

# Dead *Men's* Rule



*A snarling face with fiery eyes loomed up in the dark before Jim Benson*

*Jim Benson and Red Dolliver Plunge into a Seething  
Cauldron of Voodoo Horror as They Brave  
the Terrors of Haitian Deviltry!*

**By WAYNE ROGERS**

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**J**IM BENSON rolled and tossed uncomfortably. He moaned in his sleep and stretched his neck taut as he gasped for air. Then, abruptly, his eyes opened and he peered into the blackness that shrouded the cabin like the grave.

Where the porthole should have been was

only blackness. Groping, his fingers felt for the light switch; found it and pressed it. There was a click, but the cabin remained black.

Then Benson's fingers flew to his throat, ripped away the collar of his light pajamas and sought frantically to loosen the muscles of his throat to gasp blessed fresh air into his tortured

lungs. He was smothering, suffocating; his head was pounding and reeling dizzily. The air in the cabin was hot and poisonous.

With a mighty effort he seized the edge of the bunk and dragged himself over the side, to tumble in a heap on the floor. The jar of his fall seemed to clear his head. Along the floor the air was better, too. Benson sucked it into his lungs gratefully.

Then he turned to Red Dolliver, asleep in the lower bunk beside him. The noise of Benson's fall had not awakened the big fellow, but when his partner grabbed his shoulder and shook him violently, Dolliver groaned a protest.

"Snap out of it, Red! Wake up!" Jim shouted against his ear. "We've got to get out of here—*pronto!*"

With another groan Red Dolliver opened his eyes, peered around in the darkness and felt his throbbing head.

"What the devil—" he began to growl.

"Never mind that now. This place is full of gas," Benson snapped. "Unless we get out in a hurry we're—done for." The gas caught at his throat and sought to strangle him.

Now the husky six-footer was on his feet. Together the two men groped their way to the porthole. It was battened down on the outside. There was no chance for air there.

Then Benson reached the door. The key was gone and the door was locked.

**T**OGETHER they tugged and tore at it, but it did not budge. The gas in the cabin was getting worse. Jim's head swam sickeningly and once he fell dizzily to the floor.

"It's—locked—on the outside," he gasped as he realized that they were making no progress with the door.

A rumbling oath was Red Dolliver's reply as he backed away from the door, hunched his great shoulders like a football player taking the ball through the line, and charged. The door quivered under the impact, but it held. Again he drew back, dug his shoes into the cabin floor and charged like a bullet.

The door rattled on its hinges; the wood cracked and a tiny sliver of grey light shone through it. Red drew back his huge fist and smashed. In slivers the panel gave way and his

arm was out in the passageway, his fingers fumbling for the key still in the lock.

**J**IM BENSON was first through the door the moment it swung open. A great wave of fresh cool air enveloped him as he pressed into the corridor. Then, before he had a chance to fill his lungs with the welcome relief, a face loomed up there in the semi-dark before him. A snarling, malignant face, with fiery eyes that seemed to gleam like those of a cat.

"Antoine!" Benson gasped, and in that second a club came down with vicious force on his head.

The semi-dark of the corridor turned to purple, then merged into a thick, palpable black which enveloped him. Jim strove to fight it off. Dimly he could see a dark figure running down the corridor. Then the world swam about him and he toppled to the floor.

In a few minutes the haze cleared away from before his eyes and he sat up to find Red kneeling, gasping beside him. As the fresh sea air filled their lungs and dispelled the poison, strength returned with a rush.

With it came sudden remembrance for Jim.

"Antoine!" he grated savagely. "We've got a score to settle with that doublecrossing yellow devil."

With that he was on his feet and striding determinedly down the corridor, his fists clenched savagely and hot rage in his eyes.

"You're all wet," Red grumbled, as he followed his partner. "Why in blazes you keep pickin' on Antoine I dunno. I didn't see a sign of him."

But Jim Benson wasn't arguing. Grimly he turned the corner of the corridor and pounded on the door of Antoine Lebeau's cabin.

**T**HREE days before, Jim Benson and Red Dolliver had been kicking their heels impatiently in a barn-like room of the Hotel Nacional at Vera Cruz, while they waited for the Mexican Government to grant them a mining concession.

