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The Fifth Man

By Kathlyn Williams

Dramatized for the screen from novel of James Oliver Curwood

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CHAPTER I.

The Club of Five.

I watched the entire production of "The Fifth Man" with the understanding that I would write my impressions of this remarkable photoplay in the form of a novella. This very unusual screen drama was written by James Oliver Curwood. As I watched, day by day, the work of the players and the great task performed by the director, I decided that there was a subject worthy of an abler pen than mine. Whether I have done "The Fifth Man" justice in novelized form you who may have seen the play, or who may view the play after reading this, must be the judge.

I will set forth the story as I saw it unfolded before my eyes and just as it was unfolded before the perpetuating eye of the camera. All I can do is the best I can do. So permit me now to efface my own identity and become merely the story teller relating the story of "The Fifth Man."

Five men were seated around a table in an luxuriously furnished library. These five men were engaged in several different professions in which each had still to make his "mark."

The library was in the house of Thomas Wynn, attorney-at-law. None of them mean any abatement of ambition in his chosen profession. Wynn was the host of the evening. Wynn was now appeared with a tray containing a carafe of wine and five glasses. The French clock on the mantel struck midnight.

The five men lifted their filled glasses and Wynn said:

"Boys, it is midnight and our little club is about to disband. For two years we have met here every Saturday night to exchange thoughts on the meaning of life and discuss the fight that all must fight to attain success. You, my four closest friends, are about to leave the city of New York to go to four different parts of the world to perform professional tasks that may or may not crown you with the wreath of laurel. Shall we now, boys, pledge ourselves to meet again at a certain specified time when each will relate his experiences in his chosen field?—and when each will set forth the reasons for his success or the causes of his failure? What say you?"

All four of Wynn's guests agreed to this proposition and each expressed his opinion as to when and where they should meet.

To put into writing the consensus of ideas relating to the meeting, Wynn wrote the following:

"We, the undersigned, do solemnly pledge ourselves, if we live, to meet in the home of Thomas Wynn, New York city, at nine o'clock in the evening, exactly five years from this date."

The first to sign this document was Wynn himself. The second signature was that of Doctor Saddler, the physician of the party. The third to sign was William Berry, who had specialized in railroad engineering. The fourth signature read: "Happy Gallagher—the signer being a civil engineer. And then—the pen was handed to the Fifth Man.

The fifth man was easily the most distinguished looking of the group. He was tall and broad shouldered and he looked the picture of health. His manner expressed ease and self-confidence and reserve strength. In short, everything about this fifth man gossiped of lofty character, good breeding, high ideals and a well-ordered mind. And this fifth man signed his name thus—John Gaunt.

The specified five years had passed. The time was now a few minutes before nine on the evening of the date mentioned in the signed paper where in the five men had agreed to meet.

In his library Thomas Wynn was waiting anxiously for the arrival of his four friends. To him now came a charming young woman—his wife.

"I know what is to happen tonight, dear," she said, "and I suppose you will want to be alone with your friends."

"Yes, sweetheart," Wynn replied. "It would necessarily be a stag party—at least until after we have swapped our yarns covering our experiences in the last five years."

A little girl toddled into the room in her night clothes.

"Naughty!" cried the mother. "You ran away from bed."

"I came to say another good-night to my papa," the little one said.

And now took her in his arms and kissed her again and again.

"And now," the mother said, "to bed, you sleepyhead. Good-night, dear." She added, turning to Wynn: "Good-night for the present."

"Don't wait up," Wynn said. "Perhaps their stories will be so long that we shall sit here till the wee, small hours. If we have finished in a reasonable time, however, I will call you to meet my four friends."

"Four?" she said, inquiringly. "How do you know there will be four? You say there are two from whom you have not heard for a very long time."

Wynn sighed. "Well, it is one minute before nine now," he said. "Another minute will reveal whether there shall be gathered here tonight three men—or four—or all five. Again good-night, dear."

He kissed Mrs. Wynn tenderly and

the young wife left the room.

CHAPTER II.

"Where is the Fifth Man?"

Wynn himself had been successful far beyond his dreams. To his inherited riches he had added immense wealth made from enormous fees as consulting attorney for great corporations.

The clock struck nine. And hardly had the French timepiece on the mantel ceased to toll the hour, when the butler showed to a round-faced, well-fed, cheery man—Doctor Saddler.

