

# The Whispering

Screams rang out and the entire banquet hall was thrown into confusion as the Whispering Gorilla leaped across the table





# Gorilla By DON WILCOX

**Even Steven Carpenter didn't suspect the incredible future in store for him because he knew too much about a man named Swangler.**



**T**HE night was foggy, gray-black. It was well past midnight.

A car sped down the dimly-lighted street, its motor quiet. There were three men walking along the sidewalk, and the sound of their voices was gay; one was laughing.

*Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat.* . . . The sound of the sub-machine gun rose over their voices, cracking out the sound of death. The three pedestrians fell for cover. Only one of them, Steven Carpenter, knew what had happened after that. He had watched the other two fall; it was the way they fell that sickened him. That and the blood that ran down the pavement, sticking to his clothes. . . .

2.

The usual morning hustle in the city room of the *Daily Telegram* was quieter. On half a dozen desks lay the morning edition. There was a picture there of two men lying dead on a pavement. A third stood by, his face tear-stained. The newspapermen who walked by the desks spoke little. Some of them had been to the morgue. The City editor had all three of his telephones off the hooks.

At the far end of the long room, the elevator door opened. Steven Carpenter came walking down, waved to the City editor, walked through the door marked: Private—Managing Editor.

Lavery, the Managing Editor, turned his chair to face Carpenter.

"Where's my wife?" said Carpenter. "What did you do with her?"

"Hid her. Got her out of town."

"What the hell for?"

"I'll draw you a diagram!" Lavery snapped, sarcastically. "Now you're getting out for awhile—while you can still walk out."

Carpenter faced him, his jaw rigid, a tall, thin man, his eyes bright. "I'm not going anywhere. And I want to know where my wife is."

Lavery stood up. "Shut up!" he roared. "I'm running this show. You're taking the next boat for Africa. Take a vacation."

"You can go straight to hell," said Carpenter. "I've got that munitions ring on the run. I know what they're after—war! And I'll keep at them. I'm no quitter."

There was silence. Presently, Lavery said, "Steve, I know that. I'm not asking you to quit. They got Hannigan and Forman last night, but they were after you. And last night they sprayed your apartment with bullets—trying to get your wife."

Carpenter started. "She isn't—"



"No, she's safe. You have my word on it. She's where no one will find her—not even you. Because you're going to Africa on game hunting assignment. That'll take one day a month. The rest of the time you can keep on with that series of articles you started. Take your notes. Mail the stuff in. I want you to stay alive, you and your family. Your exposé will explode things here. You'll come back in time for the explosion, just before election."

Steven Carpenter sank into a chair. He mopped his head. "Thanks, chief," he said. "Thanks for everything. But I'm not going to Africa."

"You'll be aboard the S.S. *Congo* in less than two hours."

Carpenter shook his head. "No," he said.

## 3.

The motors of the S.S. *Congo* sent a dull roar upward into Stateroom 44. A solid, subdued roar, fitting accompaniment to the hammering of typewriter keys. The freighter was out of the harbor now. Steven Carpenter lit another cigarette as he began his column.

*QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:*

*Why was the S.S. Itaska reported to dock officials as being laden with harmless chemicals, when any stevedore on the loading job knew that the mixture of these chemicals would result in deadly mustard gas?*

*What was the real port-of-call of the American-owned and Panama-registered freighter Celeste, when she steamed out of the harbor with transport planes that require only two days to be converted to bombers?*

*Was it farm machinery in the holds of the U.S.S. Brockton when she sailed quietly at midnight last Saturday? Was it mousetraps? Or could it have been sixty thousand machine guns?*

The typewriter kept hammering. The floor became littered with paper. The room was filled with a blue haze that lay like a cloud through which only fingers moved.

There was a knock on the door. "Come in," said Carpenter.

A sailor entered, carrying a tray. "Captain Forest's compliments, sir. He says maybe you'll want a sandwich and some coffee."

"Thanks," said Carpenter, rubbing his eyes. "Put the tray down on my bunk. And here—give these papers to the Captain. They're to go wireless immediately."

As the sailor closed the door behind him, Carpenter spoke aloud. "And let those dirty . . . directing the bloody mess see how they like it!"

## 4.

"I DON'T like it," said the heavy man. "I don't like it at all. And I want it ended now." He had an iron-gray head, and his cheeks were puffy with good living. His little eyes roamed again over the bold type of the *Daily Telegram*, over the column, *QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*. The cigar in his hand was unheeded as he faced the long table with the men

around it. Now he spoke.

"We've got things running well now. Soon, when it gets too hot to continue running contraband, we'll make our big move. But before that—"

"Anything you say," said a man near him, a gray-moustached, carefully dressed man.

"Questions!" the heavy man spat out, still looking at the newspaper. "Well, we've got the answer. Spangler—you say you know where this Carpenter went?"

"Had him followed right to the boat."

The heavy hand crashed down on the paper and the cigar crushed.

"Get him!"

## 5.

The deep, pungent odors of the jungle clung to the air, but there was something fresh in it. The faint breeze that cooled Steven Carpenter's face eased the heat a little. He rose from his bamboo chair and strolled across the low, wide verandah. The door to the house had opened and the light fell out to the dusty road in a long patch.

"It's so pleasant here, Dr. Devoli," said Carpenter, "that I'm really glad the lodging houses in town were filled. It's so peaceful here near the jungle's edge. Let me thank you again for your hospitality."

Dr. Dartworth Devoli stood in the doorway, donning a laboratory apron. Taller even than Carpenter, the top of the doorway was just high enough to brush his fine white hair. His unwrinkled face and strong bearing belied his age.

"The pleasure is all mine, Mr.—ah—Fenton," Devoli smiled. "I wouldn't live anywhere else, now that I've acquired this little corner of the jungle for my own. It's both a home and a laboratory, and that's all in the world I want; that, and my work. But it is a welcome novelty to have a guest here, especially a man of your intelligence. Does your writing allow you to travel as you wish?"

"Not always." Carpenter smiled slightly. "This is more of a trip for my health. But your work—that seems fascinating, from what you told me at lunch. I've thought of it since. An article on your experiments—"

Devoli raised a hand, the sensitive fingers spread. "Please, not a word. Perhaps in a few years, after this generation of gorillas has developed. Let Plumbutter have a chance. After that—but I hear Plumbutter's voice." A low growl had issued from the laboratory building where Devoli kept his specimens, a voice at once sensuous and cruel. "If you'll excuse me," said Devoli, bowing. "I'm being paged—jungle style."

Carpenter grinned. "The moon seems about to rise. I believe I'll go for a walk. See you later, Doctor."

Steven Carpenter strolled down a winding path bordered by deep-scented flowers and delicate, dark ferns. From everywhere the myriad noises of the jungle came to him, a uniform stridency that negated itself into a clean silence. He stopped at the edge



of a clearing, silhouetted against the mammoth orange moon that edged over the tops of great trees. He was planning the next day's work. . . .

"Hello."

The man had come up so quickly that Carpenter had not heard him. He looked uncomfortable in the loose white clothes he wore, and the moonlight caught a jagged scar that ran from a corner of his mouth.

"Hello," said Carpenter, after a moment.

"Nice night," said the man, fumbling for a cigarette.

"It's a honey," said Carpenter.

"Got a match?"

Carpenter produced a match. In the cupped flame in his hands, the stranger's eyes took on a peculiar glint as he looked up at Carpenter.

"Thanks," he said. "Just wanted to make sure who you were." He backed away. There was a gun in his hand, and as he spoke, the gun flashed three times.

Steven Carpenter fell heavily, with three bullets in his heart. The stranger listened a moment to the echoes of his gun, and when they had ended, he ran lightly down the road.

## CHAPTER II

### A Gorilla Speaks!

THE English Captain put on his cap. "Thank you very much, Doctor. The Department won't forget your cooperation. If we'd had to take the body with us now, half the damned town would be awake. We'll be here first thing in the morning. The necessary autopsy can be performed by you at your convenience." He nodded to the Lieutenant, who motioned to several men in uniform. All of them turned to leave.

Dr. Dartworth Devoli stared at the body lying covered on a bench. "You were a fine chap, Carpenter," he said aloud. The table beside him was covered with papers: notes, letters, news clippings, pictures. "Two hours ago you were alive," the Doctor mused. "A fine, healthy man, with a good mind and a conscience, and a job that ended it all. And this lovely girl who was your wife . . . what will I tell her? They followed you all the way here, from a country where they needed men like you."

The scientist sighed deeply and blew his nose. "That's life," he said, quietly. "Here lies youth and vigor, dead—while an old man who scarcely knew him or his right name is the only one to mourn. An old man who has spent his years trying to approach making out of animals what nature gave you at birth. How wasteful . . . how tragic. . . ."

Devoli rose and pulled back the cover from the dead man's face. A ray of moonlight came through the shutters and lighted the dead, agonized features. "What good did all the fighting do you? Your brain was no stronger than your heart. When they stopped

that, they stopped everything."

But suddenly the aged scientist paused, and his hands trembled. "What am I saying?" he demanded of the empty room. "What am I thinking? Good Lord!"

His hands tore off the cover from the dead man. The blood from the bullet holes had clotted. For a moment the lithe, strong hands swept over the body. "Your brain, Carpenter! You were no more than your brain—but maybe . . ."

Devoli stood indecisive, his hands holding his head, his eyes burning. Then, swiftly, he rolled up his sleeves.

He placed the body upon a cot, rolled the cot over the threshold, through several rooms, into a half-lighted chamber. He touched a switch and a blaze of violet-white light flooded the room.

Now he scoured his hands in the deep white basin. The kettle that contained the surgical tools was boiling. The body waited upon the operating table . . .

Occasionally through the night the scientist would break away from his frantic work for a few seconds—long enough to listen to the soft rhythmic sluss-sluss-sluss of the automatic blood pump. Now and then a slight adjustment of the control levers, then back to the operating table.

By the time he was ready to deposit a precious mass of tissue in the chamber of the automatic blood pump, the instrument was perfectly adjusted to the conditions of temperature and circulation necessary to keeping human tissue alive.

With a sigh of gratitude to his good luck, Devoli slumped into a chair. The sun was high. The caged animals were whining for their breakfasts. For minutes the white haired man sat there, heard nothing, saw nothing—nothing except the rhythmic sluss-sluss-slussing of the automatic blood pump. He looked down at his scoured white hands, wondering at the miraculous surgery they had performed. The easier half was done.

One hand rested upon a small writing table. There was a pen, there was writing paper. He wrote: *My dear Mrs. Carpenter:*

*By this time you will have received my telegram informing you of the tragic death of your husband. I regret to inform you that it will be impossible, owing to conditions I cannot readily describe, to ship the body of Steven Carpenter back to you . . .*

Now Dartworth Devoli paced back and forth before the cage of Plumbutter.

"This is the end for you, Plumbutter boy," he muttered to the unconcerned animal. Plumbutter chewed contentedly at a straw. "I've invested a lot in you, Plumbutter," said the scientist, as he prepared a large chloroform pad. "Now I need you—need your body."

Plumbutter yawned—a little painfully, for his throat was still sore from recent operations which the scientist had performed on his voice box.

Plumbutter was a four-hundred-pound youth of six years, a healthy, normal male gorilla. The scientist



had hoped that Plumbutter would eventually shed light upon the intriguing age-old mystery of animal intelligence. In recent months the finest of Devoli's surgical skills had gone into equipping Plumbutter with every physical property necessary for speaking with a human voice.

Time and again during these past weeks the white haired master had said to his dumb protege, "It's a certainty that you and your tribe will never develop real intelligence unless you learn to speak. As soon as I get your throat in shape, you'll have a chance that no other ape has ever had." For Devoli was convinced that human intelligence and human speech were interdependent; and what a sensational victory for science it would be if an improved speech mechanism would result in a higher grade of brain power in the gorilla!

But all of Devoli's fine aircastles for Plumbutter had suddenly shaken down to nothing in that strange moment of inspiration when the dead body of Steven Carpenter had been left at his door.

"I need you, Plumbutter," Devoli repeated. The husky gorilla grew drowsier with each inhalation of the chloroform. "I *think* the purpose is humanitarian," the scientist added, "though no scientist in the world can be sure of such things until he tries. . . ."

