Wayland's shelter.

Chayoga, hearing that the strangers worked for Dennis and Ledgate, might have decided to do his employer a good turn.

Far off in the hills, Yaqui drums muttered. It was crazy, this business of Frayne and Lorela going into the unexplored mountains. And Wayland went to sleep wondering whether to join the Fraynes or stick with his dubious employers.

WHEN sunrise and the chatter of the *tamenes* aroused Wayland, he could scarcely believe that he had slept. The tang of wood fire and the fragrance of dark-roasted Mexican coffee flavored the crisp wind that came down from the Sierra. There was a twittering of small birds, the plaintive querrying of quail.

They were calling, "*Cuida'o! Cuida'o!*" Quail talk since time began; but this morning, for the first time, Wayland realized that they were saying the Spanish word which means, "Look out!"

Burros brayed like calliopes all out of tune. The *tamenes* cursed them. Packs creaked. Wayland savored the smells, relished the sounds, and was glad. The worst night was never bad, not if one lived to see dawn in camp.

Keller was no longer delirious. He would pull through, Wayland decided, as he used Frayne's razor to mow the sandy stubble from his chin.



"Hello, Dad! Don, do you still hate me?" Lorela asked, when she joined the two at the fire.

"A night's sleep does make a difference. No, and I never could. But you two are crazy, going into these mountains."

Frayne sighed. "I told you that Chayoga is the cousin of Yacupaz, war chief of the Yaquis. I can go in, where no other white man could. Dennis and Ledgate can sell stock, yes. But they can't work that mine, even if they do find it. Don't you understand, the Yaquis have kept whites out for centuries, and they'll continue. Particularly since the present administration falls over backward to prove that today the Yaqui is always right."

"But, have you the answers?"

"Years ago, I bought Chayoga out of slavery."

"Nuts, Prof." Wayland shook his head, grinned, wagged two fingers sceptically. "That's too much; grateful savage now gives you a gold mine."

"Have it your way. But in one shipment, two thousand captive Yaquis were carried off to work in the hemp fields of Yucatan. To die like flies. I bought Chayoga, and released him, and he's been with me ever since. A friend."

Wayland frowned. "Look here. You don't talk like a Ph.D., or an F.R.S. and so on. I've seen lots of profs, and they all talked like books."

"Thanks." Frayne made an ironic bow. "Only, I'm a practical person, as a side line. Education is like fertilizer. A little helps, an excess burns up the crop."

"Dad, didn't you bring even one diploma?" Lorela asked. "Or a gown or something?"

"Cut it out, cut it out!" Wayland raised a defensive hand.

Frayne went on, "Now that you are used to a non absent-minded scientist, try to get used to a second idea, equally radical and just as plausible. Dennis and Ledgate are a pair of skunks who do not deserve your loyalty. You told me as much last night, only you do not seem to realize it."

"How's that?"

"They offered you ten percent interest in the Tiopa Mine, and then sent you up in a crate that was all ready to blow up. They were too stingy to get you a good plane. Or else they were too short of funds. In non-academic terms, they were flat busted. In which case, how can they develop that mine legitimately?"

Lorela emptied her aluminum mug of coffee. "See, Don? The buildup. Why don't you team up with us?"

Frayne grinned engagingly. "I'll give you two porters to carry Keller if you insist. Go ahead and tell about the Lake of the Gods. Every time Dennis and Ledgate send a party to stake a claim, the Yaquis will shoot them up."

Wayland rose, paced about, head thrust forward. "It was a lousy trick, sending me out with that wobbly motor. I overhauled it myself, as best I could, with native mechanics, but they could have gotten the plane I wanted. They've cheated you; they've tried kidnapping and murder." He stopped his pacing abruptly. "I'm with you, Doctor." He grinned. "Or is it professor?"

"Make it Gil, and let it go at that." He thrust out his hand and Wayland accepted it.

Lorela scandalized Tula by running from her place at the fire and throwing both arms about her new ally. "Darling, I'm so glad! It was awful, thinking of you as an enemy, back there in Guaymas."

"As long as you'll iron out a few inconsistencies—" He held her at arm's length. "You look great in that Mexican outfit, even if it is the worse for wear."

"Well, I am, myself. A bit battered, I mean."

**B**EFORE Frayne had gulped his second mug of coffee, all but the final packs were loaded. Chayoga had made a litter for Herb Keller; two burros carried him upstream.

Wayland had only to touch Keller's forehead to learn that the fever was steadily subsiding. He looked for a moment at the off-center nose, the rugged face. Keller's

warped mouth was slack now, but his lips were no longer black. He looked up, blankly, then slumped. He was still groggy from bromides.

The porters bent under their packs as they filed up the narrow ledge that skirted the river. They stretched out with that swinging, slow stride that they could keep up day and night through the toughest going.

The dizzying freshness of the air got into Wayland's blood. He told himself that this was just Mexico, but something shouted him down. The barren crags, the stark blue sky overhead, the savage river: this could not be so close to home.

The sun poured down into the ravine. Bald rocks reflected the glare, and for a short while before the noonday halt, the river mirrored it up to the ledge. Wayland peeled off his shirt and with several dry-sticks improvised a canopy for Keller. Tula doctored his wounds with mountain herbs.

That afternoon the caravan doubled back in a monstrous horseshoe, a thousand feet above the past night's camp, and no more than a mile further inland. As soon as the high peaks began to cut off the sun, the wind became chilly. Far overhead, *zopilotes* circled. Someone, they hoped, would die.

Wayland heard a far-off drumming. At first it was so faint that he called it an acoustical trick of the stream. The Yaquis, though, bent forward under their loads, had their bullet heads cocked toward the sound.

*Tum-tumpa-tum . . . tumpa-tumpa-tum.* The accent cropped up in the wrong place; it spoke of resentment against everything that a white man calls orderly and harmonious. Wayland left Keller's side and stretched long legs toward the head of the column. He wanted to tell Frayne that those drums meant business.

He moved swiftly, and with unconscious stealth. He almost stumbled over a man kneeling in a niche in the rocky wall. There was hardly more than enough room to slip between the cliff and the file of animals.

The man was Santana Chayoga. He was cutting off an annoying shred of loosened leather from the sole of his boot. Wayland

got a clear look at the heavy knife. He snatched it from the Indian's hand.

