

# She

Sir H Rider Haggard



# S H E

SIR. H. RIDER HAGGARD

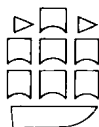
*Simplified by Michael West*

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1500 word vocabulary

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*He . . . fell back into a chair.*

# One

## *HOW THIS STORY REACHED ME*

One day I was walking along the street in Cambridge with a friend when I noticed two men coming arm-in-arm towards us. One of them was the finest-looking young man I have ever seen: he was six feet tall; his face was perfect. As he raised his hat to a lady I saw that his hair was bright golden.

"What a splendid-looking man that is!" I said to my friend.

"Yes," he answered, "he is the best-looking man in the University, and one of the nicest. The other men call him 'the Greek God', but his real name is Vincey. But look at the other one; his name is Holly; he is Vincey's guardian and has charge of the young man till he is twenty-five years of age. Some people call them Beauty and the Beast."

I looked at the older man; he was about forty years of age; he was as ugly as the other man was beautiful. He was short and very strongly made, and had very long arms. He had dark hair and very small eyes. As I looked at him I thought of a Baboon—a large, man-like monkey. Yet there was something very kind and pleasing about his eyes.

"I would like to meet them," I said.

My friend led me up to them, and for some minutes we stood talking. We talked about Africa, because I had just come back from there. Just then two ladies passed. It was clear that Vincey knew

them. Then a strange thing happened; as Vincey turned to speak to the ladies, Holly suddenly stopped talking to me; he turned and hurried across the street: he seemed to be as afraid of women as most people are afraid of a mad dog.

That evening I left Cambridge; I thought no more about the matter for years. Then, two months ago, I received a letter, and when I read the name of the sender, Horace Holly, it was some time before I could remember who he was.

“Cambridge.

“Dear Sir,

“About five years ago I met you in the street in Cambridge: I was with Leo Vincey. I have been reading your books, *King Solomon’s Mines* and *Allan Quatermain*—both stories about travels and strange happenings in Africa, and both partly true, and partly imagined.

“I am sending you a packet of papers telling of certain things which happened to me and Leo Vincey. These things were so strange that I can hardly hope that even you will believe them. Leo Vincey and I are agreed that the story ought to be made known. We are very soon leaving England for a purpose which you will be able to guess after you have read our story. We ask you to read it and see that it is printed.

“I am sending you also the ring and the broken piece of a pot spoken of in the papers.

“I have nothing to add to what is written there. Who was *She*? Where did she come from? How

did she come to the Caves of Kor? We have never learned the answers to these questions. Perhaps we never shall; or perhaps—— We are, as I said, going on a journey. Please take charge of all these things until we ask for them again—if we come back.

“Very truly yours,  
“L. HORACE HOLLY.”

This is the story which reached me in this mysterious way.

*H. Rider Haggard.*

## Two

### *HOW THE IRON BOX CAME TO HOLLY*

I, Ludwig Horace Holly, was sitting one night in my rooms at Cambridge. This was over twenty years ago. It was very late at night: within a week I had to sit for an examination. If I passed it I would be able to become a teacher in the University.

I was then, as I am now, a very friendless man. I am, as I know very well, very ugly: I have an unusually powerful body, but my shape and appearance are such that I have been given the name the Baboon. This has made me afraid of all women and not at all eager for the company of my fellow-men. In those days, when I was studying at Cambridge, I had few friends. Among these very few was a man named Vincey. He (strangely enough) was one of the best-looking men I have ever seen.



As I sat studying late at night I heard a knock at my door. It was a very cold night, and I knew that my friend Vincey had been ill; so, thinking it might be he, I hurried to open the door.

It was Vincey. He almost fell into the room. His face was white and drawn with pain, and a thin stream of blood lay at the corner of his mouth. He was carrying a heavy iron box. He put the box on the table then fell back into a chair. For some minutes he could not speak. I poured some wine into a glass and gave it to him. He drank it, and seemed better: but he was very ill.

"Let me go and get a doctor," I said.