That was when they made the acquaintance of Antoine Lebeau. Antoine was a mulatto of medium build, perhaps forty years of age, well dressed and well spoken, his Haitian French

accent hardly noticeable. The most impressive feature of his round yellow face was his sparkling black eyes, which had a way of darting from side to side flashingly.

"*Monsieur* Benson?" he inquired, as he stood bowing in the doorway.

There was something about the man that antagonized Jim from the start. Even as he reached out to take the letter of introduction from the mulatto's hand, he felt a vague suspicion of the fellow.

Immediately that was forgotten as he glanced at the curious letter and read:

Dear Jim:

This note, if it reaches you, should be brought by Antoine Lebeau, my plantation superintendent. I have tried every other way to get word to you. Every attempt has been blocked. Antoine is my only hope.

Jim, I'm trapped here in an incredible hell. Unbelievable intrigues—things that could happen nowhere else on earth—are going on all around me. I'm caught up in the thing but can't stop it.

Alone I'm helpless. With a little help I could break up this devilment and save a whole nation from howling savagery. Without it I'm afraid they will kill me and make me president.

Jeff Calhoun.

Jim Benson blinked and reread that last line. Then he turned to the inscrutable face of Antoine Lebeau.

"When did you start out with this?" he snapped, while Red Dolliver scanned the note.

"Seven days, *monsieur*. The boat, it took five days, and two days to reach Cap Haitien."

"Did you have any trouble in getting through?"

"There was trouble, yes—but I am here."

The fellow was not very communicative and Jim's distrust grew. He might have doubted the genuineness of the letter, but at the bottom of the sheet was a code word which only Jeff Calhoun would have used: a word that guaranteed the note's authenticity and at the same time sounded a desperate call for help.

**I**T was five years since he and Red had parted company with Jeff Calhoun. In a lovely valley in the interior of Haiti the ex-Marine Corps

captain had settled down. The rolling stone became a coffee planter and prospered.

Now he was in trouble. Desperate trouble, or he would not have appealed for help. Jeff Calhoun was not the sort to holler unless the odds against him were overwhelming.

"What's it all about?" Red Dolliver wanted to know, but Antoine was chary with his information.

"Nobody knows, *monsieur*," he shook his head. "The men on the plantation, they die from fever. The others, they leave. The drums, they beat in the hills, and *Monsieur* Calhoun can do nothing."

"Humph—voodoo deviltry, eh?" Red snorted. "How did you come here?"

"On the *Carib Queen*, *monsieur*. The steamer sails again at noon tomorrow. It will not return for two weeks." Antoine's tone was urgent, his eyes anxious.

"That gives us almost twenty-four hours to get ready," Jim considered.

"Plenty," Red agreed.

While Antoine arranged their passage on the *Carib Queen* Jim and Red packed their bags and bought the necessary additions to their outfit. The mulatto's sparkling black eyes watched every move of their preparations with absorbed interest. When two of the latest model automatic rifles, with a plentiful supply of ammunition, joined the equipment his excitement was intense. Nothing would do but that their operation must be explained to him.

"You, *messieurs*, were soldiers, too, like *Monsieur* Calhoun?" he hazarded. "Officers, perhaps?"

When informed that his guess was correct Antoine grinned satisfiedly.

"That *hombre* will bear close watching," Jim cautioned as soon as he found an opportunity to draw Red aside, but the big fellow was not impressed.

"There you go again with your suspicions," he scoffed. "Me, I take a man at face value until he shows up different. Antoine looks okay to me."

Nevertheless, Jim's suspicions of the mulatto had continued unabated after the *Carib Queen* pushed her rust-encrusted nose out into the Caribbean.

NOW Jim's fist banged resoundingly on Antoine's door, but there was no response from within.

"The keyhole's stuffed with rags," Red discovered, as he pulled the packing free.

Faintly from the keyhole came the same gassy odor that had filled their own cabin. Red waited no longer after that. Bracing himself against the opposite wall, he threw his weight across the corridor to crash against the door. The lock snapped and the door flew open.

The porthole of Antoine's cabin was not darkened. Daylight streamed in through it and fell on the lower bunk where he lay stretched out, partly dressed. In a second Jim was at his side, his fingers probing beneath the mulatto's shirt front.