"I thought so." Wayland indicated the chipped blade. "I have the missing piece. I found it right where Baycuri and I were playing last night."

Chayoga's face was immobile as Wayland produced the fragment he had saved. It was a perfect fit. He returned the knife to the Yaqui. "Better luck next time!"

When Wayland caught up with Frayne, he had had time to think twice about this business of exposing Chayoga. That would take tact; not for courtesy's sake, but to convince the stubborn scholar.

Frayne said, "You've come up to tell me about the drums? I like them. How's Keller?"

"Riding comfortably. Tula changed the bandages—didn't like yours."

Chayoga came trotting up. "*Amo*, it is early but we must camp just over the crest. The next spot is much too far."

"I'll look it over with you," Frayne said, and followed the Yaqui.

Wayland sat down on a rock, and let the caravan file past. Keller was clawing at the cords that bound him to his litter. "Get this junk off me. I want to sit up. Ow, damn it, what happened to my leg? Say, where'd you get all these burros? Gimme a drink, and then tell me how'd we outrun 'em?"

Wayland unhooked his canteen. "I snatched a boat. Remember? After that raft broke up in the rapids, and we both nearly drowned."

Keller snatched the canteen. He gulped, sputtered when he tasted the water. "Phoey! Listen, I said a drink. Ain't there any tequila, even?"

"Water for you, Herb. You're a sick man."

"Oh, all right. Lousy stuff, though."

WHEN the litter cleared the crest, the *tamenes* were already at work, unloading pack saddles, driving burros to the picket line that had just been set up. With prowling panthers, the pack animals could not be turned out to graze.

It was still early, but the sun was gilding the peaks which only a little while ago had been a glaring bluish white. Purple shadows reached across *barrancas* a mile deep. Just over the next ridge, perhaps, was the Lake of the Gods; a short distance as the *zopilote* flies, but days of hard marching for men.

Then Keller saw Frayne and Lorela. "For cripes sake—say, am I cockeyed, or what do I see? Where'd you find her?"

The photographer's stage whisper had a fog-horn range. Lorela laughed and said, "At the Silver Tower, of course! How's the invalid?"

"Better. Who's the old guy talking to the Indian?"

"That's my father. Doctor Frayne."

"Don't make sense. None of it. Doctor—" He groaned. "I'll get a bill as long as a Chinese dream, calling a doctor all the way from town."

So Frayne and Lorela helped Wayland explain things. When Keller pieced it all together, he said, "Pretty good, pretty good. I always told you we was working for a pair of heels, particularly that mug of a Dennis."

Once the men had eaten, Chayoga came to the fire and said to Frayne, "*Amo*, it is best to rest here tomorrow. We have a hard climb ahead, and the animals are worn out. This is a good place. Lots of water at the foot of the mesa. There are ducks, so we do not eat too much of the rations we carry, no?"

Frayne said, "Very good." Then, to Wayland: "Chayoga misses nothing."

"Probably not." Wayland fingered the knife fragment in his pocket, and thought better of offering it as evidence against Chayoga. He doubted that he could convince Frayne that the *capataz* was treacherous.

Wayland's suspicion of Chayoga was what made him sleep lightly; a furtive stirring awakened him. He felt rather than heard the stealthy motion. It was inside the dark camp. He knew better than to sit up in his shelter, or to call. Cautiously, he reached for his pistol.

The moon would soon rise, but until it cleared the peaks, the half-transparency of the darkness was more deceptive than outright gloom. A pebble rattled. Then came minutes of silence broken only by the wind.

A panther's cry mocked him from the ravine. Something moved at the lip of the mesa. Whether it approached or receded, he could not tell, but certainly no stealth was needed for leaving the camp. So Wayland fired.

There was no outcry until an instant later, when the aroused porters came from their shelters. Frayne cried, "Now what?"

Lorela, wrapped up in a *serapi*, came out to say, "This is getting to be a habit!"

"Watch yourselves!" Wayland raised his voice over the hubbub. "Someone was sneaking into camp. Heads down!"

"Huh—what'zat?" Keller, struck, a match.

"Put it out, you idiot!"

The flurry was over in a moment. There was no attack, no rattle of rocks dislodged by men scaling the slope of the mesa. Frayne called, "Chayoga! Chayoga, where are you?"

There was no answer. Presently, a *tamén* came up and said, "*Señor*, he is not here."

A search of the mesa was wasted effort. Frayne demanded, finally, "Are you sure you didn't hit Chayoga when you fired?"

"I didn't hit anything," Wayland answered. "There was no yell, no sound of a man falling down the slope."

Neither torch nor flashlight nor gasoline lantern exposed any trace of blood. There was only one certainty: Chayoga had vanished.

Finally Wayland spoke his mind: "He's run out on you. He's the one who tried to knife me." He held out the fragment of steel and went on, "I showed him this piece of broken blade. I intended it as a warning against more monkey business. I guess he was afraid I'd tell you."

"Now we're stranded with a dozen or so wild men who could cut our throats or desert, or do as they damn please, now that their chief is gone. They may be Yaqui Mansos, but they'll go wild."

Frayne shook his head. "I still don't believe he tried to stab you. You didn't actually fit that chip into his blade, and working around camp, he could have broken his knife in many ways. I think he'll be back. So take it easy. And these *mansos* may surprise you by fighting their wild friends!"

Wayland turned back toward his shelter. "I wish I had money to bet against that!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### HUTS OF PROUD PEOPLE

NOT more than a mile north of the crescent-shaped lake where Wayland's plane had crashed was a rocky ledge which overhung the unexplored Rio Bavispe. On this shelf was a Yaqui village; and rising from it was a cliff whose face was dotted with caverns. These were partly natural and partly artificial, once the home of the long extinct aborigines, and now occupied by the Yaquis who had fled from airplane attacks on their fertile but exposed *mesas*.

Shelters of pine boughs projected like storm doors from the cavern mouths at the level of the ledge. Ladders reached up the second and third tier of burrows. A few scrawny firs grew from the shallow soil of the ledge, and at one end was a patch of stunted maize. From one of the caverns ran a scanty stream which trickled perhaps a hundred yards to the edge of the shelf and then dropped three thousand feet down the vertical wall of the *barranca* at whose bottom the Bavispe flowed.