**F**OR several weeks after the operation Dartworth Devoli wondered whether his experiment had not been a dismal failure. But finally the springs of life within the animal began to take on enough vigor that the creature would creep about on his hands and feet and show an interest in food.

From all outward signs he was the same old Plumbutter with the same old jungle habits, old customary actions that he could have performed as well with no brain at all.

Then came the first indication of a change.

One morning the gorilla rubbed his great hands over his head, as if it were strange to him. His skull had been enlarged with borrowings from a foreign skull, and patched with silver plates, over which his own scalp had been tightly stretched. For almost an hour the creature seemed absorbed in stroking the furry dome above his ears, then he lost interest—if such simple behavior could be called an interest. It was simply a mechanical discovery on the animal's part, Devoli realized, and no proof that any consciousness had awakened in the new cortex.

There came a day when there seemed to be a symptom of growing curiosity in the gorilla—slight but perhaps significant. The animal showed a strong fascination for the mirror he held in his hand. Something more than the lively curiosity which any monkey exhibits—rather an agitated concern—even an emotional disturbance!

"Carpenter!" the scientist called. "Steven Carpenter! Listen to me!"

The gorilla grew attentive.

"You are Steven Carpenter! Do you understand?" The scientist clutched at the bars of the pen fervently. The animal stood motionless before him as if entranced by his words.

"You were killed, Carpenter, but I saved your brain. Gradually your nerves will straighten out and once more you'll be a living, thinking man—"

The enthusiastic words suddenly broke off. Unintentionally the speaker had run into the snag he meant to avoid—that word *man*.

He might have passed over the slip lightly had he been sure that the big hairy creature before him did not understand his words. But he was not sure; as a matter of fact—the gorilla behaved as if he had understood. He slowly lifted his great, leathery black hands, palms upward, and stared at them. Then he returned his deep-set, burning eyes to Dr. Dartworth Devoli.

The scientist edged back from the steel bars unconsciously. He was uncertain what to make of the gorilla's strange manner.

Now the animal clutched the upright bars with his great hands and pressed his bulky head close against the steel fence. His lips pushed together thickly, then opened to reveal his tongue between his chalk-white teeth. The tongue pressed at the roof of the mouth. At the same time the vocal cords gave forth a low hum. The scientist understood. The gorilla was speaking the word *man*.

"Your brain—it's working!" the scientist cried out. "You're Steven Carpenter! Steven Carpenter! Do you understand me? Your body was dead, but I've saved your brain—put it into a new body! *You can still live—and think—and be! You can be!*"

Again the gorilla studied his hands. His upright body drooped slightly, the huge head bowed, and the sluggish lips uttered a sound. It was a low, thickly whispered word, crudely pronounced but unmistakable.

**"T**HAN-N-NKS." The deep subdued boom of that single word made chills race along Devoli's spine.

Then as if the mental exertion had exhausted him, the gorilla lay down, a tired animal that wished to be left alone with his solemn thoughts.

The scientist capered about, pampering the beast with food and medicine, returning from his other duties every few minutes to study the mumbling lips.

Devoli tried to talk to him, to no avail. The beast simply stared off into space—or was he, by any chance, staring at that sprightly female ape two pens beyond?

Suppose, the scientist thought with sudden self-torture, that this prize achievement of surgical grafting should yearn for the jungle instead of civilization?

Suppose the animal instincts that dwelt within the viscera of this beast should prove more potent than the brain-stored memories of man. The gorilla equipped with the superior thinking machine of a man might decide to free himself from this prison and beat



his way back to the deepest jungles to become the king of all beasts.

Dartworth Devoli's concern grew as the gorilla's distant manner continued. . . .

Late one night as Devoli moved from gate to gate, stepping lightly so as not to disturb any sleepers, he came to the last gate, Plumbutter's own. He heard a soft tread from inside the fence. Suddenly a huge crusty hand came out of the darkness to clamp over Devoli's face and bind his head against the bars. A second husky hand slipped through the steel bars to snatch the keys. The lock sounded. The steel hinges sang a sharp note as the gate swung open, another as it closed. In the brief interval between those notes, the scientist and his prize specimen changed places. The lock clinked.

Devoli cried out, "Carpenter, in the name of human decency—!"

Perhaps the chance words were well chosen. The shadowy form of the gorilla receding toward the black wall of the jungle stopped. An arm swung, and the ring of keys whizzed through the air to fall somewhere within the pen that held the scientist prisoner.

Before Dartworth Devoli, groping through the blackness, recovered the keys and extricated himself from the pen, the sounds of the gorilla's footsteps melted away into the silence of the jungle night. . . .

### CHAPTER III

#### Gorilla in a Stateroom

DEVOLI plodded back toward his house with faltering step. He reached the porch, slumped into the first chair, and there he sat for the rest of the night, his head in his hands, his fine white hair showering down over his slender fingers.

Sunlight and the call of hungry animals forced his stiff tired body into action. He stalked through the house, then suddenly stopped. An overturned chair arrested him.

His eyes flashed across the room to an open door, he flew to the storeroom where the suitcase of the late Steven Carpenter was stored. The suitcase was there—open! It had been rifled. The money was gone.

A knock sounded at the front door. Devoli looked into the grinning face of an American agent who lived in the nearby Congo village.

"Say, Professor, I just seen somethin's got your trained animals beat to a frazzle. Some guy made up like a gorilla—"

"You've seen my gorilla?" the scientist cried.

"Your gorilla? Hold on a minute. This wasn't no *real* gorilla, though this baby could pass in any zoo I ever seen. He came racin' down to the boat—"

"Boat?"

"Now let me finish, will you, Professor? Whose story is this? I said *boat*. Almost knocked me over the pier gettin' up the gangplank. You never seen so much excitement in your life."

"You mean they let him get aboard a steamship?"

"Couldn't stop him. Or if they could, they didn't want to. He was wavin' a fistful of bills big enough to choke the Captain. An' the Captain looked like he was chokin' all right. Guess there ain't no law against these vaudeville actors gettin' made up if they want to get what they consider publicity. But I thought I'd come by an' tell you what you're up against."

Dr. Devoli sank to a chair. He was vaguely aware that his animals were screaming and chattering for food.

"Yessir," said the American, laughing, "with a fistful of bills like that actor was wavin', I wouldn't be surprised if they'd let one of them real animals outa your menagerie in the bridal suite! Coulda climbed aboard a chariot bound for Heaven, an' no questions asked. Them actors . . ."

THE steamship *Majestic* was two days out from the Congo coast, ploughing its course toward South America, en route to the United States. The weather had been rough, but it was clearing, and three stewards stood on the after deck, huddled by the rail. They seemed unmindful of the magnificent green swells of water through which the ship moved, or of the clouds that lifted from the horizon.

One of them reached into his pocket and brought forth half a dozen lengths of stiff, coarse hair.

"Now," he said, in a manner of one establishing a vital point in an argument, "what can you say to that? You'll have to admit he's some kind of animal, not a man. But he's trying to pass for a man, because he was clipping these hairs off his arms; I saw him through the keyhole. These hairs blew under the door."

"Haven't you gone in to see him, Joe?"

"No, thanks," said Joe. "Not since he growled at me that first time. I just knock and hand his tray through the door, and his big paw reaches out and takes it."

"Paw?"

"Well, *hand*—if you can call a claw as big as a platter a hand."

The three stewards sauntered down the stairs toward the stateroom in question.

"I'll bet he's a phoney, Joe—or else *you* are," one of the stewards jeered.

"All right," said Joe, half angered. "I challenge either of you to trade places with me and take him his dinner tonight. Go in and get chummy with the old boy if you feel like it. Which one of you wants to take me up?"

The challenge had a silencing effect. The subject turned.

"Does he eat like a man?"

"Eats three times as much as any human," said Joe.

The words quieted to whispers. The stewards were before the stateroom door. Joe bent to the keyhole.

"There he is. You can see for yourself."



In turn the stewards bent for a keyhole view of the mysterious passenger. What they saw was a huge dark hairy head, the savage face turned toward them.

"Don't worry," Joe whispered, never guessing that his whisper carried clearly through the keyhole. "He never sticks his head outside the door."

The stewards bent for another look. It was an impressive face, with powerful protruding jaws, a wide rubber colored nose like a human nose pressed down flat and magnified, and a massive bony skull that gathered over the ebony eyes in a heavy ridge. The gorilla showed his teeth.

"Grinning at me!" one of the stewards gasped. "Nuts—that's no gorilla. That's an actor, and he's part of that theatrical company we got aboard. He's all dressed up to get the passengers excited about the troupe."

"S-s-s-sh!" Joe whispered. "He's listening to everything we say."

"You think he can understand—"

"Sure, I thought you said he's just an actor dressed up—"

"He's no actor," Joe hissed. "He's the real thing!"

"Don't give us that, Joe—"

The stateroom door opened. The big rubbery face grinned complacently and a huge hairy arm reached out in an easy dignified gesture. The white uniformed stewards made white streaks in three different directions.

"J-J-o-o-oe!" The soft booming voice reverberated through the corridors. The powerfully spoken word froze the three stewards in their tracks. Joe saw the huge crooked finger motion to him.

"Com-m-me her-r-re!"

Joe obeyed, retracing his steps gingerly. He stopped a few feet from the half opened door.

"Don-n-n't be-e-e afra-a-aid," said the gorilla. "Go-o-oh geh-tt me-ee the man-n-ager-r-r of the the-e-eatrical-l-l com-m-mpan-n-e-e."

The deep soft husky whisper ceased and the door closed. Joe turned to the other stewards. "See?" he said. "Just like I said." But his voice had cracked, and he was as white as his uniform jacket. Then he went as fast as his wobbly legs would carry him, and the other stewards went their separate ways.

**I**N the salon Joe recognized the little, hot-eyed, black-mustached little man who was pacing around the table of card players: Roland Fuzziman, the troupe manager. Joe delivered the message with no explanations and left the dapper Mr. Fuzziman to do what he pleased about it.

Manager Fuzziman thought a moment. "One of my actors?" he repeated aloud to himself. "Room 44?" There were no members of his company there. But suddenly he brightened, corrected his tie. Undoubtedly a lady. An admirer, too discreet to speak to him publicly. Undoubtedly a beautiful lady. The smile lay broadly on his face as he walked down to Room 44 and knocked on the door.

"Com-m-me in-n-n."

Fuzziman almost jumped back to the other wall. He gulped, and as his shock receded, his professional, theatrical ear functioned again, because it still was ringing with the deep, soft tones that had answered him. There was a rich resonance and a certain breathy, thick enunciation that he couldn't readily classify among the dialects he knew. He turned the knob and walked into the room.

This time Fuzziman's gulp was distinctly audible. He stared a moment, closed his eyes, then looked again. But slowly, as he gazed at the four hundred pound gorilla, his manner changed, for Roland Fuzziman was a man who saw the world through eyes different from other people's. He blinked at the huge, hairy animal, strode up to it and slapped it on the chest.

"Say, buddy, you're good!" the little man exclaimed. "Plenty good—in fact, damn good!"

He slapped the gorilla's chest again.

"Yessir, a very sturdy outfit, brother. Where'd you get it? Brehl and Brehl or Winklesteins? Any trade mark on it? It feels like the real thing."

Fuzziman began to feel around at the wrists and neck, looking for a trade mark. He couldn't even find a seam.

"Except for the head," Fuzziman cocked his own head critically, "that's the most convincing outfit I ever saw. The head's really too bulgy—but not bad."

The gorilla gave a low chuckle like an echo out of a cistern, and he bestowed upon the dapper little gentleman a wide grin full of even white teeth. His words came forth, slow, measured, deeply resonant.

"I wan-n-nt a job-b. Can-n you-u-u u-use me-e-e in-n a pla-a-ay?"

The cocky little manager was still too amazed at this theatrical creation to answer the gorilla's question. For a few minutes he could do nothing but walk around the huge creature, sizing him up from every angle and praising his appearance to the skies.

"That voice of yours," Fuzziman raved, "how do you manage that deep down in the cellar effect? It sounds like tom-toms from the depths of the jungle. You say you want a job? My boy, you're the answer to a manager's prayers. I've got a play I've never used because it needed a man monster. With a little patching—change the monster to a gorilla—*h-m-m-m!* By the way, what's your past experience? Are you at liberty now? Where are you bound for? Any previous contracts standing in the way?"

