

# Jungle Breath

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by Lucien Burman

**THIS HAS HAPPENED**  
Attempts have been made on the life of Elise Marberry, an American girl owning considerable property near the little town of Porto Verde, in west central Brazil. She has escaped harm due to the shrewdness of her cousin and protector, Vilak, who with his friend, Lincoln Nunnally, an elderly American chemist, is trying to learn the reason for the strange enmity for Elise.

Living near Porto Verde is one Gaylord Prentiss, a strange and forbidding character, who has evinced a hatred for Elise. Tinky, Elise's two-year-old orphaned nephew, is kidnapped. A native report, Prentiss has been seen with the baby. The trail leads into the jungle. Calamity overtakes the expedition Vilak organizes in pursuit. Native trackers are injured or desert. Treachery breaks out. Their white friends are fever victims and are left with a friendly tribe.

Elise, Vilak and Nunnally finally emerge from the jungle. Presently they come to the outskirts of a strange city, resembling the old Inca civilization. There they are made prisoners. They discover they are in the power of Carlos D'Albentara, whom they had known as an engineer back in Porto Verde.

The black ruler of the city decides to marry Elise and to put Vilak and Nunnally to death. They are to be tortured at the feast of Raymi. The feast arrives. Vilak is compelled to witness the tortures of other victims. He has succeeded in cutting half way through his bonds when a friendly Indian slips him a dagger.

**NOW BEGIN THE STORY**  
CHAPTER XLIV

The Indian thrust a copper dagger into Vilak's hand. "Take," he whispered. "White man good Mabimi. Keep Mabimi from die. Mabimi white man's slave. Try see white man before. Many times—wait outside window. But always soldiers come. Mabimi have to run away. White man take dagger. Good dagger. Sharp. Kill. Kill but peoples hurt white man. Soldier come again now, Mabimi go." He crawled off into the red-silhouetted obscurity.

With the dagger Vilak quickly completed the cut in his thong. "Wish this chap could have gotten to us a week ago," he grunted. "Doesn't help us much now. Would have been through in a few minutes anyway."

His body was now free. But he made no attempt to disengage the loosened cords around his limbs, only moved his arms slightly to place the dagger in Nunnally's eager hands. "Cut yourself loose, but don't stir. Lie just as you are. We want to be moving for a while. I've got something of a plan. Not a marvelous plan or a sure one by any means. Quite doubtful, really. I've been racking my brain all day, and can't get it to function. But since the plan's all we've got it's worth a try. At dawn Batalagos will go into the temple to receive the first rays of the sun alone. He'll do it every day of the



He toppled and began rolling lifelessly down the steps.

festival. This dawn we'll try to be there with him."

The old man severed the fetters at his wrist. Furtively he tried to return the dagger to his friend.

Vilak pushed his hand away. "Keep it," he whispered. "I've got a better weapon." He began twisting one of the two rings on his finger, a seal ring of conventional pattern. The top screwed off. A large black stone as exposed, half human, half bird, like the grotesque idol with three minute claws protruding. The claws glinted brightly in the fire-light.

"It's D'Albentara's ring. I put the stone in this new mounting and used the time-worn thick of hiding it by wearing it in the most conspicuous place I could; on my finger. He looked everywhere for it but there."

Fifteen minutes passed; half an hour; an hour. Vilak made no move to go. The child on the stone a few yards away began to cry lustily. Its lamentations subsided to a whimper, then died away. A troop of yellow spotted moths floated gracefully over the crackling fire, then wheeled off as if in sudden fright. Two black beetles began crawling over Nunnally's body. With a scarcely perceptible movement of his hand, he brushed them away. "Isn't it a good . . . er . . . time to escape now?" he whispered, his eyes constantly on the sentinel gloomily pacing to and fro some twenty yards away. "The place is almost . . . er . . . deserted."

"Just the time not to escape. We'd be missed in a few minutes and caught. We'll wait till the courtyard fills with people again and their interest is concentrated on something else. Then whatever we do won't be noticed. That's an axiom."

The moths fluttered back to the fire; one by one they dropped into the flame. A few floated gracefully away. The crowd commenced to drift slowly into the court once more and Batalagos reappeared in the pavilion. There was another dance. Then D'Albentara, beside the chief, clapped his hands. As they had done the day before, the multitude fell to the ground and lay there groveling, their eyes fixed on the east. Batalagos began waddling toward the temple.

"Now's our chance," Vilak whispered. He crawled out of his thong and slipping noiselessly to the ground, crept to the shadows along the outer edges of the court away from the fire and the altar where the prostrate wailer of savages was concentrated.

The old man followed. They reached the ruined stone gallery bounding the court on all sides without being detected, then began skirting along its broken pillars toward the temple. The chief slowly climbed the sides where the gallery protected great steps in the center; they climbed quickly, at one of the sides where the gallery protected them from the eyes of the wor-

shippers. Batalagos entered. They followed. They were in a long unroofed hall. On all sides rose ghostly shapes of great ruined stone figures, some with shadowy broken arms upraised, some with fat squat bodies lacking heads. At one end was a broad, elevated stone. Toward this Batalagos made his way. The two others stealthily came after him.

He clambered awkwardly upon the stone and fell to his knees. A streak of crimson appeared atop the red mountain which the temple faced. Batalagos began a monotonous chat, flinging out his arms and striking his head against the stone. In a few moments the entire eastern horizon was flooded with a red. The chief arose and clambered down from the stone. His heavy foot touched the floor; he began his waddling return to the court. Vilak was waiting behind a scowling idol. He took a noiseless step forward; caught the chief's arm. Batalagos turned, swiftly recognized his captor and then saw the old man with drawn dagger approaching from behind another idol a few feet away. He was about to scream for help, but the quick descent of Vilak's free hand checked him.