No men were in sight. There were only brown women wearing tanned hides, or skirts and blouses stolen from lowland villages; and naked brats who looked as starved as their mothers. The women had black hair, bound low at the nape of the neck in a club-shaped knot, and gleaming with rancid fat.

All but one of these women were grinding acorns and maize in stone mortars; and she was well apart from the others. She crouched at the mouth of a cavern that was near a pyramidal tongue of granite, and some distance from the other ground floor

caves. No one ever came needlessly near to Jalana, who spoke to the gods.

She mumbled and muttered; the rhythmic sound was almost a chant. The others pretended not to listen. No one wanted to attract the stare of Jalana, for it could paralyze men or make women sterile. Jalana seemed like something long dead; it was as though all the life in the withered witch had concentrated in her eyes.

"We are starving," she droned. "Starving since the metal birds drove us from the high fertile mesa. Fire came from the sky, death comes from overhead, and the white skinned *nakhai* come with a new doom . . ."

The slant-eyed Yaqui women shivered. One snatched a child who was toddling toward the witch, and soundly boxed his ears. The dogs instinctively avoided Jalana. The children, however, had to be taught that when a curse was being woven, it was best to keep one's distance.

Jalana sang of the Golden Goddess who would come out of the lake to redeem the Yaquis from oppression and hunger. Once more the hills would be green with maize, and the woods alive with game. Jalana's wrath gripped those tight-lipped women. The pounding pestles sounded like the beating of war drums. First the Golden Goddess . . . then the slaying . . . then food for their children . . .

A tall man came from one of the caves. He rubbed his eyes, yawned and expanded his broad chest, flung back his gray hair. It was bobbed at the level of his ear lobes; wiry as a horse's tail, and bound with a band of red flannel that hid most of his forehead. Yacupaz, chief of the Wild Yaquis, did not go out to hunt any game less important than man. Short of war or emergencies, the sanctity of his position demanded his presence in camp.

Like a witch doctor, a chief is closer to the gods than other people. But once it seems that he no longer enjoys divine favor, he is deposed.

Yacupaz booted several children and a dog out of his way and stalked over toward Jalana. The old woman had ceased chanting, but continued to feed twigs and bark

to the sacred fire that smouldered day and night in a niche in the pyramidal rock.

She looked up and croaked, "Last night I had a vision. The Lake of the Gods was red with blood, and fires were on every mountain."

"Chayoga?" he demanded. "What of Chayoga?"

She blinked, shook a long staff adorned with the rattles of many diamondbacks. "He's on the way. But I can't see where. Only blood is clear. Blood from the sky, and fire from the mountain."

Yacupaz said nothing. Jalana typified the mystery and riddle of women, who made magic and spoke to spirits and demons. He himself, a chief, personified the more active but less subtle half of nature. She would tell him when she knew, or when she pleased.

He squatted beside a drum that sat near the witch, and tried its head of tightly stretched human hide. The tension was right. Then he thumped with knuckles and finger tips, and sometimes with the heel of his hand.

The sound was sullen and deep. His finger tips made small, rubbing motions against the carefully stretched skin of a long dead enemy. The roaring ceased, when his nails *tick-tocked* like dancing feet. This was no telegraph code that spelled words. Each sound phrase expressed an elementary thought, very much as a picture writing does.

WHEN the shadow of the wall reached out over the edge of the *barranca*, hunters began coming into camp. Watchers however remained at their posts, ready for *nakhai* invaders.

The hunt had been the best in many days. The women were kindling fires. Others skinned the two deer that tall Istiqua and his companions had brought home. But all were to share the food; though Jalana and Yacupaz took first choice. The dogs snapped at entrails, or bits of gristle too tough for the women and children.

Later, the cooking fires became little red eyes in the gloom. Only Jalana's sacred

hearth was fully alive. For years, it had been carried from camp to camp. It was the spiritual heart of a people who feared the malice of demons more than of men.

Yacupaz sat near Jalana, waiting for drums to sound, when his outposts brought him fresh word of the invaders. His men muttered in monosyllables to each other and smoked as they waited.

If they felt the growing tension, they did not show it. It was for Yacupaz and Jalana to think. The business of warriors was fighting. And that they did that incessantly was proved by the absence of old men. Few had lived to reach the age of forty.

A panther's scream came from the south, somewhere from the neighborhood of the trail that led from the floor of the mile wide *barranca*. Yacupaz cocked his head, listened for the cry to be repeated. There was silence. He frowned, then rose and gestured to his men.

They gathered about him. From the corners of their eyes they watched Jalana throwing aromatic herbs and bits of wood into her fire. They had nothing to say; her presence oppressed them, and they looked to Yacupaz for reassurance.

As the pungent fumes rose, Jalana's muttering became a shrill cry. One of the dogs pointed his muzzle at the moon and bayed. The rising wind whined among the jagged rocks. The witch woman, cunningly timing her ritual to those outside voices, began to sway from the waist, and gesticulate with her grimy talons.

"The deer are few, and worms eat the acorns. The *nakhai* come to rob us of what little remains. And last night the lake was red with blood, and the mountains were red."

She shook the rattle. "The Golden Goddess came to me in a vision. She will not rise from the lake until we slay the white looters. Without the blood of our enemies, she will turn her face from us, and our children starve."

"Where's Chayoga?" demanded Istiqua. Jalana's giggle was malicious. "He loves the robbing *nakhai*. They have bewitched him."



An owl hooted. The warriors shivered, drew their thin blankets about their shoulders. The screech of the *tecolottl* betokens death to some member of the tribe.

"Kill them first," Jalana croaked. "Then the Golden Goddess will drive all our enemies into the sea, and we go back to our mesas and valleys."

Repetition was having its effect on them. Yacupaz no longer waited for far-off drum beats. He beat his own drum; the sound brought echoes from every cavern mouth along the ledge.

The women herded their children into the caves. The unmarried girls came running with fuel which they heaped in the center of the plateau. They hurried back, eager to avoid Jalana, who hobbled forward. She had a brand from the sacred hearth. This she tossed into the heap of brush wood. Flames rose, and the men formed a circle about the fire.

