

# CLASSICS

ALLAN QUARTERMAIN

AND HIS ADVENTURES AS A YOUNG MISS

Volume One



t.g. cooper

Prologue  
Have Gun Will Unravel

An arrow whistled past my right ear as I grabbed Allan Quartermain's soft little hand in my own and said, "Hurry!"

Quartermain, one hand clasped in mine, the other lifting the skirts of his dress, cried out, "Stop yelling at me!"

I yanked Allan's hand, dragging him along the winding, narrow path. All along its length stood statues of leering skeletons with snakes and spiders crawling in and out of their eye sockets and rib cages. I could not see our pursuers, but the steady whistling of their arrows as they whipped through the dense jungle undergrowth confirmed they had not ended their pursuit. We had no choice but to run!

We came around a bend and I found myself at the edge of a cliff, skidding to a halt, Quartermain slamming into me and my toes sliding over the edge of the cliff, sand sliding out from under my boots and drifting down to the rushing river below. I waved my arms backward, like some sort of dodo bird.

"Don't fall!" Quartermain shrieked. "You'll die!"

"Thank you," I shouted, waving my arms, trying to keep my balance. "I had meant to do just that until you pointed out my ...." I started to tilt forward... "Folly..."

It seemed for a moment gravity and momentum would pull me forward and send me plunging 1000 feet into the frothing waters of the river below, but I glanced back at Quartermain's pretty face, those big, beautiful eyes of his so full of the light of feminine concern, and somehow I found the strength to pull and then throw myself backward, landing with a thunk against the trunk of a great tree. The force of my impact caused the tree to shake, loosening a coconut which of course dropped and hit me on the head.

I sank to my haunches with a groan, seeing stars.

"Oh no," Allan said, taking a position behind a tree as the arrows continued whizzing by. "We have to go back."

"Go back?"

"I dropped my parasol. It must be back on the trail somewhere."

Women!

I struggled to my feet, assessing our situations. The gorge before us spanned some 100 feet. On either side, a sheer cliff face of jagged rock. The river roared some 1000 feet below,

and innumerable angry natives raced toward us meaning to turn us into pin cushions with their infernal missiles. And Allan Quartermain was worrying over his missing parasol?"

"Did you hear me?" Allan said, putting his hands on his hips. "My parasol?"

"I'll buy you a new one in Casa Blanca," I said, grabbing him around his slender waist and pulling him to me.

Allan made a small pretty noise in objection to my treatment, then wiggled uncomfortably in my arms. "You know my skin is quite delicate now," he said. "I will burn most terribly in this African sun!"

"Better your skin than your bones, my dear!" I grabbed a vine I had spotted and pulled it free from the trunk of the tree it had wrapped around, shouting "Hold on tight" as I gripped it with all my strength and took a running start, leaping out into the open air above the river. Allan screamed, and I felt his arms lock onto me as he clung for dear life. We swung out, rising and rising toward the blue sky, and then our momentum slowed, and as the arc of our swing reached its end, I let go of the vine and we dropped to the soft, sandy opposite bank.

Allan, realizing what I'd done, gazed up at me, his eyes soft, and he whispered, "Sir Henry," lingering in my arms. I gazed down at him, that pretty face turned up at me, those soft, red lips, and I leaned down, holding him in my arms, feeling the soft curves of his body pressed against me, and he closed his eyes, parting those sweet lips to reveal his perfect, white teeth and a dainty pink tongue...

He was so pretty, I just had to...

*What am I thinking?* This young woman was none other than Allan Quartermain, my longtime friend and a man. I could not kiss him! It would be most improper!

Allan pushed away at the same time I pulled away, both of us shocked at what we'd been about to do. "I wasn't..." I said gruffly, clearing my throat.

"No," Allan said. "Me neither."

"Of course not, I mean..." We both laughed, a tight, restrained laughter, covering our mouths with our fists, the laughs turning into gruff, throat clearings. "You and me? How absurd."

Allan rolled his eyes. "Most absurd."

Just then an arrow came zinging through the air and planted itself in the tree between us, reminding us of our peril. Looking out across the gorge, I saw our vine had swung back across the gorge, and three burly natives with hatchets had climbed onto it and were preparing to swing across in pursuit.

I pulled my pistol from its holster and took aim at the vine, meaning to sever it with a bullet. I pulled the trigger and heard the report, but my shot went wide and was answered with a volley of arrows.

“Henry?” Allan said softly. “Um, maybe I could give it a try?”

Allan had been known, was known, as the best shot in the world. In fact, no one had ever witnessed him miss. Not even once. But, how could I, now that he was a little woman, allow him to do a man’s work and show me up in the process? It simply would not stand for such a pretty little female to do the shooting while I, a man among men, stood by and watched. I fired and missed a second time.

“Oh, let me see,” Allan said, smiling brightly and adopting a demure tone. “Maybe I shall get a lucky shot. Lady Luck and all.”

I fired a third time. Our pursuers had now swung out over the gorge and were racing through the air toward us. I fired a fourth shot, the bullet grazing the head of one of the natives and knocking off his top knot. They were getting closer.

“Men!” Allan shouted, grabbing the gun from my hand and snapping off a shot that neatly severed the vine, sending the natives howling to their doom, shrinking and shrinking as they plummeted to the bottom of the gorge, making little white mushrooms appear in the icy blue waters of the river as they plunged into its surface.

Allan handed me my smoking pistol, lifted his skirts and stormed off into the woods, calling back, “You’re welcome.”

I watched him go, my eyes falling on his narrow waist, the small of his back, the way his dress rose over his plump behind, and I shook my head, frustrated to find my amorous feelings growing all the more insistent despite my every attempt to dampen them. He was a sassy and head strong girl, to be sure, and I found that I liked it.

A volley of arrows landing around my feet snapped me free of my musings, and I feared for the safety of my pretty little friend rushing off into the forest alone, so I hopped to it, running along the path after him, my mind drifting back to the day this ravishing, maddening little woman had first appeared in my study claiming to be not just a man, but one I knew quite well from our previous adventures.