"He's dead," he announced as he looked up to meet his partner's questioning gaze. "We're just a bit too late. His heart's stopped beating but his body's still warm."

"Poor devil," Red commiserated. "Guess I'd better get the captain."

CAPTAIN GABRIEL, when he could be dragged from the comforts of his cabin, was appalled at this tragedy. His wide eyes were round pools of apprehension in his shiny black face as he stared down at the corpse. Although he promised an immediate investigation, it was apparent that he had no idea where or how to begin.

Red picked up the body of the mulatto and carried it forward to the peak, where the sailmaker fashioned a canvas sack which would serve as a shroud. Morosely Red watched while the sailor weighted the sack and proceeded to sew it up.

When the ship's bell struck noon the engines stopped and the steamer lost momentum, to lie quietly on the barely rippling sea. While the solemn-faced crew grouped around the rail, Captain Gabriel read the burial service and the canvas sack slid down a plank runway into the blue waters of the sea.

Keenly Jim studied each member of the crew, but nowhere could he detect a sign of guilt on their dark faces. The murderer, if he were among them, was a master at deception.

"It's just a matter of luck that there aren't three of us going over the side instead of only Antoine," Red commented grimly as they turned

away from the rail.

After that the partners split up their sleep, one always standing guard; but the rest of the trip was uneventful. And, although they searched the vessel from stem to stern, they found no clue to the murderer.

It was late afternoon when the *Carib Queen* steamed into Cap Haitien, late afternoon of a hot summer day. Beyond the town the jungle-cloaked mountains reared their crests in the gathering blue of the twilight. The town itself seemed to simmer and steam in the heat.

IT looked so tiny there along the shore, so helpless against the immensity of its jungle-wrapped background, that Jim Benson felt, depressingly, how futile were its attempts to cope with the power of those hills—how inadequate its efforts to build up a civilization against the deviltry that made its stronghold behind those peaks.

Cap Haitien was tense; that was apparent as soon as they landed and made their way into the town. Curious eyes regarded them as they passed along the streets and on all sides they sensed a feeling of expectancy, of waiting.

"What's the matter with this place?" Red demanded. "It gives me the creeps."

Not until they lined up against Dutch Charlie's bar did they get an inkling of what was causing the uneasiness.

"Somethin's brewin'," the bartender confided, out of the corner of his mouth. "I ain't sayin' how much I know, but I hear plenty. You'll hear it tonight yourself. Every night the drums up in the hills get goin'. It ain't the usual drummin', either. Devilish sort o' racket that gets into your blood and scares the daylight out o' you."

"That's what you can hear yourself. An' there's lots more they're whisperin'. Four big shots—important fellers—died sort o' mysteriously during the past five or six weeks. There's them who say the bodies have disappeared. Of course the government denies that—but they would anyway."

"Some more voodoo deviltry, eh?" Red blurted contemptuously.

But the bartender paled and froze up like a clam. Apprehensively he glanced up and down his bar, and busied himself with his glasses. After that

he gave them no opportunity to draw him into conversation.

"These voodoo devils have them all scared stiff," Red spat disgustedly, as they left the saloon and walked toward their hotel.

It was still early in the evening, but the streets were strangely quiet and deserted. Suddenly, as they passed a little court, Jim grabbed Red by the arm and dragged him into the shadows with a warning to be quiet. In a few moments a burly Negro passed their place of concealment, hurrying his footsteps as he glanced anxiously up and down the block.

"That bird's been following us for the last six blocks," Jim said quietly as they doubled on their course and turned down a side street a few doors away.

"Somebody's mighty anxious to keep track of us."

**A**N automobile took them from Cap Haitien, through the fields of corn, millet and cotton, then into the jungle, where plantains, banana trees and cocoanut palms vied for supremacy. As they climbed into the mountains these in turn gave way to great sablier trees with their spiked trunks, mahogany and towering pines.

Over the crest of the mountains their way led down into the interior and soon a mule pack train replaced the automobile. A wild country this, with steep canyons, narrow mountain ledges and precipitous cliffs.

From scattered little villages and lonely isolated cabins dark faces peered out at them. Everywhere their appearance provoked excitement and jubilation. It was almost as if they were expected.

