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*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

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Fires had been built in a circle, and each man not on guard had wrapped a kaross, a kind of cloak, around him and went quickly to sleep. Not me. Somebody once said there's always something new out of Africa, and I'll bet twenty to eight he meant a danged new kind of insect. Every bug in South Africa tried to buddy up with me that night. Then just as I'd got resigned to the lesser man eaters and was falling asleep a lion roared right in my ear, or so it seemed. A lion's roar in his own territory sounds so different; it has a bold to-hell-with-you tone with a hungry echo that's most creepish. As nobody even moved an eyelash, I kept still, too, but for the first time since I've been out of the army I was up at dawn. Before the sun was above the horizon we were on our way.

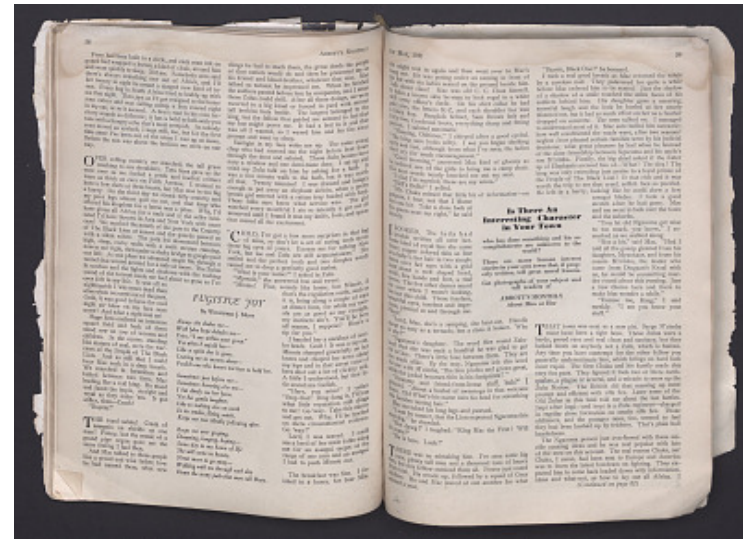
OVER rolling country we marched, the tall grass reaching to our shoulders. Two lions gave us the once over as we forded a creek and hoofed critters were as thick as cars on Fifth Avenue. I wanted to have a few shots at these beasts, but Mac was in too big a hurry. On the third day we struck hilly country and my poor legs almost quit on me, and that king who offered his kingdom for a horse was a piker. Why, I'd have given all Africa for a mule and if the seller hesitated I'd have thrown in Asia and New York with more ease! We reached the mouth of the pass to the Country of The Black Lion at sunset and the guards passed us with a silent salute. The path led downward between high, steep, rocky walls with a swift stream running, now to our right, then under a shaky bridge to gurgle past our left. At one place we advanced single file through a tunnel that wound around for a mile or more. The Zulus lit torches and the lights and shadows with the rushing sound of the torrent made me feel about as gone as I've ever felt in my life. It was all so nightmarish I was more dead than alive when we came out of the pass. Gosh, it was good to have the cool night air blow on my face once more! And what a sight met us!

Huge fires outlined an immense square field and back of them stood row on row of women and children. In the center, standing like statues of coal, were the warriors of the People of The Black Lion. And so still that I could hear Mac suck in a deep breath. We marched in formation and halted between two fires, Mac leading like a real king. He stood and faced the impis, straight and royal as they make 'em. It got stiller, then—Crash!  
"Bayete!"

THE royal salute! Crash of assegais on shields as one man! Funny, but the music of a grand pipe organ gave me the same feeling I had then.

And Mac talked to those people like a proud and wise father, how he had missed them, what new things he had to teach them, the great deeds the people of that nation would do and then he presented me as his friend and blood-brother, whatever that was. Mac talked so earnest he impressed me. When he finished the soldiers passed before him by companies, and I mean those Zulus could drill. After all these doings, we were escorted to a big kraal or fenced in yard with several tall beehive huts inside. The largest belonged to the king, but the fellow that guided me seemed to feel that my hut might peeve me. It had a bed in it and that was all I wanted, so I waved him and his fire away prompt and went to sleep.

Sunlight in my face woke me up. The same young chap who had



roomed me the night before bent down through the door and saluted. These Zulu houses have nary a window and one demi-tasse door. I sat up and tried my Zulu talk on him by asking for a bath. It was a five minute walk to the bath, but it was worth all that. Twenty minutes! I was dressed and hungry enough to put away an elephant sirloin, when a pretty brown girl entered with a rattan tray loaded with food. These folks sure knew what service was. The girl watched every mouthful I ate so intently it got me all unnerved until I found it was my knife, fork, and spoon that caused all the excitement.

"CHILD, I've got a few more surprises in that bag of mine, so don't let a set of eating tools strain those big eyes of yours. Excuse me for talking New York, but me and Zulu are still acquaintances." She smiled and the perfect teeth and two dimples nearly caused me to drop a perfectly good melon.

"What is your name?" I asked in Zulu.  
"Mjeenie," she answered low and sweet.  
"Minnie! Fine, sounds like home, but Minnie, if that's the regulation outfit, such as it is, bring along a couple of cops at dinner time, for while my morals are as good as my eyesight, my instincts ain't. You'll be here all season, I suppose? Here's a tip for you."

I handed her a necklace of scarlet beads. Gosh! It was a tap out. Minnie slumped gracefully on her knees and clasped her arms about my legs and in that sweet voice of hers shot out a lot of clickity talk. A little I understood, but that little scared me foolish.

"Here, you miss!" I yelled. "Stop that! Ding dang it, I'll lose what little reputation still clings to me! Go 'way. Take this mirror and get out. Why, I'll be lynched on mere circumstantial evidence. Go 'way!"

Lord, I was scared. I could see a herd of her male folks using me for an assegai target at the range of one arm and an assegai. I had to push Minnie out.

[[caption]] FUGITIVE JOY

By Winnifred J. Mott

Always she eludes me—  
With false hope deludes me—  
Cries, "I am within your grasp."  
Yet when I enfold her—  
Like a spirit she is gone,  
Leaving me to mourn alone—  
Foolish one who knows not how to hold her.

Sometimes just before me—  
Sometimes hovering o'er me—  
I but dimly see her form.  
Yet her gentle laughter,  
Like to nothing else on earth  
In its tender, lilting mirth,  
Keeps me ever blindly following after.

Keeps me ever groping,  
Dreaming, longing, hoping—  
Some day to my house of life  
She will come in beauty.  
Never more to go away—  
Walking with me through each day  
Down the stony path that men call Duty. [[/caption]]

The breakfast was fine. I finished in a hurry, for fear Min-

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nie might trot in again and then went over to Mac's hang out. He was posing under an awning in front of his hut with six ladies seated on the ground beside him. Talk about class! Mac was old C.C. Class himself. It takes a brown skin he-man to look regal in a white drill army officer's outfit. On his shirt collar he had gold pins, the letters K-Z, and each shoulder bar was a black lion. Bangkok helmet, Sam Brown belt and forty-five, Cordovan boots, everything sharp and fitting perfect. I saluted automatic.

"Morning, Oldtimer," I chirped after a good eyeful. "The king sure looks nifty. I see you began sheiking early and fast, although from what I've seen, the ladies don't cry for much encouragement."

"Good morning," answered Mac kind of gloomy as he ordered one of the girls to bring me a camp chair. His next words nearly knocked me out of my seat.

"I find I'm married, these are my wives."

"Hell's Bells!" I yelled.

"Mr. Chaka missed that little bit of information--on purpose, I fear, not that I blame him one bit. Take a close look at the queen next my right," he said bitterly.

I LOOKED. The lady had trouble written all over her. Come kind of royal line she came from; copper colored skin as fine as a baby's, her hair in two simple knots over her ears with a gold band about a well shaped head, small, fine hands and feet, a real queen. The five other dames once I was over when I wasn't looking, but not this child. Those fearless, beautiful eyes, insolent and imperious, pierced at and through me. Phew!

"Lord, Mac, she's ramping, she bear-cat. Handle about as easy as a tornado, but a class A looker. Who is she?"

"Ngacoma's daughter. The word flies around Zululand that she was such a handful he was glad to get rid of her. There's little love between them. They are too much alike. By the way, Ngacoma left this word for me with M'zimba, 'The lion profits and grows great, while the jackal becomes thin in his footprints!'"

"Chummy and friend-from-home stuff, huh?" I grinned. "About a bushel

of meaning in that welcome home. Old What's-his-name uses his head for something else besides raising hair."

Mac stretched his long legs and yawned.

"I sent by runner, that the Lion expected Ngacoma this morning," he drawled.

"Hot dawg!" I laughed; "King Mac the First! Will he come?"

"He is here. Look!"

THERE was no mistaking him. I've seen some big men, plenty tall men and a thousand tons of heavy men, but this fellow outsized them all. Power just oozed from him. He strode up, followed by a squad of Gray soldiers. He and Mac stared at one another for what seemed a year.

"Bayete, Black One!" he boomed.

I took a real good breath as Mac returned the salute by a careless nod. They palavered for quite a while before Mac ordered him to be seated. Just the shadow of a smile touched the stern faces of his soldiers behind him. His daughter gave a sneering, scornful laugh and the look he hurled at her nearly blistered me, but it had as much effect on her as a feather dropped on concrete. The men talked on. I managed to understand most of it. Mac sure bulled him sarcastic; how well conditioned the roads were, after two seasons neglect; how pleased certain families were by his judicial decisions; what great pleasure he had when he learned of the close friendship between Ngacoma and his uncle's son M'zimba. Finally, the big chef asked if the Eater up of Elephants accused him of--What! The idea! The king was only extending just praise to a loyal prince of the People of The Black Lion! It was rich and it was worth the trip to see that cruel, selfish face so puzzled. He left in a hurry, looking like he could chew a few assegai blades. I took a good stretch after he had gone. Mac and me went to look over the town and the suburbs.

"You let old Ngacoma get wise to too much, you know," I remarked as we walked along.

"Not a bit, said Mac. "Had I told all the gossip gleaned from his daughter, Myankaas, and from his cousin M'zimba, the leader who came from Dingaan's Kraal with us, he would be committing murder round about this evening. Just a few thorns here and there to make him wonder a while."

"Excuse me, King," I said meekly. "I see you know your stuff."

THAT town was neat as a new pin. Sarge M'zimba must have been a tight boss. Those Zulus were a hardy, proud race and real clean and sanitary, but they looked down on anybody not a Zulu, which is human. Any time you have contempt for the other fellow you generally underestimate him, which brings on hard luck most rapid. The first Chaka and his family made this very fox pass. They figured it took two or three earthquakes, a plague or several, and a miracle to mess up the Zulu nation. The British did that messing up most prompt and efficient

with rifle fire. Later some of the Old Zulus in this land tole me about the last battles. Impi after impi--and impi is a Zulu regiment--charged in regular close formation on steady rifle fire. Those oldtimers, and the younger ones, too, seemed to feel they had been hashed up by trickery. That's plan bull headedness.

The Ngacoma person just overflowed with these suicide coaxing ideas and he was real popular with lots of the men on this account. The real reason Chaka, our Chaka, I mean, had been sent to Europe and America was to learn the latest lowdown on fighting. They expected him to come back loaded down with information, ideas and what-not, as how to lay out all Africa. I  
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