## Chapter One

### The Most Beautiful Woman My Eyes Have Ever Seen

Think of whatever word you might to describe a beautiful woman, and it would not even begin to match the radiance of the woman who walked into my study one fateful, rainy morning, sat down and said, "Good to see you, old boy."

The familiarity of her tone threw me, as did the manner of her dress, as she wore the clothes of a man about to set out into the wilds for a hunting expedition: boots, khaki trousers, a rough, olive shirt. She had her long, black hair pulled back in a pony tail, and yet, despite the rather masculine nature of her garb, as I stated, she was a vision of loveliness, with bright, peachy skin, big lassy eyes and full breasts that strained against her shirt, threatening to burst the buttons, the thought of which sent a shiver of pagan hope and Christian shame through my body. Looking at her face, trying to control my natural, manly response to such a lovely creature, I searched my memory, but I did not recall meeting this young lady, and I was sure I would remember that angelic face. "Pardon me," I said, "but I am afraid you have me at a disadvantage."

I saw her eyes cloud with a confusion of emotions, most prominent of which reflected also in the pink blushing of her pale cheeks: shame. She started to speak, stopped, and then said, "Might I have a drink?"

"Of course," I said. "Forgive me. My manners have grown a bit vulgar, I'm afraid. What would you like?" I expected her to request wine, as most ladies preferred, and was about to send my servant for some as I did not keep it around in my office. I rarely had any lady visitors, after all. But she surprised me.

"Scotch. Neat," she said.

"Scotch?" I said, surprised, such a delicate creature would prefer such a masculine drink. "It's quite strong, you know."

She caught my meaning, and the pink in her cheeks grew deeper. She dropped her eyes to the side and said, "Please."

Growing more curious as to this mysterious woman's identity, I splashed some scotch into a rocks glass for her and then for myself. Picking up the glasses, I turned and casually said, "You brought a letter of introduction from my good friend Allan Quartermain. How is the old chap?"

"Oh, he is quite— changed," she said, accepting the drink and immediately taking a sip.

“Changed? Quartermain? He’s the most constant man I have ever known. Not even Solomon’s fortune was able to put a dent in old Macumazahn.”

“Indeed,” she said, her eyes growing distant as she seemed to be drifting back into some fond memory, but it soon clouded with distress, and seeing those big, pretty eyes filled with trouble, well I must say it woke the man in me most forcefully, and I tossed back my drink of set my glass down on my desk.

“How do you know Quartermain, anyway?”

The woman took another drink, set her glass down and seemed to gather her courage, her jaw tightening. “I am going to tell you something quite incredible,” she said. “I just hope you will believe me, old friend.”

Old friend? I wondered. “Just who are you?” I asked, deciding to be direct in the hopes I could push this shrinking, feminine creature to tell me what clearly wanted to tell, but for some reason feared.

“Sir Henry,” she said. “I know this will seem impossible to believe, but it is me. I am Allan Quartermain.”

I laughed. The claim seemed so absurd and ridiculous, the only thing I could do was laugh. At my laugh the young woman’s cheeks burned, but her eyes quickly filled with anger. “I will prove it to you,” she said.

“How?”

“Just lend me a gun and choose any target. I will show you that I am Quartermain.”

I snorted. Clearly this woman was mad, as I should have guessed by her manly clothes and mannerisms. No doubt she had read of Quartermain’s exploits and at some point fallen under the delusion that she was him, the poor girl. My heart quailed to think of such a beauty, her mind broken, likely to be confined to a mental hospital once whatever family she had found out about her madness. “Young lady, who is your father? Where is your family? I’ll get you some help.”

I stood. I am know to the natives as “Elephant” due to my massive size and strength, and as I rose, the woman stood, too, but rather than being intimidated by my large size, she strode right up to me and looked me in the eye. “Let’s make it a wager, then,” she said. “If I hit every target, you will listen to my story and help me regain my sex.”

“And when you lose?”

“Name your terms.”

“You allow me to take you to your family. I am sure they are worried.”

“Very well,” the woman said. “Now, let’s begin.”

I will admit that the quickness of her agreement to my terms gave me pause. It seemed clear to me she had been prepared to agree to any terms on my part because she felt supremely confident in her ability. And yet, as a looney who thought herself Quartermain, why wouldn't she?

We went out back to my practice range, where I had painted targets on a series of wooden columns. I unlocked a rifle from the cabinet and, checking it quickly to make sure all the parts worked, I handed it to her. She checked it again, then sighted down the barrel. "You're making this too easy for me," she said, raising a slender eyebrow.

"Show me my folly," I said, feeling kindly toward this poor soul. No doubt, her delusion would come crashing down when she failed to hit the target, and I would need to comfort her and keep her from getting too overwrought with feminine hysteria.

"Very well," she said, turning and aiming the gun to the right, away from the target and toward an iron bell that hung from a post, where my servants would ring the hours.

"Um, pardon me, young lady, but the target is over this way," I said, a lump in my throat at this pitiful creature.

"Oh, how silly of me," she said, then pulled the trigger. The gun reported, a cloud of smoke rising from the barrel, and the bell rung as the bullet struck, then ricocheted off the bell before striking an old plow that sat in the field and then struck the center of the target, wood pulp flying. "Bullseye," she said in a matter of fact, offhand manner that reminded me precisely of how Quartermain spoke. "Ready to listen?" She handed me the rifle.

"I'll hear your story," I said, taking the rifle, looking at it in wonder that anyone could shoot so precisely from the old thing.

"The sight is off," she said. "I corrected for it. You'll recall I used that very rifle to shoot a firefly at 100 yards one night some summers ago."

I looked at the curvaceous girl as she sauntered away, and thought— could it be? Quartermain? But how?

## Chapter Two

“Zikili,” the girl, who I was now starting to think of as Allan Quartermain said.

“The thing that should not have been born,” I said.

