The blast furnaces had proved sucesful; men were even now grinding eagerness and satisfaction, and every one of Eric's castings had turned out prise he fell in with their views at once. perfect, much to his delight. It was idwinter before they were finished, and his assistants had worked indoors and converted one part of the great tenement into a huge factory, where the crash of hammers upon anvils filled the air with a cheerful din, and the great, dim room, with its cobwebbed rafters ! black with the smoke of ages, was peopled with grimy figures hurrying here and there in the glare of the forges. Inquisitive, curious Atzlans crowded about the doors, wrapped in their blankets and furs, and cheered their fellow citizens, who worked not for wages, but for the benefit of their kind, under the tutelage of the strange visitant from the skies. Great things were prophesied for Atzlan in the coming spring by the gossips of

i night Eric sat at his rude Jan-ila lay stretched on a . fore the fire, with his back n lean dog, when Iklapel entered the door. The old priest was envelor- 1 in a colored blanket, and as he remained him for head covering and seated himself apon one of the benches by the wall he said:

"The more fly fast and thick to the north 'ine spring will come early," "It : ... I be welcome," replied Eric. "Ay an i by none more joyfully than wered Iklapel. Ye. . . .... be stormy," spoke up Jan-

restormy than ever spring was andlan.

in you know that?" asked Eric, wile smile. "Where did you gain ye a weather wisdom?"

"I be heard much," he answered, " and I have held my tongue a not meet that a boy should fore his father, but I know that ars that there will be no Katun, miles daily to the priests and sometin storthers as well. He is plotting n. a. I, for he walks abroad at night, . . i that he is. Ah, he distrusts me, an: ); Jan-ila, the water rat, has crept 1. 1 enough many and many a time to hear his words of hate and treache ! I remember the look his face wore or the day you saved my sister. and J k: .. he hates and fears our Quetthow not except that he ings good and loves darkness. Product as I was hunting along the cliffs I h ... I voices, and walking softly at snow I came close to one of

dwells. The voices were within, loud and angry. I heard Chalpa speak. He said that unless we had a sacrifice we could hold no Katun feast; that he who the old religion—a believer in the death at her, but she scorned to reply.

zer si un Geia, the hunchback, were

among them—the oldest of our fathers—

and they silently went down in the

Upon closer questioning Jan-ila, whose memory was very remarkable, repeated

the debate verbatim, and it was serious

enough to cause Iklapel and Eric to look

"What can we do?" the latter in-

Old Iklapel gazed into the fire for sev-

twilight like murderers."

eral minutes, then answered:

trouble. I know not what to do."

he will no longer trouble you."

As he spoke Eric saw a shadow pass

and that one he believed to be Chalpa

nimself. Iklapel soon rose to go, saying:

"It is near to midnight, and old men

tening at the door." . .

ila's offer of his company.

grave and anxious.

when they did they were former with many grave reasons and convincthe rew axes to an edge with intense ing arguments with which to overcome all possible objections, but to their be-

But he said: "Not I, but Lela, must decide the question, my friends. Let us go to her and ask her now.

They went to her apartment, and as they entered she perceived that they had come upon some more than ordinary errand. She paled as she gazed upon their. serious faces, and looked from one to another with questioning glances. Taking her hand Eric spoke:

"My Lela, Iklapel and Kulcan have discovered, I know not how, that we love one another, and they wish to have, instead of a human sacrifice at the feast of the Katun, a marriage feast, to make it a day of gladness and rejoicing, and they have chosen us as the victims. I have left the decision to you."

She hid her face upon his shoulder, and they had no other answer. In fact when she raised her head they had both leparted and gone about their business. In the midst of his happiness Eric was

seized with a feeling of insecurity, a foreboding of evil, which was in truth the prelude to a period of illness. After battling with it for awhile he resolved to avail himself of the only means of reaching the outside world by releasing his long captive carrier pigeon. Many a time its soft eyes had petitioned for freedom, many a time he had almost opened the wicker cage, but had checked the generous impulse, determined to await the hour of need. Somehow it seemed to him that the time had now arrived. He wrote the message upon a piece of

squirrel skin, the parchment of the priests, and fastened it to the pigeon's tail. The bird looked bright and well; it seemed eager to be off as it gazed at him with its head on one side and struggled to free its wings. Lels took it from his hands, for it had long been her pet, and covering it with her scarf she carried it up to the temple top where no one would observe them. Here they released it with a toss into the air.