"No; I am finished, Holly," he answered: "I shall not see to-morrow. No doctors can help me. Now listen to me carefully, for you will never hear me speak again—— We have been friends for two years; tell me what you know about me."

"I know that you are rich, that you have come to the University when you are older than most of the men here. I know that you have been married, and that your wife died, and that you are the best friend I ever had."

"Did you know that I have a son?"

"No."

"I have. He is five years old. His mother died when he was born. Because of that I have never wished to see him. Holly, I want to make you the boy's guardian."

I jumped up out of my chair; "Me!" I cried.

"Yes. I have been searching for someone to whom I could trust my boy, and this." He pointed to the

iron box. "You are the man, Holly. You are strong, and honest, and kind. Listen: the boy will be the last of one of the most ancient families in the world. You may laugh at what I am saying now, but one day it will be proved to you beyond all doubt, that I come in a straight line through sixty-five lives from a Greek soldier in the service of Pharaoh, King of ancient Egypt. His name was Kallikrates: *Kali*, as you know, is a Greek word meaning beautiful, and *Krates* means strength.

"The son of this soldier became a priest of the goddess Isis. This was about two thousand years ago. Kallikrates the priest fell in love with a princess of the family of Pharaoh; he and the Princess left Egypt secretly by ship. Their ship was driven by a storm on to the coast of Africa, and all were killed except Kallikrates and the Princess. They were saved by the beautiful white Queen of a wild people and lived in her home. You will learn the story from the records in this box; and you will learn that this Queen murdered Kallikrates, and that the Princess escaped to Greece with her child.

"The child and his children, and their children took the name Vindex—a Latin name meaning the Avenger or Revenge-bringer—the person who will pay back a wrong-doer for the wrong which he has done. The family moved, as the years went by, from Greece to Rome, from Rome to France, from France to England. The name Vindex became changed into Vincey.

"The things inside this box were passed from father to son and were given by my father to me,

always in the hope that one of them would at some time carry out that revenge—that repayment for the murder done hundreds of years ago by the white Queen in Africa. I tried to do my duty; I tried to find the place described in that box; but I had no success. On my way back from Africa I met my wife and she died giving birth to my son, Leo. Then I turned back to the work again. I thought, 'Before I go to Africa again I must learn Arabic.' That is why I came here. But now it is too late."

I could see that he was right; it was too late. As he lay back in the chair, breathless from having spoken so much, his lips were white. The mark of death was upon his face.

At last he spoke again.

"I ask you to take charge of my son, Leo, when I am dead. On this paper I have written down the things which I want my son to learn. When he is twenty-five years old, open that box; let him see and read what is in it, and say whether he is willing to carry out the task. Will you do this for me? I have left half my money to you. With it and the pay which you get as teacher in the University you will be able to live happily. Will you do this for me? As a dying man, I beg you to do it!"

How could I refuse?

"Goodbye, my friend," he said, taking my hand.

He went out into the darkness. Was my friend Vincey mad? His story sounded the strangest, maddest thing I had ever heard. But he was my friend, and someone would have to take charge of that five-year-old boy. For a long time I could not sleep for

thinking about the whole thing and wondering if I had done right.

I seemed to have been asleep only a few minutes when I heard my servant calling me.

"Why! What's the matter, John?" I asked, for his face was white, and his eyes showed that something had frightened him.

"I went in to call Mr. Vincey, sir—and there he lay, dead!"

## Three

### *LEO GROWS UP*

I took the iron box up to London and put it in the strong-room for safe-keeping.

I found a nice house for myself and the boy in Cambridge. I would, of course, have no woman in it. The boy was old enough to do without a woman's care. With some difficulty I found a nice young fellow named Job: he was the eldest of a family of thirteen, and so had had a lot of practice in taking care of his younger brothers and sisters.

At last the child arrived in charge of an old woman who wept at parting from him. He was the most beautiful child I have ever seen. His face was very like his father's, and of the same perfect shape; his hair was the same bright golden. I can remember how he stood there with the sunlight from the window playing in his hair: I was sitting in my

chair. Job was standing in the corner holding a wooden horse in his hand.

The boy stood and looked at me: then he held out his arms and ran to me.