“Indeed. The dwarf wizard. It is he I have to thank for this woman’s shape.”

By this time, the sun had begun to set, and we made our way to my dining room, where I had my servants lay out some beef and cheese as well as good, brown bread, honey and butter. I poured more drinks and sent them away to guarantee our privacy.

“Tell me,” I said.

Allan sat back, legs spread like a man, noticed my eyes bulge and then pressed them together, once more that sweet pink blush coming to her peachy cheeks and said, “It all started in Timbuktu.”

“What happened?”

“I woke one morning to discover I had”-- she paused, struggling to find the right words-- “A lady’s chest.”

My eyes fell to her bountiful breasts, and I pulled them back to her eyes, sensing my own cheeks burning now. “Forgive me,” I said.

Allan looked chagrined, and continued with her story. “I had been hunting out west of Wititluk, culling a pack of jackals that had been menacing the children of a small village by the Guilkill River, when a messenger had arrived with what he claimed was an urgent message from the explorer Livingston, saying he was in quite a spot and could very much use my help.

Naturally, I immediately travelled to the city, but when I arrived, I could find no trace of Livingston nor of anyone who’d seen or heard from him. I wondered, naturally, if I had been duped, or else if his spot of trouble had grown much worse. Furthermore, I could not help the feeling I was being watched, someone just always just outside my vision. I decided to stay the night and investigate further in the morning. One of the locals offered me some food, which I accepted gladly. There is no such thing as an inn at Timbuktu, and I had arranged to spend the night in the loft of one of the shepherds huts, which for me is more than sufficient. I ate and drank water from a bucket, and immediately my head began to spin, and I realized I had been drugged as I fell to the ground, my vision fading, fading, and just before it faded completely I saw a pair of bare feet and looked up into the grinning, goblin-like face of Zikili!

I woke sometime later, tied spread eagle amongst skulls set with candles that flickered with a wicked red light. Zikili danced about, chanting in some infernal tongue, and he sprinkled me



with scented oil that smelled of sugar and spice. In his hands, he held an idol shaped like a woman.

“Untie me you savage!” I shouted, straining against my bonds.

Zikili ignored me, continuing his spell, and then once he had finished, he grinned down at me and said, “I will at last have my vengeance!”

“When I get free of these bonds, you will have my boot!” I growled.

Zikili just giggled, and then he clapped three times and said some words in his fell language. Immediately, I felt my chest begin to burn, growing hotter and hotter, and I cried out even as I felt my chest begin to swell outward. Looking down I saw soft, round shapes and shook my head in confusion and horror, refusing to believe what I was seeing. Zikili laughed and laughed as two large, womanly breasts took shape on my chest, rising and falling as I breathed, tremulous.

“In three days you will be a woman,” Zikili said. “Goodbye, Miss Quartermain. Enjoy your new life.”

“Come back,” I shouted. “You monster.”

But he left me there, tied up, my bare breasts exposed to the world. I could not free myself, and in the morning some children came in and saw me, began laughing and giggling, then went and sent back some of the villagers who untied me. The women of Timbuktu often go about with their chests bare, but I was not a woman, and I was deeply ashamed to have a woman’s breasts, and I crossed my arms over my chest like any shy young maiden and made my way to the loft I had rented, deeply ashamed and disturbed. I resolved to track Zikili and force him to restore me, but then the second great shock of my life came to pass. I doubled over, stricken with an agonizing cramp, and then I felt myself growing wet, and looking down I—

“Young lady!” I interrupted, understanding what she meant to relate. “You are in polite company.”

Allan looked shocked and appalled, ashamed and confused. “Oh! I am so sorry. I forget myself. Well, let me say, I was indisposed as only a woman can be indisposed.”

The relating of her feminine travails made me feel quite nauseous, and I waved to indicate she should spare me any more of the horrible details of her female infirmities.

“Well, having been a man and knowing nothing of such unpleasantness, I could think of nothing else to do but crawl under the blanket that had been provided for me and wait for the horror to end!”

“A reasonable course of action.”

“I fell into a fitful sleep, and when I woke I pushed long, black hair from my face with a slender white hand not my own. Examining my body, I saw that just as Zikili had threatened, it was reshaping itself into that of a female. Worse, I found myself inflicted with the weak, sensitive nature of the female. As I cupped my full, heavy breasts, refusing to believe they were real, tears poured from my eyes unbidden, and I curled up and wept just like any helpless girl.”

“It must have been terrible,” I said, filling my pipe, imagining the horror I would suffer to find myself burdened with fatal female emotional weakness.

“To deepen my shame, some of the woman of the village heard me, or perhaps the children who’d been fascinated by my change, heard, and they came to offer their help. It shocked me to realize they now considered me another woman, and I could not resist as after drawing me a bath, they dressed me in the native robes of a female. As much as the changes to my body had shocked and shamed me, being dressed as a woman and ensconced in the female community appalled and humiliated me, sapping whatever was left of my masculine spirit. Standing there dressed as a girl, feeling the weight of my breasts rising and falling, the hair tingling my neck, I felt a panic, an anxiety such as I had never known, and I thought to run and hide my shame from the world. When I started back to the loft, the women shook their heads and grabbed me, easily resisting my feeble attempts to escape.

“Not safe for a girl to go about alone,” they said. “You must be protected.”

“I’m not a--” I started to say, my voice cracking, the weight of my breasts reminding me of what I was becoming. “I can take care of myself.”

The woman laughed, and one of them took my soft little hand in her own, and she took me to her family Hut, where her husband, who had hunted with me on many occasions, promised to keep me safe. It was humiliating, and yet strangely comforting, to have a man promise to protect me, I must say. I was sent to the women’s quarters, and once more as I took my mat among the females, I found my eyes filling with tears, and I curled up, hugging my knees to my chest, wondering what I would do now that I was to be a helpless little female.