The gorilla hesitated momentarily, and his answer seemed to be a deeper, more disturbing rumble, as if he had thought of something.

"On-n-l-e-e a li-t-tle un-nfin-n-nished bus-s-siness in-n-n the Sta-a-ates," said the gorilla. "It can-n wa-a-ait."

Fuzziman fished two large cigars out of his pocket, placed one of them in the gorilla's teeth, and applied his lighter. The gorilla puffed heartily and blew smoke through the black nostrils of his flat nose.



FOR half an hour the manager smoked and talked; the more he questioned the gorilla, the more intrigued he became, and the more mystified. It was evident that the creature in the gorilla skin didn't care to lay all his cards on the table. Finally the manager put a pointed question:

"I'll check over that play tonight and see you tomorrow. How will I know you when you're out of that monkey suit? What is your name?"

"Jus-st cal-l-l m-e the gor-ril-l-la," came the slow reverberating answer. "I'l-l-l al-lwa-a-ays wear-r-r this-s cos-stu-um-m-me."

"Always? No, you can't do that. Whenever you'd try to go into a hotel or restaurant you'd have trouble. Women would jump out of their shoes. Men would call the police. No, you'd better—"

"I'l-l al-lwa-ays wear-r this-s cos-tu-um-me," the gorilla repeated.

Fuzziman studied the big hairy creature in awe. If this fellow preferred to be stubborn—

"It-t wil-l-l ad-ver-r-tis-s-se our-r pla-a-ay," the gorilla added.

"That's an angle! I'll let you wear it with a sign on your back. But still—you'll find it awkward traveling that way."

"That-t is-s why-y I wis-sh to-o pla-a-ace my-sel-lf in-n you-r-r car-r-re."

The little manager stood at the door, his mystified eyes still lingering upon his fascinating protege. This man, he thought, must be some sort of fugitive—perhaps a convict who had invented this clever means of hiding himself. Well, whatever he might be on the inside, Fuzziman liked his disguise well enough to take a chance.

"By the way, what is this unfinished business you mentioned? Revenge—or love—or—"

"Bo-oth," said the husky undertone.

The manager laughed. "You're all right, brother." He stepped back to give the gorilla a final slap on the furry chest and a pinch on the tough massive arm. "You'd be just one notch more realistic if you'd glue some longer hairs on your forearms."

The gorilla gave a rumbling answer and proceeded to crouch down on the floor. A sudden sickness had come upon him, owing to the effects of smoking the cigar.

Fuzziman, of course, never guessed such a thing. He went out with a head full of enthusiasm, tintured with puzzlement. The gorilla's final gag, in answer to the suggestion of longer hairs on the forearms was a stunner that made Fuzziman champ at his cigar all the way down the corridor.

The gorilla had replied, "Hair-r-rs? I'l-l-l gro-o-ow them-m-m."

ON the final night before the S.S. *Majestic* docked in New York the various and sundry talents of the passengers were collected and displayed in a stage show down on the second deck.

The feature of the night's entertainment was a pre-

view of Manager Fuzziman's forthcoming stage play, "*The Whispering Gorilla*." From the instant that the bulky silvery gray-brown gorilla's head and shoulders appeared at the window of the stage set the audience was all eyes. And when the husky, soft whispered words began to roll forth in tones unlike any human voice ever heard, every listener was transfixed.

Three brief scenes from the play, then the curtain went down. The crowd went wild. The S.S. *Majestic* fairly rocked with the cheers and shouts of "Gorilla! More gorilla! Give us more!"

Fuzziman responded by staging one more short scene. Then followed curtain call after curtain call. Fuzziman brought the *Whispering Gorilla* back for a final bow, but still the audience wasn't satisfied.

"We want to see his face!" they shouted. "Take the mask off!"

Under the glare of footlights the dapper little manager turned to the dark hairy monster.

"How about it, fellow? Won't you give 'em a look at your face?"

The audience hushed to catch Fuzziman's words. The place was suddenly deathly quiet—so quiet that the gorilla's whispered answer carried out to every listener.

"But-t I haven't-t an-ny mas-s-sk. This-s is m-y own-n fa-a-ace."

The audience greeted this with wilder applause than before. But after the curtain had fallen for the last time, Manager Fuzziman still stood beneath the floodlights like a man paralyzed. His eyes were wide, and upon his reddened face the beads of perspiration stood out sharply.

## CHAPTER IV

### Rumblings by W. G.

THE telephone buzzed.

Manager Fuzziman strode across the carpeted floor of Suite 909, the most exclusive suite in the very exclusive Radcliffe Hotel, and picked up the receiver.

"Metropolitan Press Bureau," said the voice. "We're downstairs with the press clippings on the first month's run of '*The Whispering Gorilla*'."

"Send them up!" snapped Fuzziman.

Fuzziman had been snapping at everyone that day, though he was by nature a gentle man. He walked back to the ivory table, sniffed at a box of cigars. Lighting one, he went toward the next room, from whence came the slow, painful clicking of a typewriter. Patient, crude strokes of heavy fingers.

Standing in the doorway, Fuzziman said, addressing the immaculately dressed and groomed creature at the typewriter, "You're working on that column of yours, I suppose?" There was no answer. "I don't like to keep talking about it," Fuzziman added, hesitantly. "I know you think it's none of my business. Only you're meddling with dangerous stuff. I wouldn't have minded a column of harmless chit-chat, but—"

"Please," said the gorilla.



Fuzziman sighed. "You're a person of peculiar talents," he said. "I hope they won't lead you to tragedy." His words seemed to stop the gorilla, for the huge animal stopped typing and stared at the wall.

"Tragedy?" said the gorilla. "Maybe I've seen it. Maybe—" but he was silent.

"All right," said Fuzziman. "You know I don't want to pry. But I did want to tell you that I've read your column every day since it appeared two weeks ago and I'm rooting for you. You're doing a great thing. They say you'll swing the whole election. I only wish someone else was doing it."

"Thanks," said the gorilla. The typewriter again beat out its labored tattoo.

"Slow going, isn't it?" said Fuzziman. "You ought to get a stenographer."

"If my typing speeds up as rapidly as my speech did, I'll be all right." The animal's voice had the deep, melancholy resonance of a pipe organ, but the words were cleanly articulated, and the speech was fluent. "And I can't trust anyone to know who is really doing this column."

"Maybe I could get Lavery, the Managing Editor of the *Telegram*, to supply someone you could trust," Fuzziman began, when the doorbell sounded.

Fuzziman went to the door and three bellboys pushed in, loaded with volumes that contained stacks of papers. "Take them right in to the table in the inner office," said Fuzziman, with a wave of his cigar.

The bellboys obeyed, advancing to the room from which the clicking typewriter sounded. Two of them got as far as the table. The third one was knocked down in the rush—a rush inspired by the sight of a monstrous animal sitting at a typewriter and turning around to face them. The stacks of paper swished down in heaps over the floor, and the three bellboys chased out of the suite in a near-panic.

"What? No tips?" Fuzziman smiled wanly. He returned to the inner room and helped the gorilla gather the mass of clippings. "They're still afraid of you," Fuzziman said. "In spite of your nationwide publicity in advance of that radio program you've signed for, and in spite of a month's packed houses on Broadway, they can't decide whether you're human or not."

"Can you?" said the gorilla.

At that moment the door buzzer went off again. Fuzziman gratefully tore his eyes away from the gorilla's penetrating gaze and went to the door. As he opened it, he found himself face to face with a tall, slender, white-haired man. "I'd like to see the person called the Whispering Gorilla," he said.

"You and ten million others," Fuzziman snapped. "How'd you sneak past the house detectives downstairs? This is a strictly private—"

The tall man pushed a hand out and kept the door from closing. "I've come from the Congo," he said. "I am a personal acquaintance."

"THE Congo?" said Fuzziman. A queer chill went through him. The tall man's manner was

strangely impressive. "What is your name, sir?"

The stranger did not answer; perhaps he did not hear, for his gaze was intent upon the door to the inner office. Fuzziman looked about to see the gorilla standing there in the doorway, statue-like, his knees bent but slightly, his huge head held high above his immaculate white collar.

The gorilla advanced a step. The stranger rose from his chair, passed his fingers through the locks of white hair that sprayed over his forehead, as if appraising the creature's appearance. He looked and waited. The gorilla came to him and extended a leathery hand.

The furniture quivered as the gorilla spoke. "How do you do, Dr. Devoli?"

"How do you do," said Dartworth Devoli, "Mr. Ca—"

The syllable was only half uttered when a steel pressure from the gorilla's hand stopped it. "Mr. Gorilla," the speaker finished.

Then the newcomer and the gorilla stood silently, looking at each other. Fuzziman couldn't make out what was passing between these two. He didn't like it. It made him think of strange things. Things that made his throat dry, that forced him to clutch the ends of his coat. He took a deep breath through his mouth.

"I'll take a walk," said Fuzziman.

"You needn't," said the gorilla. "Dr. Devoli and I will visit in my private office. Dr. Devoli, this is Mr. Fuzziman, my personal manager."

The gorilla took the scientist's hat, ushered him into the next room and the door closed.

"Well, Dr. Devoli?" said the gorilla.

"I've come to take you with me, back to the Congo," said Dartworth Devoli. "You are one of my—patients, you know. I owe it to you to—"

"What of your other patients?" asked the gorilla. "How were you able to leave them?"

"Only by suspending several experiments. I left an assistant in charge. I felt that my first duty was to you."

"Then I welcome you to stay here and continue your duty."

Devoli smiled. "Your brain is working well, I see."

"Never better," said the gorilla. "Plumbutter's vigor was enough to enliven anyone's brain."

"Yes." The scientist's smile vanished. "Plumbutter's vigor is what I've been losing sleep about. You must come back with me. Live in my lodge. I'll give you every chance to get used to your new vigor—safely."

The gorilla's ebony eyes passed over the stacks of clippings, the typewriter, the yellow bulletin board where his first week's columns were posted. He got up and sauntered to the window and gazed out over the panorama of white skyscrapers. Devoli noted the lines of the well tailored black suit, and was surprised to see how much it did to correct the gorilla's misproportions.

The gorilla turned about, his long arms unobtru-



sively folded behind him.

"I had to come back to America. Believe me, Doctor, I had to finish my job." The floor seemed to tremble at his words, and his voice fell to a low whisper. "No one else knows what I've found out. An old friend of mine named Bradford helped me collect it, but even he hasn't gone ahead. And it's vital that this work continue."

"No work is more vital than the salvaging of Steven Carpenter," said Devoli.

"But don't you see, Doctor?" whispered the gorilla. "That is exactly what I am doing. Steven Carpenter found the international ring of munitions makers; he unearthed their method of shipping contraband cargoes to belligerents, while at the same time retaining the government's protection. Sooner or later they will contrive to have a ship of theirs sunk—and then war! War because a nation at war sank a ship carrying munitions to the enemy! And they'll take the country to war when they're ready for it! They're almost ready. The election is almost here. If the ring elected its puppet Congressmen, then staged a torpedoing—"

The gorilla pulled a sheet from his typewriter. "Have you read the column I write as W.G.?" he said, laying the sheet down on the table before Devoli. The aged scientist looked at it.

"Are all these things true?" he said quietly.

The gorilla nodded. "Every word. I've had to begin anew. Had I merely continued, my old editor might have become suspicious, demanded to meet me. As it is, with so much of Carpenter's material duplicated, he considers it an independent source with the same material. But he must never find out who I am, for he might beat a trail for others to follow."

Devoli sat silently a moment.

"Do you know whom you are fighting?" he said.

The gorilla nodded his great head. "I think so. Every shipment has gone through the hands of the North American Shipping Alliance." He paused, then said, "Would you call your experiment a success if I quit my responsibility to my people and my country—to assume the life of an oyster?"

DEVOLI rose and his hands trembled visibly. "If you stay here to fall, as Steven Carpenter and others fell, my life work will fall with you."

The gorilla hesitated. "Why are you so sure I'll fall?"

"Your gorilla instincts will let you down. I can't let you make this sudden plunge into civilization. Remember, from the neck down you're—you're full of primitive instincts that will control you. You're dangerous. In a pinch—"

The gorilla lifted a finger and his guest silenced. Sounds of knocking at the door of the outer office. A mutter from Fuzziman.

"It's all right," said the gorilla. "My manager is there to answer. You were saying—"

Devoli tried a new tack. "What of Mrs. Steven Carpenter? Does she know what has happened?"

