



# ELISSA

## THE DOOM OF ZIMBABWE

### BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

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#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### THE CASE OF DEATH.

An hour later the attack commenced at the chosen points of the double wall, one of them being the southern gate. In front of the advancing columns were driven vast numbers of slaves, most of whom had been captured, or had surrendered in the outer town. These men were laden with faggots to fill the ditch, rude ladders wherewith to scale the walls, and heavy trunks of trees to be used in breaching them. For the most part they were unarmed, and protected only by their burdens, which they held before them as shields, and the arrows of the warriors of Itobal. But these did little harm to the defenders, who were hidden behind the walls, whereas their shafts rained on them from above, killed or wounded the slaves by scores, and when they turned to fly they were driven on by the spear points of the savages, to be used in breaching them. For the most part they were unarmed, and protected only by their burdens, which they held before them as shields, and the arrows of the warriors of Itobal. But these did little harm to the defenders, who were hidden behind the walls, whereas their shafts rained on them from above, killed or wounded the slaves by scores, and when they turned to fly they were driven on by the spear points of the savages, to be used in breaching them.

Elissa looked on with a pale face to their left, a flood of savages poured toward them down the great ditch. "Come," he said, "the outer wall is lost. But as he spoke once more the ladders rose and the sea and flanking towers, and once more Azel sprang to cast them down. When the deed was done he looked behind him the way that was cut off and surrounded. Azel and most of his men, indeed, had gained the inner wall in safety, while he, with twelve only of his bravest soldiers, were still in the tower, who had stayed to help him to throw back the ladders, were left upon the gateway tower. Nor was escape any longer possible, for both the plain and the tower within were filled with the men of Itobal, who advanced also down the broad coping of the captured wall.

"You cannot escape, Prince Azel," cried the king. "Yield now to my mercy."

Azel heard, and setting an arrow to his bow, looked it at Itobal beneath. He was a skillful archer, and he had just pierced the golden helmet of the king, cutting his scalp down to the bone.

"That in my answer," cried Azel, as Itobal rolled upon the ground, he heard the shock of the blow, but very soon he was up and crying his commands from behind the shield hedge of his captives.

"Let the Prince Azel and the Jews with him be taken alive and brought to me," he shouted. "I will give a great reward in cattle to those who capture them unharmed, but if any do them harm, they themselves shall be put to death."

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your will as to the fate of Prince Azel. Already he hangs above the gulf, and within an hour, if you so decree it, he will fall into the abyss. He is a fine, brave man, and he will be set free to return to his own land."

"What price will he be set free, King Itobal?"

"Lady, you know the price. It is yourself. Oh, I beseech you, be wise and spare his life, and I will spare this city, which lies in the hollow of my hand, and you shall rule it with me."

"I cannot bribe me thus, King Itobal. My father, whom I loved, and shall give myself to you for the sake of a city that would have betrayed me into your hands."

"Nay, but for the sake of the man whom you love you shall do even this, Elissa. Think, if you do it not, his blood will be upon your head, and what will you have gained?"

"Death, which is dear to me, for I weary of the struggle of my days."

"Then, my dear lady, soon this fancy will escape your mind, and you will remain one of the mightiest queens of men."

"And I will have no answer, and for a while there was silence."

"Lady," said Itobal at length, "the sun rises, and my servants yonder await my commands."

Then she spoke, like one who hesitates. "Are you not afraid, King Itobal, to trust your life to a woman in such a fashion?"

"Nay," answered Itobal, "for though you say that fate concerns you not, the lives of all those perished thousands are hostages for my safety. I will have you and a means to stab me unawares, then tonight fire and sword would rage through the city of Zimbabwe. Nor do I fear the future, since now and then I think you have me now very soon will learn to love me."

"You promise, King Itobal, that if I yield myself you will set the Prince Azel free, but how can I believe you who twice has tried to murder him?"

"Doubt me if you will, lady. At least, your sword is in my hand. Look, his foot rests beneath the rock. Come from the tomb and take your stand upon it, and you shall see him pass; yes, and should you ever again see him in my hand, I will be sure that it is he, and alive. Further, I swear to you by my head and honor that no finger shall be laid upon you till he has passed with him in farewell, and I will come to my own death."

"Again there was silence for a while. Then Elissa spoke in a broken voice. "I will do as you bid, for I have no choice. Trusting to your honor, I will stand upon the rock, and when I have seen the Prince Azel go by in safety, then, since you desire it, you shall put your hands about me and bear me whither you will. You have conquered me, King Itobal; henceforward I am yours, and I will do as you bid."