In order of rank, each warrior gave his opinion; all but Yacupaz, whose word outweighed the tribe's.

"Go down and kill them!" Some added, "And Chayoga as well! He leads them."

"Get them tonight!"

"Chayoga's fault!" Jalana screeched. "Chayoga, the traitor!"

The wrathful cry leaped from mouth to mouth. Yacupaz raised his hand. When he finally won silence, he said, "Who stops to consider if we are ready for fighting? If we use all our cartridges killing the *nakhai*, how will we shoot deer? Who has a plan we can use?"

They had ambushed unwary traders and prospectors, these young men; but only Yacupaz and some older men fully understood the difficulty of fighting a well armed party.

For a moment Yacupaz held their attention. One spoke of a ravine in which Frayne could be trapped with rocks and logs hurled from above. And then Jalana's fanaticism whipped them to fresh fury.

They drew their weapons. The witch woman's frenzy had won over the chief's sober deliberation. "Lead us, Yacupaz!" they howled, "or we'll know you hate your

people! Even if the Golden Goddess doesn't come, we'll get guns and food."

WAYLAND slept little during what remained of the night of Chayoga's disappearance. "That lad is slick. He runs out, only he'll loop back to bushwhack me and Herb," he reasoned as he stirred restlessly in his blankets. "Then a couple days later, he'll make an open appearance in camp and tell Frayne he has just returned from scouting around. That keeps Frayne from thinking Chayoga knifed two pesky guests."

But it was more than just suspicion and possible hidden danger which kept Wayland awake until rolling mists and the squawking of water fowl in the pool told that dawn was at hand. He was not quite convinced that Chayoga would be loyal to Frayne if loyalty were to involve a head-on clash with tribal tradition; for human nature has its limits.

When the sun rose over the Sierra, pots and pans clattered. Airan, the cook, had a brisk fire going. The smoke and the odor of coffee blended with the smell of cedar and fir.

At breakfast, Lorela said, "Well, the camp's not disappeared, and the porters are all here. Sour puss!"

Wayland snorted. "All right, all right. Anyway, I sat up all night, watching."

Keller came hobbling from his shelter. "Hey, wait a second! Cut me in on that grub! I'm through with this invalid stuff!"

Frayne considered one angle and another of the problem as he ate. He finally decided that the wisest thing to do was to wait for Chayoga to return. Wayland and Keller eyed each other, but said nothing; not until Frayne asked for an opinion.

"I've got my notions," Wayland said, "you've got yours. I hope you're right, but it looks lousy to me."

"I don't even work here," Keller cut in, "but I still say it stinks."

"You wouldn't go back, would you?" Lorela asked.

"I've run often enough not to be sheepish about it," Wayland answered.

"There are times," Frayne said, "when

retreat is the only sensible thing. But this is not one of them."

"So you're staying?"

Frayne began to load his pipe. "I am."

Wayland rose. "If you don't mind, I'll use your field glasses for a moment."

Without waiting for an answer, he picked the binoculars from their case. The early mists had cleared, and the sun was reaching further into the deep barrancas. Wayland shaded the objectives, then searched the gorge of the Rio Yaqui. Not far ahead, it branched.

Sunrise had given him the distinct impression of country at least half-familiar. It was not any individual feature that stood out. It was rather the succession of plateaus, some narrow and short, others perhaps half a mile wide and a dozen in length. Finally he picked a tree whose lightning-blasted trunk had reached out of the gloom. He'd seen that before; he and Keller had camped near it.

"I'm with you," he said, lowering the binoculars.

"That's good."

"More than that. Instead of staying here and waiting, let's march on. That way, when Chayoga returns, he'll meet us all the sooner. The country ahead is familiar. I recognize it."

"What you mean," Frayne asked, "is that we've reached a point where your old line of retreat crosses this new route? That we've come so near the Lake of the Gods that every trail leads to or from it?"

"Correct. That Y ahead must be where the Rio Moctezuma and Rio Bavispe join to make the Rio Yaqui. Judging from the short time it took the Yaquis to come out of cover to nail me and Keller, their village—Chayoga's destination, if you ask me—must be close to the place where I made a forced landing."

"But why advance, when you were all set to retreat?"

"This camp isn't the place for a stay of several days. There's not enough grass for the animals. And we're so close to the water that we scare the ducks away, and the game. If we were further away, we'd have better

hunting when they come in for their sunset drink."

"If Chayoga is going for a gang to knock us off," Keller pointed out, "there's no sense dashing up to meet them."

Wayland answered, "A day's march ahead, and we'll be in a place a lot easier to defend, if we have to. This camp is not so good. But if they tried to get us at the next stop, we could hold them off until we got some rafts slung together. Escape down the river. Like you and I did, only you don't remember."

Frayne conceded the soundness of Wayland's reasoning. "Chayoga did say that we'd better stay here until further notice, but it may never have occurred to him that we might have to retreat."

There was a good deal that Wayland could have added to *that*, but he tried to be fair minded. So he merely said, "Chayoga might be overestimating his influence with his relatives. That's what I had in mind."

IN SPITE of his protests, Keller was carried in a litter. Hobbling to breakfast was not evidence of enough recovery to march up mountain trails; though in a few more days, the burly photographer would be able, in a pinch, to use a rifle. This encouraged Wayland. And the recognition of landmarks left him feeling less at Chayoga's mercy. But the big event of the day was when he joined Lorela during the first halt to rest porters and pack animals.

"Don," she said quietly, "I'm trusting you for good," she said. "I'm sure of you now."

"So at last I get the breaks?" He tightened the cinch of her saddle. "What's the sudden logic? How come?"

"It's obvious that the Yaquis were out to finish you and Herb Keller. *They* certainly aren't working for Dennis and Ledgate. And neither can you be, or you'd hardly have found reasons for an advance, when Dad spoke of waiting for Chayoga to return."

"For once," he said, "feminine logic is absolutely perfect. Yaquis shooting at me,

## YAQUI GOLD

### CHAPTER IX

#### THE RATTLESNAKE WAND

Yaquis shooting at that punk who came back telling about finding my plane. But I think your intuition has gone wild. I'm still not sure but what Dennis might have a tie-in with the wild Yaquis."

"Why—Don, that's silly!"

He shrugged.