"So I'm the first!" cried the physician. "Well, Wynn, time do fly. Five years! Let me tell you one thing, old boy. I've been very successful in my practice—got any number of rich folks paying me handsome fees. But that isn't exactly why I'm so happy tonight. I'm happy in particular at being alive—at being here. Hello! Listen!"

The butler now showed in the third man—Berry, the railroad engineer. Berry was bronzed of face and physically the perfection of "fitness."

"Hello, boys!" he cried, with great exuberance of youthful spirit and enthusiasm. "Here we are—three of us already on the job. I know how you have prospered, Wynn. And I am not in ignorance of how you, Saddler, have garnered patients and fat fees."

"And we," Wynn said, "are delighted with your success, Berry. We have read in the newspapers no end of stories of how you put that iron trail through from Kansas City down into Mexico—a heroic task of engineering. We congratulate you."

"But where's Happy Gallagher and—the fifth man, Gaunt?" asked Berry. "Hark!" said Wynn. "Here comes some one now."

The butler entered with a cablegram for Wynn. With eager fingers Wynn ripped the cablegram open and read it. His face fell; he became as serious as an idol.

"Read it!" he said, passing the cablegram to the others. It was from "Happy" Gallagher. It read:

"Queen's Hospital, Bombay, India."

"Thomas Wynn, New York."

"Tonight you will all be together again—except me. I am calling this so it will reach you—as I estimate the difference in time—about nine tonight—the 'great night.' I will be with you in spirit only. For they say I cannot live. Bullet through the lung. God bless you all."

"HAPPY GALLAGHER."

"Poor Gallagher!" Wynn said.

"Poor old 'Happy!'" the others chorused.

Gallagher made such a hit in the engineering world—building that dam out in California. Wynn said, "that the British government called him to India to build a dam at Amradabad. I suppose he has had trouble with some



The Fifth Man was the Most Distinguished Looking of the Group.

native who had a gun—or else that bullet in the lung is the result of some woman. Gallagher always was in favor of a duel where a woman was concerned. Who knows?"

"Well, we are all accounted for now," Berry said, "except the fifth man—John Gaunt."

"Have you heard from Gaunt in recent months, Wynn?" asked Doctor Saddler.

"No. Haven't heard from him for three years. I doubt that he will be here."

They waited. The clock ticked off the minutes. Half-past nine and—no fifth man. They began telling their experiences of the last five years. They talked on and on till—eleven o'clock struck.

The butler now entered with a carafe of wine and five glasses.

"Fill 'em three glasses," Wynn said to the butler.

Three glasses were filled. The three men took each his glass. Wynn arose. "Boys," said he, "here's to John Gaunt—wherever he may be tonight!"

"Here's to John Gaunt—whoever he may be tonight," the others said.

And just then they heard a voice behind them saying:

"John Gaunt is here."

They turned—and there in the doorway doorway stood a man. The old man said a man? I should have said the wreck of a man. For a man, like a ship, can be wrecked. This wreckage of a man that stood in the doorway doorway now, grabbed the curtains as if for physical support, he seemed scarcely able to stand unaided upon his feet. His clothes were in rags. His hair was long and matted and he wore a beard like a patriarch of old, but a beard unkempt in the extreme.

Like a tramp he looked—yet there was something in the pitiful manner of him that dispensed the idea of a tramp from the minds of the four who beheld him—excluded from their minds the idea of a tramp in the moment in which it was conceived.

The wreck of a man came forward. Rather, he reeled forward.

"Don't you know me, boys?" he asked in a husky, far-away voice. "I'm John Gaunt."

And now, at last, they recognized him. They gathered him to their embrace—yes, embraced him in the manner of the Spaniard and the French and the Italian—so wild were they to see him and so filled with sadness were they to see him in such a pitiable

plight.

"You have suffered," Wynn said. "Here! Drink this."

Wynn put to Gaunt's lips a glass of wine. Gaunt drank the glass.

"Bring food," Wynn said, turning to the waiting butler.

Gaunt sat by the fire and seemed to be summoning his strength to make the necessary explanation of his wrecked condition.

The butler brought a tray—cold chicken, cold ham, cold tongue and coffee. Gaunt ate of these viands almost ravenously.

"You see," he said, "I did not stop anywhere to wash up. I did not take the time to wash myself presentable. One reason was because I had no money with which to pay for such abruptions. The second reason was my desire to reach this house and join you boys as near to the appointed time as possible. I only just landed from a ship—half an hour ago."