"No," said the gorilla quietly. "No one knows but you."

"Do you intend to ever let her know?"

"Never."

"But—aren't you curious to see her? You *must* be." The scientist searched the expressionless silvery black face. "Are you so strong—or so devoid of your old feelings—that you can resist the temptation to see her?"

"My manager often lets me drive about in his car." The gorilla closed his ebony eyes slowly and opened them to gaze out the window. "I have already seen her—many times—but she does not know it."

Suddenly the private conversation was terminated by echoes of harsh talk from the front office. Contrary to the usual procedure, Manager Fuzziman was not doing his share of the talking.

"Don't give me that stuff. Where's this W.G.?" said a loud, snarling voice. "I mean the guy that's been writing that column."

"But there is no—"

"Then what the hell did the *Daily Telegram* send a copy boy over here for yesterday?"

"None of your business!" Fuzziman snapped.

"But it *is* our business," said the second voice, with a deadly calm. "We're exterminators, see? We come after an insect."

The first voice rang out: "Get the hell away from that phone!"

The sound of a table falling, then Fuzziman's choked cry.

The gorilla had moved halfway to the door, his arms reaching.

"Stay back!" the scientist cried. A restraining hand reached out and held his neck. "Let me go." And as the gorilla opened the door, the scientist bolted through and closed it behind him.

The gorilla, standing against the door, his breath coming in labored gasps, his hands tightly knotted as he held them clenched, heard what happened.

"Get away from that man!" Devoli said.

There was an instant's surprised silence. Then, "You're W.G.?"

"Suppose I am?"

"We're goin' to give you a little lesson in newspaper reporting . . ." The gorilla had opened the door and he could see Devoli facing him, and the two thugs, with their backs toward him as he walked in. Fuzziman was rising from the floor. ". . . where you gettin' that stuff you run? Is Lavery puttin' you up to this? How do you know so much about Carpenter and Bradford—*eeeeeeff!*"

The gorilla had taken the neck of each man in one of his hands and suddenly whirled them around.

"My God!" gasped the thinner of the two. "W.G.—the Whispering Gorilla!"

"Sit down, both of you," the gorilla boomed. "You're going to answer some questions." The two men, released, began walking slowly toward the settee which the gorilla had indicated.



But as they walked, the heavier man, his pock-marked face white, slid the hand away from the gorilla into the side pocket of his tan coat. Suddenly he whipped the hand out—and there was a gun in it!

Simultaneously the gorilla had flashed a mighty arm directly at his head. The heavy man flew off his feet and crashed into the wall. The ugly blue automatic in his hand spat flame. *Crack!*

"*Harry!*" the thin gangster screamed. "What did you . . . do . . . that . . . for?" He stood erect a moment, his hands fumbling slowly to his chest, where a dark stain was growing. Surprise alone lay on his face, and his eyes looked from one to the other. Then he crumpled up and fell limply to the floor.

The gorilla had meanwhile clamped his huge hands on the heavy thug. The gangster, bewildered, his eyes filled with terror, sat where he had fallen, still holding the gun.

The door burst open and two house detectives rushed in. "What's coming off—" The corpse stopped them. One of them went to the phone and dialed. When he finished, he said, "Homicide's on the way."

Both detectives were looking at the gorilla uncertainly. They knew he lived there, of course, but the sight of him. . . .

"Will you excuse us until the police arrive?" said the gorilla. He ushered the Doctor and Fuzziman into the next room. There he faced his manager and asked, "Did you send for a copy boy to come here?"

"Ye-es," Fuzziman said, haltingly. "Your copy was going to be late—"

"All right," said the gorilla, quietly. "It's too late now. Now the real identity of W.G. will come out. All the advantages of secrecy are over. We'll have to plan the fight differently, and God alone knows what they'll try next. There's hardly any time left with Election Day only two weeks away. *I have one ace in the hole that I've saved, but if I have to go to court . . .*"

Roland Fuzziman's eyes darted quickly to the gorilla's troubled face. Suddenly he remembered the gorilla saying to him, when he mentioned that no one could decide whether he was human, "Can you?" Somehow the question seemed important now.

Sometime later, when police, reporters, photographers had re-hashed the murder, re-enacted it a dozen times, Dartworth Devoli stood at the gorilla's side, placed a hand on the powerful shoulder, and whispered, "I'm staying with you till you see your fight through."

## CHAPTER V

### "W.G. for Congress!"

"**Y**OU are listening to the Whis-s-pering Gorilla." To the radio world that voice was like an electric magnet translated into sound. It figuratively reached out of the amplifiers to touch each listener with a gentle but compelling hand.

"Here it comes!" said "Sure" Peetson, fingering the jagged scar that ran from a corner of his mouth. He got up from his game of checkers and sauntered across the marble floor of the Carnation Club Lounge to the radio.

"And to think," his partner grumbled, "we been listenin' to that gorilla program every night, and *likin'* it up to now."

While the Whispering Gorilla theme song played, "Sure" Peetson reread the black headlines that had been folded in his coat pocket since afternoon.

**"ATTACK ON GORILLA FOILED; ONE THUG DEAD!"**

*"Plot Against Mystery Columnist 'W.G.' Leads to Door of Famed Whispering Gorilla."*

"Sure" Peetson's eyes lingered on the paragraph that described the accidental killing of Fragathorp. "Bunglers," he muttered. "The boss shoulda give me this job. I ain't had a break since I came back from Africa."

"You may get your chance yet," said his partner. Other persons who gathered around the radio were discussing the same matter in other languages. The frequenters of the Carnation Club Lounge were as cosmopolitan as a Geneva conference. The circle quieted as the theme song came to a close.

"Where's the big boss?" Peetson whispered. "Ain't he listenin' tonight?"

"He's in a stew," someone answered, "cookin' up something for the gorilla. He's got a notion he's the only one can handle this thing like it oughta be handled. Kid glove job."

"Kid glove! I could fix it with one bullet," said "Sure" Peetson.

The gorilla's voice returned to the radio. "Tonight, in place of our regular radio play, we bring you a short drama from real life which occurred today in the offices of my associates and myself. This re-enactment has been prepared by Mr. Fuzziman, my personal manager, who witnessed the invasion of the two thugs and the killing that followed. The comments are those of yours truly, the Whispering Gor—" *Snap!*

The gray mustached executive had marched across from an adjoining office to snap the switch. The Carnation Club Lounge fell silent. The big boss lighted a cigar.

Someone whispered to Peetson, "Get that paper outa sight, or he'll burn it up for you. He's been stamping out headline ashes all afternoon."

The gray mustached man paced in front of the silent group and puffed at his cigar. He began to bark.

"What the hell has this Whispering Gorilla got on us? Where does he get his stuff? Who is he, anyway?"

The dynamic speaker rested his glare on "Sure" Peetson. "You're all wrong, 'Sure'. This is no job for a gunman. If we'd known W.G. was the gorilla, today's fracas wouldn't have happened."

"I never said nothin'," said "Sure" Peetson.

"Well, see that you don't get any funny ideas," said



the big boss. "If that gorilla-actor got bumped off, the public might get stirred up enough to start investigating. Especially after the Carpenter business. So don't get any funny ideas."

"Let me remind you, Mr. Swangler," a well-dressed man with a foreign accent spoke up, "that a few tidy millions depend upon your—"

"I'll swing it, don't worry. In my own way."

"But these writings by W. G. are stirring up a very ugly temper among the people over here. What if our export syndicate should actually be investigated? Aren't you going to stop them?"

"Take it easy, Haeffner. You'll get everything you want a month after the new Congress meets. Election Day is on top of us. I'll give you America wrapped in a paper sack. Don't forget that I can step into any office in America as Paul Swangler, millionaire investor and director of enough corporations to make you dizzy. My connections with this ring were never discovered by anyone—"

Swangler's eyes caught upon the sharp look of "Sure" Peetson, and he added, "Excepting one man, and he was promptly dispatched."

The circle of men became more comfortable. Drinks were passed, and the big boss clinched his impression of confidence by mentioning that he would release a few additional advance "dividends" that might be useful before election.

Before the group dispersed Paul Swangler gave a few orders. "Burgess, I want tickets to *'The Whispering Gorilla'*, the stage play, for the rest of the week. . . . Quaggy, you follow through on this Fragarthorp manslaughter case and make sure Frag and Motini never heard of the Carnation Club. The verdict will be accidental death. The Whispering Gorilla will get a world of free advertising out of the hearings, but don't mind that. Just now we're giving him all the rope he'll take, see? . . . Winterbotham, you keep up on Alan Bradford . . . And Peetson—"

"Yeah?"

"Check up on Steve Carpenter's widow."

"Sure," said "Sure" Peetson.

2.

**T**HE chauffeur throttled down. Fuzziman hailed the crowds with his unlighted cigar, and in the rear seat the gorilla kept nodding automatically and waving the tips of his fingers at the window. Beside him Dartworth Devoli sat in an attitude of tension, his eyes on the gorilla rather than the crowd.

"Keep moving," said Fuzziman to the chauffeur. "We're due at the theater in ten minutes." He chuckled. "The next time I engage a gorilla to make sure he doesn't write for the newspapers. We've had a traffic jam every night since the killing brought W. G. out of the dark. . . . How's he feeling, Doc?"

The scientist turned the question to the gorilla. "How *are* you feeling?"

"Perfect," said the gorilla.

The scientist smiled and then grew sober. "If they

demand a speech after the play, as they did last night—"

"I'll give it to them," said the gorilla.

"You can't keep up this pace for long. You haven't slept for two nights."

"I'll sleep after election. As long as people want to stamp out the war cult I'll help them. Before I rest I'm going to get the exact dope on every man running for Congress."

3.

The scientist gave a resigned sigh. "It's a good thing Plumbutter had a rugged constitution . . ."

The play ended with the usual uproar of enthusiasm. Two curtain calls, and then came the general cry of "Gorilla! Gorilla! Gorilla!" And as soon as the gorilla appeared, the cry changed to "Speech! Speech!"

"Thank you," the gorilla bowed. "I have nothing to say."

"Speech!" a voice called. "Tell us about the attack on you. Tell us where you stand in the election."

"This is not a political rally," said the gorilla.

"Why not?" a dozen voices rang out. A chorus began to chant. "We want W. G.! We want W. G.!" The whole theatre took up the cry. "Tell us what you think of the party platforms!"

"Give us the inside dope!"

"What's going on behind the conventions?"

The clamor kept up until the gorilla raised a hand. The theatre became quiet. "I cannot tell you more than my column does. There are forces among you who would drive us to war. These men control newspapers, they own Congressmen, they have unlimited power. They must be stopped! The people of this country do not want war! They must vote against the men who are intent on driving us into that war!"

Great cheers rang out. The darkness exploded with flash bulbs going off as photographers took pictures of the strange scene—an actor in a gorilla costume, holding a political rally in a packed Broadway theatre. People were on their feet. The gorilla couldn't be heard anymore. He held up a hairy paw for quiet.

"Each day in my column, run by the free press of this country, I intend to discuss the candidates for Congress and on the day before election, three days from now, I promise to run the names of every controlled candidate—and their backers!"

But suddenly, in the stillness, a man sprang up in the balcony and shouted: "The Whispering Gorilla for Congress!"

The crowd went wild. The whole auditorium caught up the cry and for five minutes the clamor ran riot. When at last the house quieted for the gorilla's response, the deep voice sent a tragic shiver through every listener.

"I thank you from my heart, but it is impossible for me to become a candidate."

A low murmur swept over the audience, then another man sprang to his feet and shouted:

"*The Whispering Gorilla for Congress!*"





There was utter terror on the man's face as the gorilla's huge paw grasped his throat

A rally ensued, during which Dartworth Devoli, shaking his head, led the Whispering Gorilla from the stage; the curtain fell. The rally carried on out into the street. Fuzziman's chauffeur drove through throngs all the way from the theatre to the broadcasting studios.

"Who were the men who made the proposal?" Devoli asked.

"I couldn't find out," said Fuzziman.

The gorilla said nothing.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Man with the Scarred Mouth

THE next morning there was a mob of people in the lobby of the exclusive Radcliffe Hotel. The management had called and told Fuzziman that the police advised them to allow the crowd at least to voice their opinions, to say what they had come for. Fuzziman spoke to the gorilla, and then he had called down to allow a few up at a time.