"Okay, it is silly. But look here. Chayoga thinks your dad is great. Chayoga sure as blazes tried to knife me. Because I work for Dennis? Well, maybe; but look here, honey—suppose Chayoga thought that some of his tribe might be selling out to my former bosses? Every other outfit in the world has disagreements, why wouldn't a tribe of Yaquis?"

Lorela frowned. "You mean that there might be a faction favoring Elmer Dennis, and dead set against Dad?"

"Why not? Aren't there lots of Yaquis in the army? You see, lots of them have weakened. They're falling for civilization. These fellows up in the Rio Bavispe country—that is, near the Lake of the Gods—they're the die-hards. And some of them may be weakening, listening to slick talk, taking bribes."

Her frown deepened as she placed a hand on his arm.

"Don't tell Dad. Trying to shake his trust in Chayoga doesn't do any good, and it just worries him. But there's one point where I think you're wrong."

Wayland rolled a corn-husk cigarette. "What's that?"

"If Elmer Dennis did have a strong group of Chayoga's tribe under control, there'd be no need of trying to kidnap me."

"That's gospel," Wayland had to admit. "Though nothing really *holds* water. Every way you figure it, there is something leaky."

Then the line ahead began to move again, and Wayland went back to see how Keller's litter was riding. There was a long and difficult march ahead. To get to the further rim of a *barranca* only a mile wide often required a ten-mile march; sometimes twenty or thirty to get to the other side of one of those deep gorges that seamed the Sierra Madre.

FOR the moment, Yacupaz did contrive to keep his tribe in hand; but he was troubled, for Jalana's influence had become stronger than he had ever imagined possible. He stood there, tall and wrinkled and scarred from old battles, and waited for a lull in the yellings.

"This white man who comes into the mountains is my nephew's friend, he bought him out of slavery." Yacupaz gestured. "Is that true, Baycuri?"

Baycuri, the *tamen* who had run from Frayne's camp the night of the attempt to knife Wayland, was broad and solid and pockmarked. His shirt and blue jeans and rawhide sandals made him conspicuous among the ragged *brancos*.

"That's true, Chief!" His long continued use of Spanish had finally made him speak his native dialect haltingly. "Chayoga has told me. This Frayne is a good man. Look at these new pants. We ate well, too. I hated to leave camp."

Yacupaz glanced from face to face. He still had control, but he was not sure how long he could hold it. In some of the other tribes, the women had taken charge, for with years of warfare, they outnumbered the men three to one. Matriarchy had come to the mountains. It might come to his tribe. Yacupaz knew that more than Frayne's life was at stake.

Jalana cackled and shook her rattlesnake wand. "He's almost forgotten our language! Do you call that greasy fellow a Yaqui?"

The witch's derision of Baycuri's speech had its effect. There was muttering on all sides. Soon there would be nothing left for Yacupaz but to walk into the hills, where no man can long survive alone. Jalana or some other woman would take his place. It had happened elsewhere, and it could happen here.

For himself, it made no difference. He had lived half as long again as the average Yaqui *branco*. He had been a good chief, he had led many raids, and only great odds had brought his people to this barren ledge.

For a woman to take his place would mock his office, and the blood of all those who had ever followed him to battle.

Their bones were scattered over all the Tepe Suene and far down into the lowlands on either side. Some were in the distant desert, fallen in Pancho Villa's wars. He, Yacupaz, had led them, and for a witch to take his place would be to mock the spirits of these brave men.

But the young men muttered and each moment showed less respect for his presence. To make a final appeal now . . .

Then the dozen village dogs began to bark. They rushed from the shadows and across the circle of firelight. A tall man walked among them, head high. He kicked the brutes that snapped at him. Each kick lifted a dog, spilled him end for end.

The men about the fire whirled, drawing knives. Some leaped for their rifles, others strung arrows. What the women screeched was lost in the confusion. The tall man came straight toward Yacupaz, and as though he did not see any of the others. Santana Chayoga had come back to his own people, and so cunningly that none of the outposts had seen him.

**T**HOUGH Chayoga had been away a dozen years, Yacupaz recognized him. The kinsmen stolidly greeted each other, as though they had been seeing each other twice a day. Then Chayoga spoke to Baycuri, and to Istiqua, who had recognized him at once.

Chayoga's arrival broke Jalana's spell. No one paid any more attention to her until she cackled, "Chayoga, where is the enemy you are leading to your home?"

Yacupaz saw that Chayoga would not answer the witch, so he took his cue and asked, "Where are your friends?"

Chayoga had already sensed the rivalry between his chief and Jalana. He said to Yacupaz, "They are waiting for your permission to come closer."

"Tell us why you bring them." The chief was slowly stealing the spotlight by asking these questions; Chayoga understood the play, and stood ready to help block Jalana.

"Already, many of our young men take up Mexican ways. They are joining the army. Our tribe becomes weaker each year since we had to leave the big mesa."

He gestured. The moon had risen, and the tips of the peaks were gleaming. Beyond the eastern rim of the *barranca* was a succession of broad plateaus, and fertile terraces separated by thousand-foot drops. These almost inaccessible tables had furnished maize aplenty, until airplanes had driven the Yaquis away with bombs.

Chayoga knew all this, and he knew that the new regime sent no bombers, that it wished to do justice to the Yaqui; but these people had long memories and stubborn minds, and years must elapse before they could imagine a government that did not butcher and enslave them. They had helped Pancho Villa win his revolt, and then the victors had betrayed and looted their mountaineer allies.

Chayoga said, "This man is not like the others. We should learn how to use the gold there is in these mountains. He will show us how it will get us liberty, food, guns, clothing."

Yacupaz had his own doubts, but he concealed them, for this well fed young man was helping him steal the show from Jalana. "That is good, Chayoga, but do you believe that this man can carry out his honorable intentions?"

"I would not be here if I did not." He stripped off his shirt. "Has he whipped me? Do you see any fresh scars on my back? Do I look hungry, can you see my ribs too plainly? Would he trust me in these mountains if he had ever harmed me?"

The young trouble-makers were impressed, and this pleased Yacupaz. He knew when to stop, so he said, "Now eat, and then we will dance."

Women came from the caves to bring venison, cakes of maize, and acorn meal fried in bear's fat. As Chayoga ate, and pretended to relish the unpalatable stuff he once had considered sound food, Yacupaz said, "Your people are safe, for the time, but they must not leave the camp where

you told them to stay." He lowered his voice. "My young men are a lot of hot-heads, looking for plunder. If your friends move closer, I can't protect them."

"They won't leave."

"That is good. Before they come nearer, the tribe must become accustomed to them."

"I understand that." And Chayoga did; more completely than he cared to admit. He knew already that his uncle was on trial, and that Jalana was using Frayne's party as a means of forcing a tribal issue.

Chayoga was thinking, "Jalana used to tend to her business, making magic. Now she has changed, and there is more to this than there seems. After all these years, why is she so ambitious against Yacupaz?"

He asked the chief, "Have any *mansos* come into the hills recently—I mean, excepting Baycuri?"

Yacupaz' eyes narrowed just a little. "Yes. A half-Yaqui came up, trading. He gave Jalana a few presents. He said he'd been working in the pearl fisheries for a *gachupin* named Ybarra. Why do you ask?"

"I do not know," Chayoga blandly answered. "But I think it would be well to kill this man if he comes up again."

Yacupaz somehow managed to smile behind his blank face, with no change in his eyes or about his straight mouth. He nodded, slowly. "You are very polite to an old man, Chayoga. You pretend not to have seen anything, but I think you have seen all."

"Frayne saved you from slavery that kills any Yaqui. Tonight, you have kept him from sure death, for I could not have held those fellows much longer. Your getting here when you did took their minds off turning against me."

"No, uncle. You are their chief."

"A tree grows; and when it is big, it falls. For sixty years, I have talked to the gods, and when a man becomes big, the gods cut him down. That is the way of the gods and it is well. You are my brother's son, so you must come back, and be chief in my place when it is time."

Chayoga was silent longer than courtesy

demand. Yacupaz went on, "Look, boy. You have paid your debt to Frayne. Tonight, you are free."

"I am no trader, uncle, no more than you are."

"No, do not abandon him. Get him safely home again. When he owed you nothing, he was generous. You cannot do less for him, now that you owe him no more. But then you can come back, and they will follow a young man, where they might otherwise serve a witch woman."

Chayoga thought on all these things as he ate the acorn meal soaked in bear's grease. The mess choked him almost as it might a white man; acorns, soaked in wood ash lye, then boiled, and pounded to a coarse meal. No lowland peon ate anything half as offensive.

## CHAPTER X

### SCREAM LIKE AN EAGLE

THE more Chayoga saw of his people the following day, the more he realized how their warlike spirit was gradually exterminating them. The pride that had preserved them against all odds and all invaders had become their doom.

This squalid nest of caves overlooking a narrow mesa; these haggard women, these half starved, pot-bellied children—either home had changed during his absence, or else his tastes had. While the buzzing flies, the stench of refuse, and his unwashed kinsmen did not offend him as they would an outsider, he was nevertheless conscious of the difference between these hardshell Yaquis and the people of the coast.

Chayoga had the Indian's stoical indifference to his surroundings. The vermin of the camp was no more than an annoyance, yet his years of service with Gilbert Frayne made him aware of the contrast. As the day wore on, this homecoming worried him.

His boyhood friends squatted about him. They had brought in enough game the preceding day, and Chayoga's reports on the seacoast world came under the heading of important tribal business. Thus all the men listened, except two feeble fellows who had



to beat a small tomtom. This music set the pace for the women who pounded maize and acorns.

Other women came up the steep path with bundles of reeds or saplings. Whenever the maize patch or meal grinding or mending ragged garments did not keep them too busy, they went down into the *barranca*, and to the margin of the Lake of the Gods for material for huts. Few Yaquis would willingly live in the caves abandoned by the extinct aborigines; only immediate necessity, such as a violent storm, made them venture into the gloomy tunnels of the Ancient People whose feet had worn a deep channel into the rocky descent from ledge to lake.

Chayoga noted these details as he talked. He saw also that the faces of his fellows remained blank, yet he sensed that he had set them thinking. In the hands of an honest operator, the lost Tiopa Mine would redeem his people from squalor and starvation. More than that, it would keep them unified, and keep them from going into the lowlands to become "civilized"—neither Mexican nor Yaqui.

Istiqua said, "That is all good. But we all know that the Lake of the Gods is forbidden. We could have killed those two flying men, but they landed on the in-curving side of the lake, and so we were afraid to touch them. The one who jumped before the metal bird came to earth—that was different, so we tried for his hide. I do not think it is well to let anyone get too near the lake, O Chief!"

Yacupaz had a ready answer: "We will not go near the lake. If the gods curse the white men, that is their lookout. Our gods will not harm us if we mind our business and stay away."

Jalana's ears were sharp, as Chayoga judged from her malicious grin when she got up from the sacred fire, and hobbled toward the cave. She had no fear of the Ancient People and made a big point of preferring their abandoned homes: which of course proved that she had supernatural powers.

The witch stooped over a jar that was

just visible from the outside, and stirred the contents. A familiar reek billowed out, for she was brewing a batch of *tizwin* from yucca stalks. Now she uncovered the mess, and exposed it to heat and air so that it would ferment faster. When fresh, it was a pleasantly tart drink, but when ripe, it had a foul odor, and a quart would craze the stoutest drinker.

"The old hag ought to be killed . . ." Chayoga's association with Frayne had not wiped out his superstition, yet the thought cropped up, again and again, during that debate with Yacupaz and Istiqua and the others. "If someone killed Jalana, I could easily make things safe for my *patrón*."

CHAYOGA, however, did not want that task, for killing men was one thing, and settling a witch woman was something else. Much of the drudgery that made a hag of a Yaqui girl before she was fairly grown was the result of the superstitious reverence with which savages regarded women.

A man, for instance, could not till a maize patch, for the grain either would not grow at all, or the crop would be poor. Simply because woman typified the maternal aspect of nature, she had to tend the cornfield, or else the seeds would perish. The wisest man could not quite understand her, hence she was feared.

"We will dance tonight," Yacupaz said, after another look at the strips of venison that hung out to dry. "Then we will vote."

Later, when the shadow of the Sierra reached across the mesa, and chill followed on its heels, the women fed the cooking fires. Chayoga said, "Gold will buy many blankets."