Gaunt satisfied the cravings of hunger, then said:

"And now, boys, I've a tale to unfold that you may not credit. Before I begin let me assure you that I am perfectly sane. I am suffering from nothing worse than physical weakness. My mind is as clear as ever. But what I am about to tell you may strain your credulity. Nevertheless, all I tell you will be the truth—extraordinary as it may seem. And what is more, I am going to tell you my story in detail, in order that I may secure your help. For when I have finished my story our work shall have only just begun. I want your help—want it badly and promptly. So, light your cigars—and bear with me patiently till I have finished."

The Fifth Man began his story. But for his narrative, in his own words, let me begin a new chapter.

CHAPTER III.

The Fifth Man's Story.

The day following the night on which I bade good-by to you boys—five years ago—I started for Butte, Mont. There I was employed by one of the big mining companies in my capacity as mining engineer. And there I worked for three years and found some happiness in the thought that I, John Gaunt, was respected in that great mining camp as an engineer of high professional talents. But I felt that the money they paid me was not sufficient, and I began to make plans for bettering myself financially.

Just then old friends of mine from New York hit Butte. One was Josh Clarke, a prospector who had never made a big strike and was always more or less on his uppers. The second man was Bill Adler, a much more successful prospector.

"Why, hanged if it ain't John Gaunt!" Adler exclaimed, upon meeting me at the entrance to one of the copper mines.

"Glad to see you, boys," I said. "Where from and where bound?"

"I'm just from Central America," Adler replied. "Say, Gaunt, there's gold down there—loads of it for the picking. I'm looking for a man with a little more capital than I possess to go in with me and make a prospecting trip down there—in Honduras."

"Tell you what," put in the irrepressible Josh Clarke. "You two fellows put up the money and pay my fare down there—and I'll go with you. There's a safer company than two in that country where the natives will kill you for your hat—you bet!"

The result of this encounter with my old friends was that I invited them over to my rooms and there, at last, I agreed to hazard what little money I had on the proposed prospecting trip in Central America.

"I'll pilot this crowd right back to the place where I left off, unless we learn of a better place," Adler said. "It was away in the mountains in the interior—far from white men. I had spotted gold there, but I hadn't any money to get machinery in and work the claim."

The result of all this was that I resigned my good position as mining engineer in Butte, went to New York with my two friends and there embarked on a tramp ship bound for Honduras.

We outlitted at the little coast town where the vessel put us off—and started for the interior. After weeks of hardship and privation we arrived at a little settlement of gross huts where all the inhabitants were blacks—the settlement in which Adler had made his headquarters on his former visit to the country.

These blacks spoke Spanish. One day while we were gathering equipment for the dash into the mountains I happened to overhear one of the blacks talking to a group of his fellows. Said this black:

"El Toro was here today and bought provisions. Strange thing about El Toro. He always pays in gold. Where does he get that gold?"

"This talk of gold alone would have aroused my deepest interest, considering that I had everything at stake on finding gold on this trip. But the black talked of 'El Toro'—a bull—and told how El Toro had bought provisions. It occurred to a hell buy provisions? I accosted the blacks and the one who had been telling of El Toro answered my questions about the bull thus:

"El Toro, senior," he said, "is a madman. He came here as an explorer years ago. He took a black man with him into the interior on a scientific expedition in search of rare specimens of our animal and lower life. In the jungle this scientist went mad. So did his black man, whom he calls 'Chacha. The result was, senior, that the 'white scientist and the black man both remained in the jungle. They built huts—and there they still live to this day. We leave them alone, because they attack any man who approaches their huts—attack with spears ferociously and murderously. So we stay away. The thing that amazes us, however, is—where does El Toro get the gold, of which he always has a plenty—to pay for his supplies?"

In consequence of this information my two friends and I held a council of war. It that madman had plenty of gold it was because he was getting the gold out of the mountain on which he was camping. We should investigate

that vicinity forthwith.

Accordingly, saying nothing to the natives as to our exact destination, we set out to find the mountain on which the madman dwelt, hoping to find it the promised golden land of our dreams.

Three weeks later we were in camp in the foothills, far from the settlement, far from any of the black natives of that tropical region. For a fortnight we had been expecting to locate the mad scientist. But all our efforts thus far had proved futile.

This particular day, in camp, Adler and Clarke were cleaning their guns. I, ever restless, and wishing to be on the move, shouldered my gun and told my friends that I would go forth in search of adventure—meaning in search of gold.

