

STRICKLAND

God! Look at him! Look at his face...  
it's covered in fur...and those yellow  
eyes!

**SOUND: *The jungle animals have built to a crescendo.***

**MUSIC: *Wild tabla drums.***

WEISS

Listen! Listen...do you hear...they're  
coming!

STRICKLAND

Who's coming?

WEISS

(screaming over noise)  
Every feral beast within a hundred  
miles...He's possessed...They want  
him...

STRICKLAND

We stand by our man!

WEISS

Use your brain, Strickland! Look at his  
face. What's he remind you of...a puma,  
a leopard, maybe...but certainly not a  
man!

STRICKLAND

I'm not leaving him like this. Hughes,  
give me your knife...

HUGHES (N)

Strickland cut the ropes. Fleete, or  
what was left of Fleete, just sat  
there...his eyes fixed on the front  
door. The howls and shrieks all around  
us were deafening. We made a dash to a  
large closet in the bedroom, just as  
the front door burst open and the  
horrors of the night entered...

**SOUND: Guttural screams and ripping sounds, glass windows cracking as screeching monkeys and hissing snakes draw closer, Fleete's snarl, snapping of teeth.**

HUGHES (N) (cont'd)

At dawn, we emerged from our hiding place to find the room a shambles. Fleete was gone. Only shreds of his clothing littered the floor.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM - ENGLAND - NIGHT

6

**SOUND: Fork against glass, calling for a verbal toast.**

SPEAKER

Ladies and gentlemen, a toast to Captain Strickland, loyal subject of our Empress Queen...

**SOUND: Hip, hip...**

...And perhaps the good captain will regale us with tales of conquering the heathen!

**WALLA: Clapping, ad lib "speech," "speech," "speech."**

STRICKLAND

I-I-I don't really care to burden you with my experiences in India, especially as my feelings towards the heathen, as you call them, have changed. Man's beliefs, his rituals, religious or otherwise, are frankly his own business...not England's...not mine!

**WALLA: Sharp intakes of breath, ad lib shock.**

ALL

(shocked)

HUGHES (N)

Strickland and I looked at each other and raised our glasses in a silent

(MORE)

toast. I saw in his face my own haunted fear. Fleete disappeared into the night with the raving beasts, but who's to say that we, too, Strickland and I, do not carry our own mark of the beast. Weiss disappeared last year without a trace. And every day, wherever I look, the beast is all around me.

**SOUND: Howls.**

THE END