Straight as an arrow in its flight, for five hundred feet it darted up, then began to circle in ever widening sweeps, faster and faster, ever higher, ever stronger as its wings gained power, until at last, high in the firmament, it passed beyond their vision, and the canyon wall shut it out. They stood silently watching until it had gone from view; then Eric said with a sigh of satisfaction: the old homes up there where no one "He's well off! Now if no hawk seizes

him, nor hunter bag him, he will be in San Francisco in a few days."

"And then?" she inquired dubiously. "Then? Well, then in a few more Atzlan and should die. Then there was disputing, but he silenced it and declared that the new governor must be of the old religious.

spring had stolen upon the canyon sud-denly and sweetly! The sight of green meadows, the blossoming trees, the snipe darting in zigzag flights across; the long, easy swing of the swallows as they skimmed the water, sent the blood coursing through his veins, and he felt his strength returning in a rush. But he had been near to death's door, and the fact was known to the people of Atzlan. It strengthened Chalpa's position immensely. .

"This is no god!" he proclaimed. "Tis but a man, for lot he is dying! His breath is as ours. Shall we worship a god who can become ill as we can?"

Then Eric began to fancy, as he lay in his bed at night, that he heard prowling footsteps about his house, but Janla. watching jealously, could not detect any prowlers. But Eric put his revolver in his bed and kept it there. He awoke at dawn one morning and lay watching the rose tints grow and gleam along the canyon's castellated brows. Soft pearly shadows mingled with the rose, and deep, sullen blood crimson hung in the crevices of the rocks. Above was all sulphur and gold red, shooting up in long streamers across the clear, cool blue of the sky. He heard the peewee call and the shrill "teet teet" of the snipe. Then a robin burst out in a rich, rollicking matin song that made his heart swell with a queer mixture of joy and sadness. and so touching to him, softened by ill-

ness, that the tears aln st came into his eyes. Then as he looked he saw a dark hand and arm appear at his window. The hand held a bunch of small, pale green berries, and it shook nervously as they were squeezed, and a few drops of grayish white juice fell into his water ar, which stood on the window sill.

In a second he had fired at the hand, but missed his sim. Jan-ils awoke with a startled yell and stood dazed for a moment, then rushed to the window. No one was in sight, but a minute later people began to emerge upon the housetope and peer about. Others hurried to Eric's dwelling to ascertain the meaning of Quetzal's thunder. All joined in the search for the wretch who had attempted his life, but he had left no trace. The circumstance put Eric upon his guard. He realized that the enemy was willing to resort to the sternest means to accomplish their end, and he once more put on his belt and holster and carried his revolver wherever he went.

This attempt upon his life, however, was advoitly used to Chalpa's disadvantage, for he alone was known to be in-imical to Eric, and the election, which took place two days later, was lost to him by only twenty-two votes. The priests and the heads of families alone voted, and the latter were largely influenced by the dastardly attack upon Eric's life-placing it entirely to Chalpa's account.

The latter gave no sign of the rage that consumed him, but smiled as craftily as ever when the votes were counted. He congratulated Kulcan with the suavity of an Italian diplomat, for he had not played his last card, and he was now resolved upon a desperate measure. He now knew the strength of his party and the stuff of which his partisans were made, and in another week he would rid himself of his principal obstacles and come out triumphant. Another week and the Feast of the Katun would be held. He alone knew the name of the doomed maiden whose life would go out that week as a sacrifice to the god of centuries. On the morrow he would announce it, and he felt the thrill of horror which would creep over the city

when the name was heard. That same morning Jan-ils, arising

into his mouth, and his arms were bound behind him. He was allowed to lie there for a moment, and then they raised him to his feet. He saw that he was surrounded by a number of men in priests' robes, but it was too dark to recognize any of them. He looked in vain for Chalpa's face, but the priest was not visible. One of the band went into his house, and bringing forth the candle led the way into the pinon orchards, the rest following with Eric who, resisting sullenly in unavailing self censure, was carried bodily. They hurried him along, as though fear-

ing pursuit, through the orchards, along the river again until they came to th ancient burial place, where they halted a moment to be joined by Chalpa. His black eyes gleamed in fierce joy as he leaned over Eric and smiled his cruelest smile, so full of hate and fiendish satisfaction that it chilled his captive's heart for a moment.