At some point in the night I woke from a nightmare— I had been running through the jungle, chased by a mighty bull, and I screamed and cried as its powerful hooves pounded the earth, its hot breath pouring over my soft skin as it got closer and closer.... I sat up, my breasts bouncing, reminding me of my changed body, and then I knew, without seeing or touching myself, I knew I was now a woman, fully, in every way. I slipped my hands between my smooth, soft thighs...”

“My dear!” I interrupted. “Again, I must remind you of proper manners!” I could see the frustration on Allan’s face, and then anger flashed in those pretty eyes.

“We have spoken of our female conquests on more than a few occasions,” she said, crossing her arms over her amply breasts. “And you have gotten quite a bit more specific about the biology of the ladies in question!”

“Indeed, but then we were both men, talking as men do.”

“I am still Quartermain!”

“You are a young lady now, Quartermain or not, and it isn’t right for you to talk of such things. I will not have this vulgar language in my house, Young Miss. Is that clear?”

I could see him growing hot, his feminine anger bringing the same sweet blush to those smooth cheeks, but he rolled his eyes and shook his head, sitting back. “Fine,” he said. “Goodness, but you are quite the prude.”

“Continue with your story,” I said. “I am not yet entirely convinced, young lady, that you are indeed my old friend. How did you come to be here in my study after your transformation? And please, do remember you are a young lady in mixed company. Mind your manners.”

“You know I was never much for the hypocritical trappings of civilization, Henry.”

“Nor did you need the protections of good manners when it came to men, did you?”

He snorted, and then continued with his story. “In the morning the girls woke me before dawn, and I learned I was expected to go with the females and gather water. We took earthen jars and carried them close to a mile along a twisting dirt path through the woods— where were the men and their assurances of protection now, I wondered, knowing they still slept! Once we finished bringing the water back, I was put to work preparing the morning meal, grinding meal and then baking it in a stone over, the sweat pouring from my brow. My stomach rumbled and I longed to eat, but I and the other females were made to serve the men and then kneel and wait as they ate, leaping to our feet and serve them!”

I couldn’t help but laugh at the thought of this scene. I was coming to believe more and more that this was, indeed, my old friend in female form, and the thought of Allan Quartermain, big hunter and all-around man’s man scurrying about serving men as a slender girl filled me with amusement. “I’m sorry,” I said in answer to his icy stare. “Knowing you, it must have been maddening to be treated so. Why ever did you put up with it?”

“It was maddening, and to answer your question, I don’t know. I suppose I was so shocked to find myself with this woman’s shape, dressed as a girl, that I didn’t know what to do. It was as if by having my body changed, the way I saw the world changed. And—” He stopped, looking away. “I don’t know.”

“Tell me what you were going to say,” I said, sensing there was something important there. “It is better to speak of these things. The shadow held in our heads grows larger day by day, as Arthur Conan Doyle used to say.”

“Well, it shames me to admit it, but I was.... I was scared! I found myself in this small body, with these tiny arms, and having accepted a man’s protection just seemed to have filled my mind with all manner of feminine fears. I had never known such.... Worries.... And I was afraid that if I did not do as I was told, I would be sent out into the wilds— like this! With these soft hands! What would become of me if I tried to play the man now that I was just a girl? Is it too much for me to admit my womanly fears to you now? Can you still respect me?”

In fact, I found myself falling in love with him— her. To hear Allan admit his fears and womanly feelings, my heart went out to her, and I longed to take her in my arms right that moment and comfort her, but I dare not, as I did not trust myself to control my masculine nature with such a delicate female in my arms. Instead, it was my turn to look away and hope she could not see the heat in my cheeks. “So, you found yourself among the women, treated as a mere girl and afraid. What happened? How did you escape this emotional trap?”

“A greater fear pushed me to act,” Allan said. “After a few days of subjugation, one day the girls, all giggling and laughing, took me to bath in mid-day, which had never happened. After, they fiddled about with my hair, fixing flowers among the thick, curly locks, and they adorned me with jewelry and rubbed some herbs on my skin which gave me a florid scent that wafted about me. I felt ridiculous and begged them to tell what the meaning of this was, and I had come to the conclusion that it amused them to adorn me in this feminine manner, as they all knew I had been a man. It seemed to me some sort of womanly hazing, making me the most feminine among them, a belief that deepened when they pulled one of the sleeves of my robe down, exposing my bare shoulder, and then began to tease me and harass me about the way I walked, forcing me to put one hand on hip and practice walking “like a woman should” as they said.

“Well, much to my horror, as much as they took pleasure in seeing me with flowers in my hair, wiggling my hips as I walked about, there was a deeper purpose to their machinations: soon, I found myself led into the main house of my protector, where a tall, broad shoulder young man waited. When he looked upon me, his eyes lit up with desire, and he allowed them to drift up and down my body. I felt as if he mentally removed my clothes as I stood there, enjoying the soft, shadowy places of my new shape, and it sent the most barbaric chills through my body as I imagined what he imagined doing to me.

"I stood there with my hand on my hip, a smile plastered on my face, cheeks burning as he looked me over, then stood, circling me, examining my flanks, lifting my hair to look at my neck, then coming back around and carefully examining my face. 'She has good teeth,' he said to my protector. 'And wide hips. She will bare many children.'

"The comment stung me. Me? Bare children? I knew I now had a female form, but it had never occurred to me that I anyone would ever think of me in this manner. I felt like an animal at auction, being inspected and evaluated, a feeling that grew greater when he put his hand on my behind and squeezed. I wanted to punch him! But something held me back, and though I squirmed I could not find the strength in myself to tell this.... This... man.... What I thought of his boorish behavior."

"Ghastly," I said, taking a drink, though I found myself wishing I could give my friend's ample posterior a squeeze. He was quite shapely, and his body called to me.

"Well, as you can imagine, I was being considered as a wife, and when he nodded and smiled and said, 'I will take her' I was stunned and finally found my voice. "Take me?" I shrieked. "Do you think me some animal from the barn you can merely claim?"

The men laughed, and the sound of their condescending laughs drove me mad. "I am not a woman," I screamed. "I will not be your bride!"