"Do not call out, Batalagos," Vilak grunted. "Do not call out. Or I will kill. Quick, this way." He slowly released the hand which was over the other's mouth and turned it so that the captive's eyes rested on the ring glistening on his finger in the brightening light.

Batalagos paled. His great pulpy body began to quiver. "No kill," he whimpered. "White man no kill. Batalagos no call out. Batalagos do whatever white man say."

"Will Batalagos let the white man and the white girl go?" He held the ring close to the other's shaking breast.

The chief nodded quickly. "Will Batalagos let the white baby go also?"

The half-breed hesitated. Vilak brought the ring within half an inch of his quivering flesh. The half-breed moaned in terror. "Yes. Let baby go too," he whined. "Do anything white man say. Only no kill Batalagos."

"That which Batalagos speaks is good," Vilak drew the ring away a little. "Batalagos is wise. Batalagos is very wise. But let Batalagos well remember. If Batalagos breaks his word, quick as the fiery lightning will the white man kill."

Slowly they moved—between rows of sullen-visaged idols to the central door. They reached it; halted. "This is the moment I'm

afraid of," Vilak whispered to the old man. "It's here that the plan's weak. We can't tell what's going to happen when the people outside first see us. Certainly we can't trust this chap. From now on we've just got to hope for luck."

The chief waddled through the doorway. A shout of joy went up from the worshippers, changing to a murmur of astonishment and dismay as the two white men emerged from the temple and took places beside him.

Vilak pressed the ring close to him once more. "Speak to them, Batalagos," he muttered. "Tell them the sun-god has spoken to Batalagos and told him that the white men are good. Tell them many things like this, Batalagos. And say no things of evil against them, for I shall hear. And the lightning shall strike."

The chief began to speak, unwillingly, platonically, like a child forced to apologize to some indignant relative whose tidbit it had fished at dinner. His captor watched him closely, the ring at his shoulder.

Suddenly Vilak saw Nunnally wheel round with the dagger in his hand and take a position of defense. He wheeled also; saw racing across the steps from the gallery opposite him the stunted Indian of the enormous nose. The old man stuck; the half-breed leaped past and hurled himself upon Vilak. He snatched at the ring. There was a struggle; his wrist scratched against it. He toppled and began rolling lifelessly down the steps.

The attack ended as suddenly as it had begun; yet brief as it was it had afforded Batalagos an opportunity to waddle frantically down the steps to safety. Here behind a triple row of his spear-armed soldiers, he halted, and still quivering with fright, gaped up at the two Americans, who had retreated to the doorway of the temple, ready to dart behind its shelter should a spear be hurled or an arrow shot.

D'Albentara, who had dispatched the stunted half-breed on his fatal errand, came forward to join Batalagos. They began to

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talk and argue excitedly. Vilak stooped and coolly laced one of his boots which had come untied. "Failed," he said. "Afraid it would. Still two facts in our favor, though. They're afraid of hand-to-hand fighting as long as I've got this ring, and it would be sacrilege to send spears or arrows as long as we're in the temple. Otherwise I'd say we're in a damned deep hole. I'm going to smoke. First chance I've had for a week."

He started to put his hand to his pocket. Halfway his arm became rigid. His face took on once more a pronounced Mongolian cast; once more his eyes became the sharp slanted eyes of some dreaming Pekinese philosopher. But it was only for an instant. Quickly his countenance became normal. He smiled.

"I'm an idiot," he murmured. "Just as I was about the ants and about the lakes above Prentiss' house. Cudgeling my brain to invent some mechanical means of escape when all the time there's been a natural force just trying to be used. Most certainly I'm losing my imagination."

His hand continued on its way to his pocket. Quickly he drew out two boxes of safety matches, ex-

amined them, thrust them back. "Give me any matches you have," he said to Nunnally. "Look in the lining of your clothes, too." The old man searched diligently. In a moment he pulled out one smudged box, then another. These he extended to Vilak. "What . . . what are you going to do?"

Vilak put these matches with the others. "You'll see." (To Be Continued)

Vilak's daring proves his salvation. He has an astonishing trick up his sleeve. Read the next chapter.



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## BUDGET ESTIMATE

submitted to the Board of County Commissioners of Pasquotank County, N. C. by C. C. Pritchard, County Accountant, at their meeting held July 5, 1927, pursuant to "The County Fiscal Control Act," Public Laws, 1927:

### ANNUAL COUNTY BUDGET ESTIMATE

For the Fiscal Year 1927-1928,  
County of Pasquotank, North Carolina.

#### General County Fund

Estimated to be Expended Year Ending June 30, 1928 \$33,619.72

#### County Road Bonds—Sinking Fund

Estimated to be Expended Year Ending June 30, 1928 \$87,110.00

#### General Road Fund

Estimated to be Expended Year Ending June 30, 1928 \$28,750.00

#### SCHOOL BUDGET

of Pasquotank County, for the School Year 1927-1928:

School Budget Needs:	Six Months Term Budget Needs 1927-1928	Extended Term Budget Needs 1927-1928
(a) Current Expense Fund	\$136,268.95	\$29,585.26
(b) Capital Outlay Fund	\$ 16,605.00	\$ 850.00
(c) Debt Service Fund	\$ 12,907.00	\$
Total Needs	\$165,780.95	\$30,435.26

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
of Pasquotank County, N. C.

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