

Chains



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Chisholm surfaced from the whirling blackness to a dazzle of eye-burning light. He blinked painfully: the glare making his eyeballs smart as he tried to focus his vision and collect his fragmented wits.

His mind-like his lead-heavy eyes-hunted fitfully for a reassuring sign of reality somewhere in that assailing brightness. A full minute passed before he could keep his eyes wide enough open to identify the source of light. A single electric bulb was socketed high in the ceiling above him. It glared at

him like a Cyclopean eye: unwinking, mesmeric, dulling his sluggish brain.

Chisholm tried to move. His limbs and body did not obey.

His muscles received the feeble signals triggered by his slowly stirring mind but were incapable of immediate response. His flesh seemed to be made of jelly.

He tried again to move. This time the effort succeeded.

La c ng pa n tore at h s r ght arm, racing from shoulder socket to wrist and back again in lightning currents. The base of his spine felt as if a steel spike had been driven into the bone and permanently lodged there. Chisholm cried out. His whole body jerked as the involuntary sound exploded from his lips. And with the contortion of his body came another sound: a metallic clinking, consequent to every spasmodic movement

The pain brought remembrance of where he was. His wrists and ankles were fettered, with chains running to eye-bolts in the wall of the stone cell where he lay. The steel bands encircling his limbs had chafed the skin bloody and raw below the black serge of his trouser-legs and at his unprotected wrists. The pare at the base of his spine and in his racked shoulder-

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