But when they finally reached Jeff Calhoun's valley there was no sign of welcome or expectancy. It was early afternoon when they rode up to the long, low bungalow set on a little elevation above the coffee fields.

Nowhere around the plantation was there a sign of life and nobody appeared on the wide porch at the sound of their coming.

**I**N a rear room they found Calhoun lying on a disordered bed. One glance at his flushed face and unnaturally bright eyes told the story of fever. Calhoun was a very sick man. His face had

thinned and his hair was greying. Worry was stamped plainly on his features.

At the sight of his friends wild excitement leaped in his eyes and he propped himself up on an elbow to greet them.

"Take it easy, old man," Jim urged as he tried to make the sick man more comfortable. "Easy does it."

But Jeff Calhoun seemed not to hear him.

"I'm glad you came, Jim," he whispered. "You're too late to save me—I've got the fever. It's taken all my best men—it'll have me soon. But you can save Haiti—you can save thousands of white men and women and kids, Jim—from these devils. In a few days it will be too late and the dead men will rule."

"Dead men, Jeff?" Jim asked.

Calhoun's voice had risen and gained strength.

"The living dead," he babbled on. "Men without brains. A dummy president and cabinet—just puppets for these voodoo devils to turn the country into a hell hole. They've been working for years, building and building. Their organization is perfect. All they need is a military leader to direct their armies."

"Where are these armies, Jeff?" Red prompted.

"All around us. Just waiting for the call to strike. I am right in the middle of them here. They know I've been an officer and they've been at me to do their dirty work for them. Because I've refused I've been a prisoner here for months. They've killed off my men and now they've got me. I couldn't write or get a messenger past them—not until Antoine managed to get through."

The frenzied light in his eyes flamed high and his flushed cheeks burned with the fever. Then he glanced around wildly.

"Antoine—where is Antoine?" he demanded. "They've got Antoine!"

With a mighty rallying of strength he struggled to his feet and started for the door. It took all of Red's bulk and brawn to block the way and turn him back. Then, suddenly, the false strength snapped and Jeff lay limp in Dolliver's arms. Tenderly Red laid him on the bed and bent over him. There was a catch in the big fellow's voice when he straightened up.

"It's better for him like this," he muttered

grimly. "He was as mad as a hatter. Armies all around him and dead men ruling. This place drove him stark crazy."

**T**HE sun had almost set when Jim and Red finished shaping the little mound that looked out over the widespread coffee fields Jeff Calhoun had planted. Dusk settled briefly over the valley. Very soon the tropic night would descend swiftly and completely.

In silence they walked back to the bungalow. There Jim dropped into an easy chair on the wide porch and sat moodily looking out over the plantation, while Red went inside to throw together a bite of supper. A strange air of melancholy brooded over the place. There should have been workers in those fields, servants around the house. Without them the plantation was eerie and deserted.

Yet, despite this disturbing emptiness, Jim had the uneasy feeling that he was being watched; that unseen eyes were trained upon him from the fields, from the surrounding jungle, even from the house itself. Angrily he shook himself. He was as bad as the superstitious blacks, getting the wind up because of a lot of foolish chatter.

Still, Jeff Calhoun had always been as level-headed as they come. He wasn't the sort to fly off the handle without plenty of provocation. Perhaps, after all, there was something more than feverish raving to what he had said.

**"HEY, Jim!"** Red suddenly whooped from within the house.

His tone brought Jim on the run, to find him anxiously searching the living room in which they had stacked their outfit.

"The guns are gone!" he announced as he surveyed the litter of opened bundles and boxes. "Every round of ammunition, too. They didn't miss a cartridge."

Systematically they went through the gear again. Nowhere was there a sign of the automatic rifles or their ammunition.

"Whoever it was knew just where to look for the stuff," Jim pointed out. "Even that extra box we packed in my suitcase. They didn't bother to open the stuff that wouldn't interest them."

"By God—you're right!" Red whistled as he lifted puzzled eyes to his partner.

In the next instant his eyes widened, and his right hand flew to his holster, but before he could draw his automatic the house lights snapped out. With the darkness came an avalanche of hot, perspiring bodies. From every direction they poured into the room.

Clutching hands fastened about Red's arms, grabbed at his legs. Uselessly the automatic fell and dropped to the floor to be trampled underfoot.