Yacupaz fingered the threadbare homespun he had drawn about his shoulders. He saw the point of that argument. But Chayoga was far from sure of his ground. The hotheads were holding their peace, for they saw no sense in offering premature objections that would lay them open to sound arguments.

From afar, drums began to mutter. A scout was reporting the advance of strangers.

Yacupaz eyed Chayoga, but said nothing until later, when they gathered near Jalana's pyramidal rock. Then he whispered, "That is bad. Your *patrón* is making a new camp."

Chayoga was sure that Wayland had persuaded Frayne to move on, but now there was no chance of going to warn him, for Chayoga's first hasty move would be interpreted as treachery, and Frayne would be attacked.

Jalana had heard the drums, and she was happy. She fed aromatic herbs to her fire. Swaying from the waist, she muttered, gestured; then her voice became shrill as the cold wind that swept down from the summit, and scattered ashes over the Yaquis crouched about the fire.

Chayoga knew that the hag was singing legends of her own invention, for Frayne had told him the origin of the Golden Goddess tradition: a rehash of the Quetzalcoatl legend of the Aztecs, or perhaps it had come from Panama, a many times twisted tale of the goddess whose golden image Balboa had hunted in Dobaybe.

But for all that borrowed knowledge, Chayoga was uneasy as he watched the younger men. His fears were doubled, for this Golden Goddess talk could set them on the warpath. No telling what they would do if they saw Lorela's copper-colored hair. He wondered if Jalana had this legend because of advance knowledge of Lorela.

"They treated Chayoga well," Jalana cackled. "See the red sash and those fine boots. See how well fed he is. They are rich. They have food. Food we can take by night."

Her voice dropped to a hoarse whisper. The powder she flung into the fire made a quivering blue flame. Its fumes stung eye and nostril.

"Why trade with them when the Golden Goddess is on her way? Can those who come into the hills in metal birds ever be our friends?"

Yacupaz looked older than ever, and weary. He had called for a vote: and the drum message that told of Frayne's advance left him little doubt as to the decision of

his people. Nor could he call for a second delay.

Vote it had to be. He rose, stepped from the circle. One by one, the men were to file toward him, passing by the chief's right or left, according to the choice.

"Wait!" Chayoga's command checked the first warrior. "There is more to say. The tribe is more important than the men. We live today because each acted for the common good. How many of us are left? War against the *nakhai* has not increased our numbers. We kill one of them, they kill ten of us. If war had been wisdom, there would be many of us."

Someone said, "Better be dead than be slaves. Are we cowards?"

Chayoga accepted the challenge. "We have been fools, and we starve. We need a new wisdom to give strength to our old valor."

"He speaks well!" Pesuz' voice was deep and solemn. "We have killed our tribe. What once was wisdom has now become folly. Listen to Chayoga. He has lived among them. Is he a slave, or is he a free man? From a distance, he sees us more clearly than we see ourselves. We have been children, using a short measure."

THAT stirred them. Their faces did not change, they did not speak; but Chayoga could feel that his comrades now accepted him and his new ways. One by one, they filed past. Only a few dissented; these were mainly young hotheads who had never had a chance to distinguish themselves in raids.

Then Yacupaz said, "We will welcome these people, as long as they respect our customs. They will live on the mesa on the further side of the lake."

Chayoga, however, was not certain that the issue was closed. Jalana was shaking with malicious laughter. She spat at him, and the darkness of her cave echoed with her cackling.

Someone should kill Jalana before she thought of a trick to ruin the night's good work. So Chayoga thought as he went to join the dancers who were gathering about

the fire, midway down the mesa. But disposing of her was definitely a woman's task.

The men began to strip for the dance; all, that is, except several veterans who were to beat the tightly stretched drums. Lean and bronzed, gleaming in the fire-light, they formed in two opposing ranks.

Yacupaz flung back his gray hair, and screamed like an eagle. The drums roared, roll-on roll, a steady rumbling that shook Chayoga like repeated thunder. When he set a pair of deer's antlers on his head and lashed them to his brow, the days he had spent with white people seemed far off and strange.

The drums mumbled, tattled, shouted till the hills answered. Then a slow measure came from the rumbling, and Yacupaz again screamed like an eagle swooping home.

The dancers pranced in imitation of a stag in flight. The ranks met, bodies and heads held rigid to balance the heavy antlers. Only their legs moved. And now Yacupaz no longer called his signals. The pounding drums spoke for him, and each dancer bounded back to his first position.

In spite of himself, the exaltation of the stag dance gripped Chayoga. This was no festival; it was a religious ritual in honor of the beast whose flesh had kept his people from starvation. This was deep in his blood; the click-clash of antlers, the sharp intake of breath, the sweat-gleaming bodies of his comrades who stared into the far darkness as they moved, not individuals but parts of a whole—the tribe.

Chayoga's tribe. The people whose welfare hinged on the decision to admit Frayne into Yaqui Land. Long after fatigue should have made them drop, they danced on. The drums-commanded them, and they moved, statuesque and rigid. They had blended in a tribal soul; one stern, tough spirit trained to outwit and outrace the stag.

**Y**ACUPAZ shouted above the music. The drummers ceased beating the tightly stretched skins. The dancers reeled and

sagged. Some sank to the ground, exhausted now that the hypnotism of the drums let them be aware of their bodies. Other fumbled clumsily with the bands that fixed the antlers to their heads. Some moved like sleep walkers, uncertainly seeking their huts.

The fire had died. Chayoga found his shirt and blanket. He was beginning to learn once more what it meant to be a Yaqui. His tribe had taken him back. He was more nearly one of them than he had dreamed possible.

He was glad, yet he was uneasy, remembering Jalana's laughter. As he stretched out in his cave, it reechoed in his ears.

But Jalana croaked and cackled at all hours. Chayoga had other things to consider. Frayne's rash move worried him. Maybe it had been smoothed over. He was weary from the dance, and so were the trouble-makers.

Then he heard another voice. And Jalana was answering. She was warning several men to be quiet. The echoes of her cave, and the tricks of the wind made everything uncertain. It was premonition, not understanding that brought Chayoga upright.