And so I left them—never to see them again. And as for adventure—I found it good and plenty.

I had been prospecting along the ridge of the low-lying foothills for perhaps four hours, when all at once I realized that I was lost. I had omitted to take my bearings. In which direction my camp lay I could not for the life of me determine. The sun was high in the heavens—high noon—and I could not decide whether my camp lay to north or south. I was wandering dazedly and zigzag, not caring where my steps led me and now—I was lost! I called, I yelled. No answer.

The sun on the treeless foothills was so fierce in its intensity that I decided that at least I would seek the shelter of the jungle in the lower land. I descended accordingly into the thick forest. There night overtook me. I was now suffering from thirst and hunger. Yet I was compelled to cease all my efforts to find water, till morning. I slept but little. At sunrise I was again afoot, wending my way through the forest. At last I found water. And I drank deeply.

But by this time I was weaker than I had believed could be possible for so strong a man in so short a time. I found myself reeling from side to side. And at last I must have fallen in a swoon. For the next thing of which I was conscious was the sound of a voice saying:

"Here is a wonderful new specimen. I must add it to my collection."

CHAPTER IV.

A Captive "Specimen."

I opened my eyes. Over me stood two strange creatures. One was a white-haired old man, with hair like a veritable mane, dressed in leopard skins. The other was a black man of massive build, similarly dressed.

The white man was examining me curiously with a magnifying glass, as if I had been a butterfly or a beetle which, to his joy, he had discovered. I did not even then occur to me that the white man had referred to me

when he said, "Here is a wonderful new specimen." I supposed in my semi-conscious and weakened condition that he alluded to some specimen of grass or fern on which I was lying.

I sat up. "Glad I met you," I said to the white man. "I've lost my bearings. Is your camp near?"

"Yes, right near," the white man answered. And then he turned to his black man and said: "Bring him along, Chacha."

"Si, Senior El Toro," the black man replied.

"Chacha? El Toro? Why, these were the names which the natives in the settlement had given to the mad scientist and his mad black man. I now comprehended into whose hands I had fallen. I was delighted. Here was the very man for whom I was looking. Here was the man who had gold aplenty. This man was extracting gold out of the earth. And I felt sure that there must be much more gold than this madman alone could ever take out of the hills. Therefore my friends and I would come here and help ourselves from the treasure land in which the madman lived.

"I've heard of you," I told him. "I'm delighted to make your acquaintance."

The black man grinned sardonically and toyed with his long spear.

"I've got friends near here somewhere," I now said. "Our camp is somewhere on the trail from the settlement. Could you guide me back to the trail?"

"You must be fed and watered and classified," was the surprising reply from the white man.

There was something so sinister in his words, something so horribly sardonic in the leer of the black man, that I shuddered. And now at last it dawned upon me that these men were, both of them, not only mad, but were to be regarded as dangerous enemies.

"Bring him along!" again said the scientist to the black man. "We must feed him and water him and classify him at once."

This insane speech decided my course of action. I resolved to bolt. But I hadn't taken two steps toward my gun when the gun was seized by the black man and hurled into the adjacent stream. And not till then, in my dismay at seeing my gun sink

in the water, had I noticed that we were standing by a body of rushing water.

I leaped toward the water. But the black man was again too quick for me. In my weakened condition. His spear was at my heart, threateningly.

The white man now took me by the hand and led me away.

At last we reached a clearing in which were a grass hut and a great number of primitive wooden cages—cages with wooden bars. Into the hut the black forced me. To my surprise the interior had three rooms, all filled with specimens of animal life common to that region. Here were stuffed birds and reptiles and the skins of leopards, jaguars, panthers, cougars and so on, giving to the place the look of a museum of natural history.

"Before classifying you I will first show you my other specimens," the scientist said, addressing me now with so little evidence of insanity in his outward bearing that I could scarcely believe that he was really mad—it was his speech alone—his words—that betrayed his madness.

He showed me his "specimens" one by one—the whole ghastly collection—including the skulls and bones of animals—till finally he led me out of the hut and toward the row of wooden cages.

The cages, though primitive, were strongly built, with heavy wooden bars made of the branches of trees. These cages contained live wild animals—leopards, panthers, a bear and a mountain lion. At last we reached the last of the long line of cages containing what the scientist called his "living specimens."

"Why, it's a woman!" I shouted. "It's a white woman—a young girl!"