They laughed all the louder at my feminine fury, and then I lunged at the man who thought to make me his bride. He grabbed my wrists and spun me around, pinning my arms behind me. I squirmed, hapless and furious. "Let me go! Let me go!" As the man held me, he laughed all the more. 'She has spirit!' He said. 'I like a girl with some fire in her! She will be a pleasure to tame in my bed!'

Soon I found myself crying, tears of rage and frustration, and the girls came and took me away, bemused smiles on their faces, and yet I thought I saw compassion in their eyes as well. "I can't marry a man!" I cried when we got back to our room. "I am a man. How can I be a wife?"

"Oh, you are a woman now, and this is the way it is for women," they said. "It won't be so bad. You will learn to love him."

"It isn't right." I said. "I should have some say in my own fate."

"As a woman, you have only one fate: to be a wife and mother. It is better to accept your doom, Quartermain. The man, Jamarelle, is a good man. Handsome, and he owns many cattle. He will be a good husband."

"He speaks of me as if I am a wild horse to be tamed."

"Lay back and enjoy it," the women said. "He is quite the stallion."

“But I don’t want this.”

“You must learn to stop thinking like a man and accept your life as a woman. What we want? It doesn’t matter. You must learn to be what they want. It is just the way of the world.”

I pretended to acquiesce, but a fierce determination grew within me. I was Allan Quartermain, and I would not submit to another man’s will, to pleasure him in bed. No! Woman’s shape or not, I would not accept this fate. My feminine fears of the wilds and the dangers a girl would face there seemed insignificant now to the fear that I would be taken by this man, a path which had a far more certain end than the possible dangers I faced if I escaped. The one path would assuredly end with me waddling around, a baby in my belly, preparing meals for a man who looked at me as little more than a brood sow.”

“So, you just left? Like... that?” I couldn’t help but gesture at this busty girl I saw before me, who seemed as ill-suited to survival in the wilds of Africa as any person I had ever seen.

“I did,” Quartermain said, smiling at the memory, his pretty face lighting up with pride at the memory of his own daring do. “As you know, I have always had caches where I stored supplies, ammo, guns in case I needed them. There was one a day and a half west of Timbuktu. I only had to get there, and I would have a gun in these delicate little hands, where I believed it would prove just as deadly a deterrent to danger as ever it did, as I believed my expert marksmanship would remain unhampered by my woman’s sex.

“Indeed,” I said. “You seem as infallible as ever.”

“A woman with a gun is as deadly as a man,” he said. “If she knows how to use it! No wonder men have worked so hard to dissuade girls from taking up marksmanship!”

“They would have cause to fear their wives,” I said.

“Only if they gave their wives cause to want them harmed!” Allan said, barring his teeth. It seemed that even his short time living as a woman had given him a certain resentment toward the male of the species.

“What happened next?” I said, wanting to get him off the subject of men and their attitudes toward the weaker sex before he threw some sort of hissy fit.

“I waited until the other girls had all drifted off to sleep, and then, stealthy as ever, I rose in the darkness and made my silent escape. The streets and lanes of Timbuktu stood empty, and I moved in the shadows unhampered. By good fortune, near full moon hovered in the inky black sky, making my passage all the easier. The only sound I heard was the throbbing of the insects all around us, and just the hint of a warm western wind, which carried with it the faintest scent of sage.

Oh! My heart sang with joy to know this freedom once more, freedom I had thought lost forever in my days of female servitude, and yet I also felt that new sense of worry, my senses heightened, on a sort of constant alert for threats, mostly vague and uncertain, but one foremost among all: men. I did not wish for any man to find me out and about, alone and unprotected. I remembered how easily Jamerelle had overpowered me, grabbing my wrists and pinning my soft, lithe arms to me, laughing over the ease with which he dominated my little female form, and I cringed at the thought of what could happen if a more vulgar man should catch me and... Do what he would with me.

"I made it out of the village and began to tread toward my cache, alert, scanning the world around me. Hyper-conscious of my shape, the way my breasts seemed to bounce as I walked, my hips sway, at first it seemed strange and wrong, but with time I fell into a pace, and I began to grow used to the feeling of this body, to forget it in fact, and soon it was like old times as I moved in the cool night, in tune with the world around me. The feeling, Sir Henry, of being out in God's nature, in communion with all the living things that abound, it made me glad to be alive!"

"It is glorious out there," I said, nodding, puffing on my pipe, good Dutch tobacco. "And so that was it? You found your cache? Garbed yourself in your accustomed manner, and came to see me? Oh, forgive me. Would you care for a pipe?"

"No thank you," Allan said. "I find it does not agree with this delicate body of mine."

"Of course," I said. "Forgive me." It was well known that women were not able to enjoy smoking as much as men, given their fragile and delicate natures, and I felt I had been rude to draw attention to this new weakness of his soft shape, but Allan didn't seem to really care or notice my faux pas.

"It was not to prove so easy," Allan said. "I had traversed an hour, slightly more, and I could see the tree in the distance where I had my cache. I felt quite confident, even cocky, and that was when I heard it— little more than a whisper, like a breeze out of place. I stopped moving and scanned the darkness. I did not see it, but what I saw was a shadow where there should be none."

"A panther!" I guessed.

"They very same," Allan said. "Creeping in the dark, as if stalking me."

"Rare," I said.

"Yes," Allan said. "In fact, I would not believe it at first. Panthers do not hunt man— or woman— for that matter— under any normal circumstances. Yet, as I moved once more, I sensed it move as well, following in my footsteps. My woman's heart began to race, and my

mind filled with fears and terrors, and despite myself I found myself hurrying my steps, feeling a panic grow within me!”

“Then, the panther growled, that ripsaw growl I had heard so many times cutting across the plains, only now reduced to a mere woman, I screamed in answer and flew into a full out panic, running as fast as I could. Glancing back, I saw its baleful yellow eyes burning in the darkness, and I screamed a second time! The sound of my womanly screams of terror poisoned my soul with shame. I could scarcely recognize the man I had been in this terrified female I had become. Oh! I have said too much! You will think me bereft of even the merest scrap of courage.”