Savagely the big fellow flailed about him with his heavy fists. Time after time they connected crushingly with flesh and bone.

Groans and curses filled the room, but the odds were overwhelming. Red knew that the fight could not last. Already he was reeling from the terrific beating he was taking. Then one of the attackers leaped onto his back. A powerful arm locked around his neck, forced his head back—back—

Soon it was all over. He was down and hundreds of bodies seemed to be piled on top of him, pinning him to the floor and squeezing the last bit of air from his gasping lungs.

When the light snapped on again the room was filled with Negroes, great brawny fellows naked to the waist. Half a dozen of them clustered around Red, dragged him to his feet and lashed a rope around his wrists.

Across the room slumped the battered figure of Jim Benson, blood smeared and semi-conscious.

His head hung exhaustedly on his chest. Then suddenly it snapped erect as an ear-numbing booming reverberated through the room.

*Boom! Boom! Boooooom!* On the porch of the bungalow a big voodoo drum throbbed out its message, sending it echoing out over the valley. From the hills came the response as the hidden drums boomed their measured tempo into the night.

**U**P—up—up. Endlessly the trail led up into the hills, Jim and Red stumbling along in the darkness between their captors. And endlessly the drums throbbed out their pulse-stirring call.

At last the trail debouched into a great natural amphitheater, a level stretch of ground fringed with mighty sabliers. Jim gasped at the magnitude of the place and at the multitude of blacks in it.

AT one end of this outdoor cathedral a huge bonfire blazed, throwing its flickering light eerily over the savage assemblage. Halfway between the fire and the farther end of the clearing their captors lashed Jim and Red firmly to trees half a dozen feet apart.

It was this farther end of the clearing which riveted their attention. There a wooden dais had been erected beneath the widespread branches of a giant sablier. Seven chairs were arranged in a semicircle on the dais, six of them occupied by well-dressed and distinguished-looking Negroes. The seventh chair, in the center of the formation, was empty.

The six occupants of the chairs sat like statues, seemingly entirely oblivious of the throng around them or of the huge six-foot drums that were throbbing out their regular beat at the foot of the dais.

"What's the matter with those fellows?" Red asked curiously as they studied the unnatural looking semicircle. "They're clothes dummies or I miss my guess."

"No," Jim noticed. "That fellow on the left end just raised his hand. They're alive, all right, but that's about all."

Simultaneously their eyes left the barbaric spectacle before them and sought each other. Understanding and disbelief struggled for supremacy in that exchange of glances.

"Remember what Jeff said about the 'living dead'—about puppets for the voodoo doctors?" Jim reminded. "Of course I've read that sort of stuff—how these fellows poison a man with drugs that suspend life and then bring him back by administering an antidote. But I never took much stock in it."

"And there's that army business Jeff raved about," Red added. "Do you notice that these fellows, behind that front row of freaks, are lined up in columns and seem to have some sort of uniform?"

"That row of freaks are the witchdoctors—the *papalois* and *mamalois*—of the outfit," Jim identified the inner circle of fantastically garbed old men and wrinkled hags.

Red's observation was correct. Behind this ragamuffin circle the lines of gazing blacks were drawn up in regular order, the firelight reflecting on row after row of shiny faces and wide-staring

eyes.

In the center of the clearing a wild, bestial dance was in progress, two of the *mamalois* striving to outdo each other in their senuous and hideous gyrations, but their performance was receiving only cursory attention from the multitude. All eyes turned continually to the dais and to a large stone table and three empty chairs at the foot of the steps.

JIM had been testing the ropes which bound him while his eyes were cataloging the spectacle before him. The knots were securely tied and the ropes were tightly drawn.

Red, he knew, had a knack of bulging his great muscles to almost twice their size when he was being roped so that when he relaxed they loosened and gave him an opportunity to work on the knots. Jim had never been able to manage that, but years of knocking around in the far places of the earth had prepared him for emergencies such as this.

"Hell may start popping at any minute," he whispered to his partner. "Better get ready for it."

Red's head nodded and immediately his arms and shoulders started to wriggle as his muscles came into play. Where they stood, the light from the fire lit up their faces and the front of their bodies, but their backs were in darkness. After the first interest occasioned by their arrival Jim and Red had received little attention. Their part in the performance would evidently come later.

SLOWLY and painfully Jim's hands, bound behind his back and between the rest of his body and the tree trunk, worked their way up to the top of his trousers. There his fingers felt along the waistband, behind his belt. Soon a thread was loose, a few stitches pulled out. The space between the khaki and the lining widened.

Then his fingers stopped their work and he stared at the latest arrivals in the clearing. From a black tunnel in the trees came a curious figure. Of medium height, the newcomer was garbed in a frock coat and a high silk hat. A scrawny beard fringed the yellow face. From the waist up it was a man, but under the black waistcoat it wore a flaming crimson skirt and a pair of woman's shoes.

"Papa Nebo! Papa Nebo!" the black throng

chanted in voices tinged with awe. On all sides of the clearing the solid ranks were kneeling and bowing while a great moan went up from their throats.

"Papa Nebo—that's the top-kick in one of these death-worshipping voodoo cults," Jim whispered. "Now I begin to understand those dummies up there on the platform."

"Yeah, and look at those two bozos behind him," Red contributed. "Now I understand what became of our guns."

Behind Papa Nebo came two fantastically garbed figures, evidently women. Each bore triumphantly in her arms a shiny new automatic rifle which she placed on the table at the foot of the dais. Every eye in the place was turned on those deadly weapons and the ammunition piled up behind them, and now the moaning turned to a frenzied cheer which filled the amphitheater with its hysterical cacophony.

The arrival of the guns was the signal for stirring that savage throng to fever heat. All over the clearing *papalois* and *mamalois* pranced and gyrated before their followers. The drums pounded away faster and faster, and the howling and moaning made the place a diabolical inferno. Desperately Jim worked away with cramped fingers behind his back. At last his efforts were rewarded and, bit by bit, he drew from his waistband a little three-inch long blade of razor-sharp steel. Carefully he maneuvered it between his fingers, knowing that if it slipped and fell to the ground his last chance would be gone.

AT last it was in position. Then it was biting into the ropes that bound his wrists, severing them one by one. Grimly he clutched the precious blade in numbing fingers as the blood rushed back into the constricted veins and filled his hands with stinging torture.

Now that his wrists were free it would be an easier matter to cut loose the ropes which bound him to the tree and then it would be the work of only a few seconds to free his ankles. At least now he would have a chance to meet these devils hand to hand.

Papa Nebo had mounted the dais and with him he had brought the occupant for the seventh chair.

"*Monsieur le General!*" the frenzied mob

howled. "*Monsieur le President!*"

The torches stuck into the branches of the sablier trees flickered on Papa Nebo's face and made diabolic the triumphant grin that contorted his yellow features. But the newcomer seemed impervious to the pandemonium about him.

"My God—it can't be!" Red Dolliver gasped. "Jim—it's Jeff!"

JEFF CALHOUN was dressed in a military uniform. The flush of the fever had gone out of his face and was followed by a deathly pallor. Unresistingly he allowed himself to be led to the chair. Vacantly he looked out over the clearing.

"The dirty hellions—they've propped up his corpse!" Red grated with a bitter oath. "If I could only get my hands on that Nebo devil."

"You keep away from him; he's mine," Jim snapped with surprising sharpness. "Jeff is just as much alive as you or I—physically anyway. Those devils doped him—produced suspended animation—and then dug him up as soon as we had him buried. He wasn't crazy at all; he knew what he was up against. Don't you hear that president business they're howling? These voodoo devils have a revolution plotted. There's their president and cabinet—poor dummies who can do nothing for themselves and will be at the mercy of this gang."

"They'd never get away with it. The United States would step in," Red objected.

"And by that time they'd have the whole country looted and—Watch that bird!" Jim shouted suddenly.

The din was terrific and nobody paid the slightest attention to the prisoners. All eyes were turned to the dais where Papa Nebo was advancing with a metal goblet.

"That's the antidote they're giving Jeff," Jim called excitedly. "They need him in his right mind to lead their army. When he drinks that we'll be up against the showdown. All set, Red?"

The goblet was held up to Jeff's lips. Obediently he drank its contents—while Jim Benson hacked through the ropes which bound him.