"Azil hung in his cage over the abyss of air, awaiting death and glad to die because he was sure Elissa had refused to purchase his life at the price of her own safety. There he hung, while the eagles swept past him, making his prayer to heaven and waiting the end, till presently, from the opposite cliff, came the sound of horn blown thrice. Then, while he wondered what this might mean, the cage in which he lay was drawn up, and he was carried down the precipice and carried down the steep of the granite hill as it had been carried up them. At the foot of the hill the covering was taken from it, and he saw before him a caravan of camels, and seated on each camel one of his own comrades. But one camel had no rider, and Azel led by a rope.

"The servants of Itobal took him from the cage and set him upon the camel, though they did not loosen the bonds about his wrists."

"This is the command of the king," said the captain to Metem, "that the arms of the Prince Azel should remain bound until he has traveled six hours. Begone in safety, fearing nothing."

"What happens now, Metem," asked Azel, as the camels strode forward, "and why am I set free who would have done so much for me?"

"Some artifice of yours or has the Lady Elissa—" and he ceased.

"Upon the word of an honest merchant, I cannot tell you now. Yesterday as I was forced, I gave the message of King Itobal to the Lady Elissa yonder in the tomb, and she would answer me only one thing; that if we could escape we should do so, and that you must have no fear for her, since she also had found a means of escape from Itobal, and would certainly join us upon the road."

"As Metem spoke the camels passed round the hill on to the path that ran beneath the rocky base of the mountain, and there was Elissa, and with her, but at a distance, Itobal, the king."

"Halt, Prince Azel," he called in a clear voice, "andarken to my farewell. I have bought your life and the lives of your companions and you are free, for the road is clear, and not a caravan can overtake the twelve swiftest camels in Zimbabwe. Go, therefore, and be happy, forgetting no word that has passed my lips, for all my words are true, and I will be sure to be with you when you meet me at the mouth of Metem and which I now fulfill—that I would join you on your road, but I should deem me faithless to the troth which I have so often sworn to you. King Itobal, this shape is yours; come now and take your prize. Prince Azel, my soul is yours, and I shall accompany you and in death await you. Prince Azel, I come to you," and with one swift spring she hurled herself from the cliff edge to fall crushed upon the road beneath.

Azel saw, and in his agony strained so fiercely at the bonds which held him that they burst like ruffs. Then he leaped from the camel and knelt beside her. She was not yet dead, for her eyes were open and her lips stirred.

"I have kept faith," she murmured, and her spirit rose from beside the corpse and looked upward. There upon the edge of the rock above him, leaning forward, his eyes set wide in horror, stood Itobal, the king. Azel saw him, and a fury entered his heart that such a man, whose evil doing had bred such woe and caused the death of his loved one, should still live upon the earth. By him was Metem, who, for once, had no words, and from his hand he snatched a bow and set an arrow on the string, which he made up to his eye, and with one swift aim he leveled the bow at the king's head. He fired, and the shaft rushed upward. It rushed upward, it smote Itobal between the joints of his harness, so that the point of it sunk through his neck. For a moment the great man stood still, then he opened his arms wide and of a sudden plunged downward, falling with a crash on the roadway, where he lay dead at the side of dead Elissa.

"The play is played and the fate fulfilled," cried Metem. "See, the servants of the king speed yonder with their evil tidings. Let us away, lest we hide here with these two forever."

"That is my desire," said Azel.

"A desire that cannot be fulfilled," answered Metem. "Come, prince, since we cannot go without you, and surely you do not wish to sacrifice the lives of all of us as an offering to the great spirit of the lady who is dead, for it is one that she would never have asked for."

Then Azel knelt down and kissed the brow of the dead Elissa, and went his way, saying no more.

That night when the darkness fell the sky behind them grew red with fire.

"Behold, the end of the golden city," said

Metem. "Isaachar was a prophet indeed, who foretold that it should be so."

Azel bowed his head, remembering that Isaac had foretold that for Elissa and for him there was hope beyond the grave, and as he thought it a soft voice seemed to murmur in his ear:

"Be of good courage, beloved, there is hope."

And so he set his face toward the sea of life, and passed it, and long ago, at his appointed hour, gained the further shore, to be welcomed there by her who watched for him.

And thus, because of the loves of Azel, the prince, and Elissa, the daughter of Sakon, 3,000 years ago, fell the ancient city of Zimbabwe at the hand of King Itobal and his tribes, so that today there remains of it nothing but gray towers of stone, and beneath them the crumbling bones of men.