Tears began to fall, rolling down those smooth white cheeks. “No,” I said, grabbing a handkerchief and offering it to my old friend. “Not at all. Quite the opposite.”

“You’re too kind,” Quartermain said, dabbing at his tears with the white hanky I had offered him. “You’re only being polite.”

“Nonsense. The fact that you made it here is a testament to your courage.”

Quartermain composed himself, taking a deep breath that sent his breasts heaving and then reaching up to fuss with his ponytail, which caused the most alarming rise in those same breasts, and in response to which I found myself puffing furiously on my pipe, smoke clouding around my head. “It is late,” I said. “Perhaps we should retire? You must be exhausted after your travels. We could begin again in the morning.”

“I...”. His soft voice faltered, but then I saw a little of that old steel in his eyes. “I think I can find the strength to finish.”

“Are you certain, my dear? I don’t want you to tax yourself in your delicate condition.”

He nodded, once more seeming to burn with shame at his fragile new sex. “I am near the end.”

“Very well. But at the first sign of fainting, I will carry you to bed myself.”

His eyes dropped away, and I sensed that something in him liked it when I became forceful with him, particularly when it came to caring for him. This, naturally, once more aroused the man in me most ferociously.

“I ran, I screamed. The panther moved in a circling motion, quite unusual I am certain you would agree. I found myself forced to move to the left, away from my tree, though I had become so overcome with fear I scarcely cared. I could think only to run! And run I did, right into the arms of Zikili!”

“What!” I shouted.



“He had been waiting for me the whole time! The panther was but one of his conjuring, and as soon as he grabbed me, it vanished! Zikili laughed, or giggled that infernal giggle of his, holding me tight around the waist. Terrified, shocked, appalled, I wiggled in his arms. “Unhand me!” I whimpered. “You vile wretch!”

“I love hearing you beg!” Zikili said, slipping a leg behind mine and tripping me, sending me falling onto my back on the thick grass. He scampered on top of me, his legs over my ribs, and I felt a stab of absolute terror. I had never had a man in that position on me— as a woman, it had certain connotations, and I squeezed my legs together—“

I harrumphed.

“Forgive me,” Allan said. “I found him on me, and I feared the worst a young lady might fear. I had learned the weakness of my new body before, and so I felt paralyzed with panic, helpless as he stared down at me with a wicked smile, and then he placed a hand upon my bosom!”

“The scoundrel!” I spat, slamming my fist on my desk.

Allan flinched, nodding. “He was most certainly a scoundrel and a bounder! Feeling his hand pawing at me, seeing the leering hunger in those evil little pig eyes, once more I found my courage, and I delivered a punched him right in the nose as hard as I could!”

“Well done!” I cheered.

“Thank you!” Allan said. “I thought so myself. He wailed, blood pouring from his nostrils, and emboldened I began to struggle, pushing at him, seeking to role free. He attempted to grab my wrists, as a man had done before to overpower me, but I was too quick, and with my hands on his chest, I pushed him backward and rolled on top of him! Then, I grabbed his hair and pulled as hard as I could while scratching my nails across his face with the other!”

Allan’s eyes lit with triumph at the memory, while I couldn’t help but reflect that he described himself fighting exactly as a girl fights. Still, what choice did he have in such a yielding body?

“Zikili had thought me easy prey, and he now struggled to get away from the tigress he’d awoken! He could not cast his infernal spells as I hectored him, and soon, delighting to find myself the physically superior over a male. I tied his hands and feet. “Turn me back!” I said. “Turn me back, and I will spare your life!”

Zikili giggled. “I can’t,” he said.

I grabbed his hair and pulled once more, making him shriek.

“Stop! Stop! Please,” he screamed. “I can’t! I swear! But I can tell you who can!”

“Tell me, then,” I said. “And none of your conniving ways or you will know pain such as you’ve never known!”

“The Witches of Ergosium, The Lost Temple!”

“It is a myth,” I said. “A legend!”

“In the pocket of my robe,” Zikili said. “A map. You will see. I speak the truth!”

Disgusted at the need to touch this creature’s clothes, I found the pocket and the map, drawn in a spidery hand on an ancient piece of parchment. I recognized the terrain around what as a deep and nearly impenetrable jungle, with faint trails marked in the jungle and the word Ergosium in thick letters on a plateau surrounded by rivers. “I will find you,” I said, “if this turns out to be a trick. And I will kill you.”

“No tricks!” Zikili said, and then he got this creepy little smile on his face. “Quartermain,” he said. “Before you go, is there any chance you might give me a kiss?”

I gagged him and checked the bindings on his feet and hands, leaving him trussed on the ground. “I should cover you in honey and leave you to the ants,” I said, kicking him hard in the belly. His eyes grew wide with terror. “But I seem to be quite out of honey!” I kicked him again, and straightening my robes, hurried off, back toward my stash, leaving him there, struggling as the sun began to rise.”

“Most impressive,” I said, gesturing toward him with my pipe. “Most impressive, indeed. And then what happened?”

“Well, there’s not much more to tell, actually. I got to my cache, put on my old clothes, finding them too long in the sleeve and the pant leg, too small in— other areas.” He glanced down at those distractions on his chest ruefully. I now had guns, a little money. I resolved to make my way here and see you. Even that turned out to be a challenge, though not one that would make for a great story.”

“What happened?” I asked, sensing something of interest in his diversion.

“Oh!” He rolled those pretty eyes. “I made my way to Tonka thinking to catch the train. I arrived at the station, exhausted, looking forward to a bit of toast and jam, a good sleep on the train as I journeyed here. Well, imagine my surprise as I attempted to board the train only to be stopped by the conductor. He told me the trains was for respectable women only, and that I could not board in my scandalous clothing!”

I couldn’t help but laugh. “Certainly, you can’t have been completely taken by surprise, Allan. No respectable young miss would go about dressed as a man.”

“I had not been thinking of myself as a woman, nor even worrying over what clothes I wore, Henry. I merely thought of tea and toast. I protested, but my protestations fell on deaf ears. I might as well have been a common tart so far as he was concerned.”

“Were you forced to walk here, then? All that way?”

"I thought you knew me better than that," Quartermain said with a sassy smile. "I merely returned my ticket, jumped one of the transport cars toward the back of the train and rode for free!"

"And here you are, and you are welcome, of course, to stay as long as you like."

"I plan on leaving tomorrow," Allan said. "And you are coming with me."

"Pardon me?"

"I need your help," Allan said, crossing his arms beneath his breasts. "I need you to help me regain my lost sex."

I am quite vulnerable to a woman in need, particularly one as ravishing as Allan Quartermain had become, and I had felt the call of the wild pulling at me, though I also felt it would be a shame to deprive the world of such a beauty. "You want me to come with you to Ergosium?"

"Yes. Sir Henry. I don't think I should feel quite safe unless... unless... I have a man along with me, and I can't imagine any man I trust more than you. Will you do it, Henry? Please?"

"Of course," I said, and then a thought bubbled up in me. I do not know if it was some manner of cruelty, or some need, some desire to lessen my friend, or some desire on my part to see his beauty revealed. I cannot say, but at the time the words came out as a compulsion, one that I felt was odd, perhaps wrong, something even to be resisted, but which I could not. "But we won't be leaving tomorrow."

"Why not?"

"We need to get you some proper clothes for a young miss, of course."

"Proper clothes? You mean dresses?"

"What else?" I said, adopting a cool, aloof tone but feeling quite aroused both at what I was suggesting as well as the shocked look on my friend's pretty face.

"You can't be serious? Me, in a dress like some silly girl?"

"We need to travel, Quartermain, and as your experience with the conductor shows, it will not be possible if you are dressed as a man. Nor will any reputable Inn or dining hall allow us to enter. No, you must don the gowns and the trappings of your sex, I am afraid."

"I am not wearing a dress," Quartermain said, his eyes growing hot with defiance. "I will never wear a dress!"

I felt myself falling more deeply for this little female than ever, his fiery defiance igniting my manly desire to be challenged and dominate. "My dear Miss Quartermain, you will wear a dress, and you will like it."

"Oh, really?" He crossed his arms under his breasts and threw a hip out to the side.

I crossed my arms, and the battle of wills began. “Really.”

The next day, Quartermain stood on a box in a lovely white dress with a bustle, while the seamstress adjusted the hem of his skirt. As stunning as he had been in his man’s garb, he now presented a rapturous vision of angelic perfection, with the dress celebrating his slender little waist and every abundant curve of swelling feminine allure. The top part of the dress was fashioned from delicate white lace, that, it seemed to me, perfectly complimented the refined and delicate creature that stood before me.

One of my servants had put his hair up in a proper style, and it enhanced the natural beauty of his fine, delicately featured face. It thrilled me, I daresay, to know that my old friend, once the most manly of men, now found himself such a pretty bauble. More, I gained some mystifying but undeniable pleasure to know that I had, having worn him down through sheer will, forced him to acquiescence to my desire and don the dress of a young woman. Seeing him in that dress, knowing I had bullied him into it, my imagination began to run wild with other things I might make him do. I had a vision of him with his back to me, slipping a silk robe off his slender shoulders, letting it drop to the ground at his feet. He glancing over his shoulder, arms crossed over his breasts as he let me gaze upon his naked body...

“No!” I thought. “No!” I could not allow myself to entertain these rude thoughts of my old friend. I pushed them away, yet each time I looked at him, saw the rise of that big, round bustle, the rude thoughts would return. “I think I will excuse myself,” I said, my voice hoarse. “And duck out for a quick drink while you girls finish up,” I said.

Quartermain, whose cheeks had not stopped burning with shame from the moment we’d entered the dress shop, shot me a scolding glance, annoyed, I expect, at being referred to as a girl, but I shrugged and left, even as I imagined him in a bubble bath, lifting one long leg from the water, dripping with bubbly white foam. I cursed myself, pushing the thought away, and I soon plunged into the darkness of a nearby tavern and implored the bartender to pour me some scotch. I tossed it back, then waved for another. A man slipped onto the stool next to mine, and I scarcely paid any attention to him until as I went to take my next drink, I felt the cold steel of a blade slide under my throat even as another man came along the other side of me. “Give us Quartermain,” the man hissed in a voice thick with a Dutch accent. “Or, I slit your throat.”

I knew better than to lie. They had clearly followed us. I took another sip of my drink and said, “It’s a bit too hot for a fight, gents. What say I let you walk out of here and you just run on home to build some windmills?”

“Oh, we have a prankster here. A jokester. You think you are funny, eh? You don’t think I will just slit your throat and take the woman?”

“I think if you wanted to slit my throat,” I said. “I’d be dead.”

“Hahaha. Now, this time you are funny. I truly do not want to kill. So, just give the girl.”

“Who wants her?” I was surprised and a bit confused that news of Quartermain’s condition had spread so quickly. How did these thugs know he was now a woman?

“Hans Grubernotts,” the man said. “I am sure you remembers this name.”

Hans. A treasure hunter who’d crossed paths with Allan and I on many past occasions. While Allan truly loved Africa and her peoples and sought to help and protect them, Hans was a parasite who had come only to steal her wealth and abuse her people. Whatever plans he had for Quartermain, they would no doubt be rude.

The blade slid along my throat, shaving off my stubble. I knew I had only once chance, and letting myself fall backward, away from the knife, I grabbed his arm and yanked it left, plunging it right into the other man’s heart, drawing forth a gushing spurt of dark red blood. That man fell to the floor even as I did, and we slammed into the wood together. I looked over to see his dead eyes staring at me, and rolled, bounding to my feet- too late! My assailant slammed a chair over my head, which sent the room spinning, and then he smashed another into my face, and then another over my back. I collapsed against a wall, stunned, seeing stars, and watched as he pulled a pistol from his coat, a cruel smile on his lips. “I gave you a chance,” he said. “But you were a fool.”

“Well, that makes two of us,” I offered as I watched Allan, who had come into the bar, smash a vase over the man’s head. He collapsed, and I sighed with relief and— delight.

Quartermain stood there in the stunning white dress, now with a bonnet covering his brown tresses, a parasol over one shoulder and an elegant lady’s fan clasped in one of this dainty, white gloved little hands. He was a vision, an absolute vision, and once more the man in me rose up, quite thrilled at the sight of him, now such a perfect model of the young lady. He put one hand to a hip and threw it out to the side. “The nerve, Sir Henry! Over here having fun while I had to stand about having hats pinned in my hair! It is only by the merest luck I got here in time to join the party!”

I chuckled, trying not to stare. “You look— lovely,” I blurted out, unable to resist.

Quartermain slit his eyes at me. “I feel a damn fool, to tell the truth.” He tugged at the skirt of his dress, using the hand half occupied with the fan. “I don’t know how I’m supposed to get about in these infernal clothes, and I haven’t stopped blushing since the moment I found myself squeezed into this gown.

“The parasol is a nice touch,” I said, reaching out to touch it, amused.

“Evidently, with my pale and delicate skin, I am now in need of it to save myself from the brutality of the sun,” Allan said. “The girl at the shop was most insistent.”

“You do look like you would burn something awful with your fair skin.” I offered him my elbow, and he slapped it away as we both headed toward the door.

“Don’t start treating me like a girl,” Quartermain said. “It’s bad enough I must dress as one. Remember, I still have the heart of a man.”

“It will be hard to remember,” I said, “given your shape is so pleasing to the eye.”

“Stop!” Quartermain said, once more slapping me, this time on the shoulder.

There was something flirty about it, something that made me think, despite his protestations, he enjoyed being treated as a young lady. Could it be? Or, was I merely imagining what I wished to be true? I couldn’t be certain, but as we walked along the street on our way back to my estate, Quartermain chatting gaily about our upcoming adventure while twirling his parasol and glancing up at me from under the hood of his bonnet, I felt myself in turmoil. When a man ventures out into the wilds, there are many things that make him uncomfortable: heat, rain, sleeping on the ground. But I knew then that nothing would challenge my resolve and leave me more uncomfortable on this trip than that alluring little female, Allan Quartermain.

I heard a scream up ahead and quickened my pace. “Allan?” I called. “Allan?” Running around a corner, I found him struggling, the skirt of his dress having been caught in a bramble. I slowed, shaking my head. “Allan, please don’t scream so over trivial matters. You had me quite worried. I thought you to be in danger.”

Allan, I noticed, had one hand on his dress and one on the vine. “Trivial? You should spend a day wandering the jungles in a full-skirted dress and then tell me what is trivial.” He turned his attention back to his skirt and seeing him focus his feminine attention, the way his brow furled so prettily, I felt myself quite smitten, if still annoyed.

“Really, it is only a dress.”

“Which you forced me to wear,” he said, sighing with frustration. “Do you really mean to just stand there? Help me!”

I soon freed my little friend from the bramble and managed to do so without tearing the delicate fabric. He shook out his skirt, adjusted his bonnet. “I am quite cross with you,” he said, then, folding his arms under his breasts.

“Allan, we really should keep moving,” I said, wishing to avoid whatever silly female remonstrances had entered his head. I had found him, since becoming a female, just as given

to bursts of irrational emotionality as any member of the fairer sex ever was. I moved ahead down the path, but my effort was in vain, as Allan walked along beside me, unleashing his list of grievances in an angry, grating tone that turned his lovely voice into an absolute torture.

“You’re not considerate of me at all,” he started. “You know my legs are much shorter, and yet you rush about at a mad pace, and you grab me and throw me about like a doll and complain when I must rest yet you know this dress crushes! Crushes! My inside so that I can barely breath, and....” On and on he went, a torrent of ridiculous feminine fury.... And I just tuned him out, occasionally mumbling, *yes* or *of course*, resisting with all my might to snap at him, to tell him to stop being so irrational.

I had done so once, and I would not for a second time bring the explosion of rage that brought forth from my pint-sized little friend. I am old enough, of course, to know the distaste the female of our species feels toward having her illogical nature pointed out to her, but I had not until I made the fatal error, realized that Allan would prove no different from the rest of the world’s woman in this regard. Indeed, there is something in the functioning of the female brain so given to irrational nonsense that she is prone to imagine that it is the men who are the ones lacking reasons. It seemed my friend Allan, having been trapped with his female shape, had quickly been inflicted with this same malady, and come to think I the one who lacked reason when I did not agree with his constant harping on how unfair things were for women!

And so we walked, and Allan berated me, and I suffered until we came to the edge of the jungle and walked out into the clear air and gazed up in wonder at a city of red, standing on a plateau at the base of which rushed a mighty river, and our mouths fell open. “Ergosium,” I whispered.

“The Lost Temple,” Allan said, and then, quite to my surprise, he threw himself in my arms with a squeal of excitement, wrapping his arms around me in a crushing hug of pure, delighted affection. I lifted him off his feet and squeezed back, the feeling of his soft body against mine drawing away all the tension from his long barrage of recriminations. I spun us both around, delighted in the sound of Allan’s sweet, pretty laughter.

“I will be saved,” Allan said, his face so near to mine our noses nearly touched. “We made it here, thanks to you.” And then suddenly and without warning, he kissed me. It was a quick peck, a friendly kiss, and yet as he leveraged himself from my arms, cheeks blushing, I felt like that kiss had transformed me most completely. The sky seemed more blue. The air more sweet. And the pretty young lady before me with the playful smile on his face?

I realized I had fallen in love with her.

Him.

Oh, dear. I was in love with Allan Quartermain, and we were about to turn him back into a man.