Yes, the "specimen" in that roughly



She Implored Me to Save Her.

built cage was indeed a woman—more beautiful than even the dreams of men can conceive human loveliness to be. Oh, my God! It was pitiful!

Here John Gaunt stopped speaking and gazed into the fire on the hearth, tortured by his memories of the girl in the cage. His friends, exchanging looks of pity, remained quiet till the Fifth Man resumed his story, thus:

CHAPTER V.

The Girl in the Cage.

I sprang to the cage wherein was confined the loveliest woman I had ever seen. And I sought, madly, with my bare hands, to tear away the thick wooden bars.

"Who are you?" I asked, while thus engaged. "What are you doing here?"

"They have held me here for two years," she cried. And then, in pitiful supplication, she entreated me to release her.

But the two madmen now leaped on me to drag me away. I fought like a demon. But the negro's spear drew blood in two places in my back and I was obliged to yield to this "superior" force.

The girl's arms—beautifully rounded, bare arms—were outflung through the bars and she ceased not to implore me to save her. But they dragged me roughly away.

The vision of that imprisoned young woman remained before my eyes even after they forced me into the scientist's hut.

I wondered, of course, how she came to be there. And I questioned the mad scientist about her.

"She's my very finest specimen," was all he would say concerning her. "You shall see more of her presently. For you shall have the cage next to hers—if you live."

If I lived? What did this madman mean? I recalled that the case next to that occupied by the girl contained a mountain lion. Did the madman mean that I was to occupy the cage with the lion? If I lived? Perhaps in his mind was the same thought, namely, that a man and a mountain lion cannot occupy the same cage and both still live. If I lived? I felt that either the lion or John Gaunt was doomed.

The scientist, El Toro, and the black man, Chacha, now produced food. They gave me some hunks of meat, evidently the meat of some wild bird. I ate ravenously. The black man brought water and I drank. And then, strengthened by a full stomach, I began to think of means of escape. Suppose I were to feign unconsciousness? What, I wondered, would they do while I lay in a make-believe faint? Accordingly, murmuring words to the effect that the eating of food after so long a fast was having a bad effect, I pretended to swoon.

I lay perfectly still but alert. And presently I saw the black man, out of the corner of my eye, lay flat on his back, and very soon he snored. Good! The black man was disposed of. Now what would the white man do?

The other specimen fainted in the same way. I heard the scientist murmur. "Soon he will recover—and we shall have to feed him well—oh, very well—provided he lives."

I watched him, still playing possum. He arose, took a good look at me so as to make sure that I was really unconscious. Then he crept away—away through an aperture in

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Notice

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of the late J. C. Kelly, this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate, to present them before the undersigned duly verified on or before October 30th, 1914, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery.

All persons indebted to said estate will please make immediate payment to me.

This the 30th day of October, 1914.

S. F. PATTERSON, Adm. of the Estate of J. C. Kelly.

W. L. Long, Atty. 10-30-6t.

Notice

By virtue of a deed of trust made by Charlie Williams and Ethel Williams, his wife, to me as trustee, dated April 15th, 1914, and recorded in the Clerk's office for Halifax county, at Halifax, state of North Carolina, Deed Book 328, at Page 118, default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness there secured, and at the request of the holder of the note evidencing said indebtedness, I will on MONDAY, the 21st day of December, 1914, at the hour of 12 o'clock noon, in front of the Patterson Store Company's Store House on Roanoke Avenue, ROSEMARY, N. C., offer for sale at public auction to the highest bidder for CASH the following property, to-wit:

All that lot of land, with improvements thereon, lying and being situated in Roanoke Rapids township, Halifax county, state of North Carolina, and bounded and described as follows: Commencing at a stake, the Northeast corner of Lot No. 34 (Forty-Four) of plot No. 23; thence running Eastwardly fifty (50) feet to Cross Street; thence seventy-five (75) feet Southwardly along Cross Street to a stake; thence Westwardly fifty (50) feet to a stake on the line between Lots Nos. 44 and 45 (Forty-Four and Forty-Five); thence seventy-five (75) feet to the beginning. Said lot of land being one half of Lot No. 45 (Forty-Five) the North end of same. For a more perfect description of the above described property reference is hereby made to Plot or Map No. 23 of "Patterson Town," duly recorded in Book 226 at Page 7, Register of Deeds office, Halifax, N. C.

This, the 20th day of November, A. D. 1914.

A. L. CLARK, Trustee.

(Continued on Page Four)