The razor-sharp blade made short work of the ropes, and a few seconds later Jim sprang free and leaped over to Red's tree. The big fellow's face was crimson from his exertions, as Jim started to



cut through the ropes binding his ankles.

Suddenly a new note sounded through the clamor. Alarm and warning. One of the watching blacks had discovered that Jim was free and was calling to his companion.

**W**ITH a final slash at Red's bonds, Jim leaped to his feet and raced across the clearing to the foot of the dais.

Howling pandemonium raged in the amphitheater. Frenzied cries and weird yells went up from hundreds of throats. But for a few startled moments none of the blacks made an attempt to stop him.

Those few moments were all Jim needed. Once he had reached the foot of the dais his eager hands swept the rifles and ammunition off the heavy stone table on which they had been displayed, and upended it. In the next second he had dropped behind this impromptu barricade and the deadly barrel of an automatic rifle was trained over its edge.

Now a semblance of order was restored in the clearing. The shrieking *papalois* and *mamalois* had given way to a straight line of ebony stalwarts who were charging toward the dais on the run.

Grimly Jim pressed the trigger and death started to spout from that muzzle, death that cut great gaps in the advancing line.

Behind him on the dais Jim could hear the noise of footsteps, but he dared not look around. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Red's big figure loom up beside him. There was a short scuffle on the dais, and then the other rifle nosed over the barricade and a second stream of death poured into the howling blacks.

That was too much for them. The orderly line broke and rushed for the protection of the trees. Again a leader rallied them and tried to cover the distance up to the dais, but this attempt was shorter-lived than the first one.

**A** GAIN the line broke and the company, now a panic-stricken mob, ran wildly for the protecting blackness of the trees. A miraculous hush settled down over the clearing.

"They've had enough," Red grunted as he surveyed the empty clearing and listened to the echoing sounds of distant flight through the forest. "There's not a devil left."

Only then did he realize that he was talking to himself. The other rifle lay there against the table, but Jim Benson had gone. Startled, Red turned to look for his partner and beheld a curious sight.

The clearing was deserted. Of all those who had taken part in the voodoo ceremony only the six men on the dais remained. They still sat unmoved, staring out at the emptiness with lack-luster eyes.

But where was Jim? And where was Jeff Calhoun? Then Red saw them. Off at one side of the clearing Papa Nebo was racing frantically for the dark tunnel into the forest. Over his shoulder he had thrown Jeff Calhoun, but Jeff's weight was a bit too much for him. It slowed him up and enabled Jim Benson to catch up.

With a shout of satisfaction Jim threw himself at the devil priest and brought Papa Nebo to the ground with a perfect football tackle. Jeff Calhoun rolled clear and sat up dazedly. Reason had returned to him but he was too weak to take a hand in the struggle.

Jim Benson needed no assistance. Although the Negro fought desperately to break away he was no match for the avenger who pinned him to the earth and hammered away mercilessly at his bloody face. Over and over they rolled. Papa Nebo lost his hat. His shirt was ripped off and his frock coat in tatters.

Still Jim pounded away at him, until his fingers fixed themselves in the yellow throat and squeezed until the voodoo priest gasped for air.

"Take it easy, Jim," Red shouted into his partner's ear when he came up to the struggling pair. "That guy looks like an old man."

"Old man, eh?" Jim growled as he grabbed a handful of the fellow's whiskers.

**R**ED DOLLIVER gasped in complete amazement. The whiskers had torn loose from the yellow chin and now despite the gaping mouth and bloody distorted features, he was staring down at a face he knew well.

"Antoine Lebeau!" he gasped unbelievably, as the mulatto fell back limply on the ground.

"Yeah, Antoine Lebeau," Jim agreed dryly. "He's the answer to all Jeff's troubles and all this hell. I never had much use for him, but the slick devil fooled me on the *Carib Queen*. He took a

dose of his own drug—enough to fake death—and then left it to his pals on board to look after him.”

“But I saw him sewed up,” Red protested. “We saw him go overboard.”

“Yeah—we probably watched the impressive burial of a sack of coal or ballast,” Jim agreed.

The angry fire in his eyes smoldered at memory of that morning on the *Carib Queen*.

“Antoine would have gotten away with that trick,” he conceded, “but he made the biggest mistake of his life when he banged me over the head in the corridor.”