(The End.)

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#### THE OLD TIMBERS.

A singer died recently at Ryde, Isle of Wight, 86 years of age, who had sung in the choir for seventy-nine years.

John Thomas of Rucka, Wis., who is locally reputed to be 103 years of age, supports himself in his declining years by selling canes which he himself makes.

A servant girl on a farm near Cambridge, in northern France, has lived seventy-two years with the same family. She is now 84 years of age and still does her work.

Nathan Olmstead is dead at Belmont, Wis., where he had been a justice of the peace for more than fifty years. He was 87 years old. His wife preceded him to the grave two weeks.

Andrew Wolfkeil of Selmsrope, Pa., has been a railway conductor since 1854 and though he has been off the track or over the bank with his train thirty-six times, has never been hurt.

Stephen Warrington, a Delaware farmer, who is now 74 years of age, was never sick a day and has never taken a dose of medicine of any kind. He is erect and strong and can do as much work in a day as two ordinary men of his age.

Mrs. Malaba Bentley of Bloomington, Ill., whose mother was with Daniel Boone at the siege of Boonesboro, and whose mother's sister was the first white child born

in Kentucky, has just entered upon her second century of life and is unusually active.

The health of Stephen Warrington, a Nauvoo, Del., farmer, is remarkable. He is 74 years old and since the day of his birth has never had a doctor prescribe for him. He has never been sick a day and has never taken a dose of medicine. Mr. Warrington is a powerful man, weighing about 200 pounds and being six feet four inches tall.

Dr. John Parker Maynard, the discoverer of colloid, died recently at Dedham, Mass., where he had been a leading physician for many years. While a medical student he began the experiments which ended so triumphantly. His object was the application of colloid to surgical operations and when its success was demonstrated in 1847 Dr. Maynard gave his secret to the medical profession. He died at the age of 81.

#### IMPIETIES.

A Missouri paper, up in the northwest, is alluding to the death of a most estimable lady of the neighborhood, who died about four years ago and was a devoted Christian, at which times she joined the Presbyterian church.

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your way near to robbing me of my crown of victory."

"Go be it," answered Azel, indifferently. "I to be a brave man. But what of the Lady Elissa?"

"The prince, she still sits yonder in the tomb, resolute in her purpose, and giving no answer to those who come to reason with her."

As he spoke the guard led full the front of the tent, so that the sunlight shined into it, revealing Azel and his twelve companions, each at his bow, and the prince and his queen, sitting on the edge of the rock, the prince drawing his bow, and the queen laying hands on her to give her to me. And all this she does for the love of you, Azel; for the love of you she refused to become my queen, ruling over that city which I have conquered and all my unnumbered tribes. Do you guess now why I caused you to be taken living? I will tell you: That you may be the first to draw my bow, to kill you would be easy; but how would that serve, seeing that then she herself would choose to die? But, perchance, to save your life, she will live alive—yes, and give herself to me. At least I will try it; should it fail—then you can save the peace of her pride with your blood, Prince Azel."

"What I would do gladly," answered Azel; "but oh, what a bound you are who thus can seek to torture the heart of a helpless woman! Have you, then, no manhood that you can stoop to such a plot?"

"It is because of my manhood that I stoop to it," said Itobal, angrily. "Doubtless you think that a foolish fancy and naught else drives me to the deed, but it is not so, although in truth my heart chooses this woman to be my wife and none other. This woman I might conquer, but look you, of all things living this lady alone has dared to cross my will, so that today even the savage women in the kraals tell each other how Itobal, the great king, has been baffled by a girl who despises him because his blood is not all white. Thus I am become a laughing stock, and therefore, I will win her, cost me what it may."

"And I, King Itobal, tell you that you will not win her, not if you torture me to death before her eyes."

"That she shall see," said the king with a laugh. "Then he called to his men and added: "Let this man and his companions be taken to the place prepared for them."

Now Azel was dragged from the tent and thrust into a wooden cage, such as were used for carrying slaves and women from place to place upon the backs of camels. His soldiers, who had been taken with him, were thrust also into cages, and with him, and laden upon camels, that were waiting two cages to each camel. Then a cloth was thrown over them, and rising to their feet, the camels began to march. When they had covered a league or more of ground Azel learned from the motion of the camels upon which he was secured, and the blows it drove, that they were ascending some steep place. At length they reached the top of it and were unloaded from the

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