"Ah, our pale Quetzal has lost his power! Why does he not strike his servant dead with his eyes? Where is his strength now? If he be a god, let him now save himself. See," he said, turning to his fellow priests. "See the sick weak god; how he lies there pale and feeble! Why does he not call forth his thunder and strike us dead?"

"Show us now thy mighty magic, O wonder worker," cried another, "before we entomb thee forever!"

"He does not answer," added Chalps in mock pity. "He is silent before his servants. Speak, O doer of strange deeds, and speak thy last, for silenced you will be forever this night."

Eric made no attempt to speak, knowing that the effort would but provoke their derision, and they raised him again, carrying him to a ruined mass of ancient tombs. Here they placed him and while one held the flickering light the others removed several flat stones, revealing an opening large enough to admit a man. Into this they erawled, one after another, and pushed Gilbert, feet first, into what he found to be a great square passageway choked with debris. One man remained on guard at the entrance; the rest followed the light in Chalpa's hand down the inclined passage.

The air was cool in the passage, but not damp, and the light flickered now and then as they proceeded. He noticed several branching passages, but his bearers followed the main one until they came to its lowest depth. where it seemed to ascend beyond to a still farther distance. Here they laid him down and drew back-all but Chalpa-who, standing over him with a scowl of hate, addressed him, holding the light close to his face:

"Fool, to think to ontwit Chalpa, the rattlesnake, the wily serpent! Know you not how many men have died who crossed the rattlesuake's path? Their bones are whitening in secret places; their homes know them no more; their memory even is faded and gone even as yours will be-for Kinchahan, our god, loves his servant and hates all false gods; therefore I leave you to him here in the darkness. Listen and you will hear the river running overhead; we are now beneath its bed. You will have time to listen to its voice and be lulled to sleep. No one will disturb your dreams this night, O false god, for here man never comes. You will sleep the sleep that comes to all who anger Chalcu. the dread one."

With one last bitter glance of hatred Chalpa left him. Eric saw the light grow dim as his ceptors went up and along the tunnel, and then it disappeared. When the footfalls ceased he heard the solemn sound above him, told him that the river rolled

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ceived a plan which delighted them. both beyond measure, and their thoughts ran in this wise: Instead of a Katun

feast of horrors, bloody sacrifices and they would have a marriage feast! And the bridegroom would by the wonder worker, Quetzal, and the bride Lela, the

trouble him.

a victim and arrange for the great feast.
It was composed of twelve priests, the office being hereditary, the only hereditary office in Atzlan. Some of them "What do you mean?" asked Eric. "Of were old, but the majority were men under thirty. Chalps was the chief of this council and one of the three who cast the fatal lot to decide which of the twenty maidens selected by the council should die.

"I am in doubt, my brother. It is too The conncil was in secret session soon to announce our plans or proclaim eighteen days; no one knew its decision, our views to the people. They are not ] not even the high priest, and the result ready yet. But Chalpa is gaining ground, of its deliberations would not be known I can see that, and he can cause us much

until a week before the feast. This "Kill him!" cried Jan-ila, looking at | would be the week of the election, and Eric. "Kill him as you did the snake the public mind was in a ferment; all pursuits were neglected, and the people and the great beast in the woods! Then spent their time discussing these two In the midst of his speech Jan-ila topics from morn until night. Chalpa started and sprang neiselessly to the was seen everywhere, using all the arts door. He peered up and down, across of the politician; the priests were busy the moonlit space between the house and at all hours; the maidens, with fearful the river, and turning to those within eyes and blanched cheeks, wept and wove shrouds for themselves, for no one whispered:
"I heard a sound. Some one was lisknew who would be taken.

In the midst of all Eric became ill from overwork and lay for ten days in a the window on the other side. [Rispel delirious fever, tenderly nursed by Lela had heard nothing, but Jan-ila was con- and Jan-ila, but unconscious of their presence. She rarely left his bedside. vinced that some one had been spying, administering to him the medicines he had placed at his side—as he had instructed her when he felt the fever gaindeed more sleep than young ones."

And wrapping his blanket tightly about him started forth, declining Janing upon him-and giving him the food that Jan-ils prepared; hanging over him in tender brooding when he slept, or standing at his side in terrified agony when he raved in his delirium-talking to those demons whom he saw, she

thought, menacing his life. Her sweet face was the first he saw when the fever left him, and he opened his eyes with speculation and reason in them. He lay there looking at her for awhile. She sat at the foot of his couch, and the morning light was gleaming in | windows with slabs of stone to resist arher golden hair. He saw that she was pale and wan with anxious watching, and her eyes, that looked so mournfully out over the meadow, had dark blue the news if the announcement was made, shadows under them. She sighed as a while Kulcan guarded Lela. breath of scented air came, full of At sunset Iklapel's messenger came. spring's promises, in at the open window, | Chalpa had announced that Lela was to and turned to find his dark eyes with | be the Katun sacrifice—the news was in love's gentle gleam in them fastened sverybody's mouth. Eric sent Jan-ila to upon her face. She gave a little start Lela at once and kept guard at the house. and then came to kneel beside him and His pistol was in his holster at his belt, take his hand. She was not yet certain his rifle in the large room, while several that this was not a new phase of the fe-ver; but he turned his face to her as he lay ready for Kulcan and Jan-ila. pressed her hand and said:

long, dreadful days—and I feared that I sounds. A deep, solemn hush hung over should lose you! But you will get well, | all, and the splashing of the river against sweetheart. You will not leave your the bowlders came clear to his ears in poor Lela!"

shall recover fast now, I think, and you figure was outlined darkly against the —my own—you look so pale and tired! light within. He had almost resolved Go and rest and get some color in those to desert his post when he descried two white cheeks."

She laid her head on the pillow beside ently Iklapel. He walked toward them,

moment she slept, with a contented peered into their faces as they came up smile upon her lips. The blue veins in to him. her forehead made her skin look like | The stooping figure, so like Iklapel in

to his window and look forth, lo! the

fied and amazed.

"Could he dare!" he cried. "The The very next day the council of the fiend! To wreak such a revenge! I can-Katun was called. Its duty was to select not believe that he would do such an

> whom are you speaking?" "Chalpa, the head of the council; he who casts the lots and decides the fatal dice throwing! Chalpa the cheat and liar!" cried Kulcan, throwing his arms up wildly. "I fear him not, the scoun-

irelly assassin!" Iklapel peered at the youth under his haggy eyebrows, the fire in his dark yes blazing somber and low.

"Does my brother believe that Chalpa can cheat; that he would dare to deceive the other two judges, the whole city and Quetzal?" "Can chest? Dare? cried Kulcan. "He

can, and he dare, and I will face him with the charge! My sister shall not be the sacrifice!" "No," said Eric quietly, "she shall not, even if Chalpa has to be taken off to check his too pious zeal. I don't want to kill him, but I certainly shall if he re-

solves to sacrifice her." "Yes, you are right," said the old priest. "What can we do?" "We must get Lela here and keep her until we can arrange matters," Eric replied. "She must come tonight, for she will be safe here. I could defend this house, with Kulcan and Jan's help,

against a thousand Atzlans." "We will go for her at once," cried Kulcan excitedly. "Come, Jan-ila!"
"No, not now—not in daylight—they
will suspect!" cried Iklapel. "We must prevent an open conflict; we must win by peaceful means if possible, unless he makes the announcement this afternoon. In that case we must resort to extreme

measures." They dispersed. Eric and Jan-ila immediately prepared for a siege, filling the rows, and provided food and water enough for several days' use. Iklapel stationed himself at the temple to send

It grew darker, and they did not ap-"Dear heart, how long have I been ill?" pear. The city was strangely silent. He "Oh, so long, so long, my own—ten could hear none of the usual evening the falling shadow. He stepped outside "No. dear. I will not leave you. I and stood before the door, and his tall dread sights that brutalized the people and made them cruel and hard hearted, awhile her own lids drooped, and in a covered their heads stopped short and

laughter of Atzlen. The audacity of purest marble as she lay there. Her its minicry, straightened up before him scheme staggered them at first, but sweet breath fanned his cheeks as he suddenly, and at the same instant he they grew familiar with the thought as gazed upon her, fair and childlike, yet a was seized from behind in a viselike they grew familiar with the thought as they pondered it, and were pleased with themselves mightily. But it was a long time before they approached Eric upon the characteristic points. When he left his bed and could walk the search of the country perfect they approached Eric upon the characteristic process. When he left his bed and could walk the characteristic process. For biliousness.

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