He crept toward her cavern. Far in its depths was a light. When he reached its mouth, he began to understand.

That thing which he had feared most was happening.

Half a dozen of the dissenters squatted around the old hag and her earthenware jar. A gourd passed swiftly from hand to hand. They were drinking *tizwin*. She could hardly keep them quiet, but she was giving them more.

Each was armed. Chayoga could not understand the thick muttering, but there was no doubt that they were getting up courage to defy Yacupaz. The witch woman was egging them on to take the trail.

Prudence checked Chayoga before he had advanced more than a few yards. Yacupaz and the elders should deal with them. That would keep it from becoming a personal issue.

He turned. He had scarcely thrust his head outside the low entrance when Jalana's laugh mocked him. A cord suddenly drawn taut tripped him. As he lurched forward, a club knocked him to his knees.

There had been no warning.

The blow stunned Chayoga. Strong hands pinned him while others stuffed his mouth with dirty rags and lashed him with buckskin thongs. Too late, he realized that Jalana had made just enough noise to trick him into a trap. With the shrewdness of the half mad, she had expected him to lie awake, pondering on Frayne's peril and waiting for a chance to warn him before trouble broke out.

And that, of course, was just what he had done.

The drunken Yaquis carried him far back into the cave. Jalana said, "Now go, and do what is to be done."

Their answering grunts left no doubt as to the work ahead. Jalana giggled; and as the raiding party crept from the cave, she knelt beside Chayoga.

"Stop wiggling, young man!" she mocked. "You can't get loose. And you won't rule the tribe after Yacupaz is gone."

His gag kept him from answering, but even if his mouth had been free, there would not have been anything to say, for once a group defied a chief, that man's rule was ended.

"The Goddess will rule, for men have driven the tribe to ruin," Jalana whispered. "We need the wisdom of the Golden Goddess."

And this, Chayoga knew, was only another way of saying that Jalana would rule in place of Yacupaz. Nothing could stop that, or save Frayne; for there was little chance of escaping in time to warn his friends.

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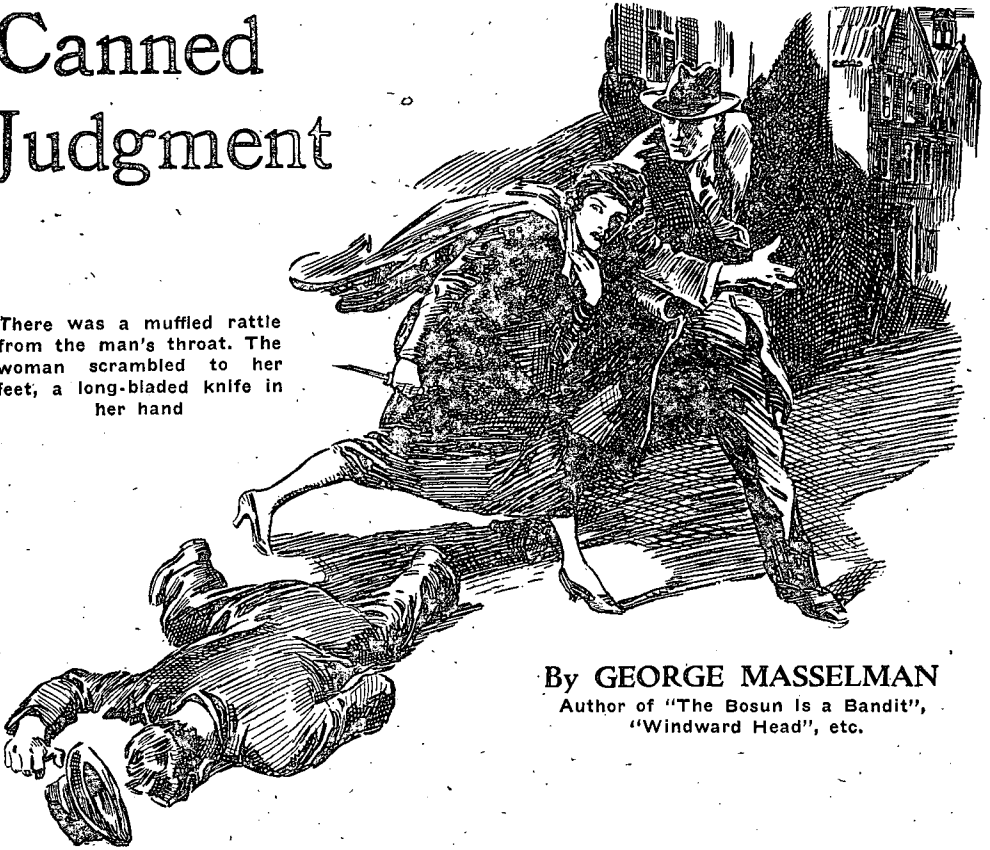
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# Canned Judgment

There was a muffled rattle from the man's throat. The woman scrambled to her feet, a long-bladed knife in her hand



By **GEORGE MASSELMAN**

Author of "The Bosun Is a Bandit",  
"Windward Head", etc.

It may not be the policy of the British government to disclose the number of U-boats sunk; but the ubiquitous Mr. Lamson knows now what happened to a lot of them

**T**HERE was more to the trawler than the eye did meet . . . Mr. Lamson chuckled to himself. For one thing the wireless equipment was a heap too good for a mere fishing boat; it was better, in fact, than many an outfit he had worked with in his days.

Also he had an assistant, and that was another thing the venerable wireless operator had not often been blessed with.

He stood at the railing, bracing himself against the pitching deck. He felt some jars against the bow and a bit of spray hit his face in the darkness.

The shore lights were slipping astern as the mouth of the Thames widened into the North Sea. He wondered what they were up to this time. Not sweeping. The paravanes and kites had not been laid out, and besides, you could not sweep at night—a waste of time and good trawlers.

Mr. Lamson wondered whether their passenger had something to do with their mission. That passenger who had come on aboard at the last moment, slipping out from behind the fishwharf and jumping to the deck, disappearing at once into the tiny messroom.

He counted on Captain Crice to give him the lowdown, as soon as they were out at sea. The old man was pretty decent about that sort of thing, especially considering the fact that Mr. Lamson was an American and always ready, at the drop of a hat, to make it clear that he was taking no sides in this war.