Now he and three receptionists, quickly hired from an agency, were busy with the people as they filed through the sumptuous room.

"No, Madam, there has been no acceptance to run for Congress. We are happy to have your support."

"Yes sir, the petitions are on the desk to your left."

"No, Miss, we cannot give out any statements at this time."

"I don't care who you are," Fuzziman was saying. "You can't—"

The tall young man persisted. "If you'll only tell the gorilla that Alan Bradford of the *Telegram* wants to see him—"

"Bradford?" said Fuzziman. He had heard the gorilla speak of a Bradford before. "Just a minute. I'll see."

The little manager pushed his way past the fringes of the crowd and let himself into the adjoining room. "Whew!" he breathed. "You should see them. They're four deep, and more coming all the time downstairs. You're going to be drafted for Congress, as sure as my name is. . . ." He broke off. "Now what did I come in here for? Oh yes. Do you know somebody named Bradford from the *Telegram*?"

The gorilla had been sitting quietly, a sheaf of papers spread out before him. Now he looked up. "Alan Bradford?" he said, nodding. "Yes. I've been waiting for him. Let him come in, please."

A moment later, the gorilla stood up to greet the young man who had entered the room. He offered his hand. "Don't be afraid to shake hands with me," he said. "I really want to shake your hand. I've



heard about your work. You were associated with—”

“With Carpenter and Hannigan and Forman.”

“Yes. And since their deaths, you’ve done nothing?”

“You seem to know quite a bit about our activities,” said Bradford.

“My business is knowing about others,” said the gorilla, quietly. “Naturally, since I became interested in this work, I found out a lot of things.”

“About North American Shipping Alliance, for instance?”

“Yes.” The gorilla stood quietly. “You have news?”

“Rather vital news.”

“And you’ve come to me with it?”

“I’m not sure. I don’t know anything about you. I know what you’ve been doing, and I know that Lavery trusts you. That should be enough, yet I’m afraid.”

“Of what?”

“What are you up to?” Bradford asked. “No one knows who you are. There are a million rumors about you. Why do you always wear this gorilla outfit? No man who was serious would continually—”

“I’m not telling you anything. Only this. I’m wearing this outfit for reasons that you’ll never understand. Do you still doubt my sincerity?”

The young man was silent. “I’ve got to know what you’ll do with what I tell you. It’s too big.”

The gorilla studied Bradford. “I see,” he said. “You found out what ship they’re going to have attacked and when.”

Instantly Bradford was on his feet, facing the impassive gorilla. “*You know that too?*” he cried, incredulously. “It isn’t possible!”

“I know a lot of things. I’ve known for some time what the Alliance was up to. I knew that when things got too hot for their racket to continue that they would play their ace—which is, to tell one of the belligerent’s secret agents of a big contraband shipment, and then wait for the belligerent to torpedo it. There would be women and children aboard; we’d have another *Lusitania*—and war!”

The young man sat as if he had been turned to stone. When he found his voice at last, he said, “They’ve chosen the night before election—two nights from now—for the sinking. The ship is the U.S.S. *Commodore*. When the papers scream the news on election morning, every pro-war candidate will be swept in!”

The gorilla rose and took Bradford’s shoulder. “Thank you,” he said. “You’ve given me another ace. With this card to play, we can’t lose.”

“What are you going to do?” said Bradford. “You’ve got to run for Congress on this boom to write your name in.”

“No,” said the gorilla. “That’s what my enemies want. They engineered this whole boom. They want me to run—and it’s impossible.”

“But I don’t see why,” Bradford protested.

“Trust me. There aren’t many days left for us and I need your help. Come back later today and bring a stenographer, someone you can trust.”

WHEN Alan Bradford and the new stenographer returned later that afternoon, the gorilla was very much engrossed in his work. He stood at his desk reading a badly typed draft of his column. On one side of the gorilla stood the erect, white-haired scientist; at the other shoulder was Fuzziman, his cigar tilted high, his eyes following the words as the gorilla read them.

Bradford and the girl, having disposed of their wraps, entered. The reading stopped. The paper fell from the gorilla’s hand and slid to the edge of the desk.

“Our new stenographer,” said Bradford. “Mrs. Carpenter, may I present the Whispering Gorilla.”

“How do you do,” said the girl.

“How do you—” the deep voice faltered. The paper that clung on the edge of the desk trembled and slipped to the floor.

“And this,” Bradford continued, “is Dr. Devoli, the Whispering Gorilla’s private physician.”

Devoli nodded as the girl greeted him. “The name was—?” His hand was half lifted toward the gorilla, his eyes were intent upon the girl.

“Mrs. Carpenter,” Bradford repeated. “You’ve heard of Steven Carpenter?”

“Yes, indeed,” said the scientist, his hand now trembling high upon the gorilla’s back. The gorilla had bowed his head.

“And this is Mr. Fuzziman, the gorilla’s business manager.”

Fuzziman extended a cordial greeting which helped to loosen mysterious tensions that had suddenly gripped the office.

Roselle Carpenter stood before the Whispering Gorilla’s desk. “Mr. Bradford said that I am to take my first orders from you,” she smiled politely, “so what would you have me do?”

The gorilla did not answer. He seemed to try to answer, then he turned away. For a minute or two his huge form was silhouetted against the window and he seemed to be absorbed in studying the skyscrapers and canyons of the city. When he turned back he picked up the paper that had dropped to the floor. His voice choked down, but the girl understood from his gesture toward the typewriter that he wanted the paper re-typed.

Roselle Carpenter went to work. The gorilla returned to the window. And Devoli hastily left the offices for a cup of coffee.

Time passed slowly through the afternoon and evening wore on, and still the columns outside the door did not diminish.

It was past nine o’clock in the evening when Fuzziman rushed in breathlessly. “Where’s W.G.?” he cried. Alan Bradford and Roselle Carpenter were eating sandwiches from a tray.



"He's in his bedroom, eating alone. Said he wanted—"

Fuzziman rushed past them, threw open the bedroom door.

Bradford and the girl, following him, saw the gorilla sitting on his bed, a huge tray before him. There was something horrible about the way he was eating, something that made the girl tear her eyes away.

"Shut that door, you fool!" the gorilla roared. The tone of his voice was primitive, brutal, a great hoarse shout that was inhuman. Bradford shuddered as the door closed.

Some moments later, it opened again. The gorilla followed Fuzziman, a still trembling Fuzziman, out. He was calm now, his face almost pleasant, and when he spoke, it was in the deep whisper that enthralled those who listened.

"Bradford," he said. "The eminent and famous Mr. Paul Swangler is outside. He wants to see me."

"Swangler!" Bradford leaped to his feet. "Do you know—"

"Yes," said the gorilla. "I know. That was my first ace in the hole. I knew what Mr. Swangler was up to a long time ago."

"What do you suppose he wants here?"

"I'm going to find out."

"How?"

"By seeing him. Remember, we have one advantage. He doesn't think we know who he really is."

The girl, who had been standing near the window, slowly rejoined the group. "Will you want me to make notes of the conversation?" she said.

"If you please," said the gorilla, not facing her. "Fuzziman, let Swangler in, please."

**PAUL SWANGLER** came walking into the room, a smile on his face. When his eyes fell on the gorilla, the smile faded a little, but he held it there. He took the gorilla's proffered hand unflinchingly. "I see the newspapers are correct in saying that you never take that costume off," he laughed.

"Cigar?" said Fuzziman.

Swangler silently took the cigar, lighted it. "I suppose you're wondering why I'm here?" he said. "I'll come to the point directly, and I would like you to do the same. I'm accustomed to quick action."

"Please proceed," said the gorilla, sitting down.

"In a nutshell, Mr.—uh—W. G. I've come to offer you my support for your campaign for Congress. I've been reading your column, and I've read your speeches, and I agree with you one hundred per cent. This country could use men like you. I admit frankly that I have a selfish interest in this. Most of my money is tied up in peace time industries, and war would hurt me tremendously."

"I see," said the gorilla.

An awkward silence fell. All eyes were on Swangler. "Every wealthy man owes it to his country," he said, pompously, "to see to it that the best *men* are elected to govern." In spite of his pompous address,

he had lingered significantly on one word. "Are you interested?"

"Yes, Mr. Swangler," said the gorilla. "Please continue."

"Thank you. Now, if I were to give you my support to the extent of, say, half a million dollars, which can be very useful in two days of campaigning, I would naturally expect to meet whoever is behind this movement."

"I'm sorry. I don't know what you mean."

"Come, come," said Swangler, jovially. "You know well enough. I mean, who writes your speeches? Who writes that column for you? Who supplied that list of 'controlled' Congressmen? I know well enough that you are—with all due respect—nothing more than the front for some organization, some man. Naturally, I must meet whoever is behind you."

"But W. G. writes it all himself—there isn't anyone!" Fuzziman burst out, before the gorilla's swift warning glance could silence him.

"Indeed?" murmured Swangler. "You know, I'm inclined to believe you." He rose to his feet and advanced to the gorilla. "I'm fascinated by your costume," he said, reaching out a hand. "I could swear you were the real thing if I didn't know it was only a costume. Do you mind if I feel it?"

The gorilla stepped back from the outstretched hand swiftly. "Yes, Mr. Swangler, I mind very much."

The words brought an electric shock to the room. Everyone tensed.

Swangler hesitated, then forced a chuckle. "Professional secret?" he smiled. "I'm not offended, and I'm sorry if I've annoyed you." He turned around, both hands outstretched in a magnanimous gesture. "Shall we draw up formal papers for my backing?" he said. "You know, they always investigate these things. Let's keep our arrangement above board."

At a nod from Fuzziman, the girl left the room.

"It will be quite unnecessary for Mrs. Carpenter to bring back any papers," said the gorilla. "You see, Mr. Swangler, I have no intention of running for Congress."

"But my dear fellow—"

"I will continue to support those men whom I consider to be right. If you would care to lend your support to that, we can continue."

Swangler smiled. "Your modesty overwhelms me, but I am afraid that I must insist on your running personally. It isn't too late; your name can be written in."

"No." The gorilla said the word incisively, showing his teeth.

At that moment, Roselle Carpenter came back into the room, closing the door behind her swiftly. It opened a moment later and Dr. Devoli followed. "Mrs. Carpenter," he said, anxiously. "What's the matter? You turned as pale as a ghost. Did something frighten you?"

The girl stood still, trembling, visibly shaken. "It's



... nothing," she managed to say. "It's just . . . nothing."

Instantly Bradford was beside her. "What is it, Roselle?" he demanded.

The gorilla had come beside her. She faced Bradford. "It's foolish for me to be upset by such a trifle," she said, trying to smile. "I thought I was being followed."

"Followed?" said the gorilla. "By whom?"

"I don't know him. I saw him last night when I went home after shopping. This morning I saw him again. Now I thought I saw him outside."

"Here?" cried Fuzziman.

But the gorilla had thrown the door open.

AS all eyes turned to the adjoining room, the people in that room all turned to face those with the gorilla, but their eyes were all on the huge animal. There were dozens of people there, men and women of every description. As they looked at the cold, searching eyes of the gorilla, a hush came over them.

The gorilla was standing there, legs slightly apart, one arm on the door he had thrown open. There was something in his bearing akin to a beast about to leap.

Suddenly a nondescript man in a gray coat began to move. He had a long scar running from a corner of his mouth. "Let me out of here," the man mumbled, beginning to push his way.

The next moment a mighty roar echoed through the room—and the gorilla had leaped halfway across the packed room towards the fleeing man!

Instantly there was a panic. Screams rang out. The man in gray had gone mad. Clawing, shrieking, he was trying to get away.

"Stop! Stop!" Devoli was shouting, fighting his way after the gorilla. He plunged through the terrified crowd and seized the gorilla by the nape of the neck. "For God's sake, remember you're a man!" he whispered fiercely. The gorilla stopped suddenly. The next instant he was surging again, but the man in gray had fled.

The aged scientist bent close to the gorilla's ear. "Remember you're Steven Carpenter, for your wife's sake," he whispered.

The gorilla stood quietly. The scene in his mind—a moonlit night in the Congo, and a matchlight flaring up—faded from his mind with a great effort. Fuzziman was saying a few words to the frightened people still in the room as the gorilla silently followed Devoli back to the inner room.