"I like you;" he said: "you are ugly, but you are good."

. . . . .

The child Leo grew into a boy, and the boy became a young man; and as he grew he increased in beauty and in strength. I carefully followed his father's orders about his schooling. He learned Greek and Arabic, and I learned Arabic too, so as to be a companion to him.

When Leo was eighteen years of age, he went to the University and after that studied the law.

I had only one trouble with Leo during all this time, and that was that almost every woman who saw him fell in love with him. This caused difficulties, but he was a very nice young man, more interested in games and his studies and his fellow-men than in women; so all was well.

And so we came to his twenty-fifth birthday.

## FOUR

### *THE OPENING OF THE IRON BOX*

On the day before Leo's twenty-fifth birthday

we both went up to London and brought back the iron box with us to Cambridge. We decided that we would open it after breakfast on the next day, Leo's birthday.

So after breakfast Job brought the box into the sitting-room and was just going to leave the room.

"Wait a moment, Job," I said. "If you don't mind, Leo, I would like Job to stay. There ought to be a third person present to see that everything is correct."

"Certainly let him stay," said Leo.

From the box containing my most precious possessions I took the keys which Leo's father gave me on the night of his death. There were three keys; one was quite a modern key; the second was a very ancient key. The third key was not like any key I have ever seen. It was a bar of silver with cuts along the edge, and another silver bar was fixed across it.

I took the first key and opened the iron box. Leo helped me to force open the heavy top. Inside it was another box, made of a black wood. It was of great age, for the hard heavy wood had, in places, decayed and turned to dust.

I took the second key, and opened the black box. Inside it was a silver box about twelve inches square and eight inches high. It was covered with Egyptian figures, beautifully cut into the metal. I took it out and put it on the table; then I opened it with the strange-looking silver key.

Inside the silver box there was a paper written in the handwriting of my dead friend, "*To my son*



read the letter."

"My son Leo,

"When you open this you will be twenty-five years old, and I shall have been long dead and forgotten by almost all who knew me.

"Holly will have told you something about the past history of your family. In this box you will find a very strange story written by a princess of long ago upon the broken piece of a Greek jar. My father told me this story when I was nineteen years old, and I set out to discover whether it was true. I came to the coast of Africa, north of the mouth of the Zambesi river: it is a part known to few and visited by almost no one. There is a rock there shaped like an African man's head. Such a hill is described in the writing on the jar. I landed there and met a man who had been driven out by his people because of ~~some wrong~~ which he had done. He said to ~~me~~, 'Far inland there is a country where there ~~are~~ mountains shaped like cups, and there are ~~great~~ caves. All round this country there are ~~low~~ lands which swallow up men who try to ~~cross them~~—unless they know the right paths. In those mountains and caves there lives a people who speak Arabic. They are ruled over by a beautiful white woman whom they very seldom see. She has power over all things, living and dead.'

"The man was very ill when he told me this; and two days later, he died. I fell ill too, and was forced to go back to my boat. On my way back to England I stopped in Greece. There I met your mother.



“I believe that this story, written on the broken pot, is true. I believe that there is some way in which people can be made to live on—and on, for ever.

“You may think that the story is only the fancy of a mad person. You may think that (even if it is true) it is unwise to have anything to do with such powers. If you think this, destroy these papers; destroy the writing on the jar, and do not let your children and their children be troubled any more by this foolish and dangerous story of the past.

“Or you may wish—as I did—to know whether the story is true, or not. You may decide to go and see for yourself.

“It is for you to choose.

“Goodbye.”

“Well,” said Leo, “what do you think of it, Holly?”

“I think that your father was mad. I thought so twenty years ago when he came into my room with this box.”

“Quite mad,” said Job.

“Well, let’s see what the writing on the jar says,” Leo took up the English of it and read:

“I am Amenartas, of the family of the Pharaohs: I am wife of Kallikrates. I write this to my little son whom I have called the Avenger. I write it because I am soon going to die. When your father and I went away in a ship from Egypt, we came to the east coast of Africa. There our ship was thrown by a storm onto the land near a rock shaped like an African man’s head.