

BORDERLAND



Houses crashed into splinters as though they had been struck by a hurricane

Gigantic Beasts of Death and Destruction Stalk a Mysterious Island in this Tense, Fantastic Story of Santo Domingo

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

Author of "Bare Fists," "The Black Falcon," etc.

I HAVE always been immensely concerned about a number of obscure things, especially about what I have come to regard as the invisible telephone wires which connect our conscious thoughts with our dreams, our nightmares, our waking flights of fancy in which

we see things no man has ever seen—at least in recorded history.

Whence come our figments of imagination in which we soar vicariously to heights which no man has ever attained except in similar flights? Where does the subconscious leave off and the

conscious begin? Where is the thin dividing line between waking and sleeping, knowing and dreaming?

I confess that I do not know, and even the incident of Cabritos has not given me a clue. It is set down here in the hope that perhaps where I have failed to find the clue, others may be more fortunate—or, perhaps, unfortunate. I say unfortunate because it may be that it is forbidden for us to know exactly where to set up the invisible wall which separates the known from the unknown.

I WAS doing some work for the Museum of Natural History, and had set up a one-man camp at La Descubierta, on Lake Enriquillo, in the Dominican Republic. The man who had hired me was Curator of Herpetology for his museum, and he was deeply desirous of procuring two things for the organization which had sent him to Santo Domingo.

He wished to procure a crocodile or alligator—I was never even scientist enough to know which was which unless I saw a specimen of each, side by side—twelve feet in length, because such reptiles had been seen in the lake. And he wanted to find a rhinoceros iguana exceeding five feet in length, because native hunters had reported them fairly numerous in the more inaccessible parts of the Republic. There was a story that they flourished in Isla de Cabritos, which is almost in the mathematical center of the lake, opposite La Descubierta.

Lake Enriquillo is some forty feet below the level of the Caribbean, and its waters are said to be four times as salty as the sea. The lake is some sixty miles long, and is separated by a rocky rampart from the much higher lake called Lago Del Fondo by Dominicans, and Etang Sumatre by the Haitians.

Jimani and Las Lajas sit on this rampart and look eastward across the vast length of Lake Enriquillo, on whose surface it is sometimes possible to see whole processions of palm trees, thanks to the peculiarities of mirage.

I mention this last as, perhaps, being a clue, though I have myself rejected it. For what happened to me happened when the sun had long since dropped into Haiti, and not even a pale moon hung over the tropics.

Set near an elbow of the lake, where the trail comes out onto the shore from the jungle-hidden native village of Columbia, is a vast fountain of water. It is supposed to be the outlet of a lost river that vanishes into the Cordillera Centrales somewhere south of the caves of Hondo Valle. It is bottomless. Hogs, sheep, cattle, even men, have vanished into it never to be disgorged!

I had been told that sometimes at night great ‘gators came out of the lake to disport themselves in this uprushing river, waddling along the creek which the fountain becomes on its journey to the lake, some hundred yards to the east. I had made my plans carefully, and they were very simple. I didn’t wish to shoot the ‘gators, for my boss wanted them without mark or blemish. Besides, ‘gators had been shot by natives on the edge of this boiling pool, and they had invariably dived into the depths to be seen no more. I had, I thought, a better idea.

I WRAPPED a heavy charge of dynamite; properly capped and fused, in a waterproof package, and lowered it some twenty-five feet into the pool. Then I concealed myself behind a bush which masked one side of the pool, with my electrical discharge box beside me. All I had to do was push a plunger and the depths of the pool would be blasted asunder. The ground might shake about me, I figured, but that would matter little.

I would do this job when ‘gators were floating on the pool, or had dived into it when I startled them. Then, stunned by the explosion, they would float to the surface and I would get the ‘gator my boss wanted.

I SAT down to wait. It is an experience to sit on a quick-sandy beach whose subterranean waters seem to whisper in the sands below, greedily sucking at you as though to draw you into the depths; while back of you, as night draws on, there are rustlings in the jungle which may mean anything. You recall the tales you have heard, for example, of the *Kukura*, that mythical half-man, half-beast, in which the natives believe, and with which they frighten their children into staying indoors during the hours of darkness. The sounds become his crashing footsteps as he goes

straight through the jungles, seeking what he may devour.

And then, ahead of you, the surface of the lake is troubled, and you can see ugly snouts on the surface of the water, and know that the ‘gators, often shot at during the day and so wary of men, are a-prowl. If a man were to fall among them—well, a ‘gator takes his food by grasping it in his mouth and spinning over and over on the axis of his body. If it happens to be a leg or an arm which he grasps—you can readily see where fancy could lead you.

I sat there, staring often at the place where the outpourings of the stream entered the lake, watching the sleeping flamingoes, which would give me plenty of warning if the ‘gators came too close. They sat moveless, like the storks on the windmills of Holland, mere shadows among the other shadows on the lake. Away to the right the Isla de Cabritos looked like the serrated back of an antediluvian monster whose other parts were under water.

Far to my right, down the curve of the lake, another stream poured into the dirty Enriquillo. There, during the day, ‘gators often sunned themselves in the fresh water, feeling secure because they could see anyone who approached them for almost a mile. Then the logs, which they appeared to be, became the animals they were, as they streaked for cover in the evil waters.

I was sitting there, hand on the plunger of the apparatus with which I intended to get my twelve-foot ‘gator, and listening to the sounds, the whispers, the talking of the seeping sands, when the unbelievable thing happened. I rubbed my eyes in unbelief.

The flamingoes suddenly removed their heads from under their pink-tinted wings and rose into the night, heading for the fastness of the Cordillera Centrales, uttering weird cries. The snouts on the surface of the lake went under with strange grunting sounds, which might have been the bellowing of bull-‘gators if the water hadn’t taken in the cries.

SOMETHING had come out of the water, directly ahead of me. At first it merely thrilled me with excitement, for I recognized it as my twelve-foot ‘gator, en route to his pool. What a monster he was! It looked as though he must be in

the shallow water just off-shore, for I could see all of his vicious head, raised well above the water, which meant that his short legs reached bottom with ease. But he stood there for a long time surveying the shore, and I was afraid that he suspected a trap. Wondering, holding my breath lest some vagrant sound disturb him, I studied him more closely—and my heart almost stopped beating.

For a far wider strip of water stretched between the shore and the beast than I had thought at first. He was fully a hundred yards from shore, where I knew that the water shelved off to great depths, and if his feet hadn’t been on the bottom he couldn’t have lifted his head so high out of the water.

The natural suggestion of this made my blood run cold. What sort of brute was this to have his head out of water when his feet touched bottom, fifty feet at least, below the surface?

MY eyes did not blink. I was afraid something might happen which I should always regret missing if I closed them, even for so long as that. My eyes burned with horrible concentration as I studied the animal. I made a strange discovery almost at once.

The creature was not a ‘gator. It did not have the long snout. The head was close-coupled to the body. The long jaws of the ‘gator were missing. Instead there was a blunt, reptilian head with a wide circle of mouth. I could see the eyes, glowing in the dark, set wide apart.

But what astounded me more than anything else was that, set near the end of the nose, upstanding, blunt, suggestive, were curved horns something like that of a rhinoceros. Here was Doctor Keller’s rhinoceros iguana—five feet long—with a vengeance.

And as though to show me the depth and implications of the “vengeance,” the creature started to move toward me out of the water. Higher and higher it rose from the lake—a great black mass which was first elephantine, then mammoth-like, then like nothing in my past experience with which I could compare it. It was now quite close to shore and towered fully fifty feet above my head.

Unbelievable? Of course. I didn’t believe it myself; but consider the strange denouement

before giving your judgment. I am, now merely the narrator.

I don't think I was ever afraid for myself. This was something over and beyond me, something so much bigger than I, that I became dwarfed to insignificance, even to myself.

I hid behind the sheltering bush while the brute came out of the water and stood on the beach. I glanced quickly right and left and not a 'gator snout showed anywhere on the surface of Enriquillo. The water, though, was troubled, as though deep under it the 'gators were milling, going mad with fear, knowing not which way to turn.

But what made them behave like that?

Were there other things below the surface which could make this one visible animal look like a pigmy? Was some vast voracious creature devouring the sole denizens of Enriquillo's deep? I had lost all perspective now. The monster which was moving up the beach with long strides had become a creature from the dawn of the world; and the world as I knew it—and reassured myself by pinching the back of my hand—together with myself and every other living thing, had been catapulted back down the ages to the very beginning of time.

THE creature's enormous feet made sucking sounds in the sand. After each step his footprint filled with water, and the resultant pool was big enough that a man might have bathed in it in comfort. I could see that the animal was going to pass quite close to me, and for the first time I became slightly concerned.

I eased around the bush, knowing it but poor cover after all since the brute's head was so high above it, and his foot might have smashed me, and the bush, without even the creature's knowledge. But the animal seemed utterly intent on exploring the jungle behind me.

He passed within yards of me and I heard the waters of the sands pour into the holes his feet had made. I turned, surprised that he had not noted me, as he found the edge of the jungle. Trees began to crackle and break before his advance, as though he had been thrice an elephant. We went straight ahead toward the village of Columbia. I opened my mouth to shout a warning, but no sound whatever came out.

THE creature went into the jungle, and his head and shoulders showed above it, as though he swam through the trees. Columbia lay in his pathway. Where was he going? What was he after? Whence had he come?

To answer the last question I looked out on the lake again.

Straight ahead, a mile or so to the east, another monster, seeming even larger than the first, was coming out of the lake. Swiftly he climbed up to the road which connected La Descubierta with Neiba and Barahona, and the scattering towns in between them. The brute reached the road, realized that it offered him unobstructed passage, and started eastward.

Even as he started, the headlights of a speeding automobile came over the ridge there and crashed into him. I heard wild screams from the car, which suddenly rose high into the air, turning over and over. Its headlights, still on, worked strange patterns in the night as the car somersaulted through space, flashing with bullet speed toward the lake. It struck, vanished. The headlights were no more. The screams were gone.

The "iguana" was moving on into the east. He went down into the valley beyond, but his head was still visible, turning this way and that, as though he sought for other victims. I turned to look to my right. A third beast was rising from the water yonder and striding straight westward, toward Jimani and Las Lajas—and Haiti.

Where in God's name had these creatures come from so suddenly?

I lifted my gaze to Cabritos, out in the lake—to find that the island, which I have likened to the back of some antediluvian monster, was a-crawl with something—something huge, mighty, awe-inspiring. In spite of the distance, they still seemed monsters to my eyes, those things which were coming out of the bowels of the island, and vanishing into the lake. Some went in to the east, some south, west and north, while others entered at compass points in between.

I knew then that all this was happening by virtue of some satanic plan; that the exodus of the brutes was not accident but design—that Cabritos, unbelievable, impossible as it must seem, as it seemed to me then, was creating these monsters out of the bowels of the earth which composed the island.

But why? How? To what end?

AS though in answer to this very question a ghastly uproar rose out of Columbia behind me. I heard houses crashing into splinters as though they had been struck by a hurricane. I heard the startled, fearful screams of men, women and children; heard the screams break short off—and knew the answer, or thought I did. It was the answer, too, I am sure, though later events would seem to disprove it. One must know something of the exact location of that wall which I spoke about, that separates the real from the unreal.

The screaming continued in Columbia, while I remained rooted to the spot, wondering what I should do. Poor devils of natives; they were dying like flies before the voracious attack of the “iguana.”

Then a strange cry came from the midst of the lake. A cry to which I could give no name, a cry of command, of entreaty. It seemed to be directed at a certain spot on the mainland, and I held my breath to ascertain whether there would be any result from it.

I heard, then, a crashing in the brush behind me, through the jungle. The first monster was coming back, coming swiftly. He fled past me with hurricane speed. Behind him came a dozen soldiers of the Guardia Nacional Dominicana, stationed at La Descubierta, just beyond Columbia. They were firing at the monster with Kragg rifles. Their bullets—I could hear them smash against the creature’s body—did no harm whatever. Just as the creature passed me, the legs of a woman disappeared into his cavernous mouth. He snorted with satisfaction.

HE vanished into the lake, and a long narrowhead of water, like the wake of a ship, moved out toward Cabritos. With astonishing speed it moved, ever widening—the furrowed waves crested with dirty foam, I had learned something then, several somethings: that this creature could not be hurt by bullets, that to take the soldiers to help me was useless. I had learned that the creature could not see very well, since he hadn’t seen me. I had learned that if there was anything at all to be done I must do it alone—and I must do it on Cabritos where the horror had just now started.

If something were not done—what?

Every village and town in Santo Domingo might be utterly destroyed by the monsters. Their source, on Cabritos, must be destroyed, so that no others could come forth to work their havoc. There must be some manner by which they could be slain. There were airplanes in Port-au-Prince, marines in Haiti with bombs and field pieces. But if the supply of these creatures was inexhaustible, what then? I must make sure, alone and unaided, of this.

BUT how to reach Cabritos? To swim was impossible. The ‘gators, small as they were compared to the monsters, could yet destroy me as I would pluck the wings off a fly, if I dared to go into the lake. It had happened to others. No boats plied on Enriquillo.

However, there must be some way. Two days before, around this lake’s elbow to the south, I had seen the remnants of an ancient dugout. With improvised oars—

I gathered up my electrical apparatus, detached the wire which held the dynamite and—being methodical and recalling that I hadn’t yet got the ‘gator I had been sent to get—fastened one end to the bush; leaving the rest in the water. I ran swiftly down the beach, looking often toward Cabritos, from whose interior the monsters still came, sliding into the lake and vanishing in all the directions of the compass. Strong fear was in me lest I might be seen and taken, for I was remembering the human legs which had gone into the cavernous maw of the first “iguana.”

I came to the dugout. It looked serviceable enough. I broke limbs off trees to serve as unwieldy paddles and as weapons, though I knew they would be worse than useless against the hideous nightmares I had seen. I cached my box of dry cells, about which were wrapped great lengths of thin wire, in the drier end of the dugout, and managed to push the aged craft into the water. The surface of the lake boiled and bubbled, and I knew that if my craft went under I would never be heard of again. I was, however, intent on my job.

Now it seemed that Cabritos had ceased its strange eruptions. The lake was still, as though it waited. From far to the south, though, came screams from Neiba, from Barbacoa and La Madre, from Los Rios; while from across the lake

came other screams, from Angostura and Duverge. The monsters were systematically depopulating the villages and towns which bordered on the lake.

AS I pushed off I studied Cabritos, now dormant—and saw sparks flying from a spot some fifty feet or so above the island, as though a primitive wireless were in operation. Was there some evil human intelligence behind this march of the monsters?

I made tough going with my improvised oars, but the water between myself and the shore widened bit by bit, while Cabritos grew larger and larger ahead. The whole thing began to seem utterly ridiculous to me now, and I wasn't at all certain that I had seen what I thought I had. But when I rested and listened, I could hear the far screams of natives in the towns bordering on the lake. It was real then, at least in part, and not a feverish hallucination or nightmare.

A queer reptilian odor, almost overpowering, covered me as I neared the island. I had noticed it particularly when that first monster had passed my hiding place at the fountain pool. It was terrific near the island, further proof that I hadn't dreamed.

My dugout, after what seemed like hours, grounded on Cabritos and I jumped out. There wasn't a sound on the island; only that strange ghastly odor. I pulled the dugout out so that it wouldn't drift away, for I had no wish to remain on the island indefinitely, nor to dare the 'gators on the long swim back. The whole thing was so unreal, and continued so, that there were times when I felt like laughing at myself. But I didn't.

The odor kept me from doing that; the odor and the traces along the shore where heavy, huge bodies had slid into the lake.

I left my electrical equipment in the dugout, which was fortunate, and started inland. Now and again iguanas of the normal size fled away from me in the night. A scrubby, crackling underbrush impeded my movements. That sparkling dart of light I had seen had stopped now. The island seemed empty of any occupancy save that of the iguanas.

I walked to the center of the island, which was covered by queer outcroppings, by piles of boulders which looked like the detritus of long-

vanished mountains. There were queerly shaped hummocks of stone. I knew that when the sun was out a man could fancy seeing all sorts of things in this queer place. Even iguanas as big as dinosaurs would be seen. Mirage was a strong phenomenon on the lake. However, this was at night, remember.

I stood listening for a long time, and looking about me.

MY heart almost jumped into my mouth when a familiar voice spoke behind me. I whirled to look into the white face of Doctor Keller, the Curator of Herpetology.

"Hello, Cleve," he said. "Did it get you, too?"

"I don't know," I said. "Something damnably queer is going on. Where did you come from?"

"I was spending the night with Juan Herrera at Duverge," he said, pointing to the side of the lake opposite whence I had come. "I had been looking for frogs and snakes in the swamp near Angostura. When that monster barged into Duverge I figured that he came from here; and I came out in a boat furnished by Juan to see what was going on. What *is*, do you know?"

"I can't believe my eyes, ears or nostrils," I told him. "I've seen monsters tonight, monsters which died before man came onto this earth. It can't be true, and yet if you saw them, too—"

"I DID," he said. "I estimate that there are about fifty of them loose. They came from this island. I'm glad to have you with me while we figure it out. Lord, if I could capture one of these creatures alive—"

That was the insatiably scientific Curator of Herpetology speaking.

"You couldn't capture them with an army," I retorted. "They uproot trees, trample down skyscrapers; at least, village huts."

He grinned. I thought his grin was rather tight and strained. Then he started off toward the west end of the island. I followed him as a matter of course, because he was my boss and seemed to expect it. He seemed, however, to know exactly what he was about and where he was going. He should have, too, I guess, for he had spent four years, off and on, in Santo Domingo, staying sometimes as long as four months at a time.

He was a queer fellow, absolutely indifferent to material things. He'd have slept with his beloved snakes and frogs if his wife, who went everywhere with him—except that she hadn't come to the island tonight—had permitted it. I thought he was a little cracked on the subject of reptiles, but I'm not a scientist.

I gasped as we stopped before the broad face of a huge rock that grew out of the floor of the island. Doctor Keller, a big man, roughly dressed, and always smelling of snakes, placed his hand against the rock, and it opened to his touch. A door swung back.

The odor I had noticed before came back, more powerful even than before. It came out of a black hole which seemed to lead down into the bowels of the earth. Doctor Keller stepped into the door.

"Come on," he said impatiently.

I stepped forward, too, and utter darkness possessed the universe as the stone door swung shut, behind me. It was then that I began to suspect the truth. Brilliant electric lights flashed on. Keller had pressed a switch somewhere. I could find no words with which to express myself. I followed Keller down and down. He didn't look back, didn't say anything.

Finally we came to a big room—a natural cave which the hand of man had made livable, even comfortable. There were chairs, rugs, tables, boxes. There were benches and tables all but covered with retorts, test tubes, scales, all sorts and designs of scientific instruments.

Here was a modern laboratory if ever I had heard one described, and I was alone with the man to whom it belonged.

KELLER sat down, after tossing his hat on a table, and motioned me to take another chair. I guess my mouth hung open and my eyes popped out as I stared at him. He looked to be as normal as I had last seen him, though there was a subtle difference, born perhaps of my growing suspicions which were so soon to become certain knowledge.

"Well, Cleve," he said, "what do you think of it?"

For a long moment I gulped and swallowed, trying to find an answer.

Then I pointed my finger at him, and my

finger trembled.

"You," I managed, "you are back of all this?"

"Yes," he said curtly, "and you are going to help me out, now that you've penetrated the secret. I'll need a messenger, someone I can trust, to take the word to the *alcaldes* of the nearest towns. After I have subjugated Santo Domingo and Haiti, and brought the Caribbean and the Atlantic within reach of Cabritos, I shall use you as messenger to the mayors of many cities; to presidents, even to kings."

ALL this he said quietly, as though he merely passed the time of day with me, while I stared at him in absolute horror. Here was the man responsible for the loss of I knew not how many lives.

"You're thinking of the dead," he said. "Don't. Death is a biological fact, no more. To slay means nothing."

"But how? Why?" I began.

Keller leaned forward.

"For twenty years I have gone on expeditions all over the world," he said. "I've never had enough money to pay for one. I've been forced to live in hovels, in swamps, in stinking rivers, in native huts, in everything under the sun which no human being should live in. Governments stint their scientists; museums give them scarcely a living wage and expect them to perform miracles without money. I have performed miracles. My museum is packed with my discoveries, while I live in squalor for the sake of science, and eat food that a dog wouldn't eat.

"I even take my wife into such a mess because she foolishly believes that she should share hardships with me. I didn't expect that when I married her. Science is to blame for the fact that her beauty has faded, that she had grown unhealthy—"

I wanted to head him off, but there was no stopping the man.

"I'm a great scientist," he said. "I have gone deeper into unknown, forbidden things than almost anyone else. I know, for instance, more about glands—"

I was beginning to get it, then, for I had read a lot about glands. Being a small man who had always wished to be a big one, glands had interested me. I knew that it wasn't beyond the

bounds of possibility that, through experimentation with glands, little men could be made into giants, giants into pygmies.

Keller rose so suddenly from his chair that I ducked as from a blow. He grinned again.

"Don't be afraid," he said. "I trust you. If I have reason to doubt, I can smash you as though you were a fly. I despise you as a man, but wish your loyalty as a helper."

HE led the way toward another rock door, which swung back at his touch. We entered another cave—or part of the first one which had been partitioned off—and lights again went on. I gasped as I looked this place over. There was just one thing in it, besides ourselves, that was alive. It was a rhinoceros iguana, perhaps four feet in length.

It darted to a dark corner as we appeared. Keller went after it. He was fast on his feet for a big man. I'd seen him race after snakes like that, scooping them up in his horny hands. He captured the iguana, which fastened its mouth on his hand. He carried the creature back to me, making no effort to release the hand. The animal finally opened its mouth of its own accord, and Keller pulled his fingers free.

"Watch!" he said.

From a cabinet cut out of the rock wall he took what looked to be a huge hypodermic syringe, whose needle he thrust into the creature's back, just behind the skull. He pressed down on the plunger. The animal straightened out, as though paralyzed, as whatever the syringe contained was driven through the skin into his body. Keller placed him on the floor. He rolled onto his side.

"Back to the door," said Keller. "This one hasn't been trained. I'm working too rapidly now for that."

WE stood side by side at the door by which we had entered, watching the apparently paralyzed iguana. Horror gripped me when the thing began to grow with amazing speed. Its limbs twitched. Its whole body seemed to balloon into gigantic proportions. Its eyes became alive again, malignant, horrible.

Keller pushed me behind him, partially closing the door, but standing aside so that I could

see past him. The brute rose on its feet. It was still growing. Now it towered almost to the roof of the cave. It whirled, dashed at us. Keller shut the door in its face, and the rock supports of the cave literally shook with the impact of the gigantic body.

Keller opened the door a crack.

In the other room the monster was walking up a sort of ramp which led to the surface of the ground—and to the lake. It climbed up and was gone. I turned to Keller.

"Simple," he said, with a wave of his hand, "though difficult for a layman to understand. I have simply learned how, artificially, to induce a miraculous multiplication of the cells of the body. That's all. I could make that creature four times as big, but he—and his mates—are big enough for my purposes now."

I shuddered. They were, in all conscience.

My voice was a croak as I spoke.

"But what's the idea, Doctor?"

"Money," he said. "Wealth. My science has brought me nothing except hard work. But now it shall bring me wealth and comfort. These iguanadons are my weapons, by which I shall force ordinary people to supply me with money, wealth, power, through the oldest emotion—ungodly fear!"

"But you can't do it. In the end the world will destroy you. Big guns will smash this island to bits. You will be attacked, destroyed. Even your monsters may turn against you."

"They won't. I trained them first. When I increased their size they remembered. I am the only person they won't attack."

"But how can you control them?"

"Simple. They're still iguanas. They know this island as their home, to which they come when they've fed. They'll all be back before morning, to sleep and—though they don't know it—to be re-injected with the glandular preparation I have perfected."

I SHUDDERED again. The whole thing was ghastly, horrible.

"But suppose," I insisted, "you are beaten, this place discovered and destroyed? And what will become of me if I am with you?"

"I'll show you that, too," he said.

What he showed me was a branch of the

main cave, bigger than either of the caverns I had been in—and its walls were buttressed by countless boxes of dynamite.

“The electrical machinery to discharge it,” he said calmly, “is in the first chamber. If I am beaten I have but to press a plunger. I shall die here, of course, and so will you. My wife will find happiness with some man who isn’t a failure. However, I don’t expect that. I’ll have the Antilles at my feet before their stunned people can realize that what they see and hear is really true. Which means that we must hurry.”

I sighed heavily. No need to oppose this man openly. He could have crushed me between his thumb and forefinger. But my mind was racing with lightning speed. “What do you wish of me?” I asked.

“That’s the spirit,” he said. “You’ve got a job to do. I must have a new supply of my serum. I must get to work on it. Your job is to bring me ‘patients’.”

“Patients?” I repeated.

“Yes. The island is filled with iguanas. You can knock ‘em over with a stick. Bring them to me as fast as you can, and keep a sharp lookout for boats. Also, be careful of the iguanadons near morning, when it will be time for them to come back.”

I went out. Catching iguanas wasn’t a tough job. I’d done it before, though usually with the help of dogs. Keller had no dogs here and I knew why. The monsters had devoured them.

My task was especially easy in the cool of after midnight, for the coolness made the iguanas comatose. I found a couple, about two feet in length each, and tucked them under my arms. On the way back I passed the dugout, gathered up my electrical equipment, thrust it into my clothing, and took it back with me. I left it on the stairs and carried the iguanas in to Keller.

HE rubbed his hands as he took them, carried them into the chamber where I had seen him turn an iguana into a monster. He had all but forgotten me, I thought. But he disproved that by sticking his head again out of the door.

“Bring more. Bring dozens, scores. I need all the weapons possible.”

“It will take a little time.”

“Work faster!” he snapped.

I worked fast enough.

I caught up my electrical equipment, unfastened the end of the wire coiled about it, and dashed to the room which housed the dynamite. I was adept in this business. I detached the wiring Keller had arranged, substituting my own. My hands trembled, for now all I had to do to blow this island out of the water, was to press the plunger on my own box of coils.

I was almighty careful as I took the box back to the dugout and left it. The wire was strung from that cavern to the dugout, a turn taken about a nub of rock on the way, so that a jerk wouldn’t disconnect the wiring. Fervently I hoped there was enough wire to reach the mainland.

Then I went after iguanas. I needed plenty, to keep Keller occupied until I could reach La Descubierta, which I must do before the iguanadons started home.

I WORKED and sweated. Claws ripped at my clothing, tore at my hands. Keller noticed me once when I returned and said patronizingly:

“Good work!”

“There’s a huge one near the west end of the island,” I said. “I don’t know whether I can handle him in a hurry—”

“Take time. Stun him with rocks, anything, but bring him here. Maybe the biggest ones have greater intelligence—go, get the brute, if it takes an hour. We’ve got more time than that before morning.”

Of course there wasn’t any big iguana. I got into the dugout and started for the mainland, rowing like mad, unreeling the thin wire at the same time, making sure that it sank to the bottom—for a ‘gator might swim against it under water and break the wire. But I got clear to the mainland without feeling a tug and figured I had maybe twenty feet of wire left over.

I sat down exactly where I had been before, and watched Cabritos. The monsters were coming home. I knew that the newest ones Keller had created had not yet been turned loose. I wondered what he had done with them, and my brain spun at the possibilities. For I knew the legends of some of Santo Domingo’s caverns, in which were mighty branch caves beyond man’s imaginings, vast black rivers, huge abysses.

Keller might have such a cavern below his

laboratory, filled with scores and hundreds of the monsters. How did I know that, during the four years of his intermittent residence, he hadn't peopled that cavern under Cabritos with countless monsters, not only iguanas, but snakes, spiders—all sorts of horrors?

My hand went to the plunger. I hoped all the monsters were home—

A HAND was placed on my shoulder. I was shaken roughly.

I opened my eyes, if they had been closed, to see a black lieutenant of Guardia standing over me.

"You went to sleep on the job, Cleve," he said. "The post is worried about you."

I stared at the man in amazement.

"Good Lord," I said, "have I been asleep? What happened last night? Is everything all right in Columbia? Did the iguanadons—"

"What are you talking about?" asked Carlos Ramirez, the lieutenant. "You have been having nightmares, perhaps?"

"Lord," I said, "what a silly ending! A dream, no more. I didn't see any monsters last night. I didn't see Doctor Keller—"

"How could you?" interrupted Ramirez. "He is in Duverge. He went there last night from Barahona. I have word by telephone. He will be in La Descubierta sometime today."

"And I haven't even got his 'gators," I said ruefully, still unable to believe I had been asleep and dreaming. "Wonder they didn't make a meal off me last night. Look, two were here during darkness."

Ramirez grinned.

"You're lucky," he said.

"Well," I said, standing up, holding onto the box, "just on the off chance those two babies are

in the pool, let's see what this thing does."

Ramirez had helped me set up my stuff and understood. We both stepped back a pace, just in case the walls of the fountain went down, taking us with them. And I jammed the plunger home.

At that very instant I noticed whither the wire ran—straight toward the shore of the lake.

Then the world was rocked by an earthquake, a hurricane and a tidal wave. I was lifted, together with Ramirez, and hurled fifty feet. My distorted, bulging eyes witnessed a gigantic thing—for Cabritos was lifted out of Enriquillo almost as one piece, to the height of many feet, where it broke apart like a mighty, unbelievably huge firecracker, pieces of which showered the towns all about the lake.

The debris crashed back—and Enriquillo's waters received them. The waters geysered aloft, forming a great wall which shut out the sight of the Bahorucos, south of the lake—and against that wall of geysering water, as against a screen, I saw the mangled shapes of all sorts of things—things which man may imagine he sees in nightmares, in flights of fancy, in everything except reality.

BUT I had no time to catalogue them, for Enriquillo swallowed it all, while Ramirez and I raced for higher ground as a monster wave raced for the shore.

We were both stunned. I had dropped my electrical apparatus, which the wave took back with it when it receded. Finally Ramirez managed a question.

"What in the world," he said, "do you think caused that?"

I gave him the answer. I knew, as a good churchgoer, he would expect—and which I was none too sure was not the answer. "The will of God!"