

4 -The lost Continent

He had not had sufficient time to cross the clearing and pass down through the horrid forest beyond the clearing; and in the second place, they would consider us as already dead, as much so as though we lay bound and bleeding before the altar of the lion god. So sure would they be, that we had fallen prey to the terrible creature which, for some reason, they feared to face, though their greed for human flesh is far greater than that of the lion."

Thus reassured, I decided to take Victory with me back to 30th Street. But how to explain my strange companion to my friends was a detail that troubled me not a little as we made our way through the Camp of the Lions, down the river bank toward the launch, and my waiting companions.

Upon the shore we met Snider. He was frantic with excitement. "The whole east coast is alive with men," he bawled into my ear, above the roar of the Atlantic. "Where have you been? I thought you were dead when I found your cap. And then we picked up Taylor, and he was as crazy as you. He said you had gone off upon a wild-goose chase after an imaginary lion. He said he heard you call my name—then some women thought they saw you later, far inland."

I managed to calm Snider, and then related my adventures. Snider listened in silence, his eyes growing wider and his face paler as I proceeded. When I had finished, he stood for a moment, as though deep in thought; then he turned toward the launch without a word and clambered in.

"Come," he said, and started the engine.

I turned to Victory, trying to frame an explanation, but she only smiled and waved her hand in a general farewell. "Goodbye," she said, as the launch moved into the stream, "You are going back to your own people. I must stay with mine. Goodbye!"

As we moved slowly down the river, I turned to see her standing there by the ancient arch, her figure silhouetted against the moonlit sky—the queen of a vanished race, alone by the ruins of their greatness.

"We must come back for her, Delcarte," I said. "We must help her to rebuild what has been destroyed."

And as we entered the broader waters of the Thames, the great buildings of New York greeted us in the east; and Victory, the last queen of England, was left alone in the silence and the night, standing amongst the crumbling ruins of a dead civilization.



Summaryer