Inside he stood once again in his impressively dignified manner.

"I'm sorry I—" the girl began. "I didn't think I would cause—"

Fuzziman came back inside. "What happened to you?" he said. "I've never seen you so angry before!"

"I don't understand," said Swangler. "That man came up in the elevator with me. He certainly looked harmless enough."

"If I ever see that man again, I'll kill him," the gorilla said. His voice was as calm and steady as a deep river. "With your permission, I bid you all good night."

He turned and walked into the adjoining bedroom. Those outside could hear the click of the lock inside.

"Well," said Swangler. "He certainly sounds as if he means it."

"I'm sorry you had to witness this," Fuzziman said to Swangler. "W. G. isn't an excitable sort, usually. I hope you won't think anything of it."

"If that man follows Mrs. Carpenter again," said Devoli, "his life isn't worth a plugged nickel. He better stay out of sight."

"You really think," said Swangler, in a low voice, "that he would kill that fellow?"

Devoli nodded. "He'd choke him in an instant."

Swangler laughed. "One would really think W.G. was a gorilla, to hear you speak. Well, I guess that's as much as I can accomplish tonight. If W.G. shows any sign of changing his mind, Mr. Fuzziman, please let me know."

Several minutes later, Swangler had gone.

THE others stood about for some moments until the gorilla's voice came from behind the door, muffled yet clear. "Fuzziman, you and Bradford take Mrs. Carpenter home. She's had a harrowing night. Bradford, did you get a good look at that man outside?"

"Yes," said Bradford, shouting.

"Don't shout. My hearing is quite acute. Remember that face. He was Swangler's bodyguard. Never mind how I know. Just keep him away. Good night."

Quietly, the two men and the girl put on their hats and coats and left.

When they had gone, the gorilla's lock clicked and he came out.

"How do you feel?" said Dr. Devoli.

"I almost lost myself," said the gorilla. "That man was the one who shot me that night in the Congo."

"Good Lord!" Devoli muttered. "No wonder you went off like that."

The gorilla sank into a chair, his hands over his eyes. "Did you see how frightened she was?" he whispered. His voice was shaky. "I'm dead, Doctor, and I've left a wife to be hunted by the lowest scum on earth. I can't lift a finger to protect her." He rose suddenly, and his bloodshot eyes gazed at Devoli. "You weren't here to see how repulsed she was when she caught a glimpse of me eating. You should have seen her face."

"Hold on," said Devoli, anxiously. He took hold of the gorilla's arm.

The gorilla buried his head in his hands. "I can't," he whispered. A great sob shook him. "I can't bear it. I love her so much. It's too much for a man to bear."

Suddenly the gorilla lifted his great head and laughed and the tears rolled down his silvery-black face. "Man—I called myself a *man!*" He faced the



Doctor with his legs apart. "Look at me, Devoli! You made me this! You made me live again—a monster! Why didn't you let me lie there? Why—"

"*Carpenter!*" the aged Doctor snapped. "Stop this! You knew what you were doing! You've work to do these next two days. *Carpenter*, listen to me!"

The gorilla stood there looking at the old man before him. "You call me *Carpenter*," he said quietly. "Thank you, Doctor Devoli."

He crossed the room and sat down. The Doctor brought him a glass of water and several pills, which the gorilla took unquestioningly.

"These will keep me from waking up during the night," said the gorilla. "But in the morning it will be here again. Do you know why Swangler and his crew want me to run for Congress? No? Because then they'll expose me—as a real gorilla! They're sure of it after tonight."

"But you're not running," said Devoli.

"No. Swangler came here tonight to find out if there was anyone behind me. Instead he found out I'm a real gorilla. His next move is clear."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said the gorilla slowly, "that the indicting of Swangler's thug for that accidental killing that took place here comes up tomorrow—and they undoubtedly have a subpoena waiting for me."

The Doctor's face turned white. "That's impossible! They'll challenge your identity—force you to prove who you are!"

The gorilla nodded. "Either that—or another way." Then he rose and went slowly back to his own room. "Good night," he said.

## CHAPTER VII

### Plot for a Victory

A DOOR closed gently and "Sure" Peetson stood before Paul Swangler.

"You sent for me?"

"Yes," said Swangler. "You know what today is?"

"Sure. Two days before Election Day. Today's the second."

"Fine. Now get out of town. Go up to Mattson's place in the mountains, and don't show up until after election."

Peetson's face clouded. "But, boss, I want to be around—"

"You heard me. Get going."

Paul Swangler watched "Sure" Peetson close the door behind him. He stepped to a phone and dialed a number. "Hello, Stetley? Swangler. Yes, the subpoena was served on him at the crack of dawn this morning. No, I can't be there, though I'd like to be around to watch the fun. Right. Tomorrow's the day he was going to publish that list of Congressmen we own. He'll be up in the Bronx Zoo by then. Do I really think he's a gorilla? I'll be damned if I don't! Sounds insane to me too, but wait till you see what

happens in court today. Certainly. There'll be no list tomorrow, and there'll be a fine Election Day the day after that. Call you after it's over."

Then, smiling to himself, Paul Swangler put the phone back and sat down to the breakfast that waited for him on a silver tray.

The corridors of the Court of Special Sessions were packed. Somehow the word had gotten around that the gorilla was going to appear. Early in the morning, the streets around the court had been roped off. The area was dense with newspapermen, though it was a routine appearance against a criminal that was going to bring the famed gorilla to the court.

Or was it? Hints had circulated . . . big doings . . . startling developments. . . . The crowds waited impatiently, wondering.

Cheers rolled down the street when the gorilla's car came into sight. One could see him sitting there with his manager on one side, and a distinguished old man on the other. The car drove up to the great stone stairway that led to the court and stopped. The police cordons battled the wild mob for gangway, and the shouts rang out.

"Lookit him still in his outfit!"

"You tell 'em, W.G.!"

"Give it to the crooks, battler!"

The photographers clustered around, impeding progress with their pleas for the gorilla to pose. The gorilla posed patiently, silently. His face was grave, as were the faces of the men with him. Presently they began walking up the long stone steps.

"Say something to us, W.G.!" the shouts rang out.

The gorilla turned. "The newspapers will say everything I have to tell you tomorrow," he said, his voice deep and booming, and amidst great cheers he resumed walking.

Police ushered them through the corridor into a small room to one side of the courtroom, to wait until the gorilla would be called. Inside, Fuzziman sank to a bench, while the gorilla stood, his eyes on the floor.

"What are you going to do?" Fuzziman panted.

Devoli held up a hand. "You've asked the same question a thousand times this morning. Let him alone."

"I'm quite all right," said the gorilla, slowly. "Did you get the money, Fuzziman?"

"Ten thousand dollars in cold cash," said Fuzziman, plaintively. "Had to get the bank president up to get it. What's it all about?"

"Soon," said the gorilla. "Soon enough. Thank God Election Day is only two days away." He said nothing more until the policeman came to call him. Then he rose and walked into the courtroom, with the two men behind him.

A sound like water rushing up on a beach greeted his appearance in court. Half the spectators stood, the better to see him, and the gavel rapped imperiously. "Order in the court! Sheriff, see that order is restored!"



The judge's eye swung back to the gorilla. He turned to the District Attorney. "Mr. Attorney," he said, "is this the witness for the State?"

"It—he is, your honor," said the District Attorney. "But he has requested that he be left out of the case. Mr. Roland Fuzziman is here on my subpoena, and he is quite capable of presenting the State's case."

"If it please the Court," said a man, rising from one of the tables in the enclosure, where the gangster sat, shifty-eyed, "that gorilla has been subpoenaed by the defense."

"Do you intend to have this—uh—person testify on the stand?"

"I most certainly do, your honor."

"In that case, the Court requests this person to remove his ridiculous and abhorrent costume at once."

Now the wave of talking and comment that rose up drowned out the gavel. The gorilla advanced to the bar and waited for the noise to die down. At length, when the sheriff had ejected half a dozen spectators, and order was restored, the gorilla spoke.

"Your honor, what if I do not choose to remove my costume?"

The judge leaned over. "Do I hear you correctly, sir? This Court has ordered that you remove that costume at once. Please give your name to the clerk."

"I must refuse," said the gorilla quietly.

The judge rapped down on his bench. "This Court is quite aware of your theatrical and political activities, but it cannot countenance an effort to reduce this Court to a laughing stock. Unless you obey my order immediately, I will be forced to hold you in contempt."

"I have no alternative," said the gorilla.

"Are you quite aware of what you are saying?" said the judge. He adjusted his spectacles, and his voice was softer. "I know the fight you are waging is a good one, but I cannot approve of your methods. Please consider your answer carefully."

"Your honor," said the gorilla in his magnificent voice. "The furthest thing from my mind is the desire to cause any undue sensation here, or to obstruct justice in any way. But there are other kinds of justice, and I have fought for my own kind more than I can tell you. I cannot explain why it must remain impossible for me to comply with the order of this Court, but I can tell you only that it would ruin everything I have worked for. I must therefore accept your decision to hold me in contempt."

The judge nodded his head in a mystified manner. "You are a very courageous man," he said, quietly, "in your own peculiar way. I hold you in contempt because I have no other alternative."

The attorney for the defense sprang to his feet. "I must protest! I demand that the witness the defense has summoned here be forced to testify!"

"You demand?" said the judge quietly. "The Court has already demanded. If the witness chooses to be cited for contempt, there is nothing more."

"But I protest against this outrageous—"

"Sit down!" the judge snapped. "It is quite within the ability of this Court to hold even a defense attorney of your fame for contempt!" He faced the District Attorney. "Call the sheriff to hold this witness."

The gorilla spoke up. "If it pleases your honor, may I press upon the understanding of the Court to grant me immediate bail?"

"I protest! I most emphatically—"

"Sit down! And shut up!" The judge glared at the defense attorney. He turned to the gorilla, his voice altered. "Bail granted. Five dollars, and I remand you to your own custody until further notice from this Court. Please pay the clerk. And now, please get on with this hearing!"

"Thank you, your honor," the gorilla murmured. He turned to Fuzziman. "When you're through here, you'll find me at the hotel." Then he was gone.

PAUL SWANGLER had barely finished his leisurely breakfast when the phone rang. He walked over to it and lifted the receiver, then listened.

"What? You blundering idiot! You let him get away—you damned fool! You—" Viciously, he slammed the phone down, his brow furrowed. Immediately the phone went off again.

Gingerly, Swangler lifted it. "Yes, I heard," he said, after a moment. "No, it isn't over yet. Stop crying, Stetley. I promise you that column will never appear. Of course I can still stop him. It's my last trick, but it can't fail! Now sit down and relax. I'll get to work right away."

Swangler pressed the receiver button down, holding the phone in his hand meditatively for some moments. Then he lifted his hand and dialed. He spoke. "Is Joris there? Swangler . . . Joris? Listen, get up to Mattson's place in the mountains right away. Peetson's on his way there now. Get him and bring him back to town. Got that? *Bring Peetson back to town without fail!*"

Swangler held the button down and dialed again.

"Hello, Rollins? Swangler. There's a change in plans. The Victory Dinner is coming off tonight instead of tomorrow night. Did you hear what I said? I don't care what you have to do. Hire two dozen planes if you have to, but have them all there tonight. I want every one of our candidates there, understand? Senators, Representatives, too. What's it all about? Can't you guess? What do people hold Victory Dinners for? Victory! *Tonight!*"

Now Paul Swangler replaced the receiver and sat down again. A slow smile spread on his face and he murmured to himself, "Peetson, you're going to give your all for the cause tonight." The smile didn't fade.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Discovery and Loss

WHEN the gorilla returned to the Radcliffe Hotel, he found the crowd already forming. He pressed



his way into the private elevator that went to his suite, then past the people in the outer room. In the inner room, he found Alan Bradford and Roselle waiting.

"Then it's true!" the girl exclaimed. "Dr. Devoli called—said you hadn't testified after all!"

"Yes," said the gorilla slowly. She hadn't looked at him when she spoke, he had observed. The gladness was in her voice, but not in her eyes.

Bradford came forward. "What do we do now?" he said.

"I'll call you in a few moments," said the gorilla. "I want to be alone while I collect my notes. I'm going to dictate my pre-Election Day column in a few minutes, and I want you to be around to add what you can. No, don't leave. Stay here; I'm quite content to stay in my bedroom."

He tried to smile, then thinking how horrible a grimace it must look, he quickly stepped into the bedroom. Then he sat down before the mirror and looked at himself for several moments. "Lord," he breathed, spreading a hand over the eyes he was forced to close. He shook his head and stood erect. "In a few days it will all be over," he said to himself. "And then?"

But he erased the thought from his mind. He opened the drawer of his desk with a key, fumbling as his huge fingers strove to move the little key. Then he arranged a sheaf of papers before him.

For several minutes he wrote with a great pen that stood nearby, each sentence a painful effort. His huge head was a study in concentration as he worked. Then he laid the pen down and seemed to be listening. His immeasurably sharpened sense of hearing had caught fragments of conversation from the next room. Now he went to the door and stood close to it.

"It's a beautiful day outside," Bradford was saying. "Real fall weather. In a few days we'll be able to enjoy it like normal people. As soon as W. G. blows this business up."

"Alan," said the girl. "What is he going to do after that?"

Silence. "I don't know. I've thought of it."

"Alan, who is he?"

"I don't know. No one knows. He's just . . ."

"Just what?"

"Don't ask me, Roselle. You know as much as I do. You saw him that day when he was eating like some—"

"Like an animal."

"Yes."

"Alan, do you really think he is?"

"I don't know, I tell you. Not even Fuzziman really knows. Did you see what happened to him when he tore after that man who was following you? Fuzziman trembled all the way to your home; couldn't talk either. I wish I knew . . . no, I don't! I don't want to know. It frightens me. It isn't possible."

"But Dr. Devoli—he must know."

"Maybe he does. He whispered something to *him* that night, but I couldn't hear. It was the only thing that quieted him."

"I noticed," said the girl. "There was only one man

who ever fought for me that way—the man I loved."

"Steven," said Bradford. "The finest man I ever knew. But, Roselle, he wasn't the only man who loved you. Roselle, I've thought about saying this to you for weeks, but I know it must take a long time for a woman like you to get over losing the man Steven was."

"Much more time, Alan, please," said the girl, her voice barely audible.

"So I see," said Bradford. "I thought I realized, but maybe a man can't feel these things like a woman. But I love you, Roselle."

The door leading from that room to the front one closed as Bradford left. After that there was silence, and only the girl's weeping could be heard.

THE gorilla sat down again. There were great tears in his small eyes, and a sob choked in his throat. His great black fingernails bit into the rough flesh of his palms, and he lay his head on the desk and wept. He lay that way until Dr. Devoli silently entered the room.

"Carpenter," the Doctor whispered, "you need all your strength now. You outwitted them this morning. Now we're almost finished. I know what you're suffering, man, but you've got to hold on a little while longer."

The gorilla turned away. "I'm all right," he said. "Go out and talk to her. She's feeling miserable. I've got to end it. Send Bradford in to me."

When Bradford came into the bedroom, the gorilla kept his back to him for some time while he spoke. "Bradford, get this down: The North American Shipping Alliance is owned by Mattson, Stetley and Swangler, through proxies. In three months, exactly 853,000 tons of contraband have been shipped on illegal permits. Among the contraband has been poison gas, machine guns, bombers, grenades, automatic rifles, trench mortars, tanks, scrap iron. On my desk you'll find complete lists. Beside it is a sheaf of affidavits from the proxies with sworn testimony that they have been paid to hold title to shares really owned by three men; also, testimony from the foreman of the Newark warehouse, testimony from—" and there the gorilla stopped.

Bradford waited expectantly. He had left the door slightly ajar, and through it came the sounds of Devoli and the girl speaking. Bradford looked closely at the gorilla's ear. A shiver swept him as he realized that the ear was twitching as it listened to the conversation.

"Dr. Devoli, I've been wanting to ask you something. Are you the same Dr. Devoli that wrote me a letter once . . . from the Congo?"

"Yes, Mrs. Carpenter, I wrote you a brief letter at the time of your husband's death."

"Why have you never mentioned it?"

"I—I thought perhaps the hurt was still too keen . . ."

"You must know that I loved my husband deeply?"

"Yes, of course."



"Then surely you realize how much I've hungered for word of him—even though he is gone. Why haven't you told me?"

"There wasn't much to tell. I'm sorry to say that I was so busy with my animals during your husband's short stay that I had little time to talk with him. Had I realized what fate lay in store for him . . . but there's no need to say that now. I remember distinctly how often he spoke of you."

"What sort of things did he say?"

"He wished he had brought you with him."

"Yes, he wrote me that . . . I wish I had gone." She was crying again.

"Close the door!" the gorilla whispered. He had turned to face Bradford as he spoke, and he was shaking. His eyes were more red-rimmed than usual, and his hands were closed fists.

Bradford closed the door, eyeing the gorilla. "What's the matter?" he said.

"Nothing. I'm not myself today. Maybe you'd better go for the day."

"Today?" said Bradford, his eyebrows lifting. "Two days before Election Day? With all that vitally important material to be—"

"I can handle it myself. Take my car. And take Ros—Mrs. Carpenter with you. It's a beautiful Fall day outside. Take her for a ride. You can both use the rest. . . . *What are you staring at?*"

"NOTHING," said Bradford. "Nothing but that paper clip."

"What about it?"

The gorilla's eyes went to the paper clip, then back to Bradford.

"*What about it?*" he whispered.

"Nothing," said Bradford. "Yesterday I watched you sharpen pencils. You held one between each pair of fingers and sharpened them that way."

The gorilla had come very close to Bradford now.

"I'm thinking," said Bradford, his face ashen, the words coming from him as if by torture, "that of all the men I ever knew, only one ever fastened papers with the clips on the *side*, instead of on top—and only that same man held pencils in his hand in that way—and that man was Steven Carpenter!"

The gorilla's hand shot out stiffly, gripping Bradford by the throat. The huge arm pushed him against the wall, and a thumb and forefinger pressed against his windpipe. Bradford's body shot backward. His legs whipped over a chair that clattered to the floor. He stood pinned against the wall, unable to struggle, helpless in the grasp of the great animal that held him there.

The gorilla held him like that for ten seconds. Then he let his hand relax and breath rushed back to Bradford's lungs.

"*Steven Carpenter is dead,*" said the gorilla, his eyes boring into Bradford's. "Never forget that you know that. I saw him die."

Still unable to speak, Bradford nodded his head.

He brushed a hand up to his eyes. "I understand, W.G.," he managed to whisper.

The gorilla helped him to his feet. "I'm sorry," he said. "Do as I said. Take her for a ride. Help her to forget. I know your friend couldn't have prayed for a better man than you. Now go—I've work to do."

Later, when Devoli came in, the Doctor said, "What happened in here? Bradford looked ill when he went out. And you don't look well either."

"Nothing," said the gorilla.

"You didn't lose your head again?" said Devoli anxiously. "You're getting to a point where you go off easily. Remember what I told you at the beginning, no matter how much it hurts: from the neck down you're a brute."

"Only from the neck down, Doctor?" said the gorilla, gently. "Have you ever taken a good look at my face?"

The Doctor looked away. "You're a long way from the Plumbutter whose face I knew. I'm worried. Deeply worried."

Then he went out and left the gorilla to his work.

IT was late in the afternoon when Alan Bradford came rushing into the gorilla's room. His clothes were torn, his face was cut in several places. "Roselle!" he cried. "They've kidnapped her!"

Instantly the gorilla leaped to his feet. "Who?" he roared.

"I don't know. They ran into our car out on Long Island, forced us out with guns and took her with them. I fought, but they knocked me out with a gun butt. When I came to, I was lying on the side of the road with a crowd around me. I didn't wait for the police and came here. There was a note lying on me when I got up. Here it is."

The gorilla's heavy fingers fumbled with the paper until he threw it down on the desk with a loud cry of frustration. "Open it! Read it!"

Bradford read: "*Don't worry. Nothing will happen. Just wait for our call later in the day.*"

The gorilla stood as if transfixed. "This is Swangler's work!" he shouted, the veins on his great neck standing out. "I'm going to kill him!"

The rage stood out on the animal's face, and his mighty arms swung up as if to come with force enough to shatter everything in sight.

But just as he moved toward the door, the telephone rang.

Swiftly, Devoli stepped over and took it. His eyes were fixed on the gorilla, one hand upraised in warning. "Hello," he said. "This is Dr. Devoli. Yes, Mr. Swangler, we have your note. Just a moment, please."

Devoli spoke to the gorilla. "Are you man enough to talk in a civilized fashion over this phone? It's Swangler, and you'll have to be calm."

The gorilla snatched the phone from the Doctor. Then he held it away at arm's length, while his breath came less rapidly, and the hair on his neck, which had



seemed to rise, settled down.

Then the gorilla spoke. "This is W. G." He said nothing else until the end, when he said, "We'll be there. If anything's happened to her, I'll tear you to bits with my hands." And he hung up.

"She's safe?" Bradford cried.

"Swangler says so," said the gorilla. "He says he only took her to persuade us to come to his Victory Dinner tonight. He says that Roselle will meet us there."

"I don't understand it," said Devoli, watching the gorilla as he began to pace the floor. "But whatever it is, I think we can be sure that she's safe if Swangler says so. Until tonight, there's nothing we can do."

But Bradford had caught the Doctor's glance.

"There's a lot we can do," he said. "And we'd better do it. That list, for instance, and those names. Come on, W. G. After all, I'm sort of fond of the girl too," he added wanly.

The gorilla looked up at him and shook his head. "All right," he said, and walked into his bedroom.

Only Devoli stayed behind, his white forehead furrowed in thought.

## CHAPTER IX

### Death Comes to a Party

"THEY must be about all here now," said one of the bellboys near the door of the Carlton House. "What a bunch. I bet this is the biggest party even this hotel ever saw. All these Congressmen and millionaires."

"There's one I know," said another bellboy. "That's Senator Green. And down there, that smooth-lookin' bird, that's Paul Swangler. Ain't that Swangler, copper?"

"Hell, yes," grinned the cop. "That's him. 'Scuse me, lads. Here comes the main treat of the evening."

The policeman joined several others going toward the door of the hotel. Outside the scream of many sirens was growing as it approached. The sounds echoed down the canyon-like streets.

Around the corner sped four motorcycles, the policemen on them riding like centaurs. Up to the Carlton they swept and the sirens died. Behind them a long, black limousine drew up. The door opened and three men stepped out. Last of all was the gorilla. The four began to go through into the hotel.

"Holy smoke!" ejaculated one of the bellboys. "It's W. G. hisself!"

"The main treat—I'll say!" said another. "He's about the only guy that's missing so far. Who are those other guys?"

"Damfino!"

The gorilla walked through the lobby and a hush followed him as people caught sight of him. His huge face was composed and his eyes looked straight ahead. Like the three men with him, Bradford, Devoli, and Fuzziman, he was immaculately clad in full evening

dress, and he was an arresting, majestic figure.

At the entrance to the Grand Ballroom, Paul Swangler came up to the group. The men bowed politely and went past Swangler inside.

There, standing not far away, with several men around her, stood Roselle Carpenter! She was radiant in her gown, a deep old rose velvet. She hastily excused herself and came up to meet the men.

Every eye seemed to rest on the little group as they stood there.

"Did they hurt you?" the gorilla said, his voice low.

"No." She was actually smiling. "They were very nice to me. They sent someone over to my place for my clothes and took me out to dinner." Her gaze rested on each of the men, lingered momentarily on the gorilla, but he was looking out over the assemblage.

"All right," said Dr. Devoli. "Now that you're safe, let's get out of here. I don't like this one bit."

"Not so fast, Doctor," said the gorilla. "Let's look about here. We've got the columns all set up and ready to go, but we may pick up a detail or two here."

"I agree," said Bradford. "This is a Victory Dinner, but it's our victory. Let's stay."

"I don't like it," Fuzziman spoke up. "It's cock-eyed. Why should they invite us here tonight? And wasn't this scheduled for tomorrow night? There's something going on here that I can't put my finger on."

"We'll stay," said the gorilla. "I'm going to find out why Swangler wanted us here so badly that he kidnapped Ros—Mrs. Carpenter to get us here."

The orchestra began to play at that moment. Bradford murmured something to the girl, but she laughed and shook her head. "No, Alan," she said. "I'm going to have the first dance with —W. G.!"

The gorilla turned slowly to the girl, his eyes full upon her. "Thank you," he said quietly. "I don't dance."

"But you must," she insisted, coming closer. "I'm asking you to."

The gorilla caught Devoli's glance from the corner of his eye. He could almost feel the Doctor wincing. His heart was beating furiously, his breath caught. "Of course," he said.

He advanced and took the girl's hand in his own. She put an arm around him, and they danced out on the floor. If everyone had been watching the group before, now they stared openly. As if by some magic, photographers appeared everywhere, and flash bulbs began popping. People stopped dancing to watch the strange couple, and everywhere the conversation followed them.

**B**UT the gorilla danced. He was awkward, his feet wouldn't do what he wanted them to, but he danced. And as he danced, the vision in his arms spoke to him, and laughed, telling him little things that had happened that day.

And slowly, a great anguish grew in the monster's



breast, and a rage tormented him. This woman was his wife. Had he lived, his life would have been spent thus, always in her arms, always beside her. The love he had always had for her burned a thousand times more fiercely now.

By the time he had finished the dance, his brain was on fire. The queer fancies he had begun to spread. How hazy everything was. He wandered out of the hall and into one of the lounges, and there Devoli found him. "Are you all right?" the Doctor asked.

"Devoli," said the gorilla. "Look at me. Am I really so hideous?"

"Not to me," said the Doctor. "I've grown so accustomed to you that I scarcely see you. I see only the being underneath."

"Thank you, thank you!" the gorilla cried. His voice was uneven, husky.

"What's the matter?" Devoli said, anxiously.

"I've been thinking," said the gorilla. There was pain, unbearable pain, in his eyes. "What if I actually told Roselle who I—"

The Doctor held a warning hand up to his lips. His eyes sent the gorilla's gaze past a wall of potted flowers that separated the lounge from the one adjoining. Bradford and the girl stood there, close together, their conversation very low.

"It's impossible for you not to eavesdrop, with your hearing," said Devoli. "Let's go before you hear some-

thing you'll be sorry about."

The gorilla started walking. "We're too late," he said, choking. "I heard it." He was aflame inside. But he had to conceal it. He had to.

When they joined Fuzziman, Devoli took the little manager aside.

"Roland," he said. "At the first sign of anything funny, get hold of W. G. and don't let go. I'm afraid. I've never seen him like this. He's all worked up to-night."

"He's not the only one," retorted Fuzziman. "Look over there." He moved his chin to indicate a small group of men who were facing them. "You know what's looking at us now?" he said. "About a hundred million dollars. That's Stetley, the fat one, and next to him, the small man, that's Mattson. And those other babies are no paupers either. They got a lot to laugh about, but I wish they wouldn't do it right in our faces."

"Tomorrow night at this time," the gorilla broke in, "we'll be doing the laughing."

"Don't underestimate them," cautioned Devoli. "Look, the dinner's going to begin."

Liveried servants were standing at the entrance to an adjoining dining hall, and as four deep-toned chimes sounded, the guests were beginning to pour through the doors. In a moment Bradford and the girl appeared and the little party began to move forward.



Every eye was on Roselle Carpenter as she put an arm around the gorilla and led him out on the floor to dance



Paul Swangler himself waited for them. "We've allowed you complete freedom up till now," he smiled. "But from here on, you're our prisoners. You may not know it, but W. G. shares the guest of honor seat tonight."

"You're too kind," murmured Devoli.

The guests of the evening were too well bred to stare too openly as the party took their seats. Famous names and famous faces were beginning to feel a little put out at their total lack of appeal beside the sensational W. G.

The dinner began quietly enough. Halfway through the first course, Paul Swangler, seated as Toastmaster, near the gorilla, rose to his feet. Five hundred banqueters turned to him.

"We are gathered tonight," he began, "to celebrate the victory of our Party—a victory which will be ours within forty-eight hours. There have been those of us who have felt doubts about our ultimate success, but tonight those doubts will vanish. For, as one of the guests of honor, we have here tonight a nationally famous figure. I refer to the Whispering Gorilla, for lack of a better name—and where indeed might I find one?"

General applause and polite laughter broke out.

"You will be surprised and pleased, I am sure," Swangler continued, "to learn that our victory has been assured by the presence of our guest of honor—rather, by the presence of both our guests of honor."

Many of the guests exchanged wondering glances. Swangler was speaking in riddles. Devoli was frightened. The gorilla was restive, his hands trembling.

"Do I make myself clear?" said Swangler. "But I am afraid I do not. The Whispering Gorilla promised us a rather gory bit of news in his tomorrow's column. Many of us were perturbed at his threats. Does not his presence here signify otherwise? Perhaps not. But let me introduce our other guest of honor, to clarify matters—"

The gorilla was rising, a low growl in his throat.

Swangler waved a hand to the guards at the entrance. The door opened and "Sure" Peetson walked in!

He was dressed in ordinary street clothes. He stood confused a moment, looking about the vast room, as if he had wandered in accidentally. He started to turn around and walk out, when he heard the pounding footsteps.

"Stop him!" Devoli cried. Fuzziman had leaped up and tried to halt the gorilla, but he was cast aside like a toy. The gorilla was running straight toward "Sure" Peetson!

Now Peetson saw him, took in the whole scene at a glance, saw Swangler—and understood in one paralyzing instant. "Swangler!" he screamed. "That's why you brought me here—for him!"

**F**IVE HUNDRED people recoiled as the scene unfolded. . . . The Whispering Gorilla shedding his veneer of civilization and turning animal . . . the jungle

beast stalking, running toward his kill . . . bounding . . . and suddenly the screams rang out. . . .

Over the wing of a table the gorilla vaulted, barely touching his knuckles. His flying black tails made him look like a monstrous bird, a monster from hell. Now Peetson began to run—too late! The gorilla had seized him about the throat . . . police were rushing up, guns drawn, bewildered, afraid to shoot . . . people fainting . . . chairs turning over . . . men blanching.

And over it all came a blood-freezing cry from the gorilla, a cry from deep in his chest, higher each instant, insane with blood-lust.

The gorilla stood for an instant with the body of the screaming gunman in his huge arms, then he whirled, leaped over a table and out of a balcony window.

As he had run past his friends at the table he heard them cry out to him. "Don't—this is what Swangler planned for you!" but it had had no effect on him. Now as he stood on the balcony, seeing the street below, he wanted to dash the body he held down. But he didn't. Swangler had wanted him to. He wanted to kill. The moonlit night in the Congo, the matchlight—all of it came back now to the gorilla . . . the door opening and Roselle seeing the way he was eating . . . dancing with her an hour before . . . all of it lost.

*Lost—he was lost!* He was an animal. Now he knew it. There was no control now. Only the desire to kill—to kill the man who had taken away more than life from him. His voice was a cry of desperation, of madness and sorrow.

Behind him now the sounds of pursuit. Police were scrambling out to the balcony. The gorilla leaped up to the balustrade and ran along the wide window ledge of the building.

Now he had been seen in the street below. The wild yelling of people rose up. He was being hunted! They had hunted him before. And then he remembered again that he was doing what Swangler had planned—but there was no help for it now. He was an animal, acting like an animal . . . what was it Devoli had said about the brute within him?

The window several feet ahead on the ledge swung open. Police were crowding there. He looked behind. They were following. Why? he thought. If he wanted to, he could drop the body once and for all. Why didn't he drop it? Swangler had wanted that. Swangler had planned it. Why was he holding the body? They were closing in on him now.

With a snarl, he bent over, seized the ledge and began climbing down the alleys cut in the stone building. There was a theatre marquee below.

Huge masses of people had formed below. The roar of the mob beat on his ears. The great electric signs were blinding him. Down he climbed, slowly, slowly to the marquee below. All the windows above were filled with people—people everywhere, and their voices all screaming at him.

But Devoli's voice he remembered. It came to him even over the crowds, over the memory of Roselle's voice as she had laughed when they danced.



He remembered he had to save the body he was carrying on his shoulders. The body was still now; it had stopped struggling and crying.

All his life came back again: his home—and the golden moon of the Congo—the music of Roselle's voice and the gun roaring in the Congo—a face more lovely than a dream—and his own, a monster's!

Now he stood on the marquee, swaying, and the body seemed to come alive again. He listened to it scream, holding its mouth close to him.

"Don't kill me! Don't kill me! I'll tell you everything! I'll tell the world!"

"You'll tell the world?" said the gorilla. His voice suddenly died away. He was so tired. He stood there gently, while down below and from every side, cameras were going. Slowly he lowered the man Peetson, and the man collapsed at the beast's feet. This was what Devoli had meant—and Roselle. All he had fought for. They had tried to stop him, but they hadn't. He had won, even for Steven Carpenter. It was over now. It was victory.

The gorilla stood there in the midst of chaos, alone on the marquee, staring down at the body at his feet. His whole life was like a dream, fading faster . . . faster. "Tell the world," he was whispering when the police climbed up to him.

Then, when the clubs crashed down on his head, all he could remember was Devoli telling him that he was still a brute inside. "Your primitive instincts—guard them!" They were hurting him, killing him, but he didn't raise a finger. He fell heavily, quietly, and a single groan came from him, and then he was still. . . .

**B**UT after that, it seemed as if it had been only the beginning. That was when "Sure" Peetson began to talk late that eventful night and didn't stop until he had run through six editions and two extras. The headlines followed each other down the pages, now of Peetson, now of the gorilla. The column that had become famous as "*Rumblings of W. G.*" ran in bold letters on the front pages. The printer's ink ran like the blood that had been spilled that night on the marquee.

**U.S.S. COMMODORE TURNED BACK BY NAVY ORDER.**

**CONDITION OF GORILLA UNCHANGED.**

**RAID JERSEY SHIPYARDS: ALLIANCE OFFICERS JAILED.**

**GORILLA'S INJURY BAFFLES DOCTORS.**

**SWANGLER CONFESSES, IMPLICATES CONFEDERATES.**

**GORILLA IN BARRED ROOM—NO VISITORS.**

The spotlight had fallen and in its scope half a dozen cities blazed. The answer came in a flood of votes, like rain to soothe. The answer came with a mighty roar.

At the end of the week, the news came through.

*Special IP Dispatch:* The Whispering Gorilla has been pronounced an animal, and unfit for association with humans. It is believed that the present physical condition of the gorilla influenced the decision. . . .

*American Newscast:* The Whispering Gorilla and his devoted personal physician, Dr. Dartworth Devoli, will leave today for the Doctor's home in Africa. The Doctor said today that his world-famous pupil will henceforth live in a jungle habitat, to which his basic instincts are more suited. The permanent injury to his brain, committed by terrified police the night of the gorilla's sensational seizure, has deprived him of all the faculties which convinced millions of people that he was a human masquerading as an animal, instead of the opposite, which was true. . . .

**T**HE thousands who swarmed at the freight docks could see little. The ship's gigantic cranes were hoisting cargo, and all that could be seen was the pointed top of a steel cage and the striped shadows that played over the forms of four persons who stood beside it.

"Sorry," said Dartworth Devoli to the other three, "that I couldn't have allowed you to see him during the past week, but you see how it is."

The great gorilla sat in a corner of the cage. Part of the bandage around his head had become unwound, and the end hung over part of the gorilla's face. He kept shaking it away and it kept coming back. Then he began chewing on the flowers that filled part of the cage.

He still wore clothes, and now he fumbled in a pocket and found some odds and ends. His head kept turning here and there, attracted by movement or by a flash of light.

"His conscious mind is gone for good," said Dr. Devoli. "He is rapidly losing his civilized habits and soon only gorilla instincts will govern his life."

The giant crane swung down, fastened to the cage. It began lifting, and the gorilla peered about him, noiselessly.

"Goodbye, W. G.!" Fuzziman called. He had to turn his eyes away.

Alan Bradford looked after the cage until it disappeared, unable to speak or move.

The men were shaking hands.

"Goodbye," said Dr. Devoli. "I'm an old man now, and my plans are uncertain. We may never meet again, but I've loved you all." His aged, aristocratic face was firm in defeat, and proud.

The whistle of the boat drowned out their farewells. The last the two men and the girl saw was the aged scientist standing on deck, waving to them as the ship began to move.

In Bradford's arms, Roselle was weeping softly. "He was so alive, so kind," she sobbed.

"I had come to feel that I'd known him for years. I felt almost close to him at the end. . . ."