

under Ogden's nose. "I'm sorry you find it necessary to do this," he said.

The old man glanced down at it mildly and then up again. "Do what?" he asked blandly. "Not long ago it would have been just what I wanted," Michael continued with admirable control, "but now it's exactly what I think you intend it to be—a somewhat painful separation. I want to point out that you cannot go on sending men away in this fashion. The time will come when one of them will balk and marry her anyway, and I'm that one."

Ogden's voice grew plaintive: "What in the name of heaven are you talking about?" "Amazonas," said Michael. "I prefer not to go."

The leathery face of the president of the Ogden Rubber Company took on a puzzled frown. "Which of us is crazy?" he asked.

"In fact, I refuse to go, and if necessary I'll quit my job."

"But it's the one thing in the world you want! I've always known that."

"I'm sorry, sir. It isn't so."

Ogden leaned forward. He seemed about to cry. "Look, Michael," he pleaded. "I'm an old man. I'm getting a little slow, but I do my best. I try to keep track of things that go on in rubber. I try to understand the younger generation. And in my fumbling way I try to be fair. But I have troubles, and my digestion is bad, and my temper is awful. So will you, out of the goodness of your heart, do me a favor and"—his quavering voice suddenly lost its aged creak and rose to a robust, virulent shout—"and remove the drooling, dithering, martyred expression from that damned pretty mug of yours and tell me in simple terms *what in the name of the prophets you actually want!*"

Michael drew a deep breath. "Sue."

Ogden ran a hand desperately over the bald crown of his head. "What's that got to do with Amazonas?"

THE door opened. It was Sue, in a wool coat with an enormous fur collar. She was carrying a hatbox.

"Look!" she cried. She set the box on the desk. Ceremoniously she untied the string and removed the cover; she pulled off the tiny hat she was wearing and reached into the box. "What the well-dressed woman will wear in the jungle!"

It was a cork helmet, small but full-fledged. She set it solemnly on her head. The effect was delicious. She revolved slowly, speaking as she turned: "Father, did you do what I told you?"

"I did." He sounded like an obedient child. "But he doesn't want to go."

"I'll persuade him," said Sue. She turned to Michael: "We needn't stay longer than a year or so. We'll have to come back, anyway, because Father says he's going to need you in the office here. But we can always go back there if we find we like it, and . . ."

Michael pulled her toward him. As her head tipped back, the cork helmet rolled to the floor.

"You're supposed to fasten the strap," said Jeremiah Ogden.


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