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WARDEN OF THE ZONE

by JOCK CUNNINGHAM

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WARDEN OF THE ZONE

By JOCK CUNNINGHAM

All he saw was the bottle coming down, and behind it Sandenis' face, cruel and bitter.

THE soldier stepped out into the road. Sandenis stopped the pickup truck and made a mock salute to him. The soldier recognized him, grinned, and waved back. So that was the way, Ramos thought sourly, that Sandenis got along with the pigs. He tried on a smile, experimentally. It didn't fit well on his face, so he let it drop.

The big tanker, squeezing along the Canal, was like a big, fat woman—blind drunk and staggering, being pulled and prodded through a door to bed by her tough little children, the towcars. What did they call them? *Mulos*. More stupidity. Why call them mules when they were not mules?

His own mother, Ramos thought, had been such a tanker, the Spanish blood lightening her skin some, but not changing her body, and making her fatter. His father had been lighter—Indian and Spanish. Ramos had bred cocks once, and once had wondered what name of breed such mother and father had produced. Spanish, Indian and Negro. At any rate, he was a Panamanian.

The ship disappeared behind the con-

trol building. The stern towcar came abreast, idling along ready to pull back if the boat went too fast. The towcars ground and whined as the old Panama City street cars used to, only more. There was a subtle rumba deep under the grind. Ramos sighed.

"All I want," Sandenis was saying, "is for you to keep your temper and work a little. You wait and see! You will become interested, Ramos. The gun! You should see it, it is a marvel—it has a device that makes it follow the search-light automatically, adjusting itself like a—"

Sandenis also talked so. He didn't expect Ramos to understand, he just thought out loud, excited, soft. Ramos looked at the soldier, standing idly in the road. These soldiers. How quick were they, really? One could get away with it. The knife hidden up the sleeve. The soldier would have no way of knowing. One would saunter up, smiling, not looking at the soldier. He would say, "Halt!" and one would smile and look stupid and leap, flicking out the knife—throw the

rifle aside with the left arm, sweeping the knife across the throat. Then what? Run? Where? Well, at night it would be easy. Oh, well, what was one soldier? Ramos felt bored. He dropped his cigarette butt out the pickup window and sighed again.

"—and when we get this gun up," Sandenis was saying, "there will be three on just that one hill. Who would guess it, to look?" He pointed at the hill where they were going. "When it is finished, you won't see that dirt scar—it will be camouflaged, like the others." He laughed. "Let them come! Our guns would blow them to bits. Do you know how many guns there are around Miraflores, Ramos?"

"No," Ramos said, looking idly at the control building.

"Well, I won't tell you," Sandenis said seriously. "I would like to, and I know I can trust you, but one is just not supposed to— But let a Japanese try to bomb Miraflores," he added, brightening and laughing, "and you would find out! Anyway, even if they did bomb it, what? They would have to destroy four sets of gates to cripple Miraflores, and every gate is bombproofed. Do you see that gate? The one we will drive over when it is closed? Well, under the roadway is the bombproofing, and I can tell you, it is thick." Sandenis laughed confidently. "It would take—take, I don't know, fifty bombers, to do it—and with the guns, and the new one we are putting up tonight, they would not get even one little tiny plane through."

"Sure, sure," Ramos said. He smiled to himself. Sandenis always talked that way. Now suppose he were to knock Sandenis out with his left elbow — he would have to, since Sandenis was even more patriotic than the Americans—then let the pickup roll fast down the hill over the guard, into the Canal, blocking the gates? He could say it was an accident, that Sandenis was knocked out by the fall. Sandenis wouldn't tell, not on Ramos. But then, they would both probably be killed, and anyway, a crane would lift the car out in an hour. But if one could cut the electric cables from the control building that worked the gates—Sandenis would know how to do that. But then, Sandenis never would.

Sandenis the blue-eyed dreamer, always dreaming of Sandenis the American, the citizen, the patriot. Working to save money, to go to engineering school in the States, to become a resident, and then a citizen. To Sandenis, this was his private war, and Miraflores his own property. Sandenis, to save the locks would even — regretfully — kill him. Nothing would hurt Sandenis more, but he would do it. He would even kill himself.

A deep, hard bitterness stiffened Ramos' insides, and his smile curved into something cold, heavy and cruel. Someday the Americans would betray that trust, and when they did, Sandenis would go to pieces. Sandenis didn't have anything but that loyalty and faith, the fool.

RAMOS remembered Sandenis at six, running gaily around in the yard that first day at the Seawall school. Ramos had seized his shoulder, grabbing a fistful of the clean, ragged blue blouse.

"Where did you get those blue eyes, chicken? They don't look pretty in that tan face. Shall I punch them out?" Then the fear in the blue eyes. "American, eh? Little bastard." The crowd gathered. "Little blue-eyed—"

"I'm not!" Sandenis shrilled at him, not even knowing what it meant. "I am —I am an American!

"How they laughed. Ramos had laughed and pushed him down, thump. "What kind of an American? Your father had no name and your mother is a—" And Sandenis, sitting on the ground began to weep with bewilderment, out of his blue eyes. They all stood over him, with Ramos, the boss.

There was something about the small, blue-clad figure that made Ramos angry, perhaps because he was ashamed of him-

self. He hadn't cared about Sandenis, yes or no, he had been angry with boredom. In a moment he would have fallen to kicking the boy savagely, but the crowd began to torment Sandenis, and he whirled instead and seized two necks and cracked two heads together, and threw them down and began to kick their faces in. They got away. He stood, hot and vicious with rage. "Leave this one alone," he said. "He is my game, not yours."

He had picked Sandenis up roughly and smacked the dust off him. Sandenis, not weeping now, had looked up at him and smiled with a sudden, enchanting trust; and suddenly Ramos smiled too.

Sandenis never called for help, but Ramos would come running, scattering the tormentors like a dog among chickens. They called him bastard more than ever when they learned he really was one, that his only parent was a man far too old to be his father. Such cases were common enough in Panama. Nobody bothered. But because Sandenis resented it, they made a special issue of it.

Sandenis always fought, but he fought pale and silent. He didn't cry, but after it was over each time, would tremble and be unable to speak. Ramos would lead him trembling away and talk quietly about the jungle and the snakes and birds in it. Then, when he was quieted again, Sandenis would begin talking about his dreams, and Ramos would remain silent, his face, as always, quiet, coldly smiling, showing only in certain lines the vicious rage that always burned somewhere behind it.

Ramos would keep saying, "Sure, sure," nodding and smiling.

Always when they baited him with his illegitimacy, Sandenis screamed wildly that he was an American. At first it was merely a name, a defense against another name. But gradually he came to believe it, to take refuge in the thought that he was an American, and at last, even when the years had left his tormentors far behind, it grew into an ambition. It was like a rope to which he had fastened his hope, to drag him up out of an abyss. By the time he was fourteen, nobody ever referred to his parentage, and nobody cared—but Ramos knew that Sandenis still thought that people thought about it, and felt like a stranger and outcast in his own city. Sandenis studied hard, and went to work haustible elixir of hope.

On his side, he had a calm, almost religious faith in the goodness of the Americans. They were to him like superior beings in virtue and wisdom, white angels, and the thought of becoming a Citizen, like them, was to him an inexhaustible elixir of hope, constantly inspiring and encouraging him.

Ramos didn't study. But he learned much, thieving, robbing, and sometimes smuggling. He watched Sandenis rise, becoming expert with electricity. Their minds separated, but they remained peculiarly united. Ramos knew Sandenis needed him, because Sandenis was alone in an illusion. And in a way he needed Sandenis, because Sandenis was the only person he knew he could trust.

Nobody knew where Sandenis had got his name. The old man told Ramos the baby had kept repeating it. From somewhere, he had picked up the one word—*San-dey-ness.*

He would tell his dreams to Ramos, and Ramos never scoffed at them, merely nodded and smiled and said agreeably, "Sure, sure." Ramos hated Americans even more than he hated the police. Sandenis knew it, and tried to convert him, and Ramos laughed at him. But he never laughed at the idea of Sandenis' becoming an American. This was Sandenis' dream. The Americans could break the dream, but not Ramos. If they ever did— When Ramos thought of this, his face became ugly as a snake's.

RAMOS studied the control building. Its pale yellow flanks turned gold in the setting sun, rich against the green

jungle. One part of the wall, smooth and empty, fascinated him.

"It wouldn't need fifty planes," he said quietly. "One bomb, on the control building."

Sandenis looked at him, a little startled. "What do you mean?" he said in a flat, wary voice.

Ramos grinned. "You know. You told me—how the wires go down there, behind that wall. Name of God! I could do it myself, with an axe. Imagine, chopping through that plaster, *ugh, ugh, ugh,* chopping through those fat cables. What then? Like cutting off its head, cutting all—"

"Be quiet! Stop talking that way!"

Sandenis was pale, his eyes big, staring at Ramos.

Ramos laughed, seized his shoulder and shook it. "Don't be silly. Do you think I would do it? I was only fooling."

Sandenis smiled limply. "Don't talk that way, Ramos."

"But I was only fooling!" Ramos protested. "Do you think I would risk my neck? I was only dreaming."

Sandenis laughed, almost a giggle. "You are funny. Such dreams! Honestly, Ramos!"

Ramos laughed too. "Well," he said, "it is a dream—but then, it is all a dream, so why get upset?" He grinned at Sandenis.

Sandenis smiled almost apologetically. "All right. But, Ramos—they are very careful—such talk sounds bad, even though you don't mean it. Remember, you are my helper now. It might mean trouble for you—and me."

Ramos' grin curdled. "I am not a fool. If I were of a mind to do it, be sure they wouldn't hear of it."

The soldier beckoned with his arm. Sandenis eased the pickup truck down the slope onto the gates. Going across, listening to the water boiling in the culverts, he smiled. "It's a grand thing, the Canal, no?"

Ramos looked dully ahead at the marsh, black now in the dusk. To him it was nothing—a crude, concrete monster, the hard, dull, cruel and inflexible concoction of Americans.

"I am earning my forty cents an hour as your helper," he said. "That is all. The rest—" he gestured at the Canal, the hill ahead, the road along which they were bouncing— "I don't care."

Sandenis smiled. "All right. You just be my helper and I will be happy. I know you hate Americans. You are like a cross old man. But they are my friends, Ramos. Maybe not so much Reed—our boss—but the Major is. I am helping them, and they me. Don't make enemies of them. They are my friends."

Ramos' lip lifted slightly, and his eyes were dull with a peculiar mixture of sullen cynicism and sadness. *I hope so,* he thought. *Sure, they love you now. They see your loyalty and smile warmly. But maybe some day will come when they will find cheaper skill than yours, or perhaps some reason why it is cheaper to get rid of you. They will remember your loyalty. Sandenis, and smile—and fire you. Only I hope not, I hope not.*

CHAPTER II

THE VOICE OF DANGER

"NOW remember," Sandenis said as they pushed up the steep skidway to the top of the hill, "ask me the questions, not Reed." They crawled around a gang of men pushing a crate slowly up, helped by another gang pulling from the top. "Reed is all right, but a little touchy. I will introduce you to him, so he will know who you are and not be suspicious, but that is all you need see of him."

They stood panting at the top. Ramos looked around. In the centre of a clearing, at the hill's edge just in front of them, nestled the emplacement, its inner foundations setting under wet burlap while carpenters still built up the forms around the reinforcing rods of the outer breastworks. A gang of men struggled to set up the frame of a hand-hoist over the pit, for swinging the gun parts,

lying ready nearby, into place, while others dug holes for the camouflage net-frame and more still dragged and placed ties in a semi-circular retaining wall around the edge of the hill.

The air was full of the gabble of argument, cries, the chorused grunts of the team pulling at the skid. Over everything the carbide floods poured a cool, bluish light whose glare seemed to Ramos only to increase the confusion.

"For God's sake," Ramos called over the din as he picked his way after Sandenis through the clutter, "Why not one thing at a time?"

Sandenis looked back at him and laughed. "There is no time." He was excited, his face bright. "Everything at once, Ramos. It all comes out even in the end, you will see. We're early—where's Reed?"

Ramos spat into a stockpile of cement bags. It all gave him a bad taste in the mouth. He stepped aside hastily for a concrete-buggy lurching toward the pit and cursed after the pusher. "So this is what you make yourself into. An ant, a slave, pew! And these fools—why do they work so hard?"

"It's the end of their shift. Come on, Ramos, it's time to get to work—and we've got to see Reed first. Oh, there he is." Sandenis pulled him through the mess, and Ramos saw a patch of red hair bright under a floodlight, and as they neared, a heavy, blocky body. An army private on duty stood nearby, watching the laborers.

Reed was ordering concrete into the outer forms. Sandenis waited at his elbow. Ramos looked from his face, alight, its excitement almost flickering with impatience, to Reed's, pale, saturnine, consciously ignoring him as he watched the pouring.

"This is my friend, Ramos, the new helper, Mr. Reed. He knows the work—I have taught him a good deal, and he is a good worker." Ramos watched Reed's face, lifted now slightly, still ignoring Sandenis at his elbow. He looked, with an expression of complacence and boredom, as though at the stars.

"He is a very good cable splicer," Sandenis went on. "He used to do it piecework at Albrook Field. That's what I need especially right now, a good splicer," he added. He waited a moment for Reed to say something. "Well," he finished, "if there's nothing new about the light, we'll get to work." He turned away.

"Just a minute," Reed said. His voice was tranquil.

Sandenis turned back, looking expectantly at Reed.

Reed stood smoking, his face calm and reposed. Sandenis waited. Twice Reed drew a breath as though to speak, and only sighed, as though bored. Sandenis fidgeted.

Somebody yelled "Time!" and a furious babble broke out. Tools clattered where dropped, and the confusion doubled as the gradually collecting new shift swarmed over the work.

"Mr. Reed, it's time for us to go to work," Sandenis said.

Reed sighed out another lungful of smoke. "You're fired. Guard, take him off the place." He turned and sauntered morosely away.

THE guard moved up beside Sandenis. Ramos stiffened. Sandenis, pale, opened his mouth twice, speechless. He jerked around and ran after Reed. The guard followed quickly, half running. "Hey, you!" Sandenis seized Reed's arm. Reed stopped, stiff.

"What did you say, Mr. Reed?" Sandenis asked in a thin, empty voice.

Ramos moved slowly after them. He felt a peculiar tingling in his back, not fear, not anger, but small waves of high expectancy. He watched Reed's face.

Reed turned, jerking his arm from Sandenis' hand. He looked down at him steadily, his face composed. "You heard me. You're fired. It's just temporary. We'll let you know later if something

else comes up. Guard, I told you to take this man away!"

"But why, Mr. Reed? Why am I fired?"

Reed's lips tightened. "No reason!" he said. "Now that's enough. I told you we'd let you know. You can get back to town with the off shift. Take him away!" he suddenly shouted at the guard.

"But Mr. Reed!" Sandenis cried, "People can't—people don't do things this way. I am—" suddenly his voice was stronger—"I am not fired for nothing! I am doing a good job—not only good—I am, you know it, very good on these searchlights! I have installed dozens, fifteen, sixt—"

"Now listen!" Reed said, his voice drowning Sandenis' out. "I've got another man, better suited. You're fired, so clear out. Damn you!" he bawled at the guard. "Don't stand there like a fool! Take him!" He turned abruptly and strode away.

The guard's face froze. "Come on," he said to Sandenis thickly. Sandenis stood still, slightly hunched over. Ramos moved beside him.

"Come on." the guard said.

"But why?"

"Don't ask me! I just stand here like a fool—but there'll be trouble now if you don't come on."

Sandenis turned, stiff all over, on his heels, and his two hands seized Ramos' forearm.

"He can't! He can't!" Sandenis said in a low voice, his face squeezed up.

"Sh, Sandenis! Wait!" He shook Sandenis' shoulder.

Sandenis began to shout. "But he can't!" He picked up a hoe and began to beat a pile of sand with it, emphasizing his words.

"Here, here!" the guard shouted, grabbing at the hoe. The handle cracked, splitting in Sandenis' hands.

"My God," the guard said, looking around. "My God, what next? Are you coming, or do you have to be carried?"

Sandenis sat down on the sandpile and began shaking his head slowly, rubbing his eyes with the backs of his wrists as though somebody had thrown dust into them.

"All right," the guard said, and ran off.

"Come on, Sandenis," Ramos said sharply. "Before that monkey brings his whole tribe. Didn't I tell you about the Americans? Didn't I?" He poured out a flood of Spanish filth, without violence. He wasn't angry. The scene was quite natural and expected, to anyone who understood—as he did—the Yankee way of doing things. "Didn't you expect it, really?"

"What is the matter with you?" Sandenis cried, rising. "Are you a fool? Do you stand there and tell me I can be fired for nothing? Listen, listen—" He choked on explanation. "He cannot do it! I have a record, eight years, ask the Central Labor Board, and now, for no reason— They never do it, Ramos, it is crazy! And he has got another man! Did you hear that? In my job—why, the fool, does he think he has a right to steal my job?" He shook with anger; and then, as his fists clenched, his voice sank, and he looked after the way Reed had gone. "No," he said in his throat. "He simply has no right." He shook his head. "It has never been so. It is impossible. Well, so he thinks he can do this? No, I have a right. And the Major will tell him so. Maybe Reed thinks he can bully me—"

Ramos felt a start of alarm. "You are going to do something crazy now!" He put his hand on Sandenis' arm. "Come on quick before the whole army comes."

"No," Sandenis said stolidly. "I am going to see the Major about this crazy thing. He cannot fire me this way, with no reason, and the Major is going to tell him so."

Ramos looked after him as he stamped away, hitting the earth with his heels. He looked around at the swarm of laborers and suddenly spat, sick of the place. But he had to wait for Sandenis.

Suddenly Reed was beside him. "What

are you doing here? You're fired too, in case you didn't know it. Move on."

Ramos stepped carefully out of Reed's reach and looked up into his face pleasantly. "Sure," he said agreeably, smiling his slow, calm, full-lipped smile. He could remember that face any time, any night in Panama, across the line. "Sure, sure, Mr. Reed." He turned and moved off through the rubbish.

He glanced back. Reed was walking away. Ramos stopped, lighted a cigarette, and picked his way back to the edge of the hill. He looked across the steep jungle, across the black marsh to the Miraflores locks, lit up brightly now—then down the Canal to Thatcher Ferry.

RAMOS went down the slope toward the jungle and stopped in the dark at the bottom of the retaining wall, out of sight, but able to see the skidway up which Sandenis would return. He put his hand into his pocket for a cigarette. A red bead flared off in the dark to his left, along the buttress. His hand stopped, and he sighed. Somebody else was smoking, waiting in the dark.

He sank to his heels, his back against the buttress, and leaned sideways in a corner where the anchor ties projected through the wall. He smiled to himself. So there was no time to do things one at a time? He watched the cigarette coal glow and fade again. But there was time for smoking, war or no war. He thought of Sandenis. Reed said he could get another job. So Sandenis would blame it onto Reed personally, and not onto Americans as a whole. Poor Sandenis. It would be lucky for him if he never learned.

Some birds began to thrash and squawk in the branches of the trees below. Birds asleep, falling off a limb.

He heard a voice, soft and near. "Meyer?" Ramos' stomach shrank. He saw a figure come around the end of the buttress, against the light.

"Meyer?" It was Reed's voice, but with a strange softness.

Reed came toward him, stumbling over clods. Ramos, smiling sardonically, pulled his feet out of the way and let Reed blunder past.

"All right," came another voice, cold. Reed's stumbling stopped. Ramos saw the coal suddenly glow. Reed's face blossomed red out of the dark and faded. He heard the long exhaling sigh of smoke.

"Well?" the man named Meyer asked. "Is it all right now?"

After a moment Reed said, "Yes, I think so. Did anybody see you here?"

"No. What if they did? I am just stealing a smoke."

"I thought he might argue—why drag you into an argument? I bullied him down and he went off soft enough. I told him I would call him back soon—that'll keep him from making a fuss."

"We only need until tomorrow night."

"My God!" Reed sighed out. "Time goes so damned fast!"

There was a soft laugh. "You sweat already."

"I don't do these things for fun—damn your soul—and damn his, too."

"Shut up, Reed. You just do what you're told and you'll be all right. We wouldn't ask you to do anything that'd take guts, don't worry."

"You'd better take it easy, Meyer."

"Ah, the big mouth again. It seems to me it was the big mouth that got you in so deep up north, wasn't it?"

"I said once you'd better take it easy, Meyer."

"Just what, in a definite way, do you mean by that?" Meyer's voice was very soft and smooth.

There was a moment of silence. Then Reed said, "All right, all right. Only things'd go smoother if you didn't—rile me. You know."

"They're smooth enough. You make them smooth. You're sure this Sandenis won't make trouble for us? Remember, the ships come through tomorrow night, and this is our only chance." He paused for a moment. "Maybe we'd better make

this fellow good and sick, instead of just firing him. He lives with a fellow named Ramos. We could catch him—"

"What for? For God's sake, Meyer, keep it as clean as you can, I don't want trouble. I told you Sandenis would be all right. His kind doesn't dare talk back. I know you've got me over a barrel, I know you can do what you want—but take it easy, for God's sake."

"Listen, don't worry, you're doing fine. When we've won the war you can go back and pay your friends their money and be a hero. Just relax, you're doing fine. Let's go up."

Feet crunched in the clods. Ramos huddled back against the ties. He heard a distant bawling. "Reed!"

The crunching stopped. He could hear the breathing of the two men, somewhere very close.

"Reed!" the bawling shout came again.

"It's the Major," Reed whispered.

"What now? Trouble?"

"I don't know. He sounds mad. Maybe Sandenis—"

"You son of a— You said you fixed it!"

"For God's sake, Meyer, don't fly off. Wait. Wait here a minute. I'll see." Reed stumbled past at a half-run.

Ramos heard Meyer cursing in a whisper. He sat thinking, smiling to himself. He didn't want to move. He remembered the soft coldness of Meyer's voice. It would be better, on the whole, for this Meyer not to know he had heard. To go might mean a fight, and to what end, after all? The conversation had been interesting, too; there might be more. Sandenis would like to hear of it.

Ramos smiled to himself and sat very still, taking care to breathe softly, through his nose.

CHAPTER III

KINDLED TO KILL

FOUR times Ramos heard the mixer's uneven chugging lighten and speed more easily, and four times the harsh rattling roar of discharging concrete. Still Meyer did not move. Then Ramos saw Reed's figure again, outlined against the light, standing still, his fingers flexing and unflexing uncertainly.

Meyer's feet crunched slightly. "Well?" he called.

Reed came into the dark slowly. Meyer cursed with impatience and passed in front of Ramos.

"Well?" he said again, facing Reed. "What's the matter? What's happened?"

Then Reed said, slowly, with difficulty, "You were right. We'll have to get rid of Sandenis some other way." Ramos started to rise.

Meyer gave a short, unpleasant laugh. "So he didn't take it from the big mouth? Guys like that don't dare talk back, eh? But this Major, instead, talked back for him, eh? Better and better. From now on, you don't think, Reed. No more thinking. And now this Major also thinks you're a fool, eh? Maybe you'll be fired instead of Sandenis—and then where'll we be?"

"Meyer, listen, I told him I had a better, a faster man—you—and just relieved Sandenis until this job was done. That's good, that's efficiency! He can't blame me for anything I said."

"I don't care what you said. This Sandenis is still on the job, you fool. You get him out of it, Reed, and quick."

Ramos rose. They were too busy to hear him. He could get away to Sandenis now. He waited a moment, to hear a little more.

"Meyer, listen! Oh my God—"

"Reed, I'll wait here twenty minutes. We've got to have that job, I've got to be able to get up here alone. If he's still working in twenty minutes, Reed, you and I are going down to Panama and see the boss. You know what I mean, don't you?"

It would be easy to kill them both now, Ramos thought. He felt for his knife. Creep up on Meyer—one thrust under the left shoulder blade, then Reed.

Reed might scream once; but it would be hard for any one to hear him, with the mixer and the hubbub going on above.

"Now get going, Reed. Break his head and throw him down the hill. Twenty minutes."

Reed backed against the buttress. "Listen, Meyer, you can't do this to me. I'm an American. An American citizen. You've got no right! Suppose I call the guards?" His voice rose. "Suppose I tell them?" Ramos opened the knife and began creping swiftly toward Meyer's back.

"Shut up," Meyer said.

Ramos saw the gun against the light and stopped. He saw Meyer's arm pistoning the gun into Reed's side, heard Reed's grunts. Meyer would shoot, even dying. They'd hear the shot. Ramos looked down into the jungle. Too thick. Too many guards.

"Shut up, shut up, shut up," Meyer said through his teeth, jabbing the gun into Reed's side.

Ramos slipped away from them, closing the knife. He ran around the buttress and came up near the edge of the clearing, opposite the skidway. He walked leisurely into the light, looking for Sandenis. He saw him to one side, directing a gang of workmen pushing a generator into a small concrete hutch.

He took Sandenis' arm quietly. "Listen, Sandenis—"

"You! I thought you had gone! Ah, Ramos, you should have heard the Maior! I told you! Didn't I tell you? That Reed! He thinks—"

"Sandenis, listen to me. I have something important to tell you. Come with me some place where it is private. Only a few minutes, Sandenis, only half an hour." He began pulling Sandenis away.

Sandenis shook himself free. "What are you doing? Come on, help me here! I cannot leave now—that Reed, he hates me now, if I left, he would say I was deserting the job. And what is this, anyway?"

"Reed, he is planning to kill you. I heard him talking."

"What? Kill me? Oh-ho," Sandenis laughed. "You are indeed a little chicken. Kill me? Oh, it is not that bad."

"Listen, Sandenis, he is mixed up in some kind of dirty game, I don't know what. He and his other man—Meyer—they want your job for something, they want it bad. That is why Reed fired you, and now—"

"Well, I know they want it! Ramos, for God's sake quiet down. I can watch myself with Reed. Now look, you see this generator? Well, we—"

"Listen, if you will come with me twenty minutes—fifteen—then Reed will be out of here for good—" Ramos began tugging Sandenis away toward the jungle. Sandenis struggled. Ramos seized his arm with both hands, swearing.

"What's going on here!" a voice roared. Ramos turned his head, saw Reed, red, excited, bearing down on them. He dropped Sandenis' arm, stood squared in Reed's path, stiff, not knowing what to do, but standing resolute between Reed and Sandenis. A big red hand plastered itself on his face, shoved, he stumbled backward and fell. He lay still, looking at Reed.

"Fighting! Drinking!" Reed bellowed. He advanced on Sandenis, his eyes in his red face half feverish with pleasure. Sandenis stepped backward, fending off Reed's hands. "What! Attacking me, are you, well, by God—" He reached out and slapped his hand back and forth across Sandenis' face. "Fight me, would you? Fight your boss? Hit me, damn you, hit me once!" He reached out again. Sandenis staggered a step, stunned, his arms sagging; blood poured down over his lips and chin.

Ramos lay still, feeling the sting of Reed's sweaty hand on his face.

"Aren't you going to hit me, you dirty little spick?"

Sandenis stood still. "Hit me again," he said, his voice soft, choked. "I won't

hit you. You want me to, so you can fire me. But I won't."

A small, hot coal burned in Ramos' stomach, the cinder of hate that always lay there; it burned steadily, growing and glowing. He got up and stepped softly to Reed's back. It was like hammering a pig, done without heart. Measuring the job coolly, he lifted his fist high behind Reed's head. Sandenis cried out in fear. Ramos brought his fist down in an accurate, short, chopping blow, just beneath the skull, to one side of the neck bones. It felt good, to come down solid on that neck, to feel it sicken and weaken under his fist. Reed's knees gave, he knelt; then made an awkward salaam forward onto his face, and rolled over on his side, kicking feebly.

Ramos jumped over him, grabbing for Sandenis.

"You fool!" Sandenis wept in fury, fighting him off. "What have you done!"

"Come on!" Ramos grabbed wildly at Sandenis' arms. He caught Sandenis up to carry him, and an enormous weight crushed down on him, squashing him to the ground on top of Sandenis. He heard Reed's breath hissing above him, and a low growl in his throat. He twisted, kicking from underneath, and scrambled away to safety, turning to see Reed holding Sandenis up by his shirt front. Reed's face was very red, looking as though it would burst with blood.

"First you!" he said in a low, thick voice. "I've got you right where I want you, now." His right fist passed across Sandenis' face once, and the slim body hung limp. Reed let it fall aside and turned toward Ramos. "Now you."

RAMOS looked quietly at Sandenis, lying limp at the foot of a pile of rubbish. Then he looked up at Reed, thinking: One must decide clearly before killing, it was foolish not to make a decision first. The fury in him boiled up against his control. *Yes*, he thought *Yes*. He smiled vacantly at Reed; and then he came up, blind, without mind or thought, left with only a red hot fury that poured through him, obliterating caution. He sprang straight up through the air at Reed, carrying him down backward. Reed screamed hoarsely; Ramos clung, desperately holding the throat with his left hand while he fumbled for the knife with his right. It was like love, like fire, the consuming, craving desire to drench the blade in that red, blood-bursting neck. The sweat on his face burned as though it would blind him. They rolled, Ramos clinging like a cat, Reed fighting wildly.

"Ramos! Ramos!" It was Sandenis' voice, high, desperate; and suddenly an added fire seared up through the lust of what he was dong, and the flame leaped pure and higher. A slight hand tugged at his shoulder, feeble as a bird's claw; then a small, brittle body burrowed between them, crushed as they rolled. "Ramos! Stop!" the muffled voice cried. He had the knife now. He jammed Sandenis' head out of the way with his elbow.

Then, hoarse, roaring as though to tear his lungs out, Reed bellowed, "Guard! Guard!" As Ramos heard the triumph in the rising shout, fear stabbed him in the back, letting out the passion's flow, and he felt shriveling into weakness and darkness. He was fighting feebly, coldly, now, fending off fists. Hurried clumping feet kicked him, hands seized him, tearing him away as he tried to cling, with the anger of the cheated. They tore him away, up. He struggled, standing. He couldn't see anything and stopped, trembling. Hands held his arms immovable. All around voices shouted and swore. Then the cloud of blackness parted a little and he saw Sandenis, held by two soldiers, his arms spread-eagled. The scene cleared and he saw Reed, bellowing, bawling orders, shaking off soldiers, brushing the dust from his clothes, tossing his head, shouting and gasping for breath.

"Arrest! Arrest 'em! Murder! The knife, there, look! By God, by God! Murder! Both! Arrest 'em, hah, by God, by God." He laughed, gasping, with pure exultation; he quieted, swallowed, and

then, breath back, his simulated rage returned. "Take 'em to the Major. We'll see now. By God, we'll see now. Fighting, murder."

Sandenis was screaming in a high,drawn cry, a wail of words which meant nothing, like the slow scream of a heavy nail being drawn. The soldiers turned them, pushed them stumbling. They were very strong. They did not hurt or hurry; when Ramos stumbled, they held him up. They were not cruel, not hard; just strong.

He looked back. Sandenis came, half-carried, weeping, his head turned as in hiding to one side. Ramos saw Reed, herding them all, smiling with delight.

Rage lit power in his loins once more. He jerked and wrenched, kicking. The soldiers' voices were deadly soothing. They held on, protesting with the mild admonitions of the consciously strong.

CHAPTER IV

THE WEIGHT OF THE EVIDENCE

"SO THEY attacked me," Reed finished. "Here is the knife." He laid the knife on the table.

The Major did not look at it. Instead his eyes went back and forth slowly from face to face, not as though he expected to see anything, but as though the action were an unconscious expression of the putting-together that was going on in his mind. Ramos and Sandenis stood against the wall of the hut, still guarded. Ramos stood waiting, his face expressionless.

Ramos heard the tiny whisper of the stenographer's pencil, and then it stopped.

"It's clearly a case of revenge, sir," Reed said, "for my firing them earlier."

The Major tapped the table twice with his forefinger, and twisted in his seat. "Ordinarily, I'd take your word and let it go at that, Reed. But I want to be sure I'm fair—and one point bothers me—your original reason for firing Sandenis. I don't understand that. Did anybody see this fight?" he asked generally. There was a tight silence. Ramos smiled to himself. Why should this go on? It was a form, a ritual—the conclusion was foregone. The important thing was to get away before they got him to Balboa. Once in Balboa, it was Gamboa for sure, and Gamboa was very hard to get out of.

"I did, sir," somebody said. Ramos raised his eyes. It was the guard who had run off for help.

"You did?" the Major said, raising his eyebrows. "And why didn't you help Mr. Reed here? He might have been killed."

"Sir," the guard began nervously, 'it didn't look to me like he needed any help."

"What the devil do you mean?" Reed broke in. "Major, this man—"

"All right, Mr. Reed." He turned back to the private. "Explain yourself."

"Well, sir, I seen this one here come up out of the brush and go over to this Sandenny here and start pulling at him, like he wanted him to go somewhere. They was having quite a argument when up comes Mr. Reed in a hurry. I don't know where he came from. He starts hollering, 'Fighting, are you?' and marches up. I guess he thought they was fighting, but they was only arguing, you know the way these spigs do. Anyway, he pushes this dark one here outta the way, knocking him down, and here's where I got a surprise, he grabs for this little feller. This little feller is just trying to get away, and there ain't no fight, no nothing, but Mr. Reed here starts slamming away at him knocking him silly. It wasn't none of my business, but—" The private stopped.

"Go ahead," Reed said coldly. "Either you're exceptionally stupid or you're lying because I told you off for failing your duty tonight."

"Sir," the private said to the Major, "I got no reason to lie, it ain't none of my business. I'll just tell you what I seen, that's all." His voice was a little louder now, and had lost its diffident quality. "Then, it's true, this one ups and coldcocks Reed—Mr. Reed—in the back of the neck and jumps over him, and

is tryin' to get Sandenny to go again. I started for 'em then, and trying to get through that mess of rubbish and wheelbarrers I didn't see nothin' next until I looks up and there's Mr. Reed beatin' the life out of Sandenny, with this other lyin' still on the ground lookin' at him. Well, he didn't need any help the way he was murderin' Sandenny, so I slow down, figgerin' to let him finish up and I'll just come along in time to clean up the carcasses. Then as fast as you know, this dark one has him by the throat and it's bloody murder with Mr. Reed yellin' for help and then I run. That's all I know, sir, only Mr. Reed sure didn't need any help, beatin' up these two, and they sure didn't hit him first."

THE Major thought a long while in silence. Then he said, "We can't have trouble. Regardless of causes or rights, we can't have it. Sandenis, you're fired. Ramos, you'll be tried for assault with a deadly weapon. Reed, I am puzzled by your conduct. Apparently these two men were merely arguing. I think perhaps you made a mistake and dealt with the situation clumsily—but that evidently was a fault of over-zealousness, and I cannot penalize you for doing your duty, even if—"

"But Major," Sandenis said, "it was not our fault! Are you going to take away my job just because Mr. Reed beat us up? Major, I have been working so hard, for years, trying—and now one man for no reason fires me, and then for no reason attacks me, for why? Am I to suffer this?"

"Be quiet," the Major said sharply. "There is still work to do. Try the contractors in Panama—"

"But it's not Panama I want! Not Panama!"

"Be quiet, I said! Sandenis, there has been a lot of trouble tonight. If I take you back, at best it would be an excuse for more trouble from the others. Perhaps it was not entirely your fault, but can I afford to take a chance? The guns are all-important, and individuals do not count now.

"You must be fired. We cannot take any chances. After the war, you can get your case reviewed, perhaps."

"After the war?" Sandenis said. Suddenly his voice was bitter. "It was Reed's fault, not mine. But you fire me, not him. Me that had no education, I must suffer. But no, not only I! You, Reed—you will suffer! You think because I am Panamanian that there need be no justice!" He glared at Reed. "You will find different—there will be justice. I will make it myself, against you and everybody like you."

The Major's voice was cold. "You had better be quiet, Sandenis. Making threats will only hurt yourself. Guard, take these men to Balboa. Let Sandenis go, but take his passes. Book Ramos in the Balboa jail. Mr. Reed, you follow them down in your car and press the charges against Ramos."

Reed looked tired, but relaxed. "Yes, sir. I'll bring my new man when I come back, and we'll get ahead with the work."

"You're not coming back. Report to me in the morning and I'll assign you to another installation."

"Another ins—" Reed's face paled. "But now—why can't we go ahead, everything is clear?"

"For the same reason," the Major said wearily, "that I fired Sandenis. We cannot have trouble. There's been trouble here. There are forty Panamanians out there, siding with these two men. Do you think I can send you back out there and not have the work delayed or hurt, because of resentment against you?"

"But—"

"Mr. Reed! You have a most irritating blindness. If I didn't know your educational background I'd say it was sheer stupidity. Do me the favor of complying with orders. And the next time you have trouble with the men, use diplomacy, Mr. Reed—we're not Nazis out here."

"But my new man, surely he can be put on here? He won't hurt anything! Sure, I'll go—but why not put my new man on?"

"Your new man seems to be the center of all this trouble. Good-night, Mr. Reed."

Ramos had been looking at Sandenis' face. It was drawn as though with utter exhaustion. There was nothing left in the eyes.

"Senor Major," Ramos said. "Before we go, may I speak?"

"You'll have time at the trial."

"I know, sir, but just a word."

"Hurry up."

"Sir, Sandenis has been working very hard for years to become an American. Ever since a little boy. Look at him now, senor. In his face, see all those dead years. You understand, senor?"

The Major looked at him, blinking a little with surprise. "It seems to me you have enough to worry about with yourself."

"Yes, Major. But I know something to clear Sandenis. You say you don't understand the reason Mr. Reed fired him? Well, I'll tell you. Because Mr. Reed is planning to do something bad with that gun, and this new helper he has to get in, so that is why he has to get Sandenis out of the job, so this new helper can do it. I heard them talking about it. I know." There was something in the tone of his voice that kept the Major's eyes fastened on him.

"You know what you're saying?" he said softly. He looked at Reed. Reed looked steadily at Ramos, his face expressionless.

"Sure I know. This Mr. Reed, he is dirty. The other man, named Meyer, told Mr. Reed to kill Sandenis."

Reed's mouth jerked with a smile, fell, jerked again.

"I was under the ties, Major, I heard them—"

Reed burst into a roar of laughter. The Major grinned, infected.

"This man," Reed gasped, "up for attempted murder—" He roared off again, and suddenly the Major laughed with him, and subsided, grinning. "All right, Reed, take them down. All right, guards." He turned away. "Take them in the panel truck."

"But it's true!" Ramos screamed in fury, struggling. "It's true!" The hands were rough, jerking him, shaking and shoving him out the door. Suddenly Ramos' mind began working again and he stopped struggling. He still had to get away. He began laughing. "All right," he said and began walking easily toward the panel truck. "What a lie! What a liar I am!" he laughed.

"Some liar," a soldier said grimly.

"Well," Ramos shrugged, "nothing hurts to try, no?" He climbed cheerfully into the truck. They had to help Sandenis up. The two guards sat beside the end opening. Ramos sat in the dark, next to the cab, furthest from the door.

"Don't try anything more," the guard said, patting his rifle.

RAMOS sat quiet as the truck started, bumping and jerking down an invisible road. He began whistling softly, thinking.

"Sandenis," he said in Spanish, "I have a rifle under the seat here."

"Shut up," the guard said.

The other guard sat up and said belligerently, "What did you say about a gun?"

"I said I hope he is careful with his gun, that is all," Ramos replied. The guard subsided, laughing shortly.

"You just shut up."

"We live together. Can I tell him what to do with my things while I am in Gamboa?"

The guard laughed again. "By God, you don't seem to care much. Go ahead. Then shut up."

Ramos thought. One guard didn't know any Spanish, but the other knew a little. He had recognized only the word *carabina,* nothing else.

"Sandenis," he said in Spanish, "listen to me. You know what *cana* is in English? The reed that grows in the marsh? Well, Senor Cana is not a real American. Do not blame the Americans for firing you. It is true that he is doing something bad with that gun, I do not know what, to hurt the Americans. So I ought to like Senor Cana fine. But I don't. I would like to cut his little red stalk. But if I do that, Sandenis, then the Americans will never know the truth and never have a chance to really fire you. I don't like that either. If you are to be fired properly by the Americans, I must get the truth from Senor Cana so you can go back to work for the Americans. Then they can fire you with true American injustice, and not this unjust injustice. Or maybe you can get to be an American, Sandenis, and then have the supreme accomplishment of firing yourself, which will make you certain of your citizenship. What do you think of that? Shall we give my clothes to the National Lottery, or not?"

"I think you are a fool, you make me trouble, you get me fired, then you laugh and joke. Why, Ramos? I thought you were always my friend. No, Ramos, go to Gamboa where you will not make me any more trouble. You were right. I was a fool to try to be an American. It is better to be like you, and hate them—only don't make jokes just now, Ramos."

Ramos blew out his breath. "I am trying to tell you it is not the Americans."

"That was a foolish lie, Ramos, the lie of a child. Please, do not talk any more. I loved them once. Well, they will find now I can hate just as strong. They will find out."

"Listen, foolish! I think they are spies, making you the butt of some plan. What else? I tell you, I heard—"

"Shut up," the guard said.

"I am so sorry," Ramos said politely in English, and in Spanish, just as politely, "You louse-breeding son of an American pig, Senor stinking offal of a hookwormed sow," and in English, "I have only one more thing to say, may I continue?"

"Oh, go on, only be quiet."

"Sandenis, go home and sleep. I am going to Gamboa, maybe, but not until I can catch Senor Cana and tickle the truth out of him with a little steel."

"What truth? Don't tickle. Just cut. Or let me do the cutting, eh, Ramos? Maybe it is better so. No, don't get caught. Escape. Follow him and save him for me, Ramos. Find out where he lives." Sandenis' voice was growing louder. "Anyway, he will never work again, he will never be an American again, if I cannot; no, and then maybe another one will never be an American again, and then—"

Sandenis crumpled and fell moaning off the seat onto the floor. He lay there groaning, holding his head, unable to lie still. Ramos sat quietly, staring ahead. His mouth twitched and his face grew blank. The guards stared at Sandenis.

"You don't know," he said in Spanish to nobody, "what you are doing to him. Senor Cana, Sandenis is going to be an American, and you will regret many things very much before long."

IT WOULD be foolish to try to escape this side of the Canal. Too few people, too many soldiers. Who could go dripping through Panama unnoticed? Ramos could not see which way they were going. Probably by Thatcher Ferry—it was more direct to the jail. When he saw the Farfan road flash by, white in the lights of Reed's car behind them, he was sure.

He would have to wait for La Boca. The ferry was only half a mile from the jail, but that stretch was his only chance. The silver workers lived there, in street after street of dark gray government quarters. At night he could easily lose himself under the houses, raised on stilts, or even in the silver clubhouse among the hordes of Panamanian workers. The

soldiers wouldn't dare to shoot too much among those houses. It had to be La Boca. Once in Balboa, he was lost among white people.

But suppose they drove the other way, past the quarry and the Mechanical Division, around through Balboa by the Commissary, without going through La Boca? There was no chance there.

Tomorrow his picture, the one taken at the Central Labor Office, would be in the Estrella, and his fingerprints, also taken by the Office, would be in the Balboa jail, waiting for suspects. Or would they bother? Yes, they would bother, but like cats, not hurriedly. He couldn't get away. The Panama police would co-operate, for government reasons. The government secret service workers swarming in the city would spot him. He could escape to the interior, David, or Chepo, or any other town. But what then? Eat bananas, drink rum, and sooner or later be caught anyway. A sour anger filled him. He could go straight to Gamboa, and save everybody trouble. For him, there was no lasting escape. For him, he might as well not try to get away, for all it would mean in the end. But for Sandenis—

He felt the truck rumble down a steep incline. Through the open end he saw the high framework of the ferry slip. They crawled onto the boat. He saw Reed's car come down the apron, two cars behind.

The boat's horn gave a short blast. He felt the engine rumbling. Fifteen minutes to the jail. Somewhere a radio in a chiva jitney played a rumba. Water splashed.

Then through the opening he saw the chiva, bright orange, named the Eagle of Panama. Its interior was lighted, showing the gaudily painted ceiling, the rows of little red balls hanging and dancing, the broken mirrors between the windows, and a few of the pictures of movie stars. It was filled with people, mostly workers. He recognized the driver, Santiago. They had worked for the same company. Many of Santiago's passengers would get off in La Boca, just beyond the ferry slip. The rest—

The horn blasted again; the ferry bumped and screeched into the sagging piles. Motors started. Slowly the truck ground forward, and then charged up the incline. Ramos watched Santiago's chiva; he smiled as the policeman held it back for three six-wheeled army trucks.

They cut round the corner by the clubhouse, narrowly missing three chivas, and gunned down the road toward Balboa.

All right, Ramos thought, looking at the lampposts flashing by. All right. The brakes slammed on, he was thrown against the cab, and heard cursing; then the truck picked up speed again.

He was half crouched against the cab, facing the rear opening. He pretended to fuss over Sandenis, still lying flat, and set his heels against the cab wall. One more chance, he thought.

A CHIVA raced up behind them, swung out of sight to pass, careening crazily. He heard frantic honking, the brakes squalled again; the cursing rose to a furious yell. The truck crawled. The chiva's Sears-Roebuck horn faded merrily ahead. They crawled past a car stalled on the other side of the road, half on the curb, its owner shaking his fist after the chiva. The truck began to pick up speed again.

All right, he said to himself—*now!* He gritted his teeth and gathered himself; then leaped, straight between the guards, out of the rear end. His toe caught on the tail gate, he spun downward.

The road leaped up at him and crashed into his shoulder, rolling him through a thousand whirling lights. Then he lay still, while the lights whirled on, feeling a deep pain in his shoulder.

There was a short, sharp crack of sound through the haze in his brain. He struggled up. Another crack, like a whip over his head, and he saw the red stab in the dark. The truck was stopped down the road. The soldiers ran, halted,

fired, ran again. Ramos dashed up across the sidewalk, under some trees, under a house, twisted between stilts. A dog barked at him. He ran on, hearing no more shooting.

He stopped. His shoulder still hurt, but he could move it. They would surround La Boca and hunt him out, if they had time. He couldn't hide. He ran on, back toward the ferry.

He came out from under the houses at a cross street, and heard distant whistles, piercing and persistent; then a siren. He looked at his clothes. A little torn, but not badly. He lighted a cigarette and strolled up the side street toward the main road, down which they had come. He limped a little, but not too noticeably.

A woman hurried by him toward the sound of police whistles. *"Que pasa?"* he called after her. She flung out her hands and ran on. He followed her. and joined a small crowd under a street light. They were all peering down the road, curious, but afraid to go closer.

The truck was surrounded by motorcycles. A motorcycle policemen rushed past him toward the ferry, stopping traffic. Ramos turned and strolled after him. Santiago would be somewhere in the line of cars, if he hadn't gone down by the Mechanical Division.

Six cars back he saw it, and as he came up to it, he saw Reed's car pull out behind it and shoot forward, escorted by an officer.

He leaned on the door of the chiva. "Hello, my friend," he said casually to Santiago. There were only two men left in the chiva.

Santiago looked around. "Ramos! Well! But what is going on down there?"

"It is wonderful, Santiago. You should see it. Shooting, fighting. See all the cops? That army truck ran into a load of Gorgona. Imagine! Rum all over the place!"

"Rum?" Santiago's eyebrows went up. He thought a moment, and then they fell sadly. "But all broken, of course."

"Oh, no, indeed," Ramos said. "I thought so, too, but then I saw the side of the truck was torn off, and cases fell on the grass, all over. You should see. A bottle here, a bottle there, still good. I got plenty, I can tel you."

"Perdone," one of the passengers said, pushing hurriedly past Ramos. The man went off down the street, trying to keep from running.

"It will all soon be gone, I think, though, if—"

"Perdone," the other passenger said. Ramos stood aside.

"— if any more people get down there."

Santiago sat dreaming a second, and then began fidgeting nervously. "Listen, Ramos, will you sit here a moment? I would like to see all that damage, and if anybody was hurt, but I cannot leave the chiva. Do you think—"

"Of course, Santiago. For a friend, *es nada.*"

"Thank you so much, Ramos. A great favor."

Ramos snapped away his cigarette and climbed in. Santiago did not even look back as Ramos turned the chiva and headed back toward the ferry. He could go around by the quarry and the Mechanical Division, up through Balboa to the jail, and wait there with faked engine trouble until Reed drove out the other end of La Boca Road.

CHAPTER V

WHAT SORT OF MAN . . . ?

RAMOS could not have heard the distant bell at any other time of day; but at one o'clock, when the heat of the sun put all Panama to sleep, when a listlessly blown paper bag was the only traffic in the street, it had become audible through persistence, finally locating itself in the house he had been watching. He had not slept. Reed's car had not moved from before it. The bell rang on and on, tiny and shrill.

Then Ramos realized it must be Meyer, telephoning. He had come first at nine o'clock, in a small coupe, and had knocked futilely. Then he had gone off again, after calmly removing the distributor from Reed's car.

At twelve he had returned and knocked for a long time, and then had spent fifteen minutes looking for some entrance. Ramos had smiled at that. Most of the houses in the city were easy. Every room of the ground floor let onto the street by doors almost as big as a wall, because most of Panama lived as openly as possible, for ventilation. The second floors were easy too—one entered a large, bare hall from the street and climbed a staircase unwatched by anybody to another central hall, and from there one could take the outside balcony to any room, if he preferred it to the inner doors. But this house had no balcony, its front windows were high and small, and its only entrance was a single small door on the street, like the American houses out in Bella Vista.

Ramos, sitting in the shade of the alley where he had hidden the chiva, smiled at the telephone's steady ring. He felt in his pocket for his new knife. It was not a good knife, but it was sharp.

The door of the house flew open and Reed, hatless, jumped down the steps into his car. Ramos opened the knife and stood up. If he could get Reed into the chiva with the knife— The ringing became louder, then was drowned by the whirring of the starter. Ramos started slowly toward the car. The starter ground futilely. Reed stamped furiously on it, not seeing Ramos.

Then Ramos saw Meyer walking toward the car on the other side of the street, and stopped. Sudden anger flared in him, died. He retreated to the shadow and watched coldly. Meyer stopped in front of the house steps, watching Reed's furious efforts with the car, smiling slightly. He had his hand in his coat pocket.

Reed flung himself out of the car and dashed for the house again; and stopped short in front of Meyer. They looked at each other.

Meyer took his hand out of his pocket and, still smiling, gave Reed the distributor. He put his hand back into his pocket and took Reed's arm gently. Reed threw his hand off. Meyer took his hand out of his pocket again and showed Reed something at which he stared for a long moment. Meyer patted him on the shoulder, and Reed walked slowly down the Avenida Norte, slightly ahead of Meyer. His head was bowed; he walked stiffly, taking short steps, almost like a man walking backward.

Ramos crossed the street. The door of the house stood wide; the telephone continued to ring steadily. Ramos turned and followed them, staring uglily at the straight, short back of Meyer's coat. His hand twitched and squeezed the knife in his sleeve.

The street was empty. It wouldn't be hard, or even dangerous, even with the gun in Meyer's pocket, to slip up behind and— But Reed would run, maybe yell, and how could he catch him? If they were going into a house, Ramos thought, an ordinary house this time, it would be all right. Better to wait. Beside, then he would have Meyer's gun to hold Reed with.

THEY went up the Avenida Norte single file on the narrow sidewalk, past the Presidentia. The bay shone blue in the sun, splashing against the sea wall; buzzards picked about on the beach beneath the low cliff. Then again, into the dark, narrow street, with the balconies closing overhead, past the building they called La Marina, and on, following the curve of the steep shore. It was a quiet, old part of town, dignified by the Palacio, the Presidentia and the Cathedral. Old, solid, and quiet, and very beautiful by the blue bay.

Suddenly the two ahead stopped. Ramos leaned quickly against a wall and looked idly up at the strip of sky be-

tween the buildings above. An iron gate shrieked. The two men disappeared. The gate clanged harshly.

Ramos felt surprise. He knew that place, an old building, two of its stories above the street, given now to offices of lawyers and importers; and one below, backed against the cliff, facing the bay. The whole building was nearly a block away. At the end they had passed, an ell, now given over to warehouse space, jutted out over the bay. There was a stone jetty for small boats along the ell, entered from the street by a sort of tunnel under the building which ramped down to the beach. He had played on that beach with Sandenis, years before. Once the place had been a hotel; then an American residence; then an apartment house. What it was now, he did not know.

He looked through the gate down the long steep flight of stone steps leading to the lower story. He and Sandenis had thrown green bananas up from the beach onto those steps, to make the people break their bones. He remembered the lay of the house below; a row of cell-like rooms, maybe fifteen feet below the street-level, opening on a long covered porch which faced the bay through a colonnade which itself was fifteen feet above the beach. The steps led only to this porch, and were shut off from it by a door.

He reflected. It couldn't be an apartment house now, if Meyer had driven Reed there with a gun. If not, then it was very quiet and isolated down there. Anything could happen, and nothing but the gulls and buzzards would be able to see or hear it. He remembered the jetty. The other end of the colonnade ended near the ramp.

He turned and went back to the other end of the building and went down through the tunnel. The beach was empty. He dropped down from the ramp. Above him opened the last arch of the colonnade, about eight feet from the beach. It was screened off with chicken wire. The next arch was open, but too high to reach.

He leaped up, caught the stone sill with his fingers and slowly drew himself up, catching the wire and holding himself kneeling on the sill. He yanked the wire away at one side and crawled through.

This section of the porch had been shut off by a doored partition. Dirty boxes and barrels were piled everywhere; through the gloom he saw another door, open. He looked in; another storeroom, almost under the street. He could hear nothing. It would be a good place to leave Meyer's body. He saw another door, closed.

He tried the partition door carefully. Beyond was a small kitchen, again shut off from the main stretch of the porch. He listened. Again no sound. Then he went through the kitchen to the further door. He opened it slightly, and heard a low mumble of voices. He opened the door enough to see the porch.

EVERYTHING was bright and clean, the thirty yards of red tile floor shining with wax, the old white walls reflecting the afternoon light far up into the shadows of the high ceiling. A soft, cool wind from the bay moved the leaves of potted flowers and ferns. He heard a glass clink somewhere, and the sound of a siphon.

Then he noticed beside him a dark flight of steps rising, and saw a small door above him. Evidently there was a small room tucked up against the ceiling in the corner of the porch. Beneath it was a similar little room, open on one side, up through which the stairs ran. He saw a wash basin faucet in it. Judging by the plumbing that ran down the wall from above, the upper part must be a shower or toilet. It would make a good place to wait and listen for a chance at Meyer. If they were drinking, they would probably use the upper part. He could get Meyer there.

But suppose Reed came instead of Meyer? He couldn't kill him, and he would yell for Meyer, and Meyer had a gun. It would be a trap.

But if he hid in the lower room, under the steps, he could let Reed pass up, and then later get Meyer, yank his feet off the steps and kill him easily.

Somewhere a bell rang. He stood still in the doorway. It rang again, beyond the opposite kitchen door, in the storeroom. He heard a door open and slam, heard feet approaching the other door, and remembered the third door in the storeroom. He cursed himself and slipped onto the porch, shutting the kitchen door as the other opened. He ducked into the washroom to hide under the steps. They were boxed in

Panic hit him. The feet were crossing the kitchen. He dashed back and leaped noiselessly up the stairs. He crouched against the little door as the one below opened.

An old woman shuffled out, passed the foot of the steps. A voice rose, giving orders. He opened the door and slipped inside.

It was quite dark except for some streaks of light entering through two sets of wooden ventilating grilles near the floor. One let through the other wall, the other faced the porch. He knelt at the latter, and could hear the voices cleanly below him. Pushing his face close to the slats, he had a narrow slit-view of the porch below.

Almost directly under him he saw three men, and his heart sank. No chance of getting Meyer now, and then Reed, not with a third to help. And he was trapped by the old woman. He heard a banging of pots and running of water through the kitchen wall. The old woman was cooking something. He could knock her on the head. Suppose she screamed? Could he get through that wire before one of them could shoot him? And what then? Nothing. He thought of all the police around the Presidencia, of running through the streets with bullets snapping after him, and his lips compressed. He sat down on the floor, despondent. Maybe they would go without coming up.

He cursed the old woman, and his own carelessness. He cursed Sandenis, and stopped, remembering why he was here.

"So the Major transferred you?" a voice said. "I see. I understand now your reluctance to let Meyer in, or to come to see me." The voice laughed. "But you must have known you couldn't hide there forever, that we would surely see you eventually. Didn't you?" It was a cool, pleasant voice, clear and modulated, like an Englishman's. "That telephone, Reed! What did you think of that? Clever, wasn't it? There is nothing to wear a man's nerves like a telephone when he's nervous to start with. Either he must answer it, or smash it, or run away from it. It rings and rings and the imagination works out of control. But then of course you suddenly realized it was Meyer; and suddenly you thought that you could get away while he was calling you." The voice laughed pleasantly, amused and paternal. "So you ran out into his arms, while I kept on ringing. Really, Reed. Well, I never thought much of your brains, getting yourself kicked out of an important place at an important time." The voice rose in irritation and broke off.

Ramos could not see the man's face, only part of his leg, and his hand, tapping the arm of his chair. He could see Reeds' face and shoulders, and the top of Meyer's head, almost directly below.

"The problem comes down to this, then," the voice resumed. "There is no one available now to rig the gun. We had you, to get Meyer in to do it. But now you have not only prevented him, but eliminated yourself. Yet we must rig that gun. Still, I daresay you could stroll up there tonight and do it yourself. Meyer, you said it will be completed tonight?"

"Except for the walls immediately around it, and the coordination with the searchlight. I was to have done that tonight, or Sandenis. Yes, everything is ready—they have set the inspection and testing for tomorrow morning."

"Shrapnel, I suppose."

"Yes. We'll have to use the shell we fixed up."

"Well, Reed, everything is waiting, even the right ammunition. What about it?"

THERE was a silence. Reed's face tightened. He stared straight ahead. The hand tapped slowly.

"Well?"

"No. No. First it was a little thing, then a big thing. I was willing to fire Sandenis, when I didn't know what you were planning. But I will not do this. I was for information only, and you know it."

"Yes; but you owe us something now for the mistakes you made last night. Well, never mind. You just stay here and keep safe."

Reed's face relaxed. "You mean I don't have to do it?" He seemed almost surprised, like a child let off a punishment. Then his face became eager. "But maybe I can do something else. I know your plan's spoiled—but it wasn't my fault. Not my fault. Maybe, there's some other way, some— Wait—" He stopped short, staring at some inspiration. "Listen. Let Sandenis do it."

"Sandenis!" Meyer snorted. "You're crazy. He's the most pro-American native in Panama. Wants to become a citizen."

"No. Do you think so, after last night? He was, but he isn't now. I heard him last night: he threatened to kill me, he's turned bitter, I tell you."

"You've got a reputation for stupidity, Reed."

"One moment, Meyer," the cool voice said. "I am interested. Reed, you say he has turned against Americans? *Hm.* That is logical, at any rate—if true. Given such an ambition, to become an American, even in the face of the general prejudice, imagine such strength of character, embittered by what he thinks is injustice, turned against the Americans. The advantage. Meyer, is that he could do it and be sacrificed as the goat, do you see? So far I have never been suspected of anything—but after we accomplish this mission, there is going to be a tremendous hue and cry, and even 'retired English gentlemen' of long residence are going to be suspected and deeply investigated. I do not want that—every deception, no matter how clever, has faults, and the faults in mine, the fatal ones which naturally I do not see and cannot conceal, will be bound to come out under such an investigation as they will institute. But with Sandenis left as culprit, with the obvious revenge motive, we won't be involved at all."

"Yes. He knows enough, technically. I could give him the firing data—better still, I could do all the technical work on the gun, all the aiming, and merely leave him to accomplish the end."

"He would have to be killed, of course.'

"Well, it is something to think about."

"No. It's got to be decided now. This is the only chance we'll get, and it must be done tonight, before the gun is commissioned. The gun is ideally located—practically point-blank to the control tower. We have all the firing angles and we have the proper projectile. It is your choice, Meyer, whether you want to risk doing it alone, or let Sandenis do it for you. I think Sandenis is an excellent idea."

"Yes," Reed said eagerly. "Yes. What do you think now? Have I paid off that mistake?"

"I hardly think so, Reed. If you had not bungled, Meyer could have used the electrical firing device, and set it for any time tonight—and could have been far away by the time it fired. As it is now, with no legal access to the gun, there isn't time to install it, and we'll simply have to use a lanyard. Somebody's got to take a risk now, Reed. No, I think you still owe us something. But I have something for you to contribute, so don't worry."

"Well," Meyer said, "it's a risk any way. But how about this? Suppose I ex-

tend the lanyard, stringing a wire to the bottom of the hill. I'll leave Sandenis up there for them to find, and I'll have a safe lead on the chase."

"You can't kill him. That wouldn't make sense."

"I've got an idea on how to kill him accidentally when the gun goes of. I'll leave Sandenis there, as I said, and fire the gun from the foot of the hill. By the time the guard finds Sandenis, I can be nearly back to the road."

"And the wire? Down the hill? They'll find that."

"No. Look, you know how many pounds pull it takes to set off the firing mechanism. File the wire through to that much strength, plus fifteen pounds extra. Then after firing, it will take only fifteen pounds more pull from me to break the wire free at the breech, which the recoil itself might do, and I'll take the wire with me. Can you do that fine a piece of work?"

The voice laughed. "I've got some good scales down in the warehouse. I'll do you a good job, Meyer."

"Fine. Leave three feet to remain on the gun—that can be taken as a lanyard which Sandenis used. I'll bring the rest back."

"It depends on you to work Sandenis up to the idea. I imagine he's pretty inflammable."

"You know they are hunting for his friend. He would resent that."

"Not so important. Play up the great injustice of the Americans to him and his country. Make him fight to help Germany win Panamanian independence. Panamanians are slaves under American dominance. Ask him to join a patriotic society—he'll feel braver if he thinks he's not alone, even if he is. You know."

"Don't worry about that. Assume he comes along all right. What's the schedule?"

THERE was silence for a moment. Then the cool voice began, slowly and carefully. "At seven thirty it will be dark—incidentally you will have a full moon in your favor—so we will plan to cross Thatcher Ferry to arrive as close to the hill as possible at 7:30. I will let you and Sandenis off there and drive slowly toward Cocoli. You will need twenty minutes to get to the hilltop. At 7:50 you will proceed to eliminate the guard, allowing ten minutes. You had better do this yourself. At 8:00 you will attend to Sandenis and string the wire down the hill. This will take you five minutes. At 8:05 you will fire the gun. That will coincide fairly well with the blasting on the third locks, and tend to confuse the guards at the other batteries on the hill for a while. They probably won't realize what has happened until, say, 8:15. By 8:25 you should be back by the road. I shall stop there at 8:25. If you do not fire the gun by 8:05 exactly, I will know something is wrong, and come myself. I do not want to do this, but this job must be done. I trust you to carry it out according to schedule, Meyer. What time have you got now?

They compared watches.

"How do you feel, Meyer?"

"Steady. I've had enough experience in each part of the job to carry it through, though I've never done anything as big."

"Or important. It's a magnificent opportunity, Meyer—think of it! What a coup, for one man to decommission the Panama Canal. And not only that—when they are moving warships, just at this particular time, the feat might have a decisive effect on things in the Pacific."

"It is a great privilege to have the opportunity."

"What about me?" Reed asked.

"Relax," the voice said. "You'll stay here, safe and sound."

Ramos smiled. If they left Reed alone, it would be easy. Time to get the truth out of Reed, and then to spoil this big opportunity, by spilling the story to the authorities.

"Your job, Reed, will be to help us

passively. I will explain. They will find Sandenis by the gun, and say that he did it out of revenge. But just to quench all doubt in their minds as to his motive, we will arrange it so that the next day or so they will find your body in your house, shot to death—no, don't move—and will write off the case completely. You see, you will act as a sort of period to the whole affair. Period."

"My bod—" Reed began faintly.

The man rose and walked a short distance out of sight. "I am sure you will see our side of it, once I explain. As long as we paid you money and you had debts, you were loyal and intelligent. Now you have become cowardly and hence stupid—and when a coward becomes afraid, he is dangerous. First, you are a potential danger to us, because you know our plans. Second, your death, as I have pointed out, will be circumstantial evidence of Sandenis' motive. It's very simple, and works out rather well, don't you think?"

Ramos saw the man reappear behind Reed's chair. He could not see the hand, but the hand was holding something close behind Reed's head.

"Just look at Meyer, Reed," the voice said.

Reed stared at Meyer's face, his own ash-white, his mouth open. "What are you doing?" he asked softly, shaking his head with small, nervous movements. "No Please, no."

"Sit still, Reed, and stop shaking your head like that."

Reed's head stopped, and he stared fixedly at Meyer.

"That's fine. Meyer, I wonder if a rope wouldn't be better for a lanyard." There was a loud pop, and Reed's head jerked forward. "The trouble with wire is that it's so unresponsive." Reed slowly slipped sideways in his chair. The man's hands appeared, straightening the body up, leaning the head back in a restful position. "But then, there's no reliable way of establishing a fixed tensile strength in a rope, at least not to the degree that you want it. We'll give Maria the afternoon off while our friend here takes a nap."

Ramos stared at Reed's face, hanging loose as though in heavy sleep. A bell rang. Fingers pressed Reed's eyelids shut. The shuffling step approached, and Ramos stupidly heard the voice telling the old woman to go, the glad *gracias*, and finally quiet.

"He will keep here tonight," the voice said. A pause. "It is three o'clock now. You will need much tact with Sandenis, Meyer, but it should not be too difficult. It would be good to get him slightly drunk. Perhaps the drunker the better. That will take the check of intelligence off his emotions. I will wait here until 6:30, and then meet you both at the Estacion Los Angeles at 7. That will give you about three hours to work on him."

"Anything else?"

"No. But wait. If he shows no positive enthusiasm for the job—only a negative bitterness—get him very drunk. We'll use him anyway."

"Carry him?"

"If necessary. I think he will rather welcome your plan, however. Good luck."

MEYER'S heels clicked away down the porch. Ramos peered through the slit. The hand was again resting on the chair-arm, the legs were comfortably crossed, one foot swinging easily, brushing the trouser cuffs of the corpse beside him.

Ramos waited for him to go, staring at the swinging leg. Wasn't he going? But Reed was dead. Reed, who was going to tell the truth. Now there were only these two left who knew the truth, and Sandenis—

The minutes passed, ticked off by the pendulum of the foot. Ramos tried to remember what the man had said. He had said 6:30. But that was three hours. And Meyer was going to talk to Sandenis, get him drunk. But that was impossible, to leave Sandenis in his state

open to Meyer's persuasion. But the man was still there, patiently waiting.

Ramos watched the foot, its expensive tan shoe, the gray soft cloth on the leg. The hand lay motionless, its long, strong fingers curved inward. Reed's body sat intimately next to it. Ramos simply stared. What kind of man sat so composedly, so closely with death of his own making, as though holding friendly conversation? Maybe they were talking, in some silent language of their own. Death to Ramos was unimportant, killing nothing—one was alive today, dead tomorrow, nobody remembered. Still, one did not keep company with one's own killing. One hid them or ran away. But it was as though this man were as much at home with the dead as with the living, as though it made no difference, as though all were the same. What sort of a man? The Americans were not like this, with their soft, weak fear of death, their incomprehensible over-estimation of a human life, as though it were a sin to be mortal. But this man—this man was, he must be, a Nazi, a German. So this was a Nazi. Ramos felt an almost nauseating repulsion. A fantastic thought went through his head. Maybe it was because this man was dead himself, just walking around pretending to be alive, that he could be so indifferent or accustomed to death.

Suppose he went down and attacked this man? How should he do it? Nothing came to his mind. He always had a plan, a way of meeting a situation. But now his mind was blank.

Ramos crouched still, not understanding. And into his uncomprehension crept a strange feeling, slow, cool. He felt as though he were a child, waiting for permission. He had always been boss; but now he was waiting on a master, crouching in abeyance of will, bound by another's movement, or lack of movement.

Suppose this man came up here? He could see him in his mind, lean, tall and gray, quietly getting up from beside the corpse; quietly, composedly mounting the stairs. He would look with mild surprise into Ramos' face, say something pleasantly, and then—

Suddenly Ramos felt anger, a tight, constricted kind, unfamiliar. He was angry at himself. A little mind inside him was angry at himself, but could do nothing, and became angrier still. He clenched his fist, for no purpose. It did nothing. He took his fist and put it between his teeth and bit it. It didn't hurt. He couldn't do anything. But he couldn't crouch here, obedient to that simple presence. Still he couldn't do anything. There wasn't anything to do.

Then he realized what was the matter. He was afraid. He had never been afraid before; but now he was—abject, submissive, hating submission, but fearing—not what the man might do to him, but the man himself, the presence, the mind of the man.

Then, quite suddenly, the man rose casually and walked away. The door at the end of the porch slammed. The iron gate screeched and clanged. Ramos crouched staring at the empty chair below.

The dead weight inside him lifted. He felt light, freer. He moved. He got up. He went down the steps and stood looking at Reed. Then, oddly, he sat down in the vacated chair. He crossed his legs, and began swinging his foot, staring at it. Reed, close beside him, sat dead.

Ramos stopped swinging his foot. His face twisted. He burst up out of the chair, whirled, frantically kicked it. He wanted to shout, to curse; he swung blindly at Reed's body, knocking it over. He stood still. Reed lay on the floor. A quiet breeze blew into the porch, waving the ferns gently.

Ramos walked quickly along the porch. Then he ran. He tore out of the door, slamming it behind him. Outside, he calmed himself, then went quickly up the steps.

The iron gate, cold and damp under

his hand, screeched open. He clanged it behind him and leaned against the wall, his mind blank and strained.

Then down the street a bugle blew, drums rolled. They were lowering the flag at the Presidencia. He laughed with sudden relief. Bugles? Six o'clock. The laugh died. He walked quickly down the street.

He forgot about the Americans, about Sandenis' job, about Gamboa. There was only one thing important now to do—to keep Sandenis from going with Meyer. He broke into a jerky half-walk, half-run.

CHAPTER VI

THE BOTTLE AND THE FACE

THE chiva was still there. He sent it down the hill into the Mercado, down past the freight yards and the station, and parked it at the Corozal-Clayton chiva stand across the tracks from Roosevelt Park. Nobody would mind an odd chiva there. Sandenis had picked the room on the Avenida Peru, near the tracks—cheap and near the Zone chivas.

The doors of the room were unlocked. He pushed through. The room was empty, and in terrible disorder. Sandenis' books lay scattered all over the floor; torn-out leaves covered everything; bits of glass from his radio set glinted on the floor and the cabinet lay smashed at the foot of the bed.

Ramos went to the door and looked out. Sandenis was coming down the street with Meyer, smiling, holding his arm. There was a wrapped bottle in Sandenis' hand. He was chattering steadily. Ramos stepped back from the door.

Sandenis' voice became louder, he turned sharply in and stopped, his foot on the sill. "Ramos!" He burst into laughter and leaped on Ramos, nearly knocking him over, and hugged him. "Ramos! I thought you had gone forever. Here, here, have a drink. Look! Carta Vieja, cheap and good. But why save money now? I don't need a job, the Society is taking care of its people, and no more electricity either. Senor Meyer! My good friend Ramos, who should be president of our society, eh, Ramos? Let me tell you about it, or let Senor Meyer tell you about it, I am too busy." He started to open the bottle, then saw the smashed radio and lifted it up. "Ramos, behold my radio, the radio of a fool. Oh, my dear friend, you were right all along. I sweated for the Americans, and for what? I was blind. Electricity! I am through!" He swung the radio and sent it crashing against the wall. "No! What we want is the things of the spirit, not of the mind! Until Panama is free in spirit, what can its mind accomplish? No! And to free the spirit we must do great things, Ramos, physical things. No, I am free now, free of electricity and slavery. Or—" He suddenly fell silent, staring at nothing. Ramos looked at him dully. Meyer's cold eyes watched Ramos.

"Or, aren't we?" Sandenis barked, jerking around on Meyer. "Aren't we?" He looked at Ramos. "What are you staring at? Didn't you always tell me what kind the Americans are? Weren't you the one?"

"Senor Sandenis," Meyer said quietly, "you have at last the right idea It is only through such people as you that Panama can gain her own life. But remember, it takes courage and sacrifice to free Panama—bravery and risk. We are few, and must be clever."

"Clever, that's right," Sandenis said quietly. He sat down on the bed, still holding the unopened bottle. "Yes, not for speeches, or even talk. We must act." he laughed shortly. "Well, I am with you. I have learned my lesson—and I am lucky to have met you so soon. Seven o'clock, did you say? Fine. I know the place perfectly, even in the dark. Well, let us have one drink—but small, we'll need our wits and our lungs."

"Sandenis," Ramos said, "don't go. I

have always told you the truth. Don't go with this man. Let him do it himself."

"Do what, Senor Ramos?" Meyer asked softly.

Ramos looked at him steadily. "Do what you are planning."

"And how, Senor Ramos, do you know what we plan?"

RAMOS was silent for a moment. Then he said, "I was there when you killed Reed."

Meyer sat up slowly, stiffly.

"What?" Sandenis cried. "You killed Reed? Why didn't you say so? There, Ramos, that proves it! Why are you so hostile! You say you saw him kill Reed. Why aren't we all friends, then? Come! Have a drink, let's band together."

"Shut up, Sandenis, and listen to me," Ramos said, still watching Meyer. "This man is German. A Nazi. He got power over Reed to make him do things. This man last night was going to take over your job, even kill you to get you out of it. He is going to use you tonight, and then let you take the blame."

"What a fool," Meyer said. "Sandenis, I thought you said this man was your friend? He is telling you lies, he is as much our enemy as the Americans."

Sandenis stared steadily at Ramos. "What are you talking about? Reed was American. Meyer killed him. You said so. What is the matter with you? Is that not good?" Sandenis swayed slightly on the bed, and caught himself. "Listen, Ramos," he said in a soft, dull voice. "I spent my life trying to be an American. They fired me. Why? Who knows? But is it just? Well, Reed is dead. Good. But I didn't kill him. Maybe I can do better tonight. But I tell you this, Ramos, I will spend my life now fighting Americans. I tell you I loved them once. I tell you I hate them now."

"You are a little too drunk to understand arguments, Sandenis. I won't talk any more. But you are not going. For your own sake. You know all your life I have loved you and taken care of you, and I will not let you kill yourself now."

"Come on, Sandenis," Meyer said getting up. "It's nearly seven."

Sandenis rose. He seemed cold sober now. "Don't bother me, Ramos. Stay here. If ever you want to join us, you can come, but do not try to hinder us," he said flatly. "I am doing something important now, something that is necessary for justice, if we are to have justice."

"Fool!" Ramos snarled. "You always were a fool, even if I loved you for it; but I'll not let this snake scum make a dead fool out of you—you'll live to be a fool your own way."

He lunged at Meyer, crashing him back against the wall, fell on him, pounding his face. It was easy. Meyer lay groaning, moving dazedly.

"Quick, Sandenis," Ramos said, holding Meyer fast. "Give me something to tie him with. There is the other we must catch. I can prove they killed Reed, and prove everything, and clear your record."

Sandenis did not answer. "Quick!" Ramos repeated impatiently, looking around. All he saw was the black bottle coming down, and behind it, Sandenis' face, sullen, cruel and bitter, the eyes as dull as though he were insane. The bottle crashed over Ramos' forehead, he fell into a sea of blackness. The face was still before him, getting smaller and smaller in the darkness, and as he looked at it he felt dismay and a strange sick horror—it was the reflection of his own.

CHAPTER VII

THE AMERICAN WAY

THE moon floated high. The marsh stretched before Ramos, black and flat, jutting suddenly up, collected into the smooth, round hill. One side of it was faintly haloed by the lights of Miraflores behind it. To the left, from behind other black hills burst the blaze of the third locks project. Elsewhere everything lay deep-shadowed, asleep.

He looked down for a moment from the

the road to the chiva, lying on its side in the mud at the foot of the embankment. Hidden till morning, at any rate.

He didn't know the time; time seemed to escape him faster the more urgently he needed it, till it flew now at a speed past sensation; he could not remember how long he had stood there, looking at the chiva.

His head did not hurt so much, but he knew some part or parts of his mind were missing. There were some things he should have felt that, looking back, he realized he had not felt: impatience at the slowness of the ferry, fear of the police; a need for a plan; knowledge of the time. He had not felt them; he had enjoyed the ferry ride, in a detached way. The rest had come in spurts, sudden actions without connection—that corner in Panama, the building shearing away from him, the hazy squall of curses fading behind; the rush up the La Boca road, the flashing stream of color of women's dresses at the corner; and a feeling of pleasure that the ferry was pulling him, and not he the ferry.

Without knowing he had done it, he had stepped off the road and was sliding downward toward the invisible mud. He went onward, not thinking, but listening; pulling one foot out, planting it, listening, moving forward steadily, with neither patience nor impatience, moving according to some obscure indicator inside himself. The moon was too bright; suddenly he hated it and shrank down and lay still without thought. A car cruised down the road, its red-painted headlights almost invisible in the moonlight. He rose halfway and noticed with surprise that his shirt front was black with mud and dirty water, and with a certain jump of pleasure he lay again and rolled his back in it. He felt better and smiled unconsciously. He liked the black shadows, the dark grasses now, felt at home in them and moved forward faster, feeling that each grass blade, each shadow was helping him on. He didn't pay any more attention to the moon.

As he neared the hill he began to be conscious of something missing, of doubt. He crouched still in the muddy-rooted grasses, staring at the black side of the hill rearing silent before him. He could not move. There was no urge to move; the indicator inside him was silent. It was the blackness of the hill that forbade him.

He crouched peacefully, waiting. A wave of darkness passed over him, a sudden dimming of the moon with clouds, and he ran crouching after it, moving very fast after the dark shadow; it fled, escaped; he shrank immovable again in the almost blinding intensity of the moonlight.

He realized he was much nearer the hill now, and was excited. The danger of the blackness seemed to swell outward from the hill, touching him, retreating, swelling, subsiding again, as though he were on the edge of a living influence, sleeping dark and evil. Half-darkness swept over him again; he trembled on the verge of running, and then relaxed, and the brilliance smote down renewed.

In the jungle of the hillside, a bird made a sharp, loud clicking sound, then another, and another, faster and faster, until the clicks joined together and in a terrific rush of sound rose and blurred into a raw, rasping scream, rising, hanging, and falling swiftly, exhausted, to silence. He relaxed, feeling better for some reason; the dangerous influence weakened, diluted by the sound. The clicking began again, again rose to its tearing climax, holding unbearably long; and died. He waited again, this time almost smiling, content; the danger had gone.

The clicking began again, repeating faster and faster like a train gathering speed; and stopped dead. The silence throbbed. Fear stabbed upward through his back and the dark danger leaped and rushed out over him, and he dared not move.

Then the moon died out suddenly and darkness covered the marsh. He was

moving fast now, running by instinct away from the spot where he had been. He kept moving until he felt safe, and found himself at the foot of the hill, brushing the jungle. The moon burst out again.

"No, hell, no," a voice said, not near, but distinct, some place along the hill.

"It's gone now, but there was something, I tell you," another voice said.

"It's the moon, kid. The moon changes. It kids you. Maybe you been looking too hard. Go on. It's nearly eight. I'll take over." There was a noise of bodies brushing leaves.

Nearly eight. The words hung in Ramos' ears. What had the gray man said? Time for this, time for that. Nearly eight. It was late. The hour eight seemed rushing at him like an abyss of night, with only a narrow band of twilight left, narrowing.

He hurried on, skirting the foot of the jungle, looking for a place to climb. He rounded the hill into the light from the locks, and found himself among crates and odd machinery. He looked up the skidway, bare and open in the moonlight.

A figure was coming down, fast and silent, stopping here and there, bending, doing something with its hands. Ramos' brain suddenly focused hard on it. Meyer. He remembered the casual voice. "At eight you will string the wire down and leave Sandenis." That was what Meyer was doing, coming down nearer and nearer. "At 8:05 you will fire the gun."

Leaving Sandenis above, Ramos thought. Sandenis was up there now. He stepped back behind a crate, and stood still watching Meyer, his mouth slightly open. He tried to think through the pain in his head.

Now Meyer stood on the flat, not fifteen feet away. Ramos saw a gleam of moon on the taut wire. Meyer held it in one hand. He looked fixedly at his wrist watch, standing perfectly still, his back to Ramos.

He looked up at Miraflores, then back at the watch. Ramos followed his glance. The long row of lights twinkled across the water from the locks. The control building reared solitary, its white sides bland in the dim light, like a big white elephant.

The earth under his feet shuddered strongly, as though he were standing on a great puddle of gelatin. He looked wildly around, then heard a dull, distant concussion that left the air sighing. Blasting at the third locks project.

Meyer's back straightened, he took two steps sideways, tightening the wire. Then suddenly everything in Ramos' head jumped into place. The gun. The gun was going off, to blast out the side of the control tower, to blow the brains out of the whole locks. Sandenis was up on the hill, like a goat on an altar.

The knife was in Ramos' hand. He opened it. It clicked sharply.

Meyer jumped around. Ramos leaped. Meyer threw the wire away, fumbling for his gun, and jumped backward. His foot came up under Ramos' chin as Ramos dived short, and Ramos drove ahead, grabbing blindly, seeing nothing but blackness and sudden lights. Then there was cloth in his hand. He pulled, grabbed, found flesh. Things were hitting his face. He gripped the knife handle and began blindly hammering at the body with the side of his fist, pounding as though flattening steak, concentrating only on gripping the knife handle tightly.

His fist smacked wetly into something. He stopped, waited. The body did not move. He threw himself off it, knelt sagging on hands and knees, trying to shake his head free, to get rid of the nausea he felt.

He held his head in his hands. He was too sick to move. Then he remembered: the gray man was coming. The wire lay somewhere like a snake, death lying loose. He must get the wire. He got up. He saw it, lying in the dirt. He picked it up, held it uncertainly, pulling tentatively. Then he dropped it and

charging he ran at the hill, up the skidway.

He burst over the edge onto the clearing and stopped, his heart pounding. His head was clear now, quickened and cleaned out by the violent action. The gray man would be coming across the marsh by now, nearing the end of the wire.

The gun was just above him, its muzzle staring over his head at Miraflores. The wire bridged the formwork of the outer works and disappeared into the emplacement.

He scrambled over the works, hung at the top, staring down. Sandenis' body lay flung back over a pile of discarded concrete forms. His chest lay only a foot from the breech of the gun; his head was thrown back, mouth open. Ramos looked at him stupidly. Why all this arrangement? He jerked alive and ran across the emplacement toward Sandenis. He tripped over something and fell. It was a body.

Then he saw a soldier lying on the ground, his rifle near him. In the moonlight the whites of the eyes were steady on him. Ramos looked closely. It was the guard who had told about the fight the night before.

"What are you doing?" Ramos said. "Can you shoot? Aim down the hill there while I find this wire—you must have seen him put it there. What is the matter with you?"

The guard said something faintly, through slack lips. Ramos bent closer. "Got me inna back," the guard repeated. "Inna spine. For God's sake, help us."

Sandenis groaned feebly. Ramos cursed under his breath, felt for the wire in the dark. He could not find it. He saw a pair of pliers lying in the dirt.

"My gun," the guard said.

The gun, Ramos thought, or the pliers, and stood hesitating. He glanced down the skidway and froze. The man stood above Meyer's corpse, black in the moonlight.

The wire rattled, slithered over the breastworks. Ramos leaped and caught it, bending it around his hand to hold it, and tried to reach the pliers with the other.

The wire pulled hard on his hand, tugged strongly. He couldn't let go now. The pliers were out of reach. He fought backward, pulling strong, and then as the man below bent his weight to the wire, he flew forward crashing into the outer works, his hand almost torn off.

The wire slacked. He stared down at the man below. The man stared back. Then Ramos saw him slowly turning, wrapping the wire around his body. Frantically Ramos leaped back, tugging, trying to find something to hitch the wire around. He wasn't strong enough to hold. If he could find something to hold.

The wire strained and he cried out in pain, pulled with both hands, straining backward. The wire behind him, leading to the gun, was almost taut. He could see the man coming up the hill, dragging himself up hand over hand, lunging his whole weight backward. Ramos cried out, softly whimpering as the wire crushed around his wrist. The slack behind was gone, the wire was pulling directly at the gun.

"Sandenis!" he cried desperately. He looked at the gray man again. He was reaching inside his coat with one hand. He was pulling out a pistol. He held it up, holding the wire with the weight of his body. Rage leaped in Ramos, a furious battle anger, and he lunged back, getting slack on the gun's breech. He held, panting for breath. There was a dart of flame from the pistol below, and a ridiculous little pop. Ramos braced himself against the forms. He twisted his eyes to the gun beside him for some part of it to turn the wire on. Another pop, and something spanged sharply off the gun.

There was a handle on one wheel—if he could turn it down to the bottom before his hold broke, or one of those bullets got him. He gave a ferocious pull,

gained a foot and as the other fought to regain it, firing wildly, he let go one hand and yanked the wheel handle down. The breech of the gun moved up—Sandenis' head was in line now. Hope jumped in Ramos.

Frantically he whirled the wheel. The breech rose, cleared Sandenis' head. A new strength poured through Ramos. Sandenis was safe, even if the gun fired. But it wouldn't fire. Suddenly he felt an intense, direct hatred for the men below, even the dead. They were not like Americans. How had he ever thought Americans were cruel or unjust? With a savage, joyful rage he turned back to fight for the wire. Something hit him in the leg, he crumpled to one side. He could feel nothing in his leg, it just wasn't there. It didn't hurt. But he couldn't hold now, much less pull, with only one leg. He suddenly felt a deep hurt, not of pain, but of sadness.

There was something missing from the sky, he noticed. Then he saw that it was the long barrel of the cannon, and then he saw, that it was pointing downward along the skidway, no longer at the control tower, but almost at the man below. In raising the breech, he had lowered the barrel.

Suddenly he was shaking with weakness and gladness. A little further down. He could aim it, if he tried. If he could point it so that the shell would explode in front of the man, in the earth, to blast him, wound him, stun him, so that he would perhaps live to talk—

The man below screamed. He had seen the gun. He was leaning far backward, pulling back, too far to throw his weight forward off the wire. His own weight would fire the cannon. Ramos laughed. "Pull!" he shouted. "Fire the gun now, Nazi!" He let out a little wire to keep the other off balance. The man screamed again.

Ramos let go. The wire yanked; the gun roared, deafening and blinding him. Then as silence and sight came back, and the smoke and dust cleared from down the slope, he saw the man slowly slipping down the skidway, writhing feebly, crying in pain, the wire wrapped around him trailing slowly after.

Distantly Ramos heard shouting. The soldiers at the other batteries would be coming in a minute. He turned. "Sandenis!"

The shouting was growing louder. He heard the clank and rattle of running soldiers. "Listen, quick, Sandenis. You saved the tower. You did it all to prove Reed was a spy, *sabe?* You tricked them into thinking you would help them, and now you have stopped their plan. You will be an American, *sabe?*"

"I know, Ramos. I did try to stop him, after he shot the guard. I tried, I knew I was wrong."

The feet were much closer now, running heavily.

Ramos knelt by the guard. "You saw him yes?"

"Listen, bud, don't worry about you two. I seen it all. They'll give you a medal for what you done, buddy."

Sandenis' hand touched Ramos' shoulder gently. "Ramos, you did it for the Americans too, didn't you, Ramos?"

They would be here in a minute. Ramos smiled slowly, silent. It was a question. And he had a new feeling, a new answer.

"Sure," he said, smiling his slow, agreeable, and somehow now pleasant smile. "I found somebody I hate worse. I guess I don't hate them at all anymore. I'll fight for the Americans, any time."

THE SNOW DEVIL

By JIM KJELGAARD

THROUGH the partly-open cabin door Markson watched the stranger staggering on his snowshoes. He caught hold of a trunk, and tried to hold himself erect. Inch by inch, clutching desperately, he slipped down the trunk. Finally, abandoning a hopeless struggle, he wilted down in the snow. Markson kicked the door shut.

Anybody who came up the Tabna in December was a fool. Anybody who came up it without a plentiful supply of grub in this year of starvation was a double fool who deserved anything he got. Markson had taken only two furs since the first of November, and in the past month he hadn't seen so much as a rabbit track. The little grub he had left was just enough to get him out of this wilderness back to McDade's post, and he wasn't splitting that with any half-starved beggar.

Markson looked at the shelf that contained his food. There were three pounds of pemmican, a half pound of tea, a tiny chunk of bacon, two or three spoonfuls of sugar, and about two pounds of flour. Markson himself was a fool for staying here until his grub got that low. But he had hoped to the last minute to find game to eat and a fur pocket that he could trap out. He needed at least a thousand dollars desperately. That would take him out of the country and keep him until he got some racket going. He couldn't go back to the States because of a little affair in Montana—an affair in which a sheriff and his deputy had died with Markson's bullets in their hearts.

He walked over to the shelf and gathered the food parcels in a little pile. There were less than ten pounds all told, and a hundred and eighty miles back to McDade's. But he could make it if he didn't waste an ounce of the grub. He could make it . . . Could he? Thirty below zero and a hard trail would take a lot of grub.

A new thought occurred suddenly to Markson. The stranger had been carrying no visible pack. But he was wearing a caribou-skin parka, and he might have a few parcels of food under that. Two or three pounds more might spell the difference between living and dying. If Markson got hung up in a blizzard on the way to McDade's, and had to sit it out three or four days, the grub on hand would never see him through. He put on his parka, drew the cape over his head, and jerked the door open.

The stranger was still lying motionless at the foot of the spruce. Markson strapped his snowshoes on, and walked the three hundred feet to him. The stranger's eyes were closed, and he breathed very rapidly. His face, covered by curly brown whiskers was so thin that it had almost the appearance of a skull, and the tip of his nose was frost-blackened. Markson nudged him with a snowshoe and said, "Hey!"

The stranger's head rolled slowly around and his eyes opened. They were watery and blue, and they blinked rapidly several times. Then they found Markson and fastened on him with a fixed, avid stare.

"Thank God!" he whispered. "You found me! I knew there'd be people on the Banner."

"The Banner?"

"Yes. I've been traveling west for weeks, trying to reach it. G—give me food. I'll pay you well."

The stranger's head rolled back and his eyelids drooped shut. Markson regarded him thoughtfully. Apparently he sup-

posed himself on the Banner River, more than seven hundred miles to the west. All the time he thought he had been traveling west, he must have been coming east—obviously he was a tenderfoot. But he had spoken of paying for food, so he must have money.

Markson stooped, lifted the starvation-wasted stranger to his shoulders, and carried him to the cabin. He laid him on the floor, opened his parka, and ran the palms of his hands up and down the man's lean sides. His probing fingers found two hard objects, one on each side of the man's belt. Markson took out two moose-hide pokes, each of which weighed about five pounds. Eagerly he untied the draw strings that closed one, and poured a little heap of gold nuggets into the palm of his hand. Ten pounds of gold, and it was worth thirty-five dollars an ounce! He calculated—roughly, five thousand dollars!

Calmly Markson transferred the pokes to his own belt, and re-fastened the unconscious stranger's parka. Once more he lifted the starved man to his shoulders and carried him down to the Tabna. It was ice-locked, but Markson had kept a water hole open. He took off his snowshoes, picked up an axe that he had left on the ice, and chopped away the thin ice that had formed since he had last used the water hole. He thrust the stranger into the hole, and watched the current suck him out of sight.

Markson returned to the cabin, made a pack of his sleeping bag and grub parcels, and started south to McDade's.

IT WAS very cold. But there was not not a cloud in the sky or any indication of a storm when Markson hit the trail. His pudgy lips formed a satisfied smile, and a mile down the trail he broke into a discordant song. Things had worked out much better than he had dared hope. Instead of the thousand dollars he had come north to get, he had five thousand dollars in his pockets. Now he'd need to hang around McDade's only long enough to get a railroad ticket west. He could take a boat from some obscure Pacific port.

An hour away from the cabin, the loneliness and desolation of this deserted land began to smother Markson's momentarily uplifted spirits. There was only snow, and trees, and no life whatever. No track, not even that of a mouse, broke the snow's monotonous pattern. Markson shuddered inwardly, and hurried his steps. The Tabna country was a white, frozen hell.

Suddenly Markson stopped, swung around, and peered steadily up his back trail. There had come to him a strange sense of being followed.

He tried to put the feeling behind him, and could not. It was absurd, he told himself. He hadn't crossed a track or seen a sign of life since leaving the cabin. There was nothing up here to follow him. Deep within his brain some sixth sense insisted that something was on his trail, something that intended harm to him. Markson swore, and tried to beat the thought way. But he could not.

Resolutely he turned south and began to snowshoe on down the trail. When he turned his back, the danger promptings within his brain became stronger, and came faster. Again Markson swung around, studied his back trail, and saw nothing. But it was there, his instinct told him, it was still coming. When he turned south once more, he broke into a run.

But he checked this incipient panic. Once more he stopped, and fought with his fear, using all the strength of his will to force it out of the craven brain cell that had given it birth. Succeeding, he turned his mind to the conquest of this new problem that confronted it. Probably, he assured himself, the fact that he had just killed a man was responsible for the illusion of being followed. He would naturally be nervous for some little time. But if there was anything following him, he could quick-

ly find it out and take steps to deal with it.

He walked calmly into a thick bunch of spruces, turned at a right angle, and ran a hundred feet. Cutting back through the trees, he ran parallel to his trail for a thousand feet and squatted down in the spruces. He could watch his trail from there. And anything following it would have to pass within good shooting distance.

Fifteen minutes had elapsed before he saw something move through the spruces. He could not be sure exactly what it was because there were so many spruce boughs in the way. It had seemed no more than a flash of dark color, close to the ground.

Again he caught the flash of color, and shifted his rifle towards it. Presently he saw the thing clearly.

It was an animal, a big wolverene with a bushy tail, blackish-brown fur, and a nearly white rump. Markson shot, and saw the bullet plough into the snow two inches ahead of the beast's nose. Then the wolverene was gone in the spruces. Markson ran to the place where he had shot at it. But the fleeing beast was no longer in sight, and he could not catch up if he tried to follow it.

Markson stood erect, and beads of sweat dotted his temple. He knew wolvernes, knew that nothing was more cunning, or more tricky, or more savage. Often, in winter, they made long pilgrimages in search of food. This one was probably on such a journey, and had cut his trail on the way. He had never heard of one killing and eating a man. But there was no doubt that a beast as big as this one could kill a man, and this was starvation country. A hunger-crazed animal might try anything.

Markson went on down the trail. He was perfectly safe as long as daylight lasted, he could shoot the wolverene if it attacked. But tonight? He had to have some sleep, and if the wolverene attacked while he slept, it could kill him.

ALL the rest of the day Markson walked as fast as could. Now that he knew what was following him, some of his fear of it died. And, because he knew something of the beast's nature, he could lay plans to thwart any attack it might make.

With the coming of night he selected his camping place carefully. Wolverenes could climb trees, and spring from one onto a sleeping man, therefore Markson laid his sleeping bag between two patches of trees, on top of a small mound. He scraped the snow away, and threw it down the side of the mound. When he lay down, he could overlook all sides of the mound without raising his head above a snowbank.

His sleeping place arranged, he went back to the nearest trees and built a fire. He opened and ate a quarter of one of his packages of pemmican, and sliced the chunk that remained in two pieces. Wrapping one carefully, he put it back into the pack to serve as breakfast. With two babiche thongs, carried in case his snowshoes needed emergency patching, he bound the rifle to a tree. He ran another thong from the rifle's trigger, passed it in back of the stock, and around the tree. The chunk of pemmican he still held in his hand was tied to the other end of the thong, and Markson cocked the rifle.

If the wolverene was still on his trail it was surely hungry enough to eat the pemmican. The rifle had a hair trigger, and the pemmican would need to be moved only very slightly to discharge the gun. When the gun went off, it would kill anything that might be tugging at or trying to eat the pemmican.

Markson went back to the knoll and crawled into his sleeping bag. But he could not sleep because he was unable to banish the wolverene from his thoughts. No beast, he was sure, would attack a man if it could get any other food, and the wolverene could get the chunk of pemmican. The discharging rifle would warn Markson of its approach. He was safe, but still he could not sleep. He tried

to move about in the sleeping bag, and it occurred to him that the bag was a perfect prison. It would hold him all but helpless in a fight. Rising, he slit the bag down the side. That admitted the cold, and he had to hold the slit edges shut by lying on them. With another bit of babiche he bound the sheathed knife to his wrist.

He thought of building a fire close to the sleeping bag. But if possible he wanted the wolverene to kill itself with the set gun, and a fire might frighten it away. Besides, a fire would provide only a very slight margin of safety. He had known a wolverene to enter and ransack a cabin where a stove was burning full blast. Markson leaped erect at a sudden loud report. But it was only a frost-bound tree snapping out in the forest. He lay down again, with his fingers curled about the knife. Finally he fell into a restless, dream-troubled sleep.

The pale, discouraged light of early dawn hung like a worn gray blanket over the wilderness when he awoke. He sprang erect, sending the sleeping bag flying from him. His sleep-drugged mind, accustomed to the routine of the cabin, adjusted itself slowly to these new surroundings, and Markson blinked heavy eyes as he looked about. Then he was fully awake, and he pressed a hand over his mouth to stifle the gasp that rose there as his questing gaze found and fastened on the wolverene.

With its short, horse-like tail half raised, and its back arched, the beast stood twenty feet from the bottom of the mound and looked up at him. Markson worked the knife loose from its sheath, and grasped the hilt. Cold shivers traveled in a continuous stream up and down his spine, and inwardly he swore at himself because he had left his rifle bound to a tree. He rose to his feet, and took one step forward. The wolverene wheeled about, and scuttled back to the spruces. At the edge of the trees it turned again, and stood watching Markson.

A step at a time, his gaze riveted on the starved beast, Markson walked back to the tree where he had left his rifle. He looked down, and sweat broke on his temple while a gasp of horror came from his taut mouth. The rifle was not there! The pemmican and even the babiche thongs had been eaten. But the gun was gone!

Markson grabbed a tree to steady himself as his mind grasped the full import of this tragedy. He had known that wolverenes were diabolically clever in springing set traps, and that they would carry the traps off to secret caches of their own. But he had never thought that one would carry away a rifle, or that any beast was cunning enough to take the bait from a set gun.

Suddenly Markson thought of the grub parcels in his pack, and glanced toward it. The wolverene was already at the foot of the mound, about to climb it. Sudden, overwhelming anger mounted in Markson. Shouting hoarsely, the naked knife in his right hand, he rushed the squat beast. The wolverene waited until Markson was almost halfway to the mound, then ran back to the edge of the spruces. He turned there, jerking his bushy tail and gritting his teeth. From the top of the mound, Markson waved a fist at him.

"You haven't got me yet!" he shrieked. "And you won't get me!"

The wolverene continued to stare at him. Again Markson fought down a rising panic, stifled an impulse to rush at the beast with his knife. He could still think a way out of this.

It might take him a day or even two days to find his stolen rifle, and his scanty grub stock could not stand even an extra day. But twenty miles down was an abandoned trapper's cabin. If he could reach that and take refuge there for the night, he could surely find some way of outwitting the wolverene.

WHEN Markson started down the trail, the wolverene fell in a hun-

dred feet behind him. Markson walked with his head half turned back, watching the beast. But the wolverene made no attempt to close the distance between them. Markson broke into a fast run, and ran for a quarter of a mile. When he stopped to look back, the wolverene was still a hundred feet behind him. Markson shuddered, and set a steady, mile-eating pace that took him swiftly down the trail. The beast intended to kill and eat him, but did not intend to get hurt in the process. It was satisfied to follow at a safe distance until it saw a chance to strike.

Going around trees wherever he could, always keeping that hundred feet of his back trail and the wolverene in sight, and with the bare knife in his hand, Markson pushed grimly on. It became a test of human intelligence pitted against brute strength and cunning, and it was a test that Markson dared not lose. But as the day wore on, and the wolverene made no effort to come closer, Markson knew that he would not lose it. The cabin was only a few miles ahead now, and when he reached that he would be safe. It gave him enormous pleasure and relieved his tense mind to think of the cabin—a haven where he wouldn't need to worry or fear. Why he could just slam the door, crawl into the bunk, and sleep all night without even thinking of this damned skunk bear!

Rounding a bunch of spruces, he saw the cabin and broke into a run. He reached the solid log building, and leaned against the door. The wolverene had run with him, and with its bushy tail half-raised, stood a hundred feet away. Markson shoved the cabin door open, leaped inside, slammed the door, and dropped the heavy bolt into place.

Once there, he backed against the door while his limp knees threatened to collapse: It was amazing, this feeling! To be able to move, to turn his back, to do as he pleased, without thinking of the wolverene's jaws in his throat, without picturing the animal's claws ripping his belly apart! Turning, he thumbed his nose at the wilderness and the wolverene. Tonight he could sleep without fear. And, when sleep had refreshed him, he would lay his plans to go on. Perhaps, seeing his intended prey escape, the wolverene would even go away, give up the hunt as useless. Wolverenes were very smart. They would waste no time hunting anything that they could not hope to catch.

There was a rustle in one corner of the cabin, and Markson whirled in that direction. He grinned weakly. Some of the chinking had fallen from between two logs, and a red squirrel had entered the crevice to make its nest inside the cabin. Sitting very still, the squirrel was watching Markson intently. When he moved, the squirrel whisked through the crevice, and Markson heard it pattering across the roof.

Markson looked about the cabin. It held a bunk, a table, two ends of logs that served as chairs, a cupboard, and a stove. There was no wood for the stove, and for a moment Markson thought of going outside to get some. But he decided against that. This new-found security was so precious that he did not want to waste even a minute of it. A cold cabin was preferable to a possible brush with the wolverene.

He was hungry, and because he had eaten nothing at all today, he decided that he would eat all that was left of his broken package of pemmican. Gravely he unwrapped it, set it on the table, and ate. When he'd finished that, he was still hungry. Cutting a chunk from another piece of pemmican, he ate that too. Determinedly he put the rest of the food away. It was a long way to McDade's, and he'd have to ration himself very carefully in order to get there. Markson spread his sleeping bag on the bunk, crawled into it, and slept.

It was dawn when he awoke, and for a few minutes he lay drowsily in his sleeping bag, enjoying the last few minutes of what seemed the best and sound-

est slumber he had ever had. He rose to a sitting position, stretched his arms, and yawned. The squirrel was running about the cabin roof, Markson could hear the rasp of its tiny paws there. He swung out of the bunk, went to the door, and opened it. A smile of satisfaction parted his lips. The wolverene was nowhere in sight. As Markson had thought he might do, he had abandoned this chase as hopeless and gone off to seek easier prey.

Markson wanted to cover as many miles as possible today, and a cup of hot tea would set him up for the journey. Picking up the knife, he went out to gather firewod.

There was a little sound on top of the cabin. Something landed on Markson's shoulders and bore him screaming to the snow. He felt powerful claws raking his shoulders, and the sting of fangs that groped for a hold in the back of his neck. Markson rolled over and over, stabbing wildly with the knife. He felt its point touch fur, and thrust with desperate strength. The knife bit deeply into flesh, and the load on Markson's shoulders lightened. Markson groped a way to his knees. Through hot, tear-stained eyes he saw the wolverene running toward the woods. Markson's knife, the hilt moving every time the animal moved, was buried in his shoulder.

Markson staggered back into the cabin and leaned against the door. The wolverine, not the squirrel, had been on the roof. And the fight had left Markson completely unarmed. Without the knife he wouldn't dare go outside. His lips trembled and his fingernails bit deeply into his palms as he clenched agonized hands. Perhaps the wolverene would leave now—the wound might even kill him. But he had best be given at least twenty-four hours to get far away.

Markson spent a hysterical day and a fear-haunted night. Towards morning, he fell into a troubled sleep. When he woke, he sprang out of the bunk and listened. For a full five minutes there was silence, and hope leaped wildly within him. Then there came the rasping of paws on the roof, and Markson crawled back into the sleeping bag, as though he would find a refuge there.

The wolverene had come back and was waiting on the roof again.

THREE months later, Constables Blaine and Thomas, making a patrol into the Tabna country, veered towards the cabin. Climbing over a fallen tree, Blaine glanced down and saw a dead wolverene. He grasped the beast by its hind paws, and wrenched it from its frozen bier. A knife was buried to the hilt in the wolverene's chest.

"Hey, look at this," Blaine called. "Some trapper lost his knife in a carcajou."

Thomas came up beside him, and looked down at the wolverene.

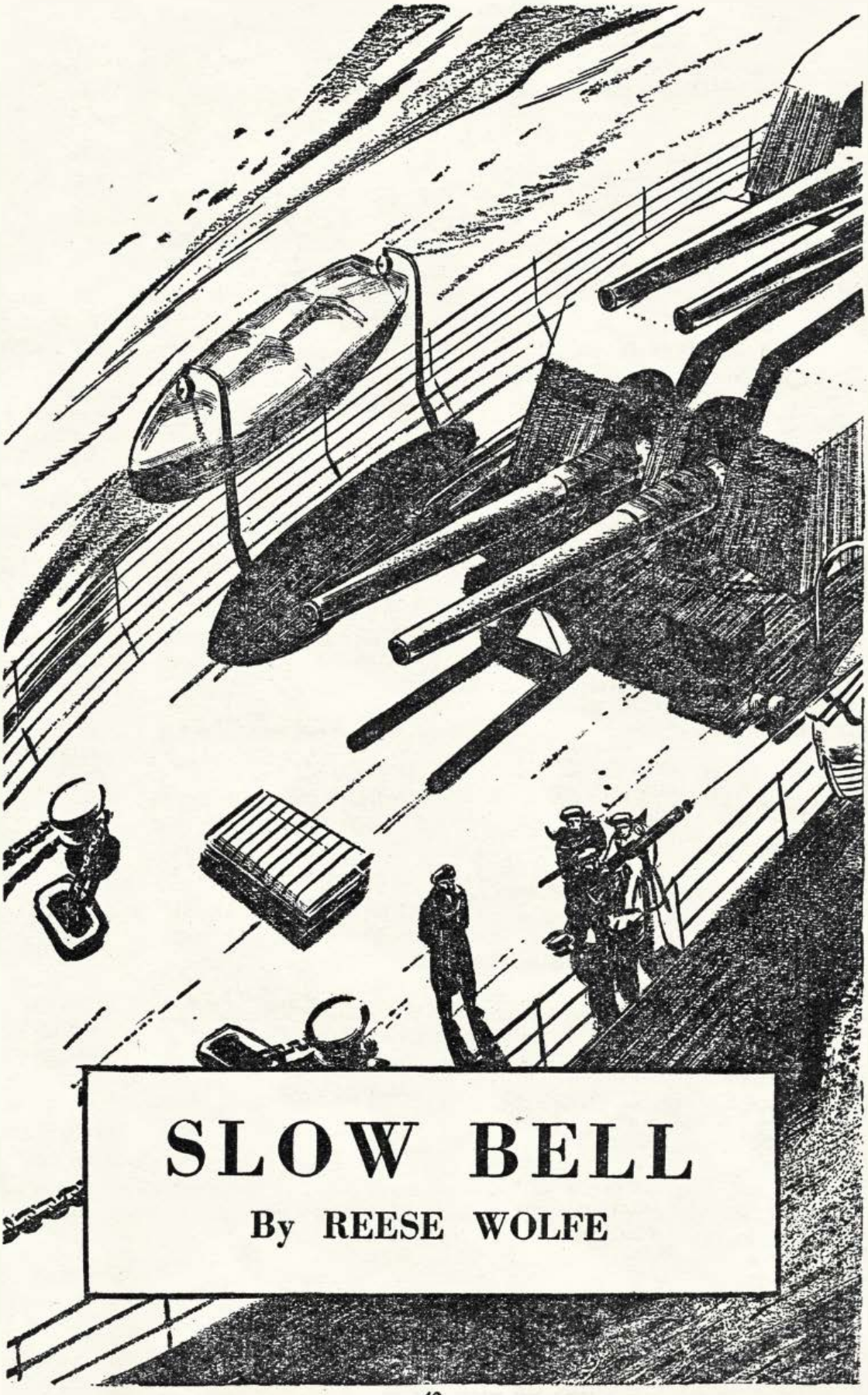
"Yeah," he said soberly, "and maybe that ain't all he lost. Come on."

The two went to the cabin and pushed the door open. Markson's frozen body lay on the floor. It was terribly thin and wasted, the corpse of a man who had died because he lacked food. His fingernails were worn completely away, where he had pried out and eaten bits of wood. Blaine knelt, and examined the body. He looked up with a puzzled frown.

"He fought the carcajou all right, his neck and shoulders have been bitten and clawed. But those bites never killed him. They didn't even hurt him much. Why the dickens did he stay here and starve after he got the carcajou? He could have eaten that."

There was a pattering of paws on the cabin's roof. A red squirrel came to a crevice where the chinking had fallen out, looked in, and ducked hastily out again at sight of the two men. Thomas looked at it, and back at Markson.

"How should I know?" he asked. "You're the smart guy on this patrol. Figure it out yourself."



SLOW BELL

By REESE WOLFE

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Dokkeskjaerskien Wharf,
Bergen, Norway.
April 8, 1940.

Consul of the United States of America,
Bergen, Norway.

Dear & Honorable Sir: I beg to report as follows: four days ago, on the 4th of April, while the S.S. SEA THRUSH, McCabe Steamship Company, San Francisco, was at sea, Oscar A. Dahlquist, master, died suddenly and his body was kept aboard until arrival here. He was buried today by members of his fam-

ily. As chief mate I assumed command, and in passing will say am sufficiently qualified since I have held a master's license issued by the United States Government for more than twenty years.

When we docked yesterday I was met by Mr. Max Preusser, charterer's agent, and frankly I do not understand Mr. Preusser's attitude. This vessel is under a time charter with a cargo which includes 200 tons of nitro-cellulose, 8 Curtiss-Wright airplane engines, 50 Ford trucks, approx. 3 million 7.62 MM rifle cartridges, 965 boxes of brass discs, and 5 boxes of steel tools, and yet Mr. Preusser does not seem anxious that I commence discharging this cargo. All you hear along the waterfront here is talk of Norway getting in the war, and although I do not believe it, still my cargo is such that it would come under prize law by the Germans if this country does not remain neutral.

So I wish to state in writing for the record that I am ready at all times to discharge my cargo. However, Mr. Preusser keeps making excuses, claiming there is a shortage of longshore labor and insisting that because of congestion in the harbor due to war threats, about 50 merchant vessels rumored to be awaiting British convoy have tied up all facilities. He says I may have to wait here two months. When I said our present berth was satisfactory for discharging, and my own crew could begin work immediately, he grew annoyed.

As I say, I do not understand his attitude and wish to make my position known to you.

Very respectfully,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Bergen, Norway,
April 9, 1940.

Captain William Hardiman,
On board S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Now at Dokkeskjaerkien, Bergen.

Sir: In view of present conditions in Bergen, you are strongly advised to take your ship, the *Sea Thrush,* a few miles farther north into one of the fjords to a safer harbor for the present. It is suggested you proceed to Vaksdal in Sorfjord where there is a wharf.

I was unable to get an expression of opinion from your Bergen agent, Mr. Max Preusser, concerning this suggestion.

Sincerely yours,
John P. Duncan, American Consul.

PREUSSER & GRANQUIST
Chartering Agents & Brokers For Sale & Purchase of Cargo
Bergen, April 9, 1940.

Master of S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Now at Dokkeskjaerskien, Bergen.

Dear Captain Hardiman: In a telephone conversation with the American Consul today I learn that he has advised you to move your ship to Vaksdal which he considers a safe place. You are at liberty, of course, to move your ship where you please, but this is to inform you that until I reach a decision concerning the disposition of the cargo, I cannot agree to the proposal or accept responsibility for your course of action.

Your faithful servant,
Max Preusser, Charterer's Agent.

PREUSSER & GRANQUIST
Chartering Agents & Brokers For Sale & Purchase of Cargo
Bergen, April 9, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consulate, Bergen.

Dear Sir:

In accordance with your request by telephone yesterday, I am enclosing herewith a copy of the manifest of the S.S. SEA THRUSH.

As I mentioned in our conversation at that time, William Hardiman, the new master of the vessel, is well known to me, and I think I am fair in stating that he is perhaps inclined to take his new com-

mand a little too seriously, with an overzealous attention to detail. It is possible the captain's accidental promotion has unsettled him, coming as it does after an unfortunate experience in losing his cargo while in command of another of this line's ships several years ago.

In any case I can see no reason to justify his insistence that the cargo be discharged immediately, in face of all the obstacles I have pointed out to him, nor, frankly, do I agree that it is necessary for him to run away to Vaksdal.

Yours faithfully,
Max Preusser, Charterer's Agent.
S.S. SEA THRUSH

Dokkeskjaerskien, Bergen,
April 10, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen, Norway.

Dear & Honorable Sir:

About 5 a.m. this morning I was awakened by gun fire, and going on deck I found the German cruiser OSTNABRUCK had made fast to our offshore side. I asked for the commander who came on deck and spoke with me in English. I stated, "What the hell is this?" But there was too much noise going on to hear his reply so I told him I was leaving as soon as I could get a pilot and tug.

He yelled, "Where are you going?"

I said, "To sea!"

He seemed to think this was very funny and said, "There is a war on, Captain, and the fjords outside are mined. I have orders to protect you."

I told him I had heard all about his kind of "protection," but while we were talking the bombardment of the harbor took place between the British air force and the German land and navy forces which seemed to come from nowhere, and he hurried away.

Meanwhile I wish to make it clear for the record that I am merely here to discharge cargo, and am still waiting for orders to do so. However, while thus waiting and talking to the German commander expenses were piling up, as a number of British airplanes flew over the SEA THRUSH and were met by fire from the cruiser lying alongside. The fire from the Germans at the low flying planes was in line with our rigging, and two topping lifts, the starboard shroud, and the radio antenna were cut down. Attached is a copy of my claim for damages with specifications of the damaged gear, given to the German commander at the time and which he ignored.

While on the bridge my cap was shot off by machine gun fire, and four of the crew ran from the vessel, but since they have no money they will be back.

I have again notified Mr. Preusser that this vessel was and is at all times ready to discharge its cargo as per manifest.

Respectfully yours,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

AMERICAN CONSULATE
Bergen, Norway,
April 11, 1940.

Dear Captain Hardiman: Since German forces have taken over here, permission has been obtained from the German Consulate for you to remove your ship immediately from Bergen Harbor. The German Consulate has also agreed to pay for any damage your vessel suffered while lying alongside a German cruiser yesterday, but I strongly urge that you hold the matter in abeyance until you attend to the more important matter of reaching the safety of Vaksdal. With Bergen in German hands continued bombing of this port may be expected.

Up to the present there has been no further word from your charterer's agent, Mr. Preusser, regarding disposition of the cargo.

Sincerely yours,
John P. Duncan,
American Consul.

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Vaksdal, Norway,
April 12, 1940.

Mr. Max Preusser,
Preusser & Grandquist,
Bergen, Norway.

Sir: This is to inform you that I have moved the S.S. SEA THRUSH from Bergen yesterday at 4:10 p.m., arriving here at 7:20 the same day.

As before, the S.S. SEA THRUSH is at your service to discharge its cargo, is ready and awaiting your orders to commence. In passing will mention that the services of a pilot were necessary, and will you please attend to compensate this man for piloting this vessel to this port. Bill attached.

Your truly,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

NORGES STATSBANER
TELEGRAM BERGEN 12-4-40,
S.S. SEA THRUSH VAKSDAL.
DEMAND YOU RETURN BERGEN.
MAX PREUSSER

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Vaksdal, Norway,
April 13, 1940.

To the General Staff of His Majesty's Government, the King of Norway, at Voss.

Attention General Lundbom:

Today a man entered my office on the American S.S. SEA THRUSH and introduced himself as a Mr. Larsen from the Bergen office of the Vaksdal flour mill here, claiming that he arrived just now from Bergen because he had been informed that the S.S. SEA THRUSH had docked at the mill's wharf here. He ordered me to vacate this wharf at once, suggesting I return to Bergen. He said his authority came from you.

Upon my inquiry who or what caused this sudden order he replied, "I am the lessee of this mill from the Norwegian Government, and we do not want this vessel here on account of danger to the mill and other surrounding property."

I called his attention to the fact that this vessel would prefer this place as a safe harbor, but he said we must go away from here anyway since he expected a number of other vessels to come here to discharge cargo for his mill.

He was then informed of my opinion that this is a figment of his imagination, since no ship could discharge cargo on this wharf which is already piled high with war materials.

He replied, "Well, Captain, I give you orders in the name of General Lundbom and as lessee of this mill, to leave at once."

My answer was, "I will attempt to leave when ready and when your order has been confirmed by the Norwegian Government." He then left.

But can you tell me, where is the Norwegian Government? I am sending this to your headquarters to ask for orders direct if I must move. I suspect there is something wrong about this man as never at any time did he show any written authority or order, and I do not like his looks.

Submitted most respectfully.
Wm Hardiman, Master.

TELEGRAM, VOSS, 14-4-40
S.S. SEA THRUSH, VAKSDAL
YOU HAVE TO STAY IN VAKSDAL
GENERAL FENRIK LUNDBOM

Oster Og Sorfjorden Sjoforsvarsdistrikt.

Den 14 de april, 1940.

Captain S.S. SEA THRUSH: By strict orders of the Admiral in command of the Norwegian Westland Naval Forces, the S.S. SEA THRUSH owing to the safety of the ship and the American citizens on board, and also owing to Norwegian military interests, has to be moved to a safe place immediately. Bergen is suggested since it is now in German hands and out of the battle zone.

F. Hellern, Distriktkommandor.

S.S. SEA THRUSH
Vaksdal, Norway,
April 15, 1940.

Mr. Max Preusser, Charterer's Agent,
Preusser & Granquist,
Bergen, Norway.

Sir:

I have received orders in the last 24 hrs. that are very confusing, but no matter what I decide to do, you are hereby notified that the S.S. SEA THRUSH is still at the above harbor and has been and is ready to discharge its cargo as manifested. Knowing very well that it is impossible to discharge this cargo at Bergen due to the territory being occupied by German troops who would be only too glad to seize the cargo for a prize court, and also due to the engagement between the various forces at war, I have decided this is the best place to discharge the cargo. Since no space on the wharf is available I have obtained lighters for the purpose.

You are herewith notified to get in touch with the consignees and demand of them that they receive the cargo as set forth in the manifest and in the attached copy of war risk insurance and delivery. Therefore, again I urge you to impress upon them the necessity of prompt action, because if they fail to act, a demurrage will be assessed against them which eventually would be a lien against the goods carried by the S.S. SEA THRUSH.

Having set forth the demands to receive the cargo you will therefore govern yourself accordingly as I will shortly attempt to put to sea and return to the United States.

Very truly yours,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

TELEGRAM, BERGEN, 16-4-40
S.S. SEA THRUSH, VAKSDAL—URGENT

REFUSE TO ACCEPT CARGO VAKSDAL DEMAND YOU RETURN BERGEN.

PRUESSER

American Consulate
Bergen, Norway,
April 17, 1940.

Captain Wm. Hardiman,
On board S.S. SEA THRUSH now at Vaksdal.

Dear Captain Hardiman:

I have just received a telephone call from Mr. Max Preusser who seems considerably distressed concerning discharging your cargo at Vaksdal.

I beg to advise you that under the present war conditions which vitally affect all previously made contracts, I consider it most unwise of you to unload your cargo even though you are at present behind the Norwegian lines and therefore still technically in the Norwegian Government's jurisdiction.

In the opinion of this Consulate you should keep your vessel in the safest possible harbor until you can get in touch with your principals in the United States. Temporarily, communication abroad is not possible, but I will advise you at the earliest moment when conditions change.

Assuring you of my keenest interest,
Sincerely yours,
John P. Duncan, American Consul.

4. DISTRIKTKOMMANDO
Voss, 18 April, 1940.

Captain W. Hardiman,
S.S. SEA THRUSH, Vaksdal,

Sir:

I hereby inform you that the Royal Norwegian Government has authorized me as Commander-In-Chief for Western Norway to arrest the cargo of your ship.

The Royal Norwegian Government will take over any economical responsibility regarding your consignees in Sweden and Finland.

Fenrik Lundbom, Commander - In - Chief

S.S. SEA THRUSH
Vaksdal, Norway,

April 18, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen, Norway.

Dear & Honorable Sir:

Things are pretty bad here. I received your letter this afternoon, but before that a Norwegian naval officer and that Mr. Larsen who I mentioned before and who says he owns the mill here, came aboard this morning and said they were searching for spies. When they saw there was nobody but my officers and crew aboard they took a hostile tack and demanded to know what orders I had received from elsewhere. I told them I had been instructed to remain at Vaksdal by General Lundbom who has now arrested my cargo. The naval officer with Larsen who says he is Commander Hellern of this district and on the staff of General Lundbom seemed to think this was very funny and said there had been a mistake. He then showed me an order signed by General Lundbom instructing him to take the vessel to Bergen. The order further stated, "The discharge of cargo is to commence as soon as the ship has been brought to safety."

I objected on the grounds the cargo might become subject to seizure and forfeiture by the Germans, but Commander Hellern said the Germans were very near Vaksdal now, and would seize it here anyhow. I then found to my surprise that this Mr. Larsen has a cargo list describing all particulars of my cargo and where it is stowed. This information could only have come from the agent, Max Preusser. They agreed to delay moving the ship until I can get to Bergen to consult with you, but I am sending this ahead because due to the shooting farther south there is great difficulty in finding a launch which will take me direct to Bergen.

I am now convinced there is deliberate confusion of orders, to wit: double crossing going on here, and these people, including Preusser, actually want the Germans to get this cargo. I do not believe General Lundbom signed that order.

Respectfully yours,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

Trengereide, Norway,
April 19, 1940.

Dear & Honorable Mr. Duncan:

I am writing in haste to say that last night I set out for Bergen aboard a chartered launch, FLORO I. En route we passed the Norwegian control at Stanghelle which cautioned us we might have trouble with the Germans farther down. In fact FLORO I was halted by the Germans and fired upon. Mong Hansen, the pilot, was wounded and we were forced to land. I was taken here to Trengereide and after examination by various German officers, was locked up in the local hotel (Hotel Splendide) pending confirmation from the Consulate that I am an American citizen. The officer in charge here agreed to telephone you for this information, but since nobody but me seems to be in any hurry about this, I am taking the precaution of making the request in writing by special messenger for your earliest possible assistance.

Respectfully,
Captain Wm. Hardiman.

Rathje Hotel, Bergen,
April 21, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen, Norway.

Dear & Honorable Sir:

Since conferring with you in your office after my release from Trengereide yesterday, I wish to make the following written record of our conversation for the benefit of my owners, the McCabe Steamship Company, of San Francisco. To wit:

The master of the American steamship SEA THRUSH sets forth and alleges: That the above vessel is now lying at anchor and afloat at a safe harbor known

and designated as the harbor of Vaksdal, Norway. That this vessel has a bona fide cargo as set forth in its bills of lading and manifest, which manifest has been deposited with the Bergen authorities on the 8th day of April, 1940, where the vessel was securely moored at one of the docks and prepared to discharge its cargo. That now, in view of serious fighting engagements in the harbor between two warring powers, to wit, the German and British forces, there has been such delay and confusion of orders that I am in receipt of the American Consul's verbal and written advice (letter attached) to proceed to a place where my vessel will be in touch with Norwegian and German pilots where it can be guided safely through the mine fields and sail toward the Faroe Islands, and then to the United States. I am advised to have the ship's papers brought to the Consulate when it can be done in perfect safety to the bearer of the papers.

I wish to state that I am in full accord with the American Consul's suggestions, but in carrying out his wishes we may overlook one important item, namely, *the cargo*. What disposition is to be made of the cargo? I have assured Mr. Duncan of my fullest co-operation, but I also wish to avoid any legal entanglements in the event it should be claimed that the master of the S.S. SEA THRUSH left Bergen without just cause and with the cargo for Bergen still on board and without being ordered to do so.

Respectfully submitted,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

P.S.: I have been required to report twice daily to the German police, and for that reason have been unable to return to my ship at Vaksdal.

Translation

AMERICAN CONSULATE, BERGEN

April 24, 1940.

Consul General von Troheim,
German Consulate, Bergen.

Dear Colleague:

For account of Captain Hardiman may I ask the assistance of the German Consul General to get a pilot to take his ship, the American, S.S. SEA THRUSH, to sea at the earliest possible moment?

The case is made more difficult as the captain's ship must be moved from Vaksdal, but it is understood the Norwegian authorities are more than anxious to have this done. Captain Hardiman however, came to Bergen in order to transact his business and has lost connection with ship and crew, which are in territory still, perhaps, Norwegian. It would be appreciated if you will expedite his return to his ship.

Over the radio have come anxious queries from Washington regarding the S.S. SEA THRUSH, since nothing has been heard of it for some time. I am certain it will be in the interest of all concerned to get the SEA THRUSH safely on her way to sea with cargo intact, as soon as possible.

Yours truly,
John P. Duncan, American Consul.

Translation

GERMAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Bergen, April 25, 1940.

To: Consul of The United States of America

Concerning: S.S. SEA THRUSH.

Sir:

The port Commander to whom your letter was referred, informs me you have requested that the steamer SEA THRUSH be permitted to go to sea.

I hearby learned for the first time that the steamer is still lying in waters near Bergen. Captain Hardiman will be permitted to return to his ship immediately, but a difficult situation has arisen by the stay of this ship in Norwegian waters because of measures taken at Vaksdal for military reasons, that will make a safe departure of the ship impossible.

I am trying for the departure of the ship by special arrangements with Berlin,

but without encouraging help. I entreat your patience until this can be arranged. Meanwhile Captain Hardiman will be returned to his ship.

G. von Troheim, Consul-General.

TELEGRAM VIA GERMAN AUTHORITIES, VAKSDAL, APRIL 26, 1940.

AMERICAN CONSUL, BERGEN.
SITUATION PRECARIOUS STOP IMPOSSIBLE DISCHARGE OR DEPART STOP PREUSSER HERE NOW NEGOTIATING WITH GERMAN AUTHORITIES TO PURCHASE CARGO STOP IF POSSIBLE NOTIFY McCABE STEAMSHIP SAN FRANCISCO STOP LETTER FOLLOWING.

HARDIMAN.

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Vaksdal, Norway,
April 26, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen.

Dear and Honorable Sir: I had to leave town suddenly this morning without being able to get in touch with you because I was brought here on a German cruiser.

Last night I received a telephone call at the Rathje Hotel from Mr. Preusser to have dinner with him at the Terminus. He introduced me to a Dr. Worms, legal adviser at the German Consulate. At dinner I learned from them that Vaksdal has now been taken by the Germans, and they both seemed to feel pretty good about this. Dr. Worms then asked me if he could have the ship's papers.

I told him, "The papers are aboard my ship at Vaksdal. I will have to get back to my ship before anything can be done about the papers or cargo. Meanwhile," I added, "the Norwegian Government at Voss has notified me the cargo has been arrested."

"No," Dr. Worms replied, "the Norwegian Government is not at Voss. It is at Oslo under a new head, and your cargo is safe." He then told me the new head of the government was a Major Vidkun Quisling. I have never heard of him.

"If that is so," I asked, "then there is no objection if I return to Vaksdal and take my ship to sea?"

"It's not that simple," Dr. Worms said. "Your ship cannot leave the fjords if it is drawing over twenty feet because our mines are planted at that depth."

I asked him the location of these mines and he informed me that they are between Bergen and Holmengra Light, and also between Vaksdal and Trengereide on the way to Bergen. The doctor then suggested that I unload enough cargo to lighten my ship to that depth so I could pass over the mines and get to sea, and requested that I deliver the jettisoned cargo to the Germans as trustees for the consignees. Mr. Preusser said he agreed with this.

"I will only turn over my papers," I said, "to the United States Consul."

"Very well," Dr. Worms replied. "We wish to avoid any trouble with your government. You will be sent to Vaksdal immedately on a German vessel and you will then return here with your ship, using the German ship to clear the way of mines. It is very possible my government will wish to purchase the entire cargo."

Well, here I am back aboard my ship at Vaksdal, with Mr. Preusser and the Germans talking about "purchasing" the cargo, but there is no evidence of any kind that the consignees agree with this or even know about it. I would attempt getting to sea somehow, but even if I could get away I haven't got a pilot, since Mong Hansen, who knows these waters like a book, is wounded like I told you. If you are unable to get a message through to the McCabe Steamship Company will you please see what can be done about locating the consignees?

Respectfully,
Wm. Hardiman, Master.

Translation

Bergen, April 27, 1940.

From: German Admiralty of the Norwegian West Coast.

To: Consul of the United States of America.

Concerning: S.S. SEA THRUSH.

Sir: After occupation of Bergen by our forces and without our knowledge thereof, the American steamer SEA THRUSH has been lying in fjords north of Bergen in the area kept by the Norwegian Government with which Germany is in a state of war. It has also been noted that the cargo was arrested by the Norwegian Government after the ship had been moved from Bergen.

By examination of the copies of the bills of lading, it cannot be put out of the question that the cargo was destined for a belligerent country. Therefore I am compelled to claim discharge of the cargo and all further examination will be submitted to the Prize Court of the German Reich. Independent of the final decision of the Prize Court, I assure you that the ship can start on its voyage at once, as soon as the discharge is accomplished.

I request that the captain of the S.S. SEA THRUSH be informed of the above since he has proved to be extremely stubborn in dealing with our representative and that you ask him to advise the point of time as soon as his vessel is ready to move to Bergen. Otherwise the necessary steps will be taken from here.

Von Scheeling, Vice-Admiral.

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Bergen, April 27, 1940.

The Admiralty of the Norwegian West Coast,

The Honorable von Scheeling,

Sir:—I acknowledge your communication of this date. The Consul of the United States of America is in accord in complying with your communication and Captain Hardiman of the S.S. SEA THRUSH has been so advised.

Please note however, that through the American Legation at Oslo the American State Department has requested the belligerent governments to use every effort to protect this vessel and its cargo in proceeding to sea from Bergen. It is pointed out that the provisions of the American Neutrality Act now prevent the vessel from proceeding to Narvik or any other North European port for discharge of cargo. For your information it is further pointed out that public opinion in the United States is running high against this detention and seizure, and it may be you will wish to bring this to the attention of the proper authorities.

Meanwhile it requires the services of a competent pilot to safely bring the vessel from Vaksdal to Bergen. I therefore request that such a pilot be sent on board at the earliest possible moment.

John P. Duncan,
American Consul.

TELEGRAM VIA GERMAN CONTROL, VAKSDAL, APRIL 28, 1940.
HON. JOHN P. DUNCAN,
AMERICAN CONSUL, BERGEN.
WILL COMPLY WITH YOUR REQUEST STOP HAVE MY OWN PILOT.

HARDIMAN.

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Bergen Harbor, Norway.
May 2, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen.

Dear and Honorable Sir: I am now lying at anchor in Bergen Harbor, having come here with the pilot Mong Hansen, who is fairly well recovered from his wound received on *Floro I.* A German minesweeper cleared the way. There seems to be left only that the discharge of the cargo is entirely up to the German authorities and this matter will be disposed of *pro tem.*

The only duty remaining up to us is to tally all cargoes as discharged from my vessel, also see that all is in good

order, or take or make exceptions to any damage. For this matter it behooves us that they furnish tally men to check the cargo on behalf of the vessel and charterer, and since the agent has apparently placed the matter of disposal in your lap, I make this suggestion to you. The Germans say they cannot spare the men, but I insist we must have five experienced tally men for the reason above set forth. The Germans say this will mean a delay of several days, made worse by the fact we can only discharge during daylight hours, due to the blackout, but I can't help that.

Will you be kind enough to explain this to Mr. Preusser, Dr. Worms, and Admiral von Scheeling as they do not seem to wish to accept my explanation? I am remaining aboard to meet any emergencies.

Again appreciating your interest and help, I remain as always, very truly yours,

Wm. Hardiman, Master.

AMERICAN CONSULATE

Bergen, May 3, 1940.

Dear Captain Hardiman: I was glad to learn of your safe arrival here, and am negotiating for the tally men you requested. Meanwhile, a message from the United States has at last come through, as follows: "To Captain Hardiman S.S. SEA THRUSH. Urge you proceed sea for United States earliest opportunity even though cargo still aboard. Charterers and consignees now in England agree this message. Try advise us your situation and intentions through American Consul or any other means available so can request belligerents assure you safe departure. McCabe Steamship."

As you can see, they do not fully appreciate the situation here, but I shall be glad to attempt to transmit any message you have for them.

Sincerely yours,

John P. Duncan, American Consul.

S.S. SEA THRUSH,
Bergen Harbor,
May 4, 1940.

Hon. John P. Duncan,
American Consul, Bergen.

Dear and Honorable Sir:

By the time you get this I will be at sea. I have decided, since my consignees are now in England, that it is advisable to attempt to discharge my cargo direct to them in some British port, and will proceed tonight, at slow bell, through the mine fields with the aid of the pilot, Mong Hansen, and the German naval officer who has been stationed aboard. I will rely on the German as lookout, as he will be placed in the bows where he will be the first to know it if we should have the misfortune to strike a mine. But I expect no trouble because I have been lightening ship since nightfall by discharging most of my bunker oil and water ballast so as to draw no more than eighteen or nineteen feet to give me the clearance Dr. Worms said I would need to pass over the mines which are planted at a twenty-foot depth between here and Holmengra Light. The German officer I speak of has been placed temporarily in the chain locker, in irons, where he is awaiting my orders, but I wish to make it clear he has not been damaged in any serious way.

We are anchored in the main channel, and the German mine sweeper that has been lying alongside of us for what they call our protection, has complied with my demand to drop two cable lengths astern to avoid the same kind of trouble we had when British planes raided this port while the cruiser *Ostnabruck* was lying alongside of us last time. So with the blackout, the way is as clear as can be expected, and I should reach Holmengra Light before dawn. In that neighborhood I will put the German officer in a lifeboat as I do not wish to be in the position of taking a prisoner to England. Mong Hansen states he wishes to remain aboard.

Thereafter I will set my course to pass north of the Shetland Islands and after six hours steaming will send a radio message addressed to British naval vessels generally, describing my course and requesting convoy.

I give you the above information so that if you are asked to do so, you can confirm my course and destination to the proper parties. I would also like it made clear to my principals that even should I fail to make a safe passage I feel there is nothing to lose since the Germans are very plainly out to take everything they can get.

Respectfully yours,

Wm. Hardiman, Master.

P.S.: I am sorry to say Mr. Max Preusser has been loitering aboard, and I have been forced to place him in irons also. It may be he will be of some assistance to the German officer later, in making land.

RADIO 11:50 A.M. MAY 5
TO BRITISH NAVAL VESSELS GENERALLY

AMERICAN S.S. SEA THRUSH PROCEEDING COURSE NORTH SHETLAND ISLANDS NOW SIX HOURS FROM HOLMENGRA LIGHT SPEED TEN AND ONE HALF KNOTS PLEASE ADVISE IF COURSE UNSAFE REQUEST CONVOY.

HARDIMAN, MASTER.

RADIO 12:10 P.M. MAY 5
TO S.S. SEA THRUSH

MESSAGE RECEIVED YOU MAY PROCEED SAME COURSE IN SAFETY.

(UNSIGNED)

"RIDE 'EM, YANK!"

A snarling hellion of spitting lead and screaming wings in the air, he was alone and outcast on the ground — this solitary Yankee cowpuncher ace in the R.A.F. Give me one more Yank, he vowed, one more like me and we'll sweep the Nazis out of the air! And the other Yankee came — saw — and was conquered . . . blasted out of the sky in a flaming air duel over the blood-drenched sands of Dunkirk, while the snarling, snapping fangs of the Nazi blitzkrieg drove freedom from the continent of Europe far below! Don't fail to read this splendid tale of airmen's valor by Hal White!

In the Same Issue:

"The Bombers Are Coming," a great novel of invasion wings by Lance Kermit, plus many other long and short stories by David Goodis, Ray P. Shotwell, and many others!

March Issue On Sale, Jan. 27th.

. . . And So Will They

By Florence Burrill Jacobs

. . . Muster Day in the Newer Land,
With Patrick Henry giving a twitch
To his waistcoat front as he urges, "Which
Gentleman's able to understand
What they mean down home when they say *afraid*
Of air attack or of ocean raid?
When they question whether our best defense
Will save from a dire consequence
If we stand alone at the last stockade?"

"I'll answer that, but it don't make sense."
A bony scarecrow in buff-and-blue
Swings on a foot where the heel sticks through.
"There's somebody runs off a movie reel
And melts folks' marrers down . . . *We* et steel,
Bit it and chawed it and spit it back
From Concord Bridge to the Shediac,
A handful sassin' a royal corps.
We trounced 'em, chased 'em, and yelled for more.
Our meat was mostly a stray bobcat
And we wasn't drilled, but we wasn't scat."

They crowd up close, in the ragged dress
That did to soldier a wilderness:
"My flintlock musket was all I had
To lick ten Hessians, but *I* was *mad*."
"No counting noses in eighteen-twelve's
Little unpleasantness! Each ourselves
Took care of what we conveniently could
And hitched up a gallus and called it good."

"They say the Nazis are harsh when riled,"
Jeers Cody, and Custer and Boone chime in
Out of the side of a caustic grin,
"Them redskins wasn't exactly mild."

Then William Mullins, a pilgrim twice
From everything that a man holds dear,
Says, "What do they mean by *sacrifice?*"
"Why, cars, and a passel o' household gear,"
Laughs James McLaughlin. "But when I came
Chopping my way to the Plymouth Claim,
I toted mine on my back instead,
All six pots and a featherbed!"
And Morris and Lewis and Adams twit

"Sacrifice!" with a sour wit:
Samuel Adams, whose bold name stood
On a fateful paper for ill or good;
Robert Morris, who underwrote
A last fierce stand with his own last note;
Lewis of the Rockies and all points west,
Storing his wounds in his bitter breast.

"We left a promising stand o' corn
When we started out for the Oregon,"
Says a man in deerskins, "And Dolly's roses
Was due to bud by another dawn . . .
She never felt right about them posies."

A tall young schoolmaster, "Times were such
I never had laid away overmuch
Silver and copper . . . I'd seemed to save
Only my life, and that I gave."

"We started out with a bare Idea
And got us half of a hemisphere;
And drove the Britishers back across;
And stopped for neither fatigue nor loss
Nor death nor torture," Old Hickory rants,
"We opened the North and the West; we bred
Lusty sons till our seed had spread
From Frenchman's Bay to the Spanish grants
And built its fortunes from sweat and pitch.
And now that we've left 'em a country rich
And strong as none of us dared foretell,
Some want to know can they keep it . . . Hell!"

Webster is acid. "A few indeed
Seem more the sons of Quixote's seed,
Tilting with windmills, than that fierce breed
Which took, to conquer a savage sod,
Only an axe and its faith in God."

Says Alden slowly, "Mayhap we'd best
A fawned and cringed like the craven rest
And lived at our ease in London Town."
But here Abe Lincoln's familiar drawl
Answers him, "Johnny, a man with sprawl
Could never have borne it to knuckle down.
First or last you'd have broken away
To fight for your freedom . . . *and so will they!*"

BREAD ON THE WATER

By CHARLES T. S. GLADDEN

ENSIGN JACKSON had all my sympathy after our air raid on Attu and he needed it. We'd flown off the *Eagle* an hour before dawn and when our squadron rendezvoused he had failed to join up. I thought that he'd had motor trouble and hoped that he'd been able to make it back on board, which wouldn't have been an easy job due to his inexperience, and when we returned from giving the Japs a taste of their medicine with a shot of American flavoring, I was greatly relieved to see his ship parked for'd on the flight deck. Mine was the third plane in. The Skipper, Tommy Martin's, was the first, and when I climbed out he was talking with Thomas, the squadron leading chief, so I joined them.

"What's wrong with Jackson's ship?" I asked.

Martin didn't give the Chief a chance to answer. "Just a little lack of guts in the pilot," he declared.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"He told Thomas that he had got lost after taking off and couldn't find the carrier group so he flew around for a while then returned. He forgot to say that he was too scared to look for us," Tommy added.

"Come on, Tommy," I said. "Give the kid a chance. Maybe he did get lost. What of it if he was scared? He's fresh out of training at Jacksonville, this was his first show. I was full of goose pimples my first one and I'd been flying for five years."

"You weren't yellow. You didn't quit," Martin replied.

"And I don't believe Jackson's yellow," I declared.

"That's where we differ," Tommy snapped and walked off. "Tell him I want to see him," he called back.

I WENT to his room and opened the door. He was lying on the bunk with his face buried in the pillow. Not till I spoke did he look up, then I saw that he'd been crying. I went over to his side and put my hand on his shoulder. "Come on, boy. Buck up. Tell me what happened," I said.

He sat up and looked me squarely in the eye. "I'm not used to night flying without some lights on the horizon. When I took off this morning it was like flying into a black hole. I was so busy watching my instruments that I lost touch with the planes ahead. I flew around looking for them until daylight, then I came back to the *Eagle* and landed because I didn't know where to find my squadron. When I walked off the flight deck I heard some of the flight crews cackling and I heard them calling me 'Chicken Jackson.' I swear to God, sir, I didn't fall out of the squadron because I was afraid. It was just as I told you."

His soul was bare and begged for understanding. I looked at him and saw myself five years ago. "Come on, we'll go up together and see the Skipper," I said.

I had to push him in Martin's door, then he stood there like a wooden Indian so I spoke up. "Go ahead and tell the Commander what happened."

He was so scared that he was shaking. "It's just as I told Lieutenant Fisher. I'm not used to night flying from a carrier and when I'd gained a couple of thousand feet altitude and looked up from my instruments I'd lost my squadron. I searched for the carrier group until daylight then returned because I didn't know what else to do."

"You haven't any business in Scouting Six unless you can fly under any conditions," Martin answered in a cold tone of

voice. "If you're afraid to fly in the dark you'll be no good in a fight. You're grounded, do you understand?"

Jackson's face turned scarlet, his eyes filled with tears. It was more than I could stand. "Come on, Tommy, have a heart," I said. "You haven't always had seven thousand hours and five Japs to your credit. You had to learn once and you did it in peace-time when the going was easy. Give the kid another chance. I've got a feeling you won't regret it."

The Skipper studied Jackson for a long time. "All right," he said. "I'll give you another chance but it's because Lieutenant Fisher asks it."

THAT had happened a month before and since then we'd been based ashore at Pearl Harbor for operational training, flying night and day, practicing gunnery, dive bombing and scouting. Nobody was as conscientious in his effort as Jackson. Night-time found me worn out mentally and physically but he'd come around to my room, park himself alongside my bed and review everything that had happened during the day. He knew he had plenty to learn and he was determined to learn it. The fact that he lived and worked under a cloud of suspicion seemed not to affect him. The officers of the squadron were barely civil to him, and the men served him only when there was nothing else to do. I watched him for some indication of his reaction but couldn't find any, except that it seemed to force him to greater efforts.

One morning as I walked along the parking area inspecting the target sleeves I saw one with more bullet holes than I'd ever seen before. I called to Thomas, "Who fired at that sleeve?"

He turned it over, looked at the number and compared it with his notebook. "It's Mr. Jackson's," he said and stood there shaking his head, deeply perplexed.

One night when he came to my room I mentioned his shooting. He beamed like a schoolboy. "I'm so glad you think it's good," he said. "I'm really working at it," he added.

"Don't forget that gunnery's only a part of the game," I cautioned. "You have to fly to find the enemy."

"I'm getting all the night flying I can," he returned. "I'm going to show the Skipper that I've got the stuff the next time I have the chance."

That came suddenly and unexpectedly. One afternoon all the *Eagle's* squadrons were ordered to land on board with personnel and equipment. We thought it was a routine movement at the end of our training period until we continued to stand out at sea, with our two guarding destroyers. Before dark, Diamond Head had dropped below the horizon and the ship was as full of rumors and speculations as a girl's seminary. That night when we assembled in the wardroom for dinner, the executive officer arose and tapped his glass for silence. You could have heard a pin drop. "The captain wishes all the officers to remain after dinner. He has something to say," he announced. When we had finished the junior officers came up from their messroom and joined us. I saw Jackson as he walked in. His face was as white as a ghost's and drawn in taut lines and I wondered whether Tommy Martin hadn't been right after all.

Then the Captain came in. He ordered us to be seated and his sharp eyes rested on each one of us before he spoke. "The C-in-C has given us a job," he said. "The strength of the Axis Powers makes it necessary to keep such a large part of the United States Fleet in the Atlantic that the Pacific Fleet is inferior to the Japanese Battle Fleet. We've just received information that they've concentrated a large carrier force in the Marshall Islands for another attack on Pearl Harbor. We can't attack them with our fleet because of their superiority. If we wait on the defensive, they'll attack us and we'll lose some ships that'll attack us and we'll lose some ships that'll further increase our inferiority. We're

in a hole but there's one chance to get out of it and that's the one we're taking —a surprise air attack, that we hope will inflict enough damage to give our fleet equality. A larger force than the *Eagle* and two destroyers would be certain to be observed before reaching its objective and if the *Eagle's* sunk in the attempt, our fleet's not much worse off than at present." He paused. "That's our mission, gentlemen. It's a desperate one. We're outnumbered a hundred to one in ships and planes and pilots. Everyone has a superman's job, but I know you'll do your best. That's all the Navy expects."

WHEN we filed out of the wardroom everyone was silent with the weight of the responsibility so suddenly thrust upon us. I had forgotten about Jackson until he touched me on the shoulder. "I'm going to show you what I can do," he said, but his voice was shaky with fear.

I patted him on the shoulder. "Loosen up and stop worrying and you'll come through all right."

Being a section leader, I went up to the charthouse to take a look at the situation. On the wall was a large map of the area between Hawaii and the Marshall Islands. On it were plotted with blue pins the positions of our ships on scouting duty; most of them were submarines and we would have to depend upon them for information regarding the movement of enemy ships in the area through which we would pass. I knew from both peace- and war-time experience that we could not depend upon them because enemy destroyers and planes could easily keep them submerged during all of daylight hours and their information would reach us too late to be of benefit. The known position of enemy ships was indicated by red pins, there were too many of them to suit me and near the course to our destination. We had to miss them! One report of our presence and we would be blown or bombed out of the ocean in a very short time. There were only twelve scouting planes in the *Eagle* to act as eyes for the ship and each pilot's responsibility gave me a feeling of doubt regarding Jackson. If he failed he would lessen our chance of success and endanger the very security of our nation. He weighed upon my mind even in my sleep. I dreamed that we were flying together, two Japs attacked us and Jackson dove out of the fight. Bullets were tearing my plane apart and playing a devil's tattoo on the fuselage. I awakened in a cold sweat and heard the general alarm gong clanging away to turn us out for the dawn patrol. It was the first time I ever welcomed that sound.

I climbed into my clothes, swallowed a cup of coffee and stumbled along the dark passageways to the aviator's ready-room, where our pilots were assembled. Jackson was there and I could tell by his sunken eyes that he hadn't closed them that night. Martin counted noses and when we were all present he called us to the blackboard. "The first two sections will take off, when the planes are ready. Rendezvous at 2,000 feet above the *Eagle*. When the last plane's in position fan out without further word and form scouting line 50 miles apart, altitude 5,000, course two twenty true, air speed 180. At the end of three hours return to the carrier. Maintain radio silence unless you sight enemy surface or aircraft. Carrier course 220 speed 25. That's all, except," he turned and looked at Jackson, "remember that the success of our mission depends upon every plane being in its proper position."

The situation was tense and I was thankful when the loudspeaker crackled: *"Pilots, man your planes."*

We filed out into the darkness on the flight deck and wormed our way among the planes spotted in position for take-off. I put on my chute and climbed in my ship. Jackson's was alongside. I saw him step in, then the bull-horn roared: *"Stand clear of propellers. Start the engines."*

There was a mounting grinding sound

that rose to a high pitch. One motor barked like a firecracker, then the others followed until a deep roar drowned everything but thought. The flight deck was a maze of dancing blue lights from the exhaust stacks as the pilots tested their engines. The *Eagle* increased speed, the wind whistled over the deck and my plane tugged at the wheel chocks and the men on the wings holding it down. I heard a deep blast on the whistle and the ship turned into the wind, and the control light on the wing of the bridge changed from yellow to green, the signal to launch planes. A flashlight wand in the bow circled and Martin's plane taxied ahead with gathering speed; the light moved down and the plane raced for the black abyss ahead. I watched it lift into the air, number two plane followed, then it was Jackson's turn, when the wand dropped a shower of sparks shot from his exhaust stacks and he headed for the bow. I was taxiing into position when he lifted from the deck so I didn't see him leave. I climbed up for the rendezvous and found only two planes of Tommy's first section. Jackson's was missing. My heart sank down to the floor boards, then from nowhere out of the night a plane shot across in front of mine and joined the first section. I was as pleased and relieved as when I landed after my first solo flight.

THAT afternoon after we'd landed I hurried to catch up with him as he headed for the ready-room. "You did it," I said. "See, it wasn't hard and it'll be easy the next time."

"It wasn't easy, I was scared to death," he declared. "And I wouldn't have found the squadron if it hadn't been circling over the *Eagle*. I saw her wake and that's how I found you."

The Skipper was there, he glared at Jackson. "You were late in joining up," he snapped. "Don't let it happen again."

The next day the second division had the dawn patrol so Jackson didn't have a chance to see what he could do. Before we took off at three o'clock in the afternoon for the evening patrol, the sweep that would insure the *Eagle's* safety for the better part of the night, the Skipper called us into the ready-room for last-minute instructions.

"You're mostly to watch for enemy patrol planes," he ordered. "We're only seven hundred miles from the Marshalls. The enemy's certain to have some long-range bombers in this area. If you sight one, you've got to knock it down, and you're to maintain radio silence while you're doing it."

I couldn't believe my ears. He was giving a single scout a job that two fighters would do well to accomplish. "Can't we go in pairs? We'd have a better chance," I suggested.

Tommy glared at me. "Our security demands a three hundred mile sweep, so you can't go in pairs. If you can't handle a Jap plane alone, you'll have to fly into him."

I hope I didn't look like I felt. My blood seemed to turn to icewater. It took a few moments for my nerve to return. "O.K.," I said, but I felt a long way from it.

Those were the longest three hours I ever flew. I spent every second of them looking for an enemy patrol plane and praying to God that I wouldn't see one. When I came in on the beam and picked up the *Eagle* that evening, I felt like I was handing my harp and wings back to St. Peter. When I cut my motor and stepped out of my ship, my mec met me with a pay-day grin on his face. He put his mouth alongside my deaf ears and shouted, "Mr. Jackson bagged one this afternoon."

"What!" I couldn't believe him. I looked to see if the kid's ship was back. There it sat.

"Yes, sir," he declared. "I guess you were right in getting him another chance." I thought it was strange how word got about, as I hurried for the ready-room.

Jackson had left. I went to his room and found him.

"Congratulations," I cried and pumped his hand. I was as proud as if I had done it myself.

He smiled and shook his head. "I don't deserve any. It was too easy." His face clouded. "It wasn't anything compared with taking off yesterday. Do you know I'm living in dread of taking off tomorrow, even though it's the big show?"

I couldn't believe him, it didn't make sense. Nerve is nerve, whether flying or fighting. I took him by the shoulders and held him at arms' length so I could look him in the eye. "What's back of this, come clean!" I demanded.

He looked shamefaced. "I've never been able to fly by instruments, I just can't get the knack of it," he said.

I shook him soundly. "I feel like turning you over my knee. It's all in your mind. Forget about it. Get up there tomorrow and do your stuff. We need men like you. You're as good as six of me."

"No, sir," he returned, "but I'll do my best."

I reminded him of that the next morning when we were crowded in the ready-room with all the other pilots just before the take-off for the attack. "I want to see you in front of me all the time until we rendezvous," I said. "Furthermore, I'm going to hang on your tail, so don't go taking me back to Honolulu."

He made a weak attempt to smile. "I'll try not to," he said.

IN A few minutes I was in my plane and ready to go. I looked across at Jackson's ship and waved my hand. He waved back and I felt better, for somehow I had the conviction that he wouldn't let me down. Then the green light turned on and Martin's plane was off in a shower of sparks. Number Two followed, then Jackson; I crowded him as I taxied along the deck so that I was only a few feet behind when he went over the bow and I stayed on his tail as he climbed for altitude. He flew straight ahead for a while then started a slow turn. He was doing so well that I took my eyes off him an instant to look for the other planes. When I glanced back his plane had started to whirl and I knew that he was in a spin. In a second's time he passed out of sight. I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach, my conscience stared me in the face. I had talked him into death, for I knew that's what had happened. If he couldn't fly by instruments at night, he hadn't a Chinaman's chance to get out of a spin. Somehow, I joined the formation and all the way into the Marshall Islands I wasn't conscious of anything but his spinning plane. It took a burst of anti-aircraft fire to snap me out of my daze, then I was too busy strafing a Jap carrier and sowing bombs on her decks to think of anything but the business at hand. Very soon I had other business—some of their fighters dropped on us and by the time Squadron Six had disposed of them, our bombers and torpedo planes had completed their attack. I saw enough battleships burning to know that the *Eagle's* brood had done a good job, even better than we had expected, and I was happy when we started back, until I counted the planes and saw how dearly we had paid, for there weren't a third of us left.

When we sighted the *Eagle* she was headed into the wind and ready to land us. We poured on board just as fast as possible, for at that time the ship was in the most vulnerable condition—the planes had to be parked forward to permit landing and there was not sufficient room for anyone to take off. When the last ship was on board, the handling crews started to run them back to make room for the fighters to take off to protect us. Only a few planes had been moved when the bull horn roared: *"Stand by for air attack enemy planes approaching from ahead."*

THERE were five bombers. They looked like a string of gray geese against the blue sky. We were in a hell of a fix and there wasn't much that we could do to get out of it. Then all our anti-aircraft guns flashed; the roar was deafening, the flame blinding. I watched the sky around the planes and saw it fill with little black puffs. One plane lagged behind but the remaining ones sailed on with utter disregard and perfect precision and headed directly for us. It was maddening, paralyzing, yet a fascinating sight.

We began to zigzag. A geyser of water shot high in the air, close aboard, and drenched the flight deck, then we were surrounded and inundated by water spouts. I felt the ship rock under the force of the explosions. There was a heavy jar and a column of black smoke shot up from the bow. Another bomb struck the island on the starboard side of the ship and exploded. The air was filled with screaming fragments and acrid smoke. I was tossed around like a straw and landed against the fuselage of a plane. I climbed dizzily to my feet and staggered about, then started down the flight deck to survey the damage. Huge chunks of decking had been gouged out of the planking and there were figures sprawled about like rag dolls. But the greatest damage had been done in the bow; the entire for'd end of the flight deck was gone. It would be impossible to launch planes until the twisted plates could be cut out and temporary repairs effected. That would take hours and in the meantime we would be at the mercy of anything that the enemy had left. I didn't have long to think of the possibilities before the bull horn blared again: "*Stand by for another air attack.*"

This time six enemy planes came in sight at a low altitude. I recognized them as torpedo planes and gave up all hope of the *Eagle* surviving the attack. They kept well outside of gun range and took a position ahead of us. I remembered what they'd done to the *Renown, King George* and the *Hermes* without air opposition.

Then a lone plane appeared out of the sun. I thought it was one of their scouts until it dove on them like a hawk, with its machine guns hammering away. I ran to the ship's side with hundreds of others to watch the man who had guts enough to tackle six planes and a score of machine guns single-handed. Disregarding their shower of lead, he bored right in until the enemy leader fluttered out of the formation and dove into the sea. I expected to see our plane follow him in, I didn't see how he could survive, but some miracle saved him for he pulled up in a steep climbing turn above the enemy formation, then with wide-open throttle he dove again. Once more I heard the chatter of machine guns. I expected to see him burst in flames; instead another Jap plane exploded like a rocket and filled the air with flames.

ONCE more he climbed high enough to be out of range of the enemy's machine guns and fell off in another dive. They had closed in tightly and I didn't see how he could escape the curtain of lead through which he had to pass; but he did, and another plane dropped like a flaming meteor into the sea. In my excitement I found myself pounding my neighbor on the back; somebody on the bridge pulled the whistle cord; about the flight deck men climbed on top of the planes, the better to see. No wonder they did—they'd never witnessed such an example of bravery, such markmanship in this or any other war.

Our pilot climbed once more until he was above the enemy planes. They had given up the attack and were streaking past the *Eagle* several thousand yards away. When he was directly above them he half rolled into another dive. The Japs' nerve broke and they scattered like chickens from a hawk. Down our man came—he leveled out for only an instant and another plane plunged into the sea.

There were only two left and they

headed for the *Eagle*. Our pilot recognized the danger of the situation—in a half a minute they would be in a position to drop their torpedoes. This time he didn't climb for the protection that altitude would give him, he leveled off directly behind one of them and flew into the face of his guns. I held my breath and watched. One of them had to go—which would it be? I heard the Jap's guns hammer away furiously, then our plane's guns opened up with a short burst and the enemy plane hit the water and turned cartwheels until it sank out of sight.

I looked for the other enemy plane and was surprised to see him flying into a sea full of geysers, all of our anti-aircraft guns were firing and I had been so intent on the air battle that I had failed to notice them. A column of water rose under the belly of the enemy ship lifting it into the air, the wings floated off and the fuselage made a large splash and disappeared. Our plane hovered above it for a few moments then headed for the ship. We turned into the wind and prepared to land it when it passed close by on the port side. I saw its number and couldn't believe my eyes. It was Two Sail Six, Jackson's ship.

I beat the others on his wing when he stopped rolling up the deck and helped him out. "Boy, you're the hero of the Navy." I declared.

He looked abashed. "It wasn't anything, sir."

"Nothing!" I cried. "What do you want to do? Take on the whole Jap Air Force?"

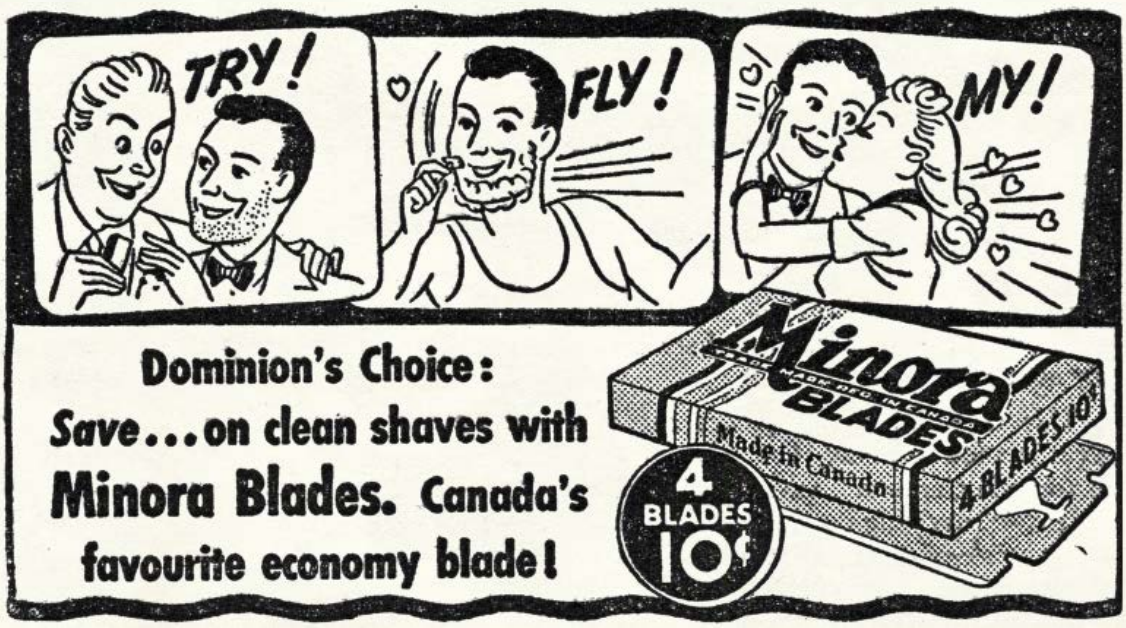
Martin stepped up and held out his hand. "Congratulations, Jackson. I've never seen the equal of your feat for bravery and gunnery . . . You've saved the *Eagle*, but where'n hell have you been?"

Jackson looked shamefaced. "I got into a spin when taking off and lost the squadron. I followed you in but got there too late for the show so came back and did what I could."

"You did what?" Tommy demanded.

"Yes, sir, I got into a spin, but I got out of it." His face beamed with pride. "I've learned how to fly on instruments and that means more to me than knocking down those five Jap planes."

Tommy shook his head and walked away deeply puzzled, but I knew that Jackson was telling the truth.



CAPTAIN OF THE COWS

By FRED D. McHUGH

"SO THE chap wot shows us where to drop 'em," asked Olcott, the gaunt and ministerial bombardier, grinning and displaying gaps between columnar teeth, "is a captain of cows, heh?"

"In a manner o' speaking," answered Sergeant-Pilot Gillies. He smiled expansively as he noted that all eyes were upon him, and as his chest went out, he almost imagined that he was in his old post before the London hotel, in his gold and blue uniform with its yards of gold braid. He went on: "And if the Nasties 'ave noticed him at orl, blimey, they prorbly think he's a barmy Frog—playin' at war and a-drilling his cows."

From the air, the shelter under which a group of R.A.F. men were having a last spot of tea before taking off looked like a hay field. Actually, it was a sprawling hangar built against the base of a hill—somewhere in England. As the men talked, ground crews busily towed planes from tunnels under the hill and warmed up their engines.

"But how'd the Air Ministry plan this system?" queried Rear Gunner Rhodes.

"'Ow? Now blarst me . . . Oh, I forgot you're new on this run, Mister Rhodes," apologized Sergeant-Pilot Gillies "Well, th' Air Ministry didn't plan it. It started when Reconnaissance came back with that first photograph and passed it on to Intelligence. But Intelligence thort it was a 'oax. Even now, nobody knows wot's behind the business. And we stopped trying to find out—just take her as she stands; bloody well upsettin' to Jerry!"

"And Intelligence didn't investigate?" Rhodes, the newcomer, was visibly impressed by the apparent failure of Intelligence to live up to its name.

"That they did, Mister Rhodes, but Reconnaissance didn't wait. Went back for more next day. And got it. They brort in a second picture wot clinched it."

Sergeant-Pilot Gillies paused and looked about him for questions. None came. But Gillies noted the rapt attention of his bomber-mates, and twirled his bushy mustache with a glowing self-esteem.

"This second time," said Gillies, "there was a question mark forenenst the hill other side o' Cherburg. In code, it was. Reconaissance says they went down through a hot ceiling of flak, saw the chap's signal, and then circled. The coded signal broke up and then formed again. Then they flew low again and waggled their wings for O.K., and the question mark scattered fast."

"You mean the cows retreated, Sergeant?" Bombardier Olcott heckled with mock gravity. "Bad old plane frightened 'em?"

Sergeant-Pilot Gillies turned a sorrowfully reproachful eye on the bombardier and ignored the question.

"The man who drove the cows with a stick," he said, "could be seen from the air. Obviously the same man as made both signals."

"But what was the first signal?" asked Rear Gunner Rhodes.

"Just the word 'code' in code. Intelligence studies everything that looks pecooliar nowadays so when that orkard squad o' cows showed up in a photo, they was suspicious. Till they enlarged the photo, I mean, and saw th' spots was cows. Thort the picture might show new kind of gun emplacement, or sumthin'. 'Cause the word was lined up with each letter under another. And each letter was made of red and white-spotted cows for code dashes and dots."

"Very neat," said Rhodes. "Those

cows would be our Jersey and Guernsey breeds, then. How does he help us?"

"Code, Mister Rhodes, code—with the cows. He signaled his plan with his cows. But it was a tedious job, but Reconnaissance finally got th' details; and had to hang around so long doing it fresh squadrons o' Messerschmitts was sent in and Jerry's Ack-Ack batteries was reinforced.

"What we finally understood was that each morning at ten, an important target would be showed to us. This chappie, he lines up his cows to make a arrer pointing for us. And the number o' red cows and white-spotted ones in the shaft o' the arrer bloody well tells us the distance in kilometers and fractions."

Sergeant-Pilot Gillies paused for a moment and Wing Commander Burch joined the group, acknowledging the salutes of the non-coms with nonchalant camaraderie. These men had faced death with him many times before, and they would again—as a select, closely knit group.

"And that," said Burch, "is the special mission on which we go this morning—to see what your 'Captain of the Cows' has pointed out for our target. He's done well by us in recent weeks. May our luck stay with us today!"

MR. ALFRED TWIGGS was puzzled. Hours from now—before morning, certainly—he would be Mr. Twiggs no longer. He would once more be Gaston Durot, squat, broad-faced peasant in the baggy blue pantaloons and the squashed-down cloth cap. Gaston Durot would have the same matted hair that sprayed over Mr. Twiggs' ears and the same deep-blue eyes, but he would be the cow-herder driving his cows to pasture on the slopes overlooking Cherbourg. That would be early in the morning. The cows would amble slowly out of the barns of the Chateau and he would follow them, grinning vacuously as the Nazi sentries bedeviled him in terrible French that sounded like retching.

On the road, which was a deep channel between massed blackberry brambles, he would pass Monsieur Barzeau and greet him with a polite *"Bon jour."* But he would keep his eyes forward and his feelings would try hard to erase that perpetual twinkle from the corners of his eyes. For Monsieur Barzeau would be on his way to work, down the winding curves of the hill to German divisional headquarters in the town of Cherbourg. Gaston Durot had a secret and he knew that politeness was the simplest way to prevent talk that might prove embarrassing to him. So he spoke to Monsieur Barzeau each morning as they passed, and then spat into the roadside brambles and muttered *"Collaborateur!"*

These things would happen as usual tomorrow. Tomorrow he would be Gaston Durot. He didn't know that, of course, for today he was Mr. Twiggs. And Mr. Twiggs was puzzled. He could not account for many things about him. It had been that way ever since Mr. Twiggs had found himself in the vicinity of Cherbourg with no memory of how he got there.

Most of all, Mr. Twiggs thought of Lizzie. Not that there was any puzzle about his Girlie; there wasn't. But he did hear her calling to him often. and he couldn't understand the gist of her message.

And Mr. Twiggs pondered also about that hospital. He must have been in it a long time. He remembered entering it late in 1918. He didn't remember getting out. He felt that it was in or near Germany. And he knew that he had entered it after his second wound—that bad one which had left him, with a seared streak through his abdomen and another across his temple, lying for hours out in No-Man's Land. After that, he remembered a stretcher and an ambulance and a hospital cot. For a while there were hovering nurses, and then ether and forgetfulness.

After that first small wound earlier in the war, they had sent him to Cher-

bourg for a long, easy detail. Following the more serious wounds, they must have returned him to Cherbourg to convalesce because it was familiar to him. But how long ago had that been? Strange that they had moved the British camp from this hill overlooking Cherbourg and the jetty-enclosed harbor beyond.

Cap in hand, Mr. Twiggs was a Millet peasant, sending his glance and with it an earnest, anguished cry, out to the blue saucer's rim beyond which was his England. Mr. Twiggs was not religious. Yet vesper bells did something to him—when this soft melody came undulating up the hill to him. Their music made him think with tenderness of Lizzie, of his Girlie. And he was worried for fear he might never understand her calls to him.

From the first, Mr. Twiggs had liked Cherbourg. He had stayed almost a year on that first detail. Then he had gone back to the front—but with the determination to return here after the war. Lizzie would have liked it; and Mr. Twiggs hoped to find here the peace he had not had since she had gone. Even now, here on this hill, he could hear his Girlie calling to him from out there in the Channel when the soft peal of the evening bells carried up to him.

But the war wasn't over. He'd heard of no peace. And certainly there were German soldiers all about the place. How did they get here? The last ones he could remember at Cherbourg were P.W.'s—prisoners of war. They did camp work. Mr. Twiggs chuckled as he remembered those queer Yanks guarding those prisoners as they worked—guarding them with empty pistols because adequate supplies were never available. Where were those Yanks? Were they still coming? Last he'd heard, the Doughboys were driving the Germans back at St. Mihiel.

There were many things that bewildered Mr. Twiggs. He couldn't quite understand whether Lizzie called him to come to her, or that she was coming to him. He just couldn't be sure. He couldn't be sure about all those things that, lately, teased the edges of his mind. But he had one picture the demons of forgetfulness couldn't hide—the picture of a greedy sea that reached out and grasped his Lizzie and never returned her. And in the picture was a boat with a white sail. And Lizzie's straw hat floating on deep blue waters.

Alfred Twiggs now hated the sea. He *had* loved it. So had Lizzie Twiggs. On his first leave after the mud of Flanders, he had gone to Great Yarmouth with his Lizzie for a holiday. To wash the bloody muck out of his brain with sight of rolling blue water and the good smell of salt air!

There should have been no danger with the small boat they hired for a sail out into the Channel. Alfred Twiggs was an expert sloop sailor. And an excellent swimmer. But fate and a sudden squall conspired to nullify those two protective abilities. The squall carried the boat toward France, and when it was last seen Lizzie was at its tiller frantically trying to fight it back to British shores. Alfred Twiggs had been knocked unconscious by the swinging boom and thrown overboard. He revived after partial drowning, but in his dazed condition he just managed to stay afloat, was too muddled to think of looking for Lizzie's disappearing boat.

Thus he got the picture in pieces. He could see the white sail in his memory—and Lizzie in her straw hat, gay and affectionate. Confusing cross-currents in Mr. Twiggs' mind obscured other memories and the meanings of things not clear.

HERE in Cherbourg, where people were mostly French, something gave him a strong hint that he should know a person named Gaston Durot — should know him intimately. Why? And why had this man left his possessions in that one small loft room over the horse's stall? There they were in the room that he, Mr. Twiggs, was occupying temporarily. Ah,

these peasant Frogs—he just couldn't get used to their habit of living in the same buildings with their farm animals. Durot had apparently come to stay. But who was he? The name sounded strangely familiar; but the man apparently had something to do with cows, and Mr. Twiggs knew no one with such an interest. And yet—that familiar name!

If Mr. Twiggs was puzzled by all these things now, on the morrow Gaston Durot would be puzzled in turn. First, he would wonder why he had gone to sleep so very early the night before. Vespers had not even sounded, and the last he could remember was that he was out by the Chateau. He had done this strange thing several times recently—and occasionally in the years that had passed. Hours had simply vanished out of his life, and he could not account for them. Unless, that is, he was sleeping. But always after such a sleep—if that were really it — there seemed a call for him lifting up from the town. Vesper bells warmed him as never before. And from the blue Channel beyond, he almost expected to see a white messenger coming to him.

Perhaps—perhaps those great planes had something to do with that feeling—or vice versa. Perhaps here was a sign—not voices like those the blessed Saint Joan heard in the garden of Domremy, but a sign nevertheless.

It might even be that Gaston Durot was about to recall details of the life of Gaston Durot before that man's "birth" in a German hospital at Trier.

Durot remembered how they had questioned him for hours about himself, how he had muttered but few words in reply. He had known but few—a sort of pidgin French and nothing else. The doctors had called in psychiatrists and psychologists when they had discovered he had to re-learn French. They stood about him, looked wise, and expressed astonishment at what they called his British accent—for he knew no English—and came to no helpful conclusion about his case.

The nameless man was transferred to a French hospital where they kept him for years trying to open up the past for him. At first he had muttered "Liz-zie" a great deal, but the doctors thought he was saying the French *"que si,"* and remarked on his agreeableness. Soon he forgot even that. Yet "Cherbourg" remained in his thoughts and on his tongue. They finally sent him there.

That had been years ago. He became Gaston Durot, a man with an invented name, no known past, no relatives, only a stable loft room, and a job driving cows to pasture. The new war started and Durot watched its unfoldment with complete detachment. It meant little to him. The Nazis came and that fact made very little difference either, except that they had killed off some of the cows he loved. He resented this in a futile sort of way.

In the summer of 1941, a little slip of paper wrought a change in Durot's thinking. It was a simple little sheet that floated down from the skies, written in simple French for simple peasants; and the message it gave was that "V" stands for victory—victory against the aggressors. The three dots and a dash in that message opened a tiny crack in the cask of Durot's memory. He already *knew* that code "V." It came rushing into his consciousness like a dream picture, or something out of his past. And with it it came, slowly, the entire International telegraph code. He knew that code! Gaston Durot was astonished and a little frightened about that—this token of another man's life coming to him now. But there it was.

Perhaps here, too, was a sign—a sign which, coupled with those great planes that came in from the sea, was trying to tell something to Gaston Durot. Or to that other man he was before that wound across the temple in the earlier war. He would see. And if the results were bad for the Nazis . . . . They had butchered some of his milch cows. The remaining cows would help him.

The only thing he could think of to

attract attention was the word "code," which is the same in French and English. At first it was very difficult to keep his cows in position. He was more successful when he tethered some of them, prodded others with a long stick. On the second morning, with child-like confidence that the same pilots would be over the same area, Durot laid out a question mark—two dots, two dashes, two dots. And then a great roaring monster came down close to his hill, sailing through blossoming flowers of deadly explosives to give him what seemed like a nod of approval.

Those great planes from England were his friends. They were enemies of the cow-butchers and of *colloborateurs* such as Barzeau. Gaston Durot knew that now. And the war meant something to him at last. He was elated. He began to lay his plans. Carefully. Very carefully.

I HAVE no authority, Herr Colonel-General, in such matters." Herr Oberst Kurt von Glockener dared let a note of complaint enter the conversation which had been formal and military for the past two hours. For the Oberst was getting tired of standing rigidly at attention while the inspecting general sprawled comfortably at ease in a swivel chair, his feet on the desk.

"Authority?" ripped out Herr Colonel-General Eisenmund. "Authority, my dear Oberst? What is the German Army coming to that you wait for authority to save the material that is becoming so scarce in the Reich! You are in command here. You are ranking officer in the Cherbourg sector!"

"If you will pardon, sir . . . . The military is not what it was in *our* day, Herr Colonel-General—in 1914."

"You dare make excuses!" roared the Colonel-General. "You dare criticize the Army—the Fuehrer's Army. Be careful you do not invite a court-martial."

There was silence for a moment and then Eisenmund said, in a seductively confidential tone, "Aber, what makes you think you have no authority in this case?"

"Because, sir, when it first became apparent that information was leaking out of Cherbourg and our enemy began scoring consistent successes, I assigned several of my staff to investigate only to have orders suddenly. . . ."

Oberst von Glockener paused, looked fearfully up at a framed picture of the man who was Adolf Schicklegruber, but called himself Hitler. The Oberst had reason to fear that picture, for he had found behind it a microphone he had not dared remove. Put there, he had no doubt, by Heinrich Himmler's Gestapo!

"Proceed," ordered Colonel-General Eisenmund.

"Sir. . .," said the Oberst, and paused again. He would have stopped had he not seen the rising fury in his superior's eyes. He said, "Herr Himmler's men have the only authority in such matters here."

"Ach, so-o-o! As I suspected; wherever I go what do I find? Politics. In our glorious army. Yet you, with a little backbone. . . Have you no initiative? Could you not have continued your investigation? But no. Of course not—an old man shelved with other old men to police this wretched France."

Herr Colonel-General Eisenmund rose from his chair and strode furiously across the room. Purple veins stood out on his Goering-like face, and his unrationed paunch seemed to palpitate.

The Oberst still stood at attention. He glanced uneasily toward the picture on the wall as his superior went on.

"Herr Himmler's men, eh? Well, have they found the culprit? Have they stopped the spying? Have they put an end to the destruction? *Nein!*"

The word was spat out, and Oberst von Gluckener meekly answered, *"Nein."*

"Enemy bombers," Eisenmund chanted with an explosive sort of calm, "hit our perfectly hidden underground hangar and destroyed a hundred bombers and fighters. Luck, eh? *Nein, nein, nein!*

It was spotted for them. Don't ask why and by whom. Go find him."

"He'll be the same man who set the *verdamnt Englisch* on to that warehouse of ammunition the very morning after it was unloaded from a ship at night. He showed them our carefully accumulated store of high-octane gasoline—a rarity these days—and a trainload of airplane engines; a bomb storage dump; a flotilla of U-boats refueling in the harbor. These and other important targets have been bombed to bits by the enemy! Consistently. There is no doubt the enemy has had secret data. And you, Herr Oberst von Glockener, say it is not within your province to investigate.

"Did you make *any* progress with your investigation," growled Herr Colonel-General Eisenmund, "before somebody gave you orders?"

"Indeed yes, Herr Colonel-General. We rounded up a dozen pro-British peasants. They went before the firing squad. Two enemy agents followed."

"But the destruction continued," snapped his superior.

"Unfortunately, yes. One of our civilian clerks, a French traitor" — von Gluckener mouthed the word with an old soldier's expression of distaste—"gave us information we hadn't time to check before."

"And the matter was dropped there?" was the caustic question.

"Yes, sir, but our French clerk, Barzeau, tells me the situation he reported is the same. Naturally, I had no desire to hand this information to other. . . to anyone else."

"*Naturlich,*" said Colonel-General Eisenmund dryly. "This nobody could discover anything."

Von Gluckener ignored the sarcasm.

"Barzeau told us of a peasant, a cowherd on the the hill above Cherbourg, who he believes, signals the enemy flyers."

"What?" cried the Colonel-General.

"He was brought in once, sir, but he proved to be only a *dummkopf,* a lout. Of his stupidity I'm sure."

"Oh, you're sure! *Where* is this peasant now?"

"Doubtless herding his cows, sir. He would have no mind to leave, nor any means."

"Bring him to me. I will question him myself—at ten tomorrow morning. At the same hour I will have a general conference—in the Hotel de Ville. Herr Oberst, give the orders for the attendance of my staff and yours, of all available officers of the line; and see that local Gestapo commanders are present."

"*Ja wohl,*" replied Herr Oberst von Gluckener with a sharp heel-click and a salute. "Your staff and mine. The Gestapo"—he raised his eyebrows slightly, looked toward the picture with its hidden microphone—"will be present, sir."

THERE, Herr Colonel-General, is the French peasant at the table." von Glockener pointed. "He is Gaston Durot. Beyond him is the informer, Barzeau."

Colonel-General Eisenmund sat in the mayor's chair on a dais with his dozen staff officers ranged about him. Nearby sat von Glockener. The aldermanic chamber was filled with dozens of other officers in all grades up to Oberst, or Colonel. Sitting apart, a group of Gestapo leaders scowled their superiority, yet kept quiet until the meeting should start.

"Any trouble capturing him?" asked the Colonel-General. The crafty officer put into his voice a synthetic warmth that duped his inferior into an unmilitary informality.

"On the contrary, Herr Colonel-General, his capture was simple," answered Herr Oberst von Glockener. "A corporal's squad, with Monsieur Barzeau, arrested him at midnight — not in the stables, but out on the hill. Oddly, he kept muttering *'que si'* and clutching crazily at a piece of white parachute cloth he probably found on the hill. He is *verruckt*—crazy! The *dummkopf* thought he was a drill sergeant for cows. Had them out at midnight and was lining them up like soldiers."

"So!" exclaimed the Colonel-General. "He was lining them up, eh?"

"Yes sir; and saying something that had an English sound to it, Barzeau reports, and then *'que si'* over and over."

"And clutching the white rag, you said? But what of the cows? They were tethered, no doubt?"

"Why yes, Herr Colonel-General."

"And you men left them there on the hill?" A grinding of teeth could be heard in the inspecting general's voice.

"They did, sir."

"And they're still there?"

"Yes, sir."

"And laid out in a pattern," intoned Herr Colonel-General Eisenmund acidly, "a pattern that somehow tells the enemy what to bomb today. You fool! The peasant is too smart for you; and now it is too late to send anyone to move the cows. We can but wait and wonder what today's target is. Unless we can make your 'fool' peasant talk—which I doubt.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" demanded the pompous Colonel-General. "Get him up here at once! It's ten o'clock, and there's the raid sirens!"

NOW blarst me!" exclaimed Sergeant-Pilot Gillies as he and his bomber mates unharnesed their flying togs. "Blarst me if I ain't got a pree-monition abaht that raid."

"The one we just finished?" asked Bombardier Olcott, looking up with a glint in his eye from the job of unlacing his boots. "Why, Sergeant, didn't you know that a premonition comes beforehand? 'Pre' means—"

" 'Pree' means the first part of pree-meditated," growled the Sergeant-Pilot between clenched teeth. "And the second part is 'murder'—murder of blokes wot is too smart."

Bombardier Olcott chuckled.

Rear-Gunner Rhodes looked from one to the other for a moment and then spoke. "Whatever you want to call it, there's something odd about it."

"What, f'rinstance?" asked Olcott with a grimace. "Remember you're new here."

"All right," said Rhodes, "I'll remember. But don't risk a comparison between the dusty old houses you've knocked over with your bombs and the Jerries I've knocked out of the sky—before I was new *here!* The Jerries fought back."

"And the Ack-Ack fire—" Olcutt began, but Sergeant-Pilot Gillies cut in and stopped the feud.

"Something odd, Mister Rhodes?" he asked, licking his lips.

"Only that it seemed strange we should bomb an ordinary town building. They are not often military objectives."

"Ah," gloated Gillies as he threw a triumphant glance toward Bombardier Olcott. "That's wot I mean. The squadron never touched no town buildings before."

"I wonder why it did so today."

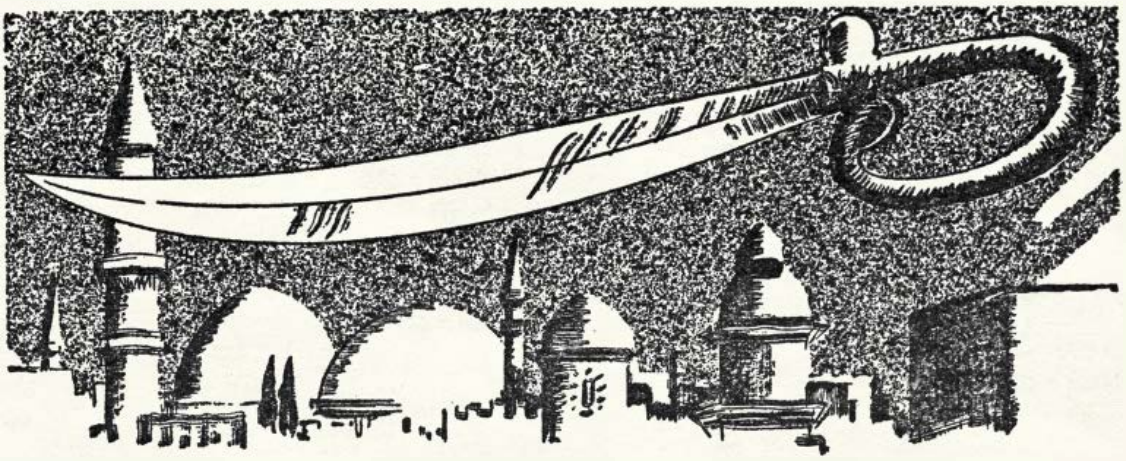
"Wing-Commander Burch believes in that Frog with his cows. If the blighter puts out a arrer pointing to th' City Hall, we bomb th' City Hall."

"You mean *I* bomb the City Hall," boasted the Bombardier. My first stick straddled the building— as only an expert—"

"That it did, my lad," the Sergeant-Pilot said placatingly to head off further interruptions.

"Yes, my lad, your stick straddled the target. If it hadn't, there wouldn't 'ave been that queer bloomin' o' smoke, white and shaped like a sail on a Channel sloop. Kinder like a soul floatin' away as th' City Hall turned to dust. And that," he added grimly, "is why I got a pree-monition—that we won't hereafter get no code from the man with th' cows. Now 'pree' something with that 'hereafter' if you can!"

THE SWORD OF QUALOON



By BARRÉ LYNDON

SYNOPSIS:

ALL through the Middle East, the calm of Moslem peoples has been disrupted by war; the world's traffic, riding down the Suez Canal to Africa and the Orient keeps Port Said swirling with men of every race. Many are saboteurs and espionage agents. And these are the concern of BOB CUNNINGHAM—known to the Arabs as "el-Cunningham." Posted here as front man for British Intelligence, Cunningham's job is to settle disputes among the natives, watch for enemy agents and keep peace in the "wickedest city in the world." In this, he is aided by KAMIL BEY, clever young Egyptian commissioner of police.

Among Cunningham's many worries is the strange case of SARIE, the "Yezidee woman." Unwilling symbol of the hated Yezidee cult, she has been pursued from Assuan to Cairo to Port Said by Yezidee dervishes who wish to take her back to the island of Suakin as the *Shaitan sitt*—"wife of Satan." Because of the mark that has been put upon her, the Arabs believe she has brought them the evils of war. There are rumors that a new phophet—IBN ABDALLAH—had arisen to gather followers against the Yezidees. And because Sarie is under the protection of Cunningham, several attempts have been made upon his life. More than one such attempt has been thwarted by his faithful bodyguard—the crippled ABDI. Cunningham's friends are greatly concerned for his safety—the two men with whom he shares his quarters: CAPTAIN TWEEDIE, a Britisher, and DOCTOR LARRIMORE, an American, who is a member of the staff at the native hospital. And, especially, DOCTOR ANN SOMERSET, an American girl who works with Larrimore, and is in love with Cunningham.

Walking through the market place one day, Cunningham sees an Arab smith forging a sword of strange design—"for killing Yezidees, *effendi*," the smith tells him. Cunningham buys the sword and takes it to PRINCE MIKKI, a handsome Turkish military attache and admirer of Sarie's. Mikki, a collector of Arab weapons, warns him that it means trouble. Cunningham sends Abdi to Suez to investigate and the cripple leaves his cousin, OMAR to guard his master.

Then a queer figure arrives in Port Said, a slim negro dressed in a ragged burnoose but speaking in the cultured tones of an Oxford man, CURZON LEE, an agent of the British, to whom he is valuable because he can go anywhere in North Africa without arousing suspicion. Now he has returned from a mission on which Cunningham has sent him into the desert: to investigate the new prophet who calls himself in Ibn Abdallah.

When Curzon Lee arrives at headquarters to report, Cunningham and Kamil Bey learn to their astonishment that he has been converted to the teachings of Ibn Abdallah—the man he had gone to investigate! Kamil Bey suggests they detain him in custody, but Cunningham allows him to leave.

One night, soon after, Cunningham is working at police headquarters with Tweedie and Kamil Bey when Sarie arrives with one of her Nubian watchmen. The Nubian has brought along a sword he has got from a trader. It is a replica of the sword Cunningham bought from the Arab smith, but this one is sharp and shining, and engraved with Arabic characters. Cunningham calls Prince Mikki who comes to headquarters and identifies the weapon, from its Arabic inscription, as a copy of the sword of Qualoon, a former king of

Egypt, from whom Prince Mikki claims descent.

The door opens and Abdi walks in—without his crutch! He tells them that he has seen Ibn Abdallah at El Kantara, only thirty miles away, and that the prophet has cured his crippled leg. However, he is clearly in great pain. Larrimore examines him and says the joint has been forced back into place. A moment later a sergeant bursts in with startling news. The prophet has arrived in Port Said.

Hoping to deal with him without force, Cunningham and Kamil Bey hurry to the native market place, where they find Ibn Abdalalh, a huge man with a shaven skull, surrounded by an excited crowd of natives. The prophet is telling them he has brought swords—that all Yezidees must die! Led by Ibn Abdallah, the crowd surges toward the town. Cunningham is helpless to stop them. Just then the air raid sirens scream—enemy bombers are coming over! The mob breaks up as the natives run for shelter. During the raid, Cunningham catches sight of Curzon Lee. He grabs the negro and forces him to reveal where the swords are coming from: the Sinai Peninsula. Cunningham orders all caravan traffic from Sinai checked. He also calls Cairo and discusses Prince Mikki with the intelligence department there. Cunningham is sure that something other than fanaticism is urging the prophet on—perhaps Axis agents are behind him. Meanwhile Ibn Abdallah has got away, and returned to the desert.

Prince Mikki turns up at headquarters to say he has suddenly been recalled to Ankara. Cunningham tells the Turkish attache that Cairo has identified him as the grandson of the Mahdi, a Nubian who once led a revolt in the Sudan. Prince Mikki indignantly reasserts his claim to descent from Qualoon, and takes his leave. He goes to see Sarie and asks her to go away with him—hinting that, after the war, he hopes to ascend the throne of Egypt with Sarie as his queen. But Sarie—who has already refused Larrimore's proposal of marriage, and escape—rejects Mikki's offer also. She is resigned to the fate which she feels is rapidly overtaking her. Prince Mikki leaves Port Said, alone.

PART THREE

A YEZIDEE dervish lay dead on the sandbank, where it was narrow and ready and full of herons' nests. A little distance away, where the end of the sandbank submerged, an old boat was careened under the weight of three more Yezidees, who sprawled across the gunwale, half in the water. Two others were by the stern, their robes awash, shot as they struggled to push the grounded craft clear.

Egyptian police stood about, knee-deep in water, watching while Cunningham shone a flashlamp on scarred cheeks and chests, on dirty robes and dead eyes that gleamed, reflecting the strong light. There were white streaks in the woodwork of the boat, where bullets had ripped, and one of its derelict sweeps was splintered at the blade.

"Your men riddled them," he commented.

"They knew the devils were trying to get through to the town," Kamil answered.

Beyond the tilted vessel, the shallows of Lake Menzala were marked by the ribs of sandbanks; gray as old bones in the moonlight, and by small islands on which grew palms and thorny sunt trees. They formed a screen for Port Said, and the town showed darkly, less than a mile away.

"Seen enough?" Kamil stamped gently with one foot; he had stepped deep into water when he jumped from the launch which waited near.

Cunningham turned away, his shoes sinking in wet sand, and Kamil gave orders to the men; the boat was to be righted and the dead Yezidees loaded into it, then the launch would come back and tow it to the shore.

Three policemen stood by the dervish on the sandbank, their blue uniforms as dark as the shadows, their black faces hardly visible below steel helmets. They were nervously restless, because it was no small thing to kill men as mercilessly as they had killed the Yezidees, kneeling among the reeds, shooting furiously for as long as anything moved by the boat.

They had begun their patrol with twenty-five rounds of ball ammunition apiece, and now their pouches were empty. The fusilade had roused the whole native quarter. Scores of vessels had come out, loaded to the swamping point.

They floated now between the islands and the soggy sandbank, full of natives who stared silently across the water and dared come no nearer.

When Kamil stepped toward the

launch, Cunningham said, "You might give these fellows a word." He indicated the three policemen. "They're a bit worried."

"They should be, pumping off all that ammunition!" But Kamil was pleased that the men had been so alert, and he told them that they had done well. "Only a dead Yezidee is a good Yezidee," he said, and that amused them.

Relieved. they waded toward the upset boat, repeating Kamil's words. "Only a dead Yezidee is a good Yezidee!" they told the others, who laughed with them and said the words over and over again as they used rifle-butts to lever the dead dervishes into the vessel. They did not like to touch them with their hands.

The launch, with Cunningham and Kamil aboard, backed out of the reeds, heading away from the shallows before it curved toward the lake-side quay. Abdi sat in the bow; he carried a watchman's club since he no longer had need of his crutch, and he was proud that he could now walk like a whole man at Cunningham's back.

Cunningham began to fill his pipe. He wore an old tweed coat, and he had a scarf knotted about his neck, because the air was chilly over the lake. Abdi was huddled in a rough woollen cloak, and the Arab pilot seemed to be shrunken in his worn peajacket and floppy police pants. Kamil had a police cape about his shoulders; that, with his *tarboosh*, made him look a little odd. The light of the moon was pallid on his face, and his expression was sober.

Cunningham's pipe was short, old and well-smoked, and with it between his lips he looked calm. But he did not feel calm, and his uneasiness came from a growing appreciation that a crisis was near. The shooting of the Yezidees had brought an abrupt and startling alarm, although he had been expecting them to appear.

The dervishes by the deserted city of Suakin always celebrated the anniversary of the birth of the *Shaitan sitt* and, invariably, they attempted to get at Sarie before her birth-date. It was for this that they had once abducted her, taking her to Suakin for the ceremony. Now some of them had tried again, although much later than usual.

They had been caught easily, but their attempt pointed toward a new danger; if Ibn Abdallah knew of the Yezidee gathering at Suakin, he might go against them while they were concentrated there.

The prophet was sailing down the Red Sea and, each day, Cunningham received reports about him from Port Sudan, forty miles above Suakin. The reports came from airplane pilots who maintained a shuttle service between Suez and Port Sudan; flying over the Red Sea, they were able to watch the progress of the prophet's *dhows*.

It was impossible yet to determine whether he was making for Jedda, on the Arabian shore, or whether he would sail to Suakin, on the coast opposite. Cunningham was waiting to assess the situation before he made any further move and then, he knew, he might have to move very quickly.

THE pilot found deep water and opened the throttle, so that the blundering thud of the motor became a roar. Kamil pitched his voice above it. "I'll get extra men out and make a good search," he said. "But I don't think we'll find any more dervishes about."

"I'll join you later," Cunningham answered. "I want to let Sarie know that everything's all right. She'll have heard about this."

"She'll have heard the shooting!" Kamil called.

"No. She's at the Divan with Tweedie."

"Not with Larrimore?" Kamil asked curiously.

"He went down to Suez this morning. I don't think he's back yet." Cunningham's tone was short as he added, "He heard of a ship that's going east."

Kamil regarded him speculatively for a moment longer, then gazed ahead to

where the buildings of Port Said formed a hummocky black mass.

Cunningham knocked the top ash from his pipe, wondering whether Larrimore had returned on the night train. If he had found a ship, it would probably be sailing very soon, and Ann would sail with him. That thought jarred Cunningham, because he himself might have to leave Port Said at any time, racing down to Suakin. His departure would be abrupt, and Ann might be gone when he returned.

In face of this urgency, he had decided to abandon all other considerations and follow his impulse to tell Ann that he was in love with her.

He knew he would regret it everlastingly if he said nothing and simply allowed her to go. Actually telling her should, it seemed to him, take no more than a judiciously chosen half-minute. But the half-minute seemed very elusive and he felt that he was unreasonably clumsy about arranging it, not judicious at all.

The launch changed direction. Leaning shacks and ill-built sheds became visible at the shore line, and the water's edge was marked by clusters of natives. There was a big crowd of them on the quay, staring over the lake toward the launch.

As the note of the motor eased, Kamil said suddenly, "Sarie won't like Larry going." He added, "And I notice she's very nervy."

"She knows that the Yezidees'll be trying to get at her again," Cunningham answered. "That's why I want to reassure her."

"I wondered if Mikki might have scared her," Kamil said. "That was a queer business! There must have been something behind it."

"I don't know what he was after," Cunningham replied, "but they should be busy cooking his goose in Ankara now, and then we may know more about a lot of things! Not that it will help us much."

The intelligence department was trying to run down the Syrian in Beyrouth, and uncover the source of the Qualoon swords, and Prince Mikki was being investigated very thoroughly. But Cunningham knew that exposure of any influence which might be behind Ibn Ablallah or of any ambitious designs on the part of Prince Mikki, would not make the slightest difference to the issues between the prophet and the Yezidees and Sarie.

Natives swarmed toward the launch when it bumped against the quay. They yelled questions at Abdi as he scrambled ashore, and at the pilot. Neither would answer, and the launch started back the moment that Cunningham and Kamil had landed.

The crowd broke to let them reach the police car which waited at one side. Abdi rode on the runningboard. The streets were clear; it was after midnight and any Arabs who might have been about had gone down to the lake. The car cut across the market place. The lebbek tree, beneath which the prophet had exhorted his followers, stood with rags and tatters of cloth hanging from every bough, weird in the moonlight.

The Armenian driver turned along the Shari Eugenie, traveling fast and hooting his way past untidy stores with painted signs, and stucco-fronted buildings that were pastel-colored under the moon. Cunningham alighted a couple of blocks from the Manhattan Divan, and the car went noisily on in the direction of the police building.

He knocked out his pipe and headed into a shadowed street, with Abdi padding close behind. He found Sarie's carriage standing near the entrance of the night club. The driver and her guards were sitting in a row on the curb, and they crowded excitedly about Abdi as Cunningham went on to the cellar doorway.

It was lit by a blue-dipped bulb and in a little vestibule, beyond the black-out drape, was a sleek Maltese. He wore a tuxedo and worked at a baize-covered table scattered with reservation slips and accounts. With him were two hat-check

girls, dainty little *Ghawazi*, supple and black-eyed, wearing tight-waisted dresses and lavish jewelery.

They started forward, but the Maltese waved them hastily away, bowing respectfully as Cunningham went down the cellar steps, between walls that glistened with gilt, parting more drapes at the bottom.

THE Divan, as always, was full of restless movement and noise. The table-lamps were blurred by smoke-haze. the white robes of waiters and the bright colors of women's gowns shifted against a background of tropical khaki, naval and air force blue uniforms. The Comoro blacks were pounding an impelling rhythm, the dance floor was jammed and couples were overflowing between the close-set tables.

Cunningham looked for Sarie and, as he went forward, he was conscious of the roughness of his clothes, and of the fact that his shoes were mired from wet sand. Sarie was not dancing, and he was halfway along the cellar before he saw that she was with a little crowd in one corner.

Someone had brought in a gilli-gilli man, a native conjuror. He squatted on a cleared table, with a blue cloth twisted about his battered *tarboosh*, and a jacket above his red-striped robe; his feet, dusty from the street, were half upturned, showing their pink soles.

Like all *gilli-gilli* men, he worked with day-old chicks, cleverly producing them out of the air, from men's pockets, from the fuzzy coiffure of a sallow-faced dance hostess, and let them run about his feet, squeaking, until he apparently tossed them into thin air and then produced them all over again.

He reached out to touch the evening bag which Sarie carried. She opened it and, amazed, found a fluffy chick inside. She laughed and let it run out, and she was still laughing when she saw Cunningham. She turned quickly, beckoning him toward her own table near the wall, the laughter leaving her face and eyes.

Tweedie stepped from the little group as Cunningham approached. "What's this rumor about Yezidees out on the lake, Bob?" he asked.

"Everything's all right!" Cunningham told Sarie what had happened.

She wore a jeweled scarab in a fillet against her hair. Her dress had heavy Egyptian beads at the neck, and more of them formed a brilliant panel at her waist. She looked very beautiful as she sat listening quietly, while Tweedie snatched a glass from a passing waiter and poured champagne for Cunningham.

"I knew they'd come again," she said.

"You didn't seem worried," Tweedie commented. "You've nearly worn me out, dancing."

"I forget things when I dance," she answered, and sipped from her glass.

There was a subtly-edged note in her voice and, although she held herself under control, Cunningham sensed that she was quivering from taut nerves. Then men in uniform came to the Manhattan Divan to forget, for a little while, where they had come from and where they were going. He knew that Sarie came to the place for much the same excellent reason, but he did not understand why she should be so tense.

He could never be sure what was going on in Sarie's mind and, for days, he had had a feeling that something was maturing there. He had no means of telling what it might be, unless she was troubled over Larrimore. He tried, now, to make clear that any immediate danger to herself had been dissipated.

"I don't think the Yezidees will worry us again for quite a little time," he said. "If there is any trouble now, it'll be down at Suakin. I've had a report that the dervishes appear to be reconstructing their tower."

"They're probably rebuilding it for my birth-date," Sarie said. "I wonder why that should be? They've never done it before."

She drank a little champagne. Tweedie sat with one ear cupped to catch Cunningham's voice through the noise in the

cellar when he answered, "I don't know why they're doing it, but I may have to go down there, if only to wreck the tower again." Cunningham smiled as he added, "And then, I'll try and settle the whole thing for good and all! If you remember, I promised you that, Sarie."

"And how would you do it, Bob?" Her tone was peculiarly gentle.

"It depends on what I find happening there," he said.

She shook her head slowly. "Even if you wiped out all the dervishes, Ibn Abdallah would still try to get at me."

"We'd hold him off!" Tweedie assured her.

"But that wouldn't settle it," she insisted. "It would all still go on!"

Cunningham knew that she was right. The fanaticism of the prophet and his followers was such that they would not be content until the *Shaitan sitt* was destroyed, with the Yezidees. Their beliefs were deep and ineradicable and they left no alternative unless, by some means, Ibn Abdallah could be subdued completely.

CUNNINGHAM sipped a little champagne. Sarie's expression was thoughtful as she watched him. She bent forward and said unexpectedly, "Bob, I intended to give a little birthday party, Yezidees permitting!" She smiled. "If you may be going to Suakin, suppose I put it forward. You're not likely to have left by tomorrow evening. So you come then?"

"Yes," he said. "Thank you."

"And bring Ann," she suggested.

He drained his glass, and he was smiling when he put it down. "Thank you!" he said again, and laughed a little, because Sarie's invitation seemed to offer an ideal opportunity for the half-minute that he wanted with Ann.

"You'll come, won't you?" she asked Tweedie. "Find yourself a girl, and perhaps you'd invite Kamil for me. And tell him to bring someone respectable!" They laughed together, because Kamil Bey's taste tended to be a little unconventional. She looked at Cunningham. "I wonder if you'd ask Larry to come?"

"You can ask him yourself," Tweedie said. "Here he is!"

She sat back, her black-fringed eyes widening and her lips parting in a slow smile. Larrimore was pushing his way between the tables, fresh and smart in a tuxedo; Cunningham saw that he must have changed immediately after the night train got in, hurrying on to the Divan.

His expression was a little set as he came up. Tweedie rose, pushing his own chair forward for him, while Cunningham asked, "When did you get in?"

"About half an hour ago," Larrimore said. "The train was late."

"I didn't think you'd come, as you've been all day in Suez," Sarie said.

"I've got to make the most of my time," he answered. "I shan't be in Port Said much longer."

Cunningham watched him, and Sarie sat unmoving. Larrimore did not look at either of them as he went on, "They won't say exactly when the boat will sail, but they think it will be in about three days' time."

"On my birthday," Sarie commented, and he looked up at her then. She spoke again, and her tone was level, controlled. "I think you're very right to go, Larry."

"I know," he answered, "but I hate doing it. Only I could wait forever for official orders."

She leaned toward him, and spoke quickly. "I'm putting my birthday party forward." She smiled, but her eyes were watching his. "Tomorrow evening, at my house. So we'll make it a farewell party, too!" She spoke to Cunningham. "Just for fun, we'll have Egyptian food. Toasted lotus seeds and papyrus pith, and chickens stuffed with raisins!" Then she looked at Larrimore again. "And those little cakes you like so much." Her voice had become high, and Cunningham saw how she was picking at the table

cover, twisting it below the table-edge. "I'll have some musicians so that we can dance. I'd like to make it a very happy party for you to remember, Larry."

"Swell!" he said, and added abruptly. "Is there a glass about? I'd like a drink!" He reached for Tweedie's. "D'you mind if I borrow yours?"

"And d'you mind looking after Sarie?" Tweedie was gazing across the cellar. "I think I see a girl I might bring tomorrow. Excuse me!"

He moved away. Cunningham poured champagne for Larrimore while he asked, careful to make his tone casual, "Will Ann be going with you?"

"They're holding a berth for her," Larrimore replied, then raised the glass toward Sarie. "Here's to the party," he said, and emptied it while applause sounded from the dance floor and the Comoro band slipped into another tune. He set the glass down, coming sharply to his feet.

"Would you care to dance, Sarie?" he asked. "There aren't so many left!"

Cunningham stood as she rose. "Thank you for coming over, Bob." Her hand was warm against his own for a moment. "Don't forget to bring Ann."

He watched them move to the crowded floor, then he made for the street. He called to Abdi, and walked on so quickly that the man had difficulty in keeping up with him.

Cunningham did not notice that because, just then, he had only one concern. The problems offered by Ibn Abdallah and Suakin receded before sudden worry about whether his little-used tuxedo was fully wearable. He disliked it because it made him feel awkward and dressed up, but it would be the proper garb for Sarie's party. Also, he remembered, Larrimore had once told him that Americans often were married in evening dress. In that case, he reflected, it would be very appropriate to be wearing a tuxedo while he proposed marriage to a girl from Boston.

CHAPTER XII

"I AM FOREVER DAMNED!"

IT WAS the first time that Ann had seen Cunningham in a dinner jacket, and the effect was exactly what she expected. He looked not so much dressed up, as dressed to compliment a lady. Ann liked that.

"Very handsome, Bob," she told him and he grinned, pleased.

They danced to the native band which Sarie had borrowed from the Divan and, surprisingly, the Arabs conjured modern tunes from seven-stringed lutes, viols made of coconut husks and fish-skin, mellow flutes, narrow drums, and a dulcimer with lamb's-gut strings.

The big room was beautiful under the subdued glow of hanging lamps. It was amusing to dance around the splashing fountain, and up shallow steps at one side and on to the *makad*, a balcony which overlooked the quiet courtyard, where moonlight touched the palms and lotus pool.

Ann had enjoyed the Egyptian dinner delicately seasoned meats wrapped in vine leaves, boned chicken with nuts and raisins, jujubes from the zizyphus tree, and wonderfully flavored dates from Alexandria.

Cunningham made little conversation, but there was, Ann found, something exciting about his touch, and his smile. He watched her, even when, out of courtesy, he danced with Sarie, or with Kamil's partner, or with the girl whom Tweedie had brought. She was half Greek and half Egyptian; an altogether luscious creature, made for warm shadows and soft lights. She had a faintly dusky skin and lingering black eyes, and remarkably rich lips.

She was the daughter of a Port Said official and, Cunningham told Ann, had been passed from one British army officer to another, none of whom could make the slightest romantic impression on her.

"She's just a beautiful husk," Tweedie whispered to Ann, and he was amused by it. "All she wants is to dance, and eat

sweets while she's dancing. She won't sit out. She's either frightfully deep, or purely ornamental."

Ann had never seen Sarie so lovely as she was now, nor so apparently happy as she danced with Larrimore, talking to him, laughing, making him smile. But there was an undercurrent to her jauntiness, a watchfulness which suggested that the party was just staging for something which she had to do. Ann noticed it, and she had the impression that Sarie was either resolved about something or resigned; it was impossible to guess which.

She wore white, and her long skirt seemed to flow as she moved; she had very little jewelry, but the wonderfully colored Egyptian beads which she liked so much were heavy at her shoulders, deep at the front of her dress. And she wore a coronet, built up on a jeweled fillet of gold and shaped, Cunningham said, after the style of the ancient, united crown of upper and lower Egypt.

"She is Princess Zahra-Kheta tonight," he whispered. "Kamil's girl realizes it, too. You watch her!"

Ann had seen for herself the curious deference which Kamil's partner showed toward Sarie. She appeared a little awed, not because she was looking at the *Shaitan sitt*—she was not a Moslem, and such superstitions did not bother her—but because she obviously knew something of Sarie's ancestry.

She was an *alima*, a professional singer, very celebrated amongst Egyptians, and she was Kamil's social equal or he would not have brought her. She wore an evening gown, but her hair hung long, almost to her waist, and she had a tremendous amount of jewelry. Ann counted nine bracelets and three necklaces; she had earrings and, in front of a colored handkerchief pinned to her hair, was a diamond *kussa* from which hung pierced emeralds, nodding against her smooth forehead.

Cunningham was dancing with her when, as a rattle of drums marked the end of a tune, Sarie asked her to sing. She agreed willingly, and Kamil hurried to borrow a tambourine.

"Nalla will sing in Arabic," Sarie told Ann. "Sit with me, and I'll translate it for you."

Ann knew that it was not just for this that Sarie drew her toward the wall-divans, raised at one end of the room. She saw Kamil hand the tambourine to Nalla, bowing. Since courtesy demanded that they give full attention to the singer, the others sat facing her, their backs to Sarie and Ann.

The musicians began the plaintive tune of a native song; the air was delicate, set to a scale which contains more notes than European music. Nalla stood by the fountain, and her low voice was very clear.

Sarie whispered, "This is a lover's song." She began to translate, "'By night my sighing does not cease, for a gazelle has stolen my heart. If my love come not back to me. . . .'" Then she broke off, said softly, "Ann, I asked you once before. Are you very fond of Bob?" She studied Ann's face. "Of course, I know that you are."

"And you feel that I'm trespassing, perhaps," Ann said.

"No, no!" Sarie smiled quickly. "But I wanted to talk about it, if you don't mind."

Her expression was serious, although she smiled. Her eyes were unusually bright and, looking at her, Ann saw once more how finely made were her hands, and how exquisite was her beauty. There was something very appealing about her and, suddenly, Ann was again aware of the latent friendliness which she had always felt toward Sarie.

"I've been selfish about Bob," Sarie whispered, "afraid that you might take his attention too much from me, and from the dangers about me. But I'm not in love with him."

Ann waited for her to go on, not interrupting. After a little space, Sarie said, "And life with him in the deserts

would be like changing one prison for another. I have had enough of prisons!"

She looked toward Nalla, who closed each verse of her song with knuckles rapping against the tambourine, so that the brass disks clashed. They clashed now, and Sarie waited until the girl was singing again before she remarked. "You know, I used to think how odd it would be if you stayed here, and I went to America instead."

"With Larry?" Ann murmured. "He's asked you?"

"Yes, but I said 'No.'" Sarie went on, "You hear what Nalla is singing now? It means, 'O my tear, that drew thee to my cheek.'" She said, "That's how I feel because I'm not able to go with Larry, I have to stay."

"Perhaps he'll stay here, too," Ann said quietly.

Sarie shook her head. "No, he should go. And I don't want anything to persuade him against it!" Her tone was firm and, after a moment, she added, "You know, I wish you and Bob much happiness."

"Before he asks me?" Ann smiled.

"He'll ask you tonight," Sarie said. "He's afraid you may go with Larry."

The tambourine clashed loudly, marking the end of the song. Nalla stood smiling through the applause, her jewelry glistening. The musicians clapped, calling approval of her voice until she rapped at the tambourine and began to sing again.

Now Sarie said nothing more. She sat looking toward Larrimore, then her glance went about the room. She gazed at the colored wall-tiles and the huddled musicians, at the heavy lamps and the playing fountain and the singer by it. She looked at her guests, one after the other, until her gaze returned to Larrimore.

Ann, watching her, thought she understood what Sarie was doing; it seemed as though, sitting quietly there, she was trying to impress this moment on her memory, so that she might call it all back after Larrimore had gone.

WHEN the song was done, Cunningham came quickly to Ann and they danced again. They circled the fountain, then he eased her toward the steps and, as they danced up them, he said, "I believe the band has to get back to the Divan pretty soon, ready for the midnight show. But let's sit the rest of this out, shall we?"

They paused on the balcony, which was only dimly lit by the lamps in the room behind, and he moved with her toward the slender balustrade, where bougainvillea dropped out over the courtyard. White lotus blooms were open above the pool, and curving palm fronds were silver-tipped against their shadows, touched by the moonlight.

Cunningham spoke abruptly, with the music making a background to his steady voice, "Are you thinking of going with Larry?"

"No," Ann answered.

She saw his surprised, pleased smile, and she said, "Because he won't be going."

"But he's booked passage!"

"Larry thinks he's going," Ann admitted. "But he'd feel terrible if he went because he's in love with Sarie. He's really in love, Bob! I know that."

Cunningham nodded, while Ann told him, "He'll find that he can't simply go away and leave her to face what she's up against. Maybe he can't do a thing to help her, but I know him! In the end, he just won't be able to go."

"You may be right." Then Cunningham said slowly, "And you won't be leaving, either."

"Not just yet, anyway."

"D'you want to go?"

She looked up as she answered frankly, "No."

"That's fine!" He dropped a hand to hers. "That makes it all right to ask you something."

His tone was husky. He stared out

to the courtyard for a moment, then he turned to her. He cleared his throat and, at that, she smiled. He smiled in response and then, because he saw something mischievous in her expression, he began to laugh in the quiet way that he had learned from the Arabs. She laughed with him and he said, "Do I have to ask you, Ann?"

"Not if you're going to hawk in your throat and be formal," she said.

He drew her close, said, "It's funny, but nothing ever happens in just the way you imagine it will."

"Nothing ever does," she agreed.

"But it doesn't much matter how it happens," he suggested. "It's still pretty marvelous."

"Isn't it!"

He held both her hands, said suddenly, "Lord, there'll be a million things to talk about!" His glance was caught by a figure moving across the courtyard and his tone changed. "Only not here, Ann!"

She looked, and saw a police clerk, his white linen suit shining in the moonlight, a blue tassel bobbing on his *tarboosh*. They watched him go to the door and speak to one of the Sudanese house-boys, then both disappeared inside.

Cunningham said, "I wonder what he wants?"

Suddenly the band stopped playing and Kamil was calling him. "Bob, Cairo wants you to telephone immediately! It's urgent."

Sarie showed behind Kamil. "Do it from here," she suggested.

"We've direct wire from the police building," Kamil told her.

Cunningham moved down the steps. "I'm afraid I ought to see what it is." He looked toward Sarie. "It may be important."

"Parties always break up when someone leaves." She smiled regretfully, then added, "But the band has to be at the Divan in half an hour, anyway."

"Let's all go on there," Tweedie suggested.

"I don't think I should enjoy the Divan, after this evening," Sarie said quietly. "It's been a very happy party, so let's just say good-night." She added, "You can use my carriage, Pat. I think Kamil has a police car."

They talked while the house-boys brought wraps and coats and, when the moment came to say good-bye, Ann thought that Sarie was unusually punctilious in the way she parted with her guests, standing by the fountain, shaking hands with each in turn, thanking them again for the birthday gifts they had brought her.

"I've enjoyed everything so much," she said, and glanced toward Cunningham when she told Ann good-night. "It's been a party to remember, I think."

Larrimore was the last to go to her. "I'll walk home," he told the others as he faced Sarie.

"Don't hurry away, Larry," she said. "We can dance until the band has to go."

He remained beside her as the others went out to the courtyard. She did not move until she heard the car start away, and the voice of the Arab driver calling to his carriage horses, then she signed to the musicians and they began to play again.

SARIE slipped into Larrimore's arms and they danced, not speaking at all. Then she drifted toward the steps. They moved up them and, on the balcony, she paused and said softly, "Up here, just now, I believe Bob asked Ann to marry him." She added, "I saw it about them as they left."

"They're lucky," he answered.

She nodded. "Yes."

They gazed at one another through the shadows, while the Egyptian musicians played on. He remained with his hands at his sides, simply looking at her until she said, "This is our good-bye, Larry."

"I'll see you again before I go," he answered sharply.

"It's much better to say good-bye now."

He said slowly, "If I do go."

"You must, Larry!"

She reached out and made him turn a little, so that reflected light from the moon reached him. Always there had been about his face a faint aggressiveness, but that was gone now; he appeared only very young and deeply troubled because of things beyond his control, and almost beyond his understanding.

He saw her in the glow from the hanging lamps, and she was beautiful against the shadows. The shapely coronet and the brilliant Egyptian beads marked, he knew, her link with the long-distant past and, at the same time, they made her seem very remote.

She smiled as she said, "I told you, Larry, I know my destiny, and it doesn't touch with yours." She studied his face, then her voice came again. "You must understand that I am a figurehead to the Yezidees, and nothing can alter that." She shook her head a little as she went on, "Ibn Abdallah is right when he says that I am forever damned. It's altogether better for you to go."

She frowned a little at the tone which came into his voice. "I hoped, if I had got you away, you might fall in love with me," he said. "If there'd been a chance of that, I don't think you'd be able to tell me to go now."

It seemed a long while before she answered. The musicians were still playing softly. She stepped closer as she said, "Larry, it's possible to come to love someone so much, that you can be afraid to show it."

She leaned nearer still and, suddenly, his arms went about her. He became aware of her perfume; all evening he had caught it, but never so clearly as now.

It was very sweet and subtle and, with Sarie so close, it drove away every thought but the fact that he held her. Her lips were close, and she whispered, "Don't come to my house again, Larry. Don't come to find me before you go. Say good-bye now, and keep this for your memory."

She kissed him then, and her kiss, born of sadness, was yet the most radiant thing that he had ever known. Then her hands were pushing blindly at him, compelling him to go.

He left her on the balcony, and he was half across the courtyard before he fully realized that he was leaving.

He stopped and looked back, but she was no longer there.

He glanced at the Nubian watchmen who stood by the courtyard wall, at the moonlight on the palms and at the lotus blooms in the pool and, somehow, he was again aware of her perfume.

He gazed toward the empty balcony. His pulses were racing and he smiled as he went quickly out to the street.

He walked fast, and he smiled still. It might be that Sarie had told him goodbye and believed that he would go, but he knew that he was not going. He could never leave her now.

CHAPTER XIII

SEARCH BY NIGHT

IT WAS the following evening that Larrimore learned Sarie had disappeared. Her guards were frantically searching the town while the sun, made enormous and angry by haze, was falling fast into the sea.

The sky darkened while the men searched, and Cunningham did not immediately learn that Sarie was missing. He was sitting in the police building, below the big wall map. He had the telephone in his lap, and shrouded electrics threw bright light all about him.

Kamil was perched on the side of the desk, his linen tunic just catching the light. His *tarboosh* was pushed to the back of his head and he was smoking a cigarette, swinging his riding crop; his manner appeared casual, but he was watching Cunningham.

Abdi sat on the floor by the open door and Tweedie stood near, neatly uniformed, waiting to bring in four men who were in the outer rom, under a police guard. One was a smiling Greek fisher-

man who had escaped from Crete. There was a dark-skinned, gray-eyed stowaway from a Haifa boat, and who looked to be an Iranian. The others were Maltese, found by the wharves of Port Fuad, where they had no business.

These formed the day's crop of strays, waiting for Cunningham's examination. He gazed unseeingly toward them while he listened to a clear voice which came over the line from Cairo. He spoke suddenly.

"One moment! I know that Prince Mikki didn't answer his recall to Ankara. He probably guessed he'd be put under arrest! I had that information late last night. All I want now is that report from Jedda! I understand Mikki has turned up there."

He snapped finger and thumb to attract Kamil's attention, then, for his benefit, carefully repeated what he heard.

"Mikki landed at Jedda yesterday, from a plane which he'd hired in Assuan." Cunningham listened before he continued, "The Hejaz authorities impounded the plane, but Mikki gave them the slip." He nodded toward Kamil and went on, "He boarded a *dhow* and sailed off on it? That's what I want to know! I may call you again a little later. Good-bye."

He replaced the receiver and set the telephone on the desk as he said quickly, "That means Mikki's gone out to meet Ibn Abdallah's *dhows!* He's joining him."

Kamil nodded coolly and used the loop on his crop to flick ash from his cigarette. Cunningham stood up, jabbing a finger toward the corner where now lay the pile of greased swords which smuggling Arabs had brought from Beyrouth.

"Sword of Qualoon . . . sword of Islam!" he exclaimed. "The sword that's going to carve a Moslem empire! Mikki's sword," he added then softly.

"And Mikki is going to carry it for the prophet!" Kamil smiled as he said, "Finding that fellow in Beyrouth helped quite a bit."

Intelligence men had picked up the Syrian, learning that the well-made swords had been coming to him by sea. Their actual source had not been established; it was probably Greece or Turkey, but that was not important. Cunningham was satisfied to discover that it was Prince Mikki who had arranged that they should be smuggled down to the prophet.

Ibn Abdallah received the weapons as coming from a strong and sympathetic prince in the north and one, moreover, who was pleased to conspire in their apparently miraculous delivery. It was evident that Mikki's intention had been to wait until the prophet had fomented real trouble, then step in as his sword-bearer and whip the whole thing to the dimensions of a holy war.

"I don't suppose he's ever even seen Ibn Abdallah," Cunningham said thoughtfully. "He'll probably introduce himself as the strong prince, showing an original sword of Qualoon to prove it I think his tactics must have been inspired by connections which have promised that, if the general war goes against us, he'll be made king of a new Islamic empire. A puppet, but still a king!"

"That'd suit his princely blood," Kamil smiled.

"Only I'm sure that Ibn Abdallah is genuine enough, on the whole," Cunningham added. "He's simply being used."

He remained by his desk, looking down at a telephoned report from one of the pilots on the Suez-Sudan shuttle service. He had made a southward cast over Suakin, confirming that the Yezidees had completed reconstruction of their eighth tower of Shaitan. It appeared to be built from wood and plaster, and Cunningham knew that the dervishes had erected it for the double purpose of celebrating Sarie's birth-date, and defying Ibn Abdallah.

It was, as yet, impossible to tell whether the prophet's *dhows* would turn for Jedda or for Suakin. They were in position to head for either place, and they could turn during the night.

Cunningham said suddenly, "Well, I'll see these men, then we'll get into action."

"Down at Suakin?" Kamil jerked himself off the desk.

"If Mikki joins the prophet, he'll see that they go there!" Cunningham answered. "Then there'll be a head-on clash with the dervishes and, if we can't check it, we'll have trouble all over the map!" He gestured toward the wall, then moved to the outer room, stopping short when he saw Larrimore thrust past the black-out drapes.

LARRIMORE wore the short-sleeved shirt and white pants in which he uusually worked at the hospital. He came quickly past the police and their prisoners, checking just inside the doorway, breathing hard.

"Sarie's gone," he said. He had lost most of his normal color and sweat trickled on his blanched cheeks, because he had been running. "One of her guards came to the hospital, asking if she was there. That's how we found out."

No one moved. They remained staring, astounded, not at once coming to realization of just what he meant.

"They thought she was sleeping late after the party." Larrimore's voice was sharp in the quiet. "This afternoon that *fellahin* girl went up and found Sarie wasn't there. She told the watchman. They thought maybe she'd slipped out somehow. They've been running all over, trying to find her!"

It was just a moment more before anyone moved, then Cunningham started toward him. "Get a car, Kamil," he called abruptly. "Pat, I'll see those men some other time. Come on, Larry!"

He grabbed Larrimore's arm, turning him, running out to the yard after Kamil. They crowded into an open police car and the Albanian driver sent it away before Abdi could get on the running board. The driver kept his thumb pressed on the horn button, so that the machine screamed through the dark streets. The yellow glow from its masked headlamps caught natives as they darted from the dusty roadways, yelling.

Cunningham could feel that Larrimore's shirt was soaked from perspiration; he grabbed a car robe and pushed it around him. He asked questions, but Larrimore knew no more than he had already said.

"What happened to her?" His tone was suddenly wild, and his hands were cold.

"She can't have gone!" Kamil exclaimed.

"She must be gone!" Cunningham said. "She doesn't play tricks!"

"Then is Mikki behind it?" Kamil raised his voice to make it carry through the incessant hooting. "He tried to get her away before."

"He's in Jedda!"

"He might have engineered it," Kamil answered.

They did not speak again until the car ran into the street by Sarie's house, slowing because the road was jammed with Arabs, their white robes and light turbans making ghostly patches in the gloom. Word had spread swiftly through the native quarter that the *Shaitan sitt* was gone; exorcised, they said, through a miracle worked by Ibn Abdallah for the relief of all men.

Ann was inside the house; she had come from the hospital with Larrimore. The extra lamps were still hanging, left from the party, and the place had an empty atmosphere yet, with it, there was a peculiar oppressiveness which came from the silent, staring crowd outside.

The *fellahin* girl was weeping, terrified, and the faces of the two Sudanese house-boys revealed their helpless fright.

"She's gone, Bob!" Ann said.

"It's Mikki!" Kamil exclaimed.

"Nobody could have got her past the guards," Cunningham answered sharply.

"They didn't see her go out," Larrimore said.

Cunningham hesitated, then spoke abruptly, "Find the *bab sirr.*"

That was the hidden door which exists in every Arab-built house of any size; a

device by which the owner may slip out unseen, or admit others secretly. They hunted for it about the ground floor, requiring only a minute or two to locate it, tucked away in the darkness beneath a flight of steep steps which led to the upper story.

The *bab sirr* had a heavy wooden lock, and wooden bolts which had been drawn. On the floor, under the steps, was the key to the opened lock: an awkward slip of wood with little iron pins. The door could be opened only from inside, and it led to an alley which cut across the block.

"She let herself out here," Cunningham said.

At night, one watchman remained in the courtyard and the other constantly patrolled the house. It would have been quite easy for Sarie to avoid them, by using this door.

Larrimore's face showed pallid in the shadows as he said abruptly, "Last night, Sarie told me good-bye as though she knew she wasn't going to see me again."

"She's had something in her mind for days," Cunningham answered.

He agreed with Kamil that men on the lake would have stopped Sarie if she had tried to cross it. If she had left Port Said by the canal road, patrols there must have seen her. Or she could have gone by the early train.

"I'll start inquiries," Kamil said, and hurried away while Cunningham went up to Sarie's room.

It was small, near the top of the steps. She had not slept on the divan, but her white dress was thrown across a stool. Her jewelry had been dropped onto a small table near the wide window, where moonlight was beginning to shine weakly through the lattice. The door to one of the small-paneled clothes closets was open, but the *fellahin* girl could not tell what Sarie had been wearing when she went.

Cunningham went down again, to discover that the two watchmen and one of the carriage guards had come back. They were in the courtyard, panting, their eyeballs rolling, distressed because it would seem that they had failed in their duty. Cunningham questioned them, but they had nothing to say that would help.

"You carry no blame." He used Arabic when he spoke. "But when you found the *effendina* gone, you should have come first to me." He made his censure mild; these men had served him in the Sudan, and he knew their loyalty. "Now stay by the house and guard it from the crowd."

KAMIL had taken the police car, and Cunningham called for Sarie's carriage. He rode back to the police building with Larrimore and Ann.

"We'll soon know what's happened," he promised, but it was an hour before they learned that a patrol on the canal road had stopped a car at Ras el-Esh, eight miles out of Port Said.

The time had been close to midnight, and the machine had been driven by Hassan Mamoud, a Copt who worked as hack driver for an oil company on the quayside; a bold man, and a crafty one. There had been a woman in the car, wrapped up against the night air; a native woman, the patrol-leader reported, but not a friend of Mamoud, because she sat in the back seat.

"That was Sarie," Cunningham said. "She'd naturally sit in the back seat. And she'd have to wear native dress, or be recognized at once."

"Mamoud would take her anywhere, if she paid him well enough!" Kamil commented. "And, apparently, he hasn't returned yet."

"Sarie knows we'd question him," Cunningham said. "She could have told him not to hurry back. I wonder if she was making for Cairo. A train for the south goes out of there at five o'clock in the morning."

Tweedie asked, "Why should she go south? Why should she go at all?"

"She could have a reason," Cunningham answered and, as he reached for the telephone, he knew that Larrimore was watching him.

He talked with officials in the Main Station at Cairo. They began inquiries to try and determine whether Sarie had left on the morning train.

"And if she did—" Cunningham looked at his wrist watch—"she'd have been at Luxor an hour ago. I'll have a word with them, too."

"The train goes on to Assuan." Kamil pointed to the wall, where Assuan was marked on the Nile, halfway down the length of the map.

"Then we could stop her there!" Cunningham put in urgent calls.

Kamil said, when they were done, "Of course, she may not be on that train at all."

"I think she is," Cunningham answered quietly and, again, he caught Larrimore's glance.

Ann stripped off her white smock and divided sandwiches which she had ordered from the police canteen. Larrimore took a chair against the wall and remained watching, not interrupting at all now.

Cunningham refused the sandwiches and so did Larrimore, but Tweedie was watching cheerfully when he suggested, "Sarie could be going to Assuan. I mean, Mikki flew across to Jedda from there." He added, "She could do the same, or something. It's only about five hundred miles."

"She wouldn't have anything to do with Mikki!" Cunningham exclaimed.

He was sure of that, but he still wondered why Prince Mikki had tried to persuade Sarie to leave Port Said with him. It seemed to Cunningham, now, that Mikki might have intended to keep hidden. Ibn Abdallah would then have accused the British of concealing her and, at the same time, his search for the *Shaitan sitt* could have no ending, since Mikki had her hidden. That, as Cunningham saw, would be a neat device to sustain trouble.

Something of this sort could have been in Prince Mikki's mind. Or he might have planned simply to turn her over to the prophet as proof of his own good faith. But that was not likely, because it would have taken half the motive out of Ibn Abdallah's crusade.

Whatever Mikki's design, Cunningham felt certain that he had nothing to do with her going now. She distrusted him completely. She had left of her own will, deliberately.

In the back of his mind, Cunningham had an idea of why Sarie might have gone. He would not consider it seriously until he knew more, but he could tell that Larrimore had something of the same thought.

Cunningham caught Ann's glance, and her smile was a little rueful; over lunch, they had promised themselves dinner at one of Gaby's candle-lit tables, and continuation of what had begun on Sarie's balcony the evening before. When she whispered, "There are lots of tomorrows, Bob!" he knew what she meant.

The room was made somber by its black-draped window and bare floor, and shadows were deep about the funneled light from the electrics. Little periods of complete inaction were broken by police reports; they said that Sarie could not be found in the town, that the lake patrols had seen nothing untoward the night before, and that Hassan Mamoud was still missing. As time passed the atmosphere in the room became strained and tense, and Kamil showed that he felt it when he complained to Cunningham, "We can't do a thing until we get some sort of lead from somewhere!"

"We'll hear from the railway any minute now," Cunningham told him, then reached for the telephone again.

He called the intelligence department in Cairo, on the direct line, and detailed what had occurred. "We haven't the slightest idea where she's gone," he ended abruptly, "but I'll advise you the moment I have anything more."

He hung up, then looked sharply as

Larrimore spoke from the shadows. He sat with his hands on his knees, leaning forward, taut, like a man ready to leap to his feet.

He called, "I believe I know where Sarie's gone." He stared accusingly at Cunningham. "And you know, too!"

Cunningham slipped around the desk. "We won't rush at conclusions, Larry," he said quietly.

"It's wasting time!" Larrimore's voice was high, and Cunningham stepped to him, facing him, looking down. "You ought to start after her now!"

"We'll wait until we're sure, Larry!" He lifted a hand, and pushed gently with his fist at Larrimore's shoulder. "You stay quiet, old son," he said, and turned away.

TWO hours had passed when a railroad official telephoned from Cairo, saying that it had proved impossible to determine whether or not Sarie had boarded the southbound train. Later, a very disturbed voice from intelligence came over the direct line, wanting to discuss the situation. At a little short of midnight, a call came from the railroad depot at Luxor; no particular watch had been kept on passengers from the Cairo train, and no one like Sarie had been observed.

"We'll just see if there's anything from Assuan," Cunningham said.

Midnight brought a message from Ras el-Esh; Hassan Mamoud had been stopped on the road, tooling his car back to Port Said. Fifteen minutes later, he was standing by Cunningham's desk: a little man in a blue robe and a blue turban, with a peculiarly dry and wrinkled skin which was puckered, monkey-like about his sly eyes.

He was quite frank. He said that Sarie had come to his house the night before, and she had offered him twenty English pounds to drive her to Cairo. She had worn native clothes, and a black *yashmak*. He had set her down near the Midan el-Mahatta, by the railroad station, and he knew that she had gone somewhere by train.

It was, he added, the *effendina* who had suggested that he spend the day with friends in Cairo, and this he had done. He ended by saying that he was then on his way home, but in this he was mistaken; Kamil had the Arishi sergeant lock him up until morning.

The Assuan police telephoned in a very little while; Sarie had not been on the train when it arrived at the end of the line.

"She wasn't on it at all!" Kamil exclaimed.

"She could have got off anywhere on the way. She wouldn't be noticed in native dress." Cunningham's tone became decisive. "Pat, put a call through to Port Sudan. Tell Major Brent to stand by." He added, "Do it when we've gone."

He bent, jerking open a lower drawer of his desk, lifting out an old Sam Browne belt, weighted down by a heavy army revolver in a holster. "We'll let Cairo know that we're leaving right away," he told Kamil. "We'll drive down to Ismailia, and be ready to take off at dawn."

Kamil said, "For Port Sudan?"

Cunningham nodded. "Then we'll make for Suakin." He looked toward Larrimore while he added, "That's where Sarie's gone."

"Suakin?" Kamil frowned, then stared with Ann and Tweedie as Larrimore came upright.

"Can't you see?" He moved into the light, one hand outstretched, cupped as he gestured. "It's simple enough!" His voice was strained. "She's gone to the Yezidees."

There was no color at all in his face, and his lips were dry. He moved nearer, spreading his quivering hands.

"She made up her mind to it long ago," he said. "She knew it'd have to be!"

He looked around at them.

"Ibn Abdallah's going to Suakin. He will make an end of the dervishes with

his swords, and he'll find Sarie there!" He gazed at Cunningham, and stepped close to the desk. "Then she won't be any more trouble to you. There won't be any holy war . . . no riots . . . no disturbances in your damn Middle East . . . nothing!" He turned on the others. "That's why she's gone!"

Cunningham spoke quietly. "That's not it, Larry." He spilled shells from the carton into his palm. "She doesn't know how near Ibn Abdallah is to Suakin. We've never told her." He pocketed the shells while he held Larrimore's gaze. "She's after something else."

"Is she, Bob?" Larrimore's tone was disbelieving and he could not control his voice, so that it came loudly. "Then what is it?"

"The Yezidees would follow the *Shaitan sitt* if she led them away!" Cunningham dropped the carton back to the drawer, and kicked it shut. "If she led them away to the mountains beyond Mosul, they'd follow her!" He glanced at Kamil. "It'd be like an evacuation, and she'd be taking them clear of Ibn Abdallah so that there could be no more trouble here." He added, "That's what she's after, and that's why she said goodbye to you, Larry!"

Through the silence, Kamil said, "She couldn't do it now. It's too late!"

"She doesn't know that!" Cunningham picked up his belt, and reached for the telephone. "I'll tell Cairo that we're starting, and that we want a plane!"

CHAPTER XIV

ZIKR OF THE BRASS PEACOCK

A SERVICE plane took Cunningham a thousand miles southward and landed him at Port Sudan, accompanied by Kamil. It was late afternoon when he rode out of the town alone, traveling along the forty miles of old camel track which led down the coast to Suakin.

There were mirages all the way and heat-haze magnified every sundried bush to the size of a tree. The stalks of scorched grasses built up until they appeared to be solid thickets, and each stone loomed like a boulder until Cunningham came almost level with it.

To his left was the Red Sea and, where coral reefs made the water shallow, a continuing mirage showed the shore-line as an endless waterfall, spilling smoothly green, streaked and glistening with foam. On Cunningham's right were volcanic hills, wrinkled and barren, tinted sullen red.

Between hills and sea the land was desolate, made weird by the mirages and by tremulous haze. Salt flats glared between areas of broken ground, and great patches of loose sand threw back the sun's sapping, afternoon heat. Nothing lived here, and beside the camel track lay the scattered, dehydrated and now almost weightless bones of sheep and goats which had wandered from the meadows and good water by Port Sudan.

Cunningham rode alone in an old, ill-used car borrowed from a trader. Its steering wheel wrenched under his hands whenever the machine hit soft sand, or the front tires jarred into a hole.

Kamil had gone ahead to Suakin. He had put on Arab dress, so that he might enter the derelict town without hindrance, and Cunningham planned to arrive there as darkness came; the Yezidees would have recognized him by daylight. Kamil was to watch for him, and report what he had found.

They knew that Sarie was there. Foreseeing what they might do to stop her, she had left the train short of Assuan, continuing there by road. The place had once been her home, and she had persuaded some Egyptian civil pilot to fly her on to Suakin; in no other way could she have covered the distance in the time.

Local natives all knew that the *Shaitan sitt* had come to Suakin. Port Sudan was crowded with fuzzy-haired Hadendoas who had left the village on the mainland, outside Suakin itself, afraid to remain within sight of the tower of Shaitan

which the Yezidees had built. It shone white, they said, and was tipped with gold, blazing in the sun. And they were full of stories of dervishes who, for days, had been coming by sea, or out of the deserts, always arriving at night.

Sarie was showing a desperate determination, and Cunningham knew that she was fulfilling the sense of destiny deep within her. She had been denied any real life of her own; the very fact of her existence had created troubles which had now multiplied to the threat of wide disaster. She imagined that, with the dervishes concentrated at Suakin for her birth-date rites, leading them away would resolve any difficulty. She did not realize that Ibn Abdallah would inevitably intercept them, and none would escape the massacre, least of all herself.

Cunningham had assembled a force of two hundred Sudanese troops, with trucks and Bren-gun carriers. They were following him now, timed to reach Suakin half an hour after sunset. Tentatively, he had planned to close in on the island during darkness, surround the tower, recover Sarie and put the Yezidees under restraint. Any approach in daytime would have meant open fighting, and that was something which he wanted to avoid.

He drove as steadily as he was able, with heat from the motor burning about his feet. Many times he had to use low gear to charge through patches of pale, powdery sand which billowed chokingly into the car, blinding him until the sliding machine thrust clear. He glanced back when the track swung toward the sea, and saw dust from the car rolling in a high and lingering wake.

The mirage persisted along the shore line, but it became broken as the sun dipped behind hillcrests, throwing long shadows. He was able to look out to the sea then, wondering about Ibn Abdallah and his *dhows*.

He had no further information concerning the prophet, but he had radioed the southbound shuttle service plane to make a sweep and try to locate the vessels; Tweedie was coming down on the machine, and Larrimore would be with him.

Cunningham felt sure that Ibn Abdallah would turn up at Suakin, and there was risk of his arrival that night. But Cunningham had taken no measures to head him off, because he expected to have everything in hand within an hour after darkness. If Prince Mikki proved to be with the prophet, his intention was to arrest the *Turki ghamik* and, holding the Yezidees, attempt to treat with Ibn Abdallah.

He still felt that, left to himself, the prophet might prove a reasonable man. He was superstitious, and artful over his claim to work miracles, but his teachings were based on the Koran and they were sincere. Had they been otherwise, he could not have won so widespread a reputation among the Arabs, who are inherently devout.

Over and above all this, Cunningham was impressed by the effect that Ibn Abdallah had on Curzon Lee, and he was not as sure as he had been that the Negro was deluding himself. He had sunk to the extent of fanatical behavior, but Cunningham could not believe that Curzon Lee would attach himself to a leader who did not, in some measure, sustain his own ideals.

THE mirage on the shore faded as the sun dropped. Cunningham had been driving for more than two hours when he came to a long rise, made as the hills bulged seaward before they swung inland. The car climbed slowly, jolting over rocky ground and, near the crest, he stopped and again looked back.

The dust that he had raised hung for more than a mile behind. In the far distance, he thought he could make out another dust-cloud, lifted by trucks bringing the Sudanese, but he was not sure.

He wore a burnoose above his shorts and shirt, and now he shook sand from it, discarding his sunhelmet and pulling the

hood over his head. He drove on and, topping the rise, he saw Suakin. In the brief, soft evening light the deserted town made the most beautiful sight on either shore of the Red Sea.

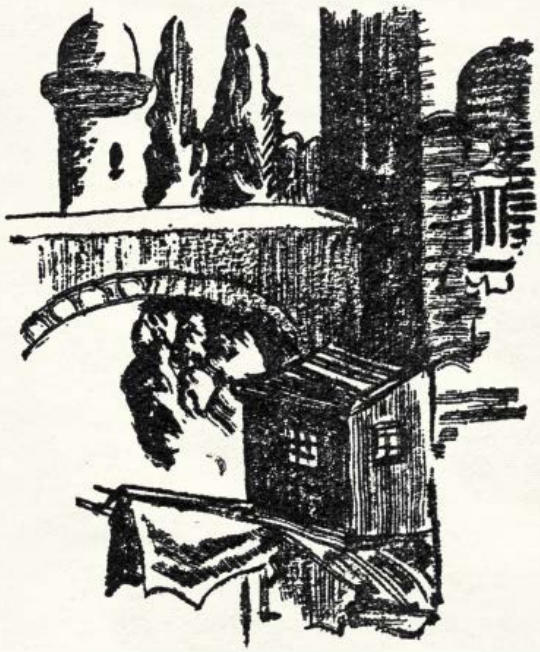
It stood on a coral island at the end of a small lagoon, the water of which was a clear green, and so smooth that it mirrored the ivory-white, gleaming buildings. The houses were compact inside a coral-built wall which completely encircled the island, broken only by a short causeway that linked it to the mainland. Big, magnificently latticed windows showed below flat roofs, and above them lifted a railed minaret.

It was an Arab city, complete and perfect to see, mellowed by the setting sun, and there was nothing to show that it had stood abandoned for over twenty years.

Cunningham looked for the eighth tower of Shaitan, and saw it standing from the heart of the town. It was thick, starkly white, rising higher than the minaret and tapered to a blunted top. As he rode down the slope, the top flashed brilliantly in the leveling light; it was capped with hammered brass, which natives thought was gold.

There was not the least sign of life. Ten thousand Arabs and Egyptians and Sudanese had once lived inside the coral wall, trading richly in coffles of slaves, elephant ivory and hides and ostrich plumes from the interior. From the day that Sarie had been born there, trade had declined and men had moved away until no one was left except the Yezidees. An explanation was that Port Sudan, built further up the coast, offered modern facilities for trade; but all Moslems believed that it was the birth of the *Shaitan sitt* which had turned the ancient city into an empty shell.

Cunningham saw the Hadendoa village, beyond the end of the causeway. It was a great collection of ragged shacks and weak fences, and there was no movement anywhere about it. Beyond, where the hills went back, he saw old blockhouses which had been built to guard Suakin in the days of the rebel Mahdi, Prince Mikki's grandsire.



The white of Suakin's walls turned to pink as the sun went down, and by the time that Cunningham came to the edge of the lagoon even that light had gone. The camel track stretched on toward the village, and he swung the car onto a patch of Red Sea coral, switching off the motor. He stepped out, pulling his burnoose close, looking for Kamil.

The hills were black against the western sky, and shadows were growing deep among the buildings as Cunningham began to walk along the stone causeway, sand gritty under his shoes. It ended at an arch which formed the entrance to Suakin, and he paused here, looking along a street which curved away beyond, flanked by house walls with jutting windows that were as finely carved as any in old Cairo.

His hearing, dulled by the racket of the car, had become attuned to the quiet, and he heard voices in the town. They came in quick, repeated shouts, and behind them was the deeper sound of men

chanting. He knew that the Yezidees had started a *zikr*.

There was no indication of where Kamil might be and, as he went on, the dead atmosphere of Suakin closed about him. He could see that the latticed woodwork of windows was warped and broken. The light-colored walls were cracked and streaked and stained. Through empty doorways he saw the rubble of collapsed floors and fallen timbers. Debris lay thick along narrow side-lanes, and the hot air carried a fetor of mold and neglect.

The chanting grew in his ears and, where the street bent towards a square almost in the center of the island, he saw the flickering glow of flames, caught by walls ahead. The light came from across the open space, and he stopped short when he reached it.

THE eighth tower of Shaitan lifted at one side, stark and bold against the smooth sky, its brassy tip still gleaming. Near-by buildings had been felled to provide timber for the structure, and it rose from a huge, square base. The front of this was open, lurid with the glare of a great fire which burned inside. A swirl of shadows flung out to where the makings of a feast were heaped about an old fountain, with the carcasses of sheep ready spitted, and piles of goat-meat beside rough, mud ovens.

The blaze of light, and the roar of voices, kept off kites and vultures, but jackals were everywhere in the dark openings of streets and narrow lanes around. Cunningham heard one scream, and the scattered pack took up the cry, the red glint of their eyes coming and going as they moved restlessly, afraid to venture nearer.

The howl of the jackals was half lost in the chanting that echoed loudly from the hollow interior of the tower. He tried to distinguish the words, but could make nothing of them. He realized that the Yezidees were probably using Kurdish, the language in which much of their perverted scripture was written. Their *kitab el-iswid*, the Arabs called it . . . their black book.

He moved on until he was able to see through the opening. Dervishes were circling, one ring inside another. Some were robed, but most of them were almost without clothing, their bodies shining. They bent far backward, long hair flying, then flung themselves forward again rocking while they shifted sideways.

The thudding of tambourines set a rhythm to which their voices swelled and eased and roared exultantly again. Each time that the chant reached a peak, some whirled on their toes, eyes glaring, shouting shrilly before they plunged into one of the circles turning nearer the fiery center of the tower's base.

The floor was raised here, forming a platform which was surrounded by braziers that glowed red-hot, full of burning charcoal. Yezidee spikes were stuck into them, the handles protruding, and masses of wood blazed between each brazier, sending flames high.

Men who formed the inner circle were silhouetted sharply against flying sparks and smoke and red-hot metal. Dervishes, whirling here, snatched slender spikes from the braziers, dancing on, holding the glowing metal high. Again and again, as the chant pealed anew, a Yezidee pinned hot and sharpened iron through the skin of his chest. There were men with spikes skewered through both cheeks and others who snatched burning charcoal from the braziers, hugging it barehanded while they moved.

Cunningham had seen *zikrs* before, but not a Yezidee *zikr*, and never anything as savage as this.

Raised at the back of the dais, lit by lurid flame which leaped from below, was the shape of a brass peacock, glinting through the smoke, emblem of Shaitan, and the dervishes held that it was their invocation of Shaitan which made them impervious to pain.

Their hurts, inflicted in an emotional frenzy, were no different from those of flagellants, or of any sect in which devotees work themselves to an ecstatic state. Yet it would have been easy to believe that some unnatural spirit possessed them now, in the secret atmosphere of abandoned Suakin.

Their glistening bodies swayed and twisted, black against the glaring braziers. They were furiously exultant because Sarie had come to them. Cunningham could see nothing of her, but, suddenly, he sighted Kamil in the outer circle, swinging and howling with the rest.

His robe swung open and his mouth was wide as he chanted, and Cunningham guessed that he had joined the *zikr* in an effort to locate Sarie. The daring of that would appeal to Kamil. Then, watching him, Cunningham understood why Kamil had done it, and he realized the purpose of the ring of fire and the raised floor.

As a child, before Sarie could know its meaning, Yezidee servants had secretly taught her their fire dance, symbolic of the time when all their enemies would be thrown into some bottom-most hell, and the wife of Shaitan would dance on its gates. This *zikr* would be climaxed when Sarie appeared, dancing inside the flames, showing that she had returned completely to the dervishes. Working from inside the tower, Kamil would be able to help her get away when the troops came; that was why he had not met Cunningham.

The *zikr* grew more and more wild, and Cunningham saw that there would never be a better time to surround the place. He started back across the square, then paused abruptly as he looked toward the quays on the seaward side of the town.

Where the streets ended, blurs of dull light were bobbing in the darkness. They were lit torches, touching others so that their wads of oily tow flared up, as torches had flared about the lebbek tree in the native quarter of Port Said.

IBN ABDALLAH was landing with his followers and, in spite of his alarm, Cunningham was almost glad to see it. There was an approach to tangible evil about the frenetic figures which handled fire and seared their bodies, and howled invocations from the black scriptures of Shaitan. He felt that it might be as well if the prophet were allowed to use his swords, except that Sarie had yet to be extricated and, Cunningham remembered, it was Prince Mikki who had provided those swords.

The lit torches began at once to lift and fall in unison, beating against the darkness. Through the chanting of the dervishes, and the barking screech of jackals, Cunningham distinguished shouts from the quays, timed by the moving torches, "Al-*lah* . . . al-*lah* . . . al-*lah* . . !"

He pitched off his burnoose and went sprinting for the street which led back to the arch, glancing down the little lanes that ran aslant to the water's edge, hoping to see the trucks from Port Sudan. He was aware of sudden relief when he sighted them, bulking black in the darkness and rolling fast along the camel track toward the lagoon, coming in a mass of flying dust.

He ran on, wondering whether Prince Mikki had helped to time the prophet's landing, just when the dervishes would fall most easily. He did not think that the *Turki ghamik* would ever be content merely to act as sword-bearer for Ibn Abdallah, if a disrupting holy war did develop. Mikki would want to lead the Arabs, but he could not do that while the prophet headed them. Probably Mikki hoped that something would happen to him.

There had been persistent rumors among the natives that the British wanted to kill the prophet. Mikki, or his connections, could have started those to help foment trouble, but the death of Ibn Abdallah was the one thing to be avoided Nothing could so surely arouse the Arabs.

When he reached the arch, Cunning-

ham saw the leading truck halting near the causeway; the rest were swinging up, Sudanese spilling out of them before they stopped. Two Bren-gun carriers, little jeep-like vehicles, headed the column and Tweedie came from these, wearing service kit, running onto the causeway.

"We saw the *dhows* from the plane. We've been trying to get here first!" He slithered to a stop as Cunningham pulled up. "And there was a crowd of local natives waiting on shore," Tweedie added.

"Ibn Abdallah's just arrived!" Cunningham was looking back at the glow from torches on the far side of the island, and it seemed to him that they were beginning to shift into the town. "Pat, bring on those Bren carriers." He spoke coolly. "We'll use them to help block off the streets."

At once Tweedie turned, racing away. Cunningham started to follow, then paused. The Sudanese, forming up, were already beginning to move forward, and he saw Larrimore running toward him. His face was pale, and he swung a watchman's nail-stubbed club.

"Bob, we brought Ann! She's over by the trucks."

That surprised Cunningham, but he was glad; Sarie would probably be in need of someone like Ann. He thought he saw her beyond the troops, and he asked, "Who's that with her? Abdi?"

"It broke his heart when you left him behind," Larrimore answered.

"I might have known he'd wangle himself down here!" Cunningham added quickly, "You stick with me, Larry!"

The Sudanese were approaching then, trotting steadily onto the causeway. They were among the best of native troops. They wore battle kit and smart, symmetrically folded turbans and they thudded along three abreast, rifle-barrels glinting, equipment rattling. Their commander was Major Brent; a big fellow with a spreading, guardee mustache and a ready smile. Cunningham fell into step beside him, and the young major asked calmly. "What's the situation, old boy?"

"Ibn Abdallah's moving in. You'd better send one platoon toward the quays to hold him off!" They ran on side by side. "Put the rest around the tower as we planned, then close them in." They trotted through the dark arch into the street beyond, and Cunningham asked, "Your men know there's to be no shooting?"

"They'll use gun-butts only, unless you give other orders," Brent answered decisively.

"They'll probably have to stun most of the dervishes," Cunningham told him.

"My wogs will love that!" Brent laughed softly.

Cunningham laughed with him; he knew how little the Sudanese liked the Yezidees. "I'll see you in the square," he said. "Come on, Larry!"

He lengthened his stride, sprinting.

CHAPTER XV

THE PYRE OF SHAITAN

CUNNINGHAM saw yellow-gray Egyptian jackals slip away to the shadows as Ibn Abdallah's followers came up from the quays. They filled the short streets and lanes, and their intoned "Al-*lah* . . . al-*lah* . . . al-*lah* . . .!" rose steadily from among the derelict buildings. Turbans showed green between uplifted swords and torches, and some men had great sheaves of dry palm leaves which they bore headhigh.

Cunningham saw them coming, but the Sudanese were only a little distance behind him when he ran into the square, pulling up with Larrimore, staring toward the tower.

The dervishes were no longer circling. They stood swaying from side to side, chanting shrilly, thin and fast. Their mortifying spikes caught the light, the haft-chains clinking through the rhythmic thudding of fish-skin tambourines.

New wood had been heaped about the braziers so that flames, leaping high, formed a hot and burning frieze beyond which Sarie was now visible. She wore black, and what she wore was formless,

draping her head, loose about her body.

When they saw her, she was spinning so that the swirling fabric wrapped closely, covering her face and arms until she became only a dark and indefinite shape, writhing in the smoke-haze, sinking as all enemies of the Yezidees were to sink, all but vanishing between the flames before she rose again.

Then she appeared as the wife of Shaitan was to appear when she came in triumph from the pit and danced on its gates. Sarie danced in simulation of that triumph, arms reaching out, silken fabric flying wide and whirling high, only thinly veiling her as she moved in the wide ring of fire. Her features were colorless even in the glare, and her dark eyes were almost closed.

Smoke, catching the light, made a reddened canopy above her. The dervishes, jerking violently from side to side, filled the base of the tower with strange movement, their voices strident above the impelling beat of the tambourines.

Larrimore stared aghast. Cunningham looked to see that Kamil Bey was still there, then turned to watch the leading platoon of Sudanese burst into the square.

The black troops deployed neatly, splitting into sections, running to block off the prophet's followers in the torch-lit streets. They were only partly across the open space, not yet in position, when scores of half-stripped figures suddenly appeared from the landward side of the island.

Water dripped from them as they rushed, carrying no torches and coming without a cry. They were natives who had waited on shore to meet the prophet, and they had swum the lagoon to join him.

They emerged abruptly, flanking the platoon. The big man turned to hold them and, at once, their maneuver was checked, disorganized. Cunningham shouted furiously, "Keep going! Keep going, there!" He heard Brent bellowing, but the natives were already breaking the ranks of the men.

Ibn Abdallah's followers, seeing troops, knew they were there to keep them from the Yezidees. They surged forward, yelling, coming like a flood, hundreds strong. The rest of the Sudanese could debouch only slowly from the narrow way along which they had run and, before they could come up, the prophet appeared at the mouth of a side street, polished head shining and his powerful voice roaring. At his back were tattered *marabouts,* clamorous and wild-eyed, sword-armed like himself.

Other followers swarmed out at either side while, from every roof around, brown kites and eagle owls and gray vultures pitched into the air, disturbed and wheeling, crying through the shouting as the Sudanese ran in. They made compact knots of resistance, jabbing their rifle-butts, but they could not hold wet and half naked men, or followers who slashed with blazing torches and beat at them with sheaves.

ARABS broke through, making for the sides of the tower, smashing thin plaster from the walls, thrusting torches into the timbers beneath, or piling up palm leaves and setting them aflame.

The wood in the tower was old, tinder-dry because it had come from buildings around It caught at once, and Cunningham knew how rapidly the inflammable structure would burn. When the base walls went, the very weight of the tower would bring the whole thing down, burying Sarie and the dervishes in a mass of blazing woodwork, while Ibn Abdallah's followers prevented their escape at the front.

Larrimore, suddenly frantic, would have run forward, but Cunningham jerked him around to where Brent was bawling orders as the last of his Sudanese raced up.

"Get your men together again! Clear the front of the place," Cunningham called.

He had always intended to reach Sarie through the back of the tower, while troops kept the dervishes engaged at its entrance; that plan should still be feasible but, because of the fire, the method would have to be different.

He ran on to where the Bren gun carriers were coming up, with Tweedie driving the leading machine. "Turn that round!" Cunningham called through the noise of the motor. "Follow me, Pat!"

He was very cool, and he knew exactly what he wanted as he made for a side-lane which opened near, Larrimore with him still. He ran between half-wrecked buildings from which the dervishes had ripped beams and rafters and latticework. At the bottom, the lurid flush of mounting flames lit rubble and debris.

The lane came out a little behind the tower, which had been completely surrounded by flaring sheaves in a concerted move so unusual for Arabs that it suggested Prince Mikki's influence again. Flames from the burning walls reached high, roaring up. Palmwood burned white-hot and fibrous between uprights which showed dark, skeleton-like through the rolling smoke.

Brent's whistle was shrilling as he reformed his men, leaving the open space to the prophet's followers. Those with swords were attacking at the front of the structure, where the dervishes stabbed desperately with their spikes, trying to break out.

Cunningham had only a glimpse of the fight, and he shouted as the Bren carrier came up, "Pat, charge that. Hit it hard!" He pointed to where the rear of the tower had been built out to form a domed sanctuary with neither doors nor windows; quarters for a Yezidee priest or, in this case, for Sarie.

Tweedie sent the carrier pitching over the littered ground. Burning fronds spun stiffly about its wheels as he struck the back of the building with all the speed that he could gain. Flaming wood sprayed out and the carrier jammed for a moment, then Tweedie slammed into reverse and the machine jerked backward, leaving a jagged opening about which fire licked and took fresh hold.

Cunningham had his revolver out when he ducked through the gap with Larrimore. The rounded room had a divan of skins, some gourds and reed platters, and it opened wide into the tower.

Tremendous heat hit Cunningham as he jumped forward. Great tongues of flame were sliding up into the tower, drawn by some draught, catching cross-timbers so that the whole interior was now walled and roofed with fire.

ARABS were cutting their way to the platform, drawn in by sight of the *Shaitan sitt*, dervishes packing back before them. Ibn Abdallah's shining skull showed, and his sword was slashing as he tried to come at her.

Some tambourines thudded and a few dervishes were chanting shrilly, mechanically, still half stupified from the *zikr*. Sarie was on the dais, and her way to it had been closed, so that she had no means of escape. She shifted in automatic reflex from her dance, staring out at the menacing figure of the prophet as he plunged on.

The brass peacock was lifted on an iron pole from encircling braziers and burning wood and, near this, Kamil showed, eyes glittering in a face that shone from sweat. He held a length of timber which smoldered at one end, wrenched from the wall, and he was smashing at the braziers, trying to break through them.

One tilted, then crashed over. Larrimore dropped his club, and his shoes scattered a rolling pool of flaming charcoal as he made a desperate jump for the gap. Cunningham went with him, leaping the coals. Scorching flame from burning woodwork was close about him before he gained the earthen platform and, straightening up, he saw blazing beams spill from inside the weakening tower as part of a wall sagged.

They dropped amongst dervishes at

the front of the dais, raising a great curtain of sparks when they slammed across the braziers there. The dervishes broke, and Ibn Abdallah plunged through them.

Sarie saw him coming and, when Larrimore caught at her, she screamed, not knowing who it was that held her. She struggled frantically and Cunningham went past them, because the prophet was jumping for the fallen timber which now half bridged the braziers.

Ibn Abdallah found a footing and reared up, trying to fling himself onto the platform, but the beams shifted and he pitched back, falling. Then, through the volleying smoke and gushing sparks, Cunningham suddenly saw Prince Mikki.

His face was dark against the white hood of the burnoose that he wore, and a sword was lowered in his left hand. In his other hand he held a gun, pushing it forward, stooping as Ibn Abdallah struggled to come to his feet. In that instant, Cunningham understood the whole scope of the *Turki ghamik's* design.

He was not waiting on chance for something to happen to the prophet. A bullet through Ibn Abdallah's head would be blamed on the British. Every Moslem would seek vengeance for his martyrdom, and Prince Mikki would be left to lead them, carrying the sword which was to carve a new empire of Islam in the Middle East.

Cunningham fired instinctively. His bullet hit and brought Mikki upright, but it was not this which killed him.

An unmistakable voice screamed at one side and Curzon Lee showed through the smoke, a sword of Qualoon raised in both hands. He brought the weapon down with all his strength, and Mikki dropped.

He fell as a side wall caved in and the burning tower rocked, a flaming mass of beams falling out of it. They came from above the platform and Cunningham jumped forward, clearing the braziers, spinning to look back as he landed, thinking of Sarie and Larrimore.

He glimpsed them, crouching together, as the timber crashed solidly, piling down on the dais and hitting the braziers, strewing red-hot charcoal so that he had to jump again, while still more woodwork slumped out of the collapsing tower.

He saw Ibn Abdallah fling himself away with Curzon Lee, as the side walls began to collapse completely. Debris pitched at Cunningham and he stumbled over dead Yezidees, struggling toward the open front, followers and dervishes plunging with him.

He gained the open air as the whole structure dropped solidly. Instantly, fire gushed up through the old timbers so that they became a blazing pyre for the dead Yezidees, for Prince Mikki and for all who had been trapped there.

He used one fist and the butt of his revolver, working frantically to break from the mass of men who milled about him. He heard the prophet's voice, and saw him standing within the heat of the pile, swinging his sword, pointing into the flames.

"Allahu akbar! The *Shaitan sitt* tastes the burning!" He was roaring, triumphant, and followers shouted with him, *"Allahu akbar . . .!"*

Cunningham was half blinded by smoke, his eyes were streaming as he doubled around the flaming site. He could see that the outbuilding at the back was a mass of flame, its domed roof crushing under timber which had dropped on it.

He blundered on, gasping in the smoke, his heart pounding. He made out the Bren gun carrier, then saw Tweedie near it, supporting Larrimore, whose legs were buckling under him so that he half fell while he held Sarie; Kamil was with Tweedie, trying to hold them up.

The front of the dais had been hit first, but only now was Cunningham sure they had been able to reach the little sanctuary behind it before the tower settled completely down. He heard the prophet and his followers shouting exultantly; for them, the *Shaitan sitt* had perished on the island where she had been born, but

their elation was nothing compared with Cunningham's as he ran at Tweedie.

"Get Sarie away!" He swung her off her feet, shouting at Kamil. "Ibn Abdallah thinks she's still in there!" He made for the carrier, looking back, seeing only swirling smoke with fire glaring through it. "Get her off the island, Pat!" Tweedie understood then, and scrambled up behind the wheel while Cunningham called, "Don't let anyone see her. Not even Abdi!"

He slipped her over the low side of the machine, then tumbled Larrimore after her, while Kamil pulled off his burnoose and flung it across Sarie. His voice was a parched croak as he called, "Keep her covered up, Larry!"

Tweedie sent the machine away, wheeling it sharply, roaring off along the narrow lane.

CHAPTER XVI

GO WITH SAFETY

SARIE sat on a hinged bench in the corner of an army truck. The canvas top was laced at the back and a hurricane lamp, turned low, hung from one of the metal supports. Blankets were wrapped over the scorched, clinging Bombyx silk that she wore, and her eyes were black against the pallor of her face; black and excited, the pupils dilated.

Larrimore had an arm about her, and he could feel her tension as they waited for Cunningham; Sarie would accept only his word that the prophet believed she had been trapped in the tower. The hope that it was true had kept her from collapse; Larrimore, shouting the news in her ear as they jolted together in the carrier, had roused her from a half-swoon brought on by heat and nervous exhaustion.

His shoes were broken and charred. Burns hurt his hands and legs, but he was hardly aware of them as he waited with Sarie, the minutes dragging. Ann knelt on Kamil's burnoose; on the littered floor beside her was a small suitcase, which held a change of clothing and a first-aid kit.

She wore a khaki skirt and a red shirtwaist which had been faded by the north African sun. She had applied salve to Sarie's arms, and now she was stripping off her blackened sandals, tending reddened skin about her ankles and insteps.

Triumphant shouting still sounded from the island. She could hear Tweedie shifting impatiently outside, near the Bren gun carrier, while Larrimore whispered, "He won't be very long, only he's got to check up, Sarie! He's got to make sure." Then Ann sat sharply back on her heels when she heard Tweedie call, "This way, Bob!"

Sarie half rose, but Larrimore drew her down to the bench again. They heard running footsteps and Cunningham's voice, "Did anyone see her?"

"Not a soul!" The lacing shifted in the flap when Tweedie began to undo it. "I sent Abdi and the guard away before we took her off the carrier."

"Is she hurt?"

"She's singed a bit, and shaken up, but she's all right now!" and Tweedie's voice came clearly as the flap opened.

Cunningham appeared, hoisting himself swiftly into the truck. He had a quick smile for Ann, then he moved to Sarie. Kamil followed him, climbing awkwardly because of burns on his hands; he had ripped off the robe that he had worn under the burnoose, and now he had only shorts and sandals. Fragments of calcined wood clung to his skin, and ugly blisters were rising against his legs, but on Kamil's lean features there was a very satisfied expression.

Sarie asked eagerly, her tone high, "Bob, it's not true, is it?"

"They think the *Shaitan sitt* is dead and we'll keep them thinking it!" He slipped to the bench beside her, talking quickly. "I'm going to send you into Port Sudan right away. Kamil will take you."

"I'll put you on a boat!" Kamil spoke easily, dipping into Ann's pot of salve, rubbing the ointment over his hands. "I'll have you at sea before dawn." He added, smiling, "With Larry."

"You can go out of Egypt now, Sarie," Cunningham said quietly, and that was something he had always wanted to be able to tell her.

She smiled, staring at him still. Then, as she realized all that his words meant, and as her suspense ended in a great wave of relief, her lips quivered. Cunningham spoke sharply, jarring her because he could not afford to let her break down, "You gave us the devil of a time, bolting from Port Said!"

"But things couldn't have turned out like this, if you hadn't!" Kamil was laughing.

Cunningham patted her shoulder, then said urgently, "We've got to get you out of here as fast as we can, so brace up, Sarie. And we must keep you hidden until you're on the boat."

She answered, "Yes, Bob! Yes!" Her eyes were glowing as she looked at Larrimore, while Cunningham went on, "I still have to tackle Ibn Abdallah, but there's nothing for you to worry about any more!" He asked Ann, "D'you have any clothes she could borrow?"

"There's a suit in here!" Ann stood up, pushing her case forward.

"Lend her what you can."

Their glances met for just a moment and she smiled. He was strung up, his nerves taut; she realized that he could give her no polite attention just now, and she did not want it. Grave matters were at stake, which demanded all his attention.

He said to Larrimore, "Leave Sarie to Ann for a bit, will you? And, Sarie . . . hurry!" he added.

He backed away, snatching up the burnoose on which Ann had been kneeling. He held it while he dropped out to the darkness with Kamil and Larrimore. Tweedie readjusted the flap, and they stood listening. They heard Ann talking. Sarie's excited tones sounded, pitched low, and the strain had gone from her voice.

Larrimore asked them, "Bob, do you mean what you said?" He wanted reassurance. "We're both going?"

"You're going, and you're leaving Ann behind!" Cunningham laughed. 'I wish we could give you a better send-off, but the main thing is to get you away, and to be quick about it." He turned to Tweedie. "Will you drive this outfit into Port Sudan?"

"I'll break all records getting there," Tweedie promised.

Cunningham looked at Kamil then. "When you arrive, telephone Cairo right away. They'll cut any red tape about putting them on a boat. And clear all the natives off the quay. Don't take even the most remote chance of her being seen!"

"I'll watch that," Kamil said.

"And, while you're talking to Cairo, you'd better report about Prince Mikki."

He saw Tweedie glance sharply, but he did not explain; Kamil could do that on the way to Port Sudan. In his own mind, Cunningham was certain that Curzon Lee must have been suspicious of the *Turki ghamik,* otherwise the negro could not have been so ready to strike in defense of Ibn Abdallah.

OVER in Suakin, the quality of the shouting had changed. Most of the dervishes had been killed, and the few who remained were held by the Sudanese. At Cuningham's orders, Major Brent had pulled his men out of the square, leaving it to the prophet's followers. While the Arabs swarmed jubilantly about the flaming debris of the tower, some of the Sudanese had moved their *dhows* offshore, keeping them under guard.

That would force the prophet onto the mainland. Cunningham meant to meet him then and, he hoped, make an end to the threat which Ibn Abdallah had brought out of the deserts.

Brent would soon be withdrawing his

men from the island, and Cunningham was anxious that Sarie should leave before they appeared. He called for Ann to hurry and, almost immediately, she came from the truck, dragging her lightened suitcase.

"Sarie's ready," she said, as he helped her to the ground. "I've told her good-bye."

"Get set, Pat!" Cunningham pushed him toward the front of the truck, and Kamil went with him. "Well, this is it, Larry!" He turned to Larrimore, shaking hands. They smiled at one another through the darkness, and when Larrimore tried to express something of his feelings, Cunningham said urgently, "Hop in, you're wasting time, old son!"

Larrimore bade Ann good-bye. Cunningham boosted him quickly into the truck as the motor started up. Sarie's face appeared at the unlaced opening, and her eyes were very bright as she reached for Cunningham's hand. There was happiness in her tone as she said, "Bob, I can't realize all this!"

"You will, when you're on your way," he told her.

She said, "Good-bye, Ann!" Then half whispered in Arabic, *"Nahar sa'id* . . . . thy days be happy."

Cunningham answered quietly, *"Ma es-salama* . . . . go with safety, Sarie." He shouted, "Right away, Pat!"

The truck jerked forward. Ann called a good-bye. They heard Larrimore answer as the big vehicle swung around, heading along the camel track.

Cunningham shook out the burnoose that Kamil had worn. He pulled it about his shoulders as he stood with Ann, watching the masked lamps of the truck throw a yellow glow on the sand and coral while it went away, its top catching red light from the fire which still blazed in the heart of Suakin.

IBN ABDALLAH came from the island with only a few torches flaring about him. His robes were singed and burned, and at his back were men whose robes were stained like the swords which they carried low in their hands.

The feet of his followers scuffled the dust, and their exultation had gone, replaced by the dark fear which men have when they are fresh from killing.

They were uneasy because their *dhows* had vanished, and because the Sudanese had gone from the island. They expected to find the troops waiting for them by the causeway, but only Bob Cunningham was there.

He stood where the army trucks had been, the hood of the burnoose pulled about his head. When the torches picked him out of the night, the Arabs recognized him at once as "el-Cunningham."

Ibn Abdallah stopped and his followers halted with him, packing up behind. From them came the clinging odor of smoke and singed cloth and the reek of sweat, and with this was the deathly smell of splashed blood, drying on men's skins.

The flares made a red glow on the sand, and lit the prophet's deep-set eyes. Massive wrinkles ran almost to the crown of his head and his broad saddle-maker's hands were calloused and scarred.

He was a powerful man and he was very troubled now, full of revulsion from the slaughter of the dervishes. He had found, because his heart was not yet hardened in leadership, that it was one thing to cry out for the murder of men, and it was something else to do the killing, even though it might be done in the name of Allah.

He had bloodguilt now, and he could not tell what might be hidden in the darkness behind "el-Cunningham." Ibn Abdallah, facing him, was more than a little afraid of this man who all Arabs held in respect. His voice sounded hoarsely, "Peace be on you, O el-Cunningham!"

Cunningham answered quietly, "And on you, O Ibn Abdallah, the mercy of Allah!" The prophet sensed a threat behind his words, and Cunningham added, "Put up your tent, and we will talk."

Ibn Abdallah regarded him for a little space, then remembered that he had act-

ed only against worshippers of Shaitan, who was lord of evil; moreover, he had acted in the name of Allah, who was greater than "el-Cunningham." He lifted his sword, then drove the point deeply and firmly into the sand, so that the weapon remained upright when he removed his hand, marking the place for his tent.

At that, some of his followers ran toward the native village, while the others began to move out to the ground at one side, pausing there and watching silently. Cunningham waited, not moving.

The men returned from the village with skins and poles, planting uprights, tying cross-pieces and hanging the skins to form a squared tent which was open at the front. They spread more skins on the sand. Ibn Abdallah stepped onto them, and Cunningham followed.

ANN was watching from where the army trucks had been shifted, a quarter-mile away. Abdi stood by her; he seldom squatted now that he was no longer crippled, because he liked to feel the soles of both his feet against the ground.

Major Brent was with the Sudanese, who had been placed in sentry groups to enclose the open ground around the causeway. They were concealed by the darkness, and only if the prophet's followers tried to get away would they run against them. Some had been caught swimming the lagoon, and patrols were still watching the water.

Ann knew that everything now depended upon what manner of man Ibn Abdallah proved to be. A fanatical bigot would want to continue what he had begun, heedless of everything; but Cunningham still hoped that the prophet was a man strong only in simple belief and without real craftiness or rancor.

If he were, it might be possible to achieve a wise understanding, and then Ibn Abdallah might yet fulfil the Moslem legend of a prophet who would come to the Arabs in their days of distress. Always, Cunningham had hoped for the rise of someone who could hold them together, a leader with whom authority could treat.

The followers lit no fires, except one by the tent to give light for the two inside it. The moon came up, and Abdi found bankets for Ann. She wrapped herself in them, sitting on the floor of the truck, leaning against the side wall. She was aware that Cunningham was likely to be a long time with the prophet.

She watched the glare of the burning tower die away, and midnight had passed when she heard a truck approach. Kamil was returning from Port Sudan, very pleased with himself. He told her that a naval launch had taken Sarie and Larrimore to meet a ship coming down from Suez, bound for Panama. Tweedie had gone out with the launch to bid them a last good-bye.

"Bob'll probably be over there all night," Kamil said. "A lot rests on this." He added, "You get some sleep!"

She did not try to sleep, although she was tired now. She wanted to be awake when Cunningham returned. Things other than quiet in the Middle East depended upon what was happening in the prophet's tent.

If all went well, they were to be married in the English church on the Shari Farouk, in Port Said. She had discovered that he had commissioned a native jeweler to make her a ring set with emeralds from Kosseir, on the Red Sea coast, and the gold was to be from a mine near the Nile. Ann liked his idea of giving her gold and gems from the soil of Egypt. It went with her memory of lotus blooms and the palms in Sarie's courtyard.

Those were her last thoughts before Cunningham's voice suddenly roused her. He was leaning over the end of the truck, standing out against a sky that had become softly gray in the east.

He put an arm about her as she slid stiffly forward, and she was aware of a lifting rush of gladness when she saw

something very close to triumph in his smile. He kissed her, and she felt the stubble on his chin, and caught the odor of wood-smoke about him, but those things made him only the more real in a moment when she was not fully awake.

"Everything's all right!" he said. "Look over there." He nodded in the direction of Ibn Abdallah's camp, and she blinked the sleep from her eyes.

Dawn-light was just touching the buildings of Suakin so that they seemed to float, mirage-like, above the shadows on the ground. She could see little other than that, but she heard movement.

"The prophet's followers are turning out for the daybreak prayer," Cunningham said. "And they're throwing their swords into the lagoon, because there's Yezidee blood on them! Pat's just got back, and Sarfe's safe at sea with Larry." His tone was eager as he asked, "Ann, could we be married tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow?" That startled her for a moment, and she was suddenly wide awake.

"Is that too soon?"

"No," she said, and laughed a little. "It's not too soon, Bob."

He laughed with her. "I wanted to settle that! But I really wakened you because dawn's coming up, and there's something that I'd like you to see."

He did not say what it was, but he told her a little of what had passed between himself and Ibn Abdallah. He had proved much what Cunningham had hoped: a man in the style of Mahomet, devout and honest in his belief that the Yezidees should be wiped from the earth, and that all infidels should be driven beyond the borders of the Moslem world.

The deceit of Prince Mikki troubled him greatly. He could not understand the reasons for it, but he appreciated how very close he had come to death. Cunningham made plain the way he had been used, then spent the rest of the night persuading the prophet that persecution of the Yezidees could lead only to more evil, and that even infidels have a place on the earth.

It took time and, because it was the only sure way to argue with an Arab, Cunningham based his arguments on the Koran. This impressed Ibn Abdullah deeply; such learning in an infidel was very rare.

In the end, he promised to confine himself to teaching the Islamic faith, and neither to arm his followers nor to pursue the Yezidees further. Swearing by the Koran, Cunningham said that he would evacuate all active worshippers of Shaitan, sending them out of the Sudan and Egypt and Sinai. He agreed, further, that those few dervishes whom the Sudanese held should be sent away to the mountains beyond Mosul, roped together and under a strong guard, and clad in blue robes which would safely contain their evil.

He told Ann this, while the gray light spread. "And you'll see what I mean, in a few minutes," he said. "You'll understand Arabs better, too. They're pretty good people."

THE sounds from the prophet's camp faded, and now Ann saw that his followers were forming themselves into deep rows. There were more of them than she had imagined, stretching away until they became lost in the shadows. Ibn Abdallah took his place before them, facing across the sea toward Mecca, and at his back appeared the figure of Curzon Lee, standing apart from the others, honored.

Over at one side of the trucks, Major Brent stood with Tweedie and Kamil, and Abdi was by them. Tweedie caught Ann's glance and, smiling and cheerful, gave her a little salute.

She waited quietly, content to feel the comfort of Cunningham's arm as he stood beside her. She watched the sky begin to change to lucent green as the gray light climbed and dimmed the stars. A pink glow came below the green,

and she found that she could view the whole horizon beyond the planished flatness of the Red Sea.

The air was soft and very still. There was no sound at all as pure colors swept across the tremendous stretch of clear sky, changing under the quick urge of tropic dawn, bringing mounting beauty.

The pink light climbed, and the horizon deeped to red. The red burned hot, and became orange. The orange grew brighter until it was gold, and the gold spread gloriously until Ann felt that music should come from the earth itself to mark the splendor of the dawning day.

Shafts of sunshine leaped upward, yellow and brilliantly glowing as they broadened, merging as the sun lifted under them, magnificent to see and lighting the quiet world. It was then that Ibn Abdallah's voice came out of the silence, crying and vibrant, *"Allahu akbar . . .* Allah is most great!"

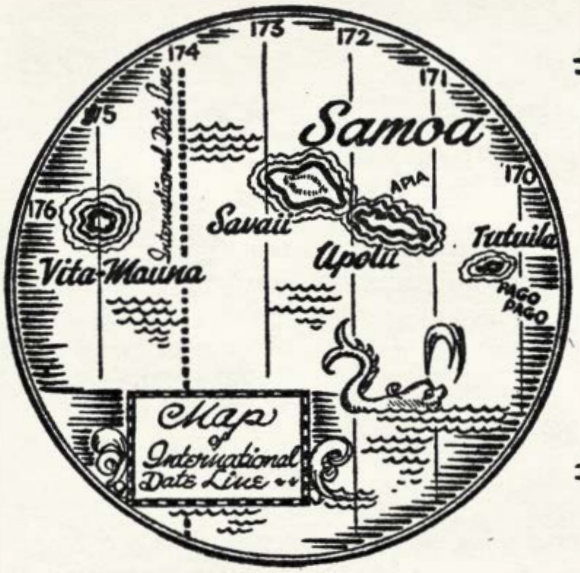
Cunningham's arm tightened about Ann's shoulders, and she knew that this was what he wanted her to see.

The prophet stood with his arms uplifted as he began the daybreak prayer, while the voices of his followers rose behind his own in a swelling paean, *"Bismillahi . . . 'rahami . . . rahim . . .* Praise be to Allah, lord of the worlds!"

The light, coming out of Arabia and gilding the Red Sea, made Ibn Abdallah's head shine and it drew color from the robes of the men behind him, so that they stood bright against the barren earth.

Vultures wheeled and dropped above the ashes in Suakin, and Ann thought of Sarie sailing out of the darkness, out of Egypt.

The voices of the prophet and his followers rose, rhythmic and chanting, filling the silence, and when their orison ended in a great and rolling "Ameen . . .!" Ann knew that she was listening to the music which she had felt should be there in the dawn.



ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

BANG—bang!

Request:—My question is about the thirty caliber M 1 U.S. Garand Rifle. When shooting on the range at 200 yards, I have noticed that there are two distinct sounds made. One is the dull crack of the rifle itself; the other is a sharp crack that comes right after. What I would like to know is what makes the second sound.

We were shooting at paper targets that were backed by cheese-cloth. We have had quite a debate as to whether the sound was made by the bullet passing through the target. The sound was made when we were using regular .30-50 ball ammunition.

Private Nick Hirniak.
Camp Hullen,
Texas.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—I'd say that the sharp crack you describe is the effect of the air as it fills the vacuum caused by the bullet's flight through the atmosphere.

I've noted it many a time; especially in the pits during my trick tenting targets, as well as during the trips to and from the butts, out of the line of fire of the men on the line, but say fifty yards or so to one side of the direct line from target to firing points. Just like the crack of a lightning bolt when it hits near you; you recall that sharp ear-splitting crack comes before the roar of the thunder.

Of course, the effect on the atmosphere of bullet and thunder bolt is vastly different as regards volume. Some say the crack is the effect of the waves of air tossed aside by the passing bullet, but I believe my theory, as expressed in the opening sentence of this letter, is the correct one.

I've never heard the sharp crack given by a low-speed bullet, I may add, just by the ones of really high speed—Springfield, Mauser, .250 Savage, and such.

A ONE-MAN lumbering operation.

Request:—I have a piece of land in the north woods, with a lot of timber on it. My ambition is to build a lodge on this property from the wood on the place. There is oak, hemlock, spruce, and some pine, suitable for cutting, on it.

With the aid of a portable saw-mill, I would like to saw this into lumber myself. Therefore, I would appreciate it very much if you would answer the following questions.

1. (a) After sawing how do you go about seasoning the boards?

(b) How long does the seasoning process take?

(c) Is there a chemical used to prevent cracking?

2. (a) Is there an inexpensive way of drying the lumber artificially?

(b) Do you know of any plan, for the construction of a home-made drying kiln, and how I may obtain it?

Roy A. Pinkert.
1100 Wolfram St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Hapsburg Liebe:—1. (a) and (b) Except where a kiln is used, lumber is seasoned by time and weather, in stacks, which requires on an average about a year. Different lengths of time, of course, for different kinds of woods and different weather and climates. Where there

isn't so much lumber—as perhaps in your case—you could save much time by racking instead of stacking. Watch for warping though, and turn the boards that start it. In racking the boards are stood on ends, angled across a pole. The ends shouldn't rest on the ground, of course. Put scrap stuff under them.

1. (c) I don't know a chemical that will prevent cracking. Heavy outside paint on the board ends—or the ends of the logs before they are sawn—will help lots.

2. (a) and (b) So far as I am aware there is no inexpensive way of drying lumber artificially. Nor do I know of any plan for the construction of a "homemade" dry-kiln. All the kilns I've ever seen were of solid stuff, usually brick, except for the doors, heated by steam pipes underneath, with just enough vent above. I understand there is such a thing as a hot-air kiln, but haven't seen one. Perhaps the rack method is your simplest, best bet.

BELL bottom trousers, garb of navy blue.

Request:—A discussion arose a short time ago as to the whys and wherefores of the different parts of a sailor's uniform, especially the reasons why the sailors wear the type of collar they do, of the significance for both stripes on the collar and why the stars are on the corners, what the neckerchief signifies and why the trousers are made the way they are. I would appreciate it if you would answer these questions to settle this discussion.

Albert J. Mayer.

Reply by Lieut. Durand Kiefer:—Possibly you are familiar with the tradition to the effect that the three rows of white tape on the sailor's uniform were originated by the British Navy to commemorate Nelson's three great victories of Copenagen, The Nile, and Trafalgar, and that the black neckerchief was originally worn by British sailors in mourning for Nelson's death. I was about to offer this explanation, offhand, to you when I decided to check the authenticity of the tradition, and I'm glad I took the time. According to Lovette's Naval Traditions, Customs, and Usage, this popular tradition regarding the sailor's uniform is entirely unfounded, and the black neckerchief originated as simply a black sweat-rag which sailors wore both around their necks and their foreheads long before Nelson's death. Black was used because it showed the dirt and powder stains less. There is record that British sailors used these black neckerchiefs as mourning for their late captains as early as 1785, when the crew of H.M.S. Berwick cut theirs in two and wore half around their arms and half around their hats at their captain's burial.

As for the stripes (and there are three, not two) on the collar, Comdr. Lowry, R.N., writes that a member of the Royal Navy committee which drew up the uniform regulations of 1890 informed him that the committee recommended using two stripes but that the Admiralty had decided upon three for no other reason than that three were considered more decorative, and that the two stars on the collar were adopted for the same reason, no mention of Nelson or his victories having entered the matter.

The origin of the collar is more obscure, but it is not unlikely that it was originally introduced to protect the sailor's white jumper from becoming soiled by his pig-tail in the days when all sailors' hair was worn long and braided. Collars are still always dark blue regardless of the color of the uniform.

The large bell-bottoms on sailors' trousers originated, of course, out of the necessity of rolling them above the knees to scrub decks and wade onto beaches in landing ship's boats. As for the distinctive fly with its thirteen sturdy buttons, there is no truth to rumor that it was designed as a deliberate obstacle. It more probably originated from the tendency of the conventional fly to hamper a man's working along a yard on the man-ropes when furling or unfurling sail in The Old Navy. The belt was probably discarded as an article of uniform for the same reason.

ALONG the old Texas cattle trails.

Request:—I should like to know the route of the trails listed below:

1. Chihuahua Trail through Texas during the Civil War days about 1868.
2. Sonora Trail.
3. Arisciachi Trail of Mexico.

I would like to know all I can learn about the trails, the old landmarks, etc.

Also are there any unfriendly Indians along the Yaqui River in Mexico?

Is there a town or towns by the following names, Guaynopa or Rio

Aros, Mexico? In State of Sonora?

Next summer a group of friends are planning on following the trails; will it be dangerous, and what equipment will we need?

My grandfather told of his wagon train being raided, and half the train burned by Indians, at a place called Horseshoe Crossing, or else Castle Gap, do not know which, but is there a crossing or gap by that name and what is the location, if possible?

E. Myers.

Lock Box 27,
Mt. Pleasant, Mich.

Reply by J. W. Whiteaker:—The struggle of the early cattle raisers of Texas to find markets for their excess animals forms one of the most colorful chapters of southwestern history. Just when trail driving began probably will never be known. At an early date, however, the settlements in Louisiana opened markets for Texas products, and early maps show a contrabrand trail skirting the coast and connecting Texas and Louisiana areas, indicating trade despite restrictions that prevailed. However, the South Texas cattle surplus increased and by that time Texas won her independence.

The Opelausas Trail had come into existence paralleling the coast and leading from the Texas cattle region to settlements in Louisiana. Many Texas cattle were marketed in New Orleans and were distributed throughout the Mississippi Valley and even shipped to the West Indies.

During the Civil War many cattle went to the Confederate Army over an eastward extension known as the Vicksburg Trail, ending at Vicksburg. There was a parallel trail known as the Natchez Trail, so called because Natchez, Miss., was its eastern terminus.

In the West, the gold rush in California, beginning in 1849, created a good market and many Texas cattleman braved the dangers of the long drive. The principal trail to this market swung through West Texas to the Pecos in the vicinity of Horsehead Crossing, then swung northward to a point near the New Mexico-Texas line and thence westward.

The first northern trail over which some drivng, even prior to the Civil War, was known as the Shawnee Trail, taking its name from Shawnee town. Originating in south and central Texas this trail came north, leaving the State at Preston Crossing in Grayson County, Texas, on the Red River. On this trail cattle went as far as St. Louis. Owners of crossing along this route began to erect tall gates as the trail shifted westward from Ft. Worth and crossed Red River at Sivoll's Bend in Cook County or at Red River station in Montague County. This route has become known as the Chisholm Trail. Later the route of the main North-South cattle trail was pushed northward leaving the State at Dean's Crossing, in new Wilbarger County. This trail was known as the Western or Dodge Trail.

John Chisholm established his Denton County Ranch in the early fifties. He was active in supplying meat to the Confederate Armies during the Civil War and drove herds eastward to Natchez and Vicksburg. It is possible that he drove herds through Oklahoma.

The most definitely fixed and enduring portion of the famous North-South trail was that between Austin and Ft. Worth. North of Ft. Worth there was a tendency to shift the route while south of Austin there was a branching out of feeder trails that led in from the South Texas ranges.

The Goodnight-Loving Trail was opened soon after the Civil War when Chas. Goodnight and his partner, Oliver Loving, drove to market at Ft. Sumner, starting from the vicinity of Ft. Belknap, near Graham, Texas, and going via the old stage route through Ft. Phantom Hill and Ft. Chadbourne up the middle Concho to Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos and up the Pecos on the west side to the channel of the Delaware, thence westward along this stream.

The cattle trails of Texas delivered some ten million head during the period from 1867 to 1890 when trail driving died out due to the spread of the network of railroads. Part of this supply went to the northern packing houses, but a larger portion went to stock the ranges of the great plains north to the Canadian border and westward to the Rockies.

The old Spanish Trail was the route of the Spanish explorers from San Augustine, Fla., to San Diego, Calif., entering Texas near Orange to Houston, San Antonio, on to El Paso through Texas. The trail in the past few years has become part of the Texas highway system. The above-mentioned trails are the best known. There may be others not mentioned, being short feeders to the main trails.

In the mountains of Sonora there is a remnant of the once powerful and savage tribe of the Yaqui Indians

who have not as yet been conquered by the Mexican Government. These Indians have their own strongholds in the mountain fastness and have been left strictly alone for many years.

The Yaqui River has been the scene of several gold rushes in the past. The natives are rather friendly as a general rule.

I know of no towns by the names of Guaynopa or Rio Oras in the State of Sonora. The names of many small towns or villages have been changed several times since coming into existence by bandit or rebel chieftains of past years who took over places for their own headquarters.

The crossing that your grandfather spoke about must have been Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos in Reeves or Pecos Counties, for the old crossings are gone now and bridges on the highway have taken their places. It would not be dangerous to follow the old trails for they are highways now.

You have been on fishing and camping trips. No doubt, such equipment used then can be used now. Tourist camps are located on most of the old trails, with supplies of all kinds to be had, so you need not be uneasy about making the trip.

If there are any other questions you care to ask about the territory I am covering for Adventure, do not hesitate to write.

J. W. Whiteaker.

It wasn't so much what Patrick Cory did to Donovan's brain as what the brain did to Cory—and to his wife—and to his assistant, Doctor Schratt. The whole ghastly business began, appropriately enough, on Friday the 13th. That was the day the Mexican organ grinder passed through Washington Junction with the tubercular Capuchin. Cory bought the flea-ridden monk even after the beast had bitten him. Ten months later he realized what a madman he'd been ever to make the purchase. Schratt called it **invading God's own hemisphere** and he was probably right. CURT SIODMAK has edited Cory's diary—the whole grisly sequence—and given it the title—

DONOVAN'S BRAIN

You can read it in **Black Mask** and decide for yourself **whether or** not Schratt was correct in his assertion.

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—Earl B. Powell, care of Adventure.

Baseball—Frederick Lieb, care of Adventure.

Basketball—Stanley Carhart, 99 Broad St., Matawa, N.J.

Camping—Paul M. Fink, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—Lieut.-Colonel John V. Grombach, 1619 Massachusetts Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C.

Canoeing, paddling, sailing, cruising regattas—Edgar S. Perkins, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins: and Medals—William L. Clark, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156 St., N.Y.C.

Fencing—Lieut.-Colonel John B. Grombach, 1619 Massachusetts Ave., N.W. Washington, D.C.

First Aid—Dr. Claude P. Fordyce, care of Adventure.

Fishing: fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips — John Alden Knight, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Pa.

Fishing: salt water; bottom fishing; surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations—C. Blackburn Miller, care of Adventure.

Globe-trotting and Vagabonding — Robert Spiers Benjamin, care of Adventure.

Health Building Activities, Hiking — Dr. Claude P Fordyce, care of Adventure.

Motor Boating—Gerald T. White, Montville, N.J.

Motorcycling: regulations, mechanics, racing—Charles M. Dodge, 70 Colonial Sq., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—Theodore S. Solomons, 952 No. Hudson Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—Robert White, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—Chas. H. Hall, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: foreign and American—Donegan Wiggins, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns—American and Roreign, Wing.

Shooting and Field Trails—Roy S. Tinney, c/o Adventure.

***Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. Price, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: skiffs, outboard, small launch; river and lake cruising—Raymond S. Spears, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming: Louis DeB. Handley, 115 West 11th St., N.Y.C.

Swords: spears, pole arms and armor—Capt. R. E. Gardner, 306 Roseborough St., San Antonio, Tex.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"Chief" Stanwood, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—Jackson Scholz, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—Paul M. Fink, Jonesboro, Tenn

Wrestling—Murl E. Thrush, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. Knauer, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: American North of the Panama Canal, cutoms, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, tetishism, social divisions, Arthur Woodward, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance laws, licenses, operating data schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders—Major Falk Harmel, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D.C.

Big Game Hunting: guides and equipment—Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology insects and spiders, venomous and disease-carrying insects—Dr. S. W. Frost, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa

Forestry: in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States—Ernest W. Shaw, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: tropical forests and products—Wm. R. Barbour, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: reptiles and amphibians—Clifford H. Pope, care of Adventure.

Marine Architecture: ship modeling—Chas. H. Hall, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mining, Prospecting and Precious Stones: anywhere in North America. Outfitting, any mineral, metallic or non-metallic — Victor Shaw, 11628¾ Mayfield Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine—Gordon MacAllister, care of Adventure.

Orinthology: birds, their habits and distribution—Davis Quinn, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N.Y.

Photography: outfitting work in out-of-the-way places; general information—Paul L. Anderson, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N.J.

Radio: telegraph, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets—Donald McNicol, care of Adventure.

Railroads: in the United States, Mexico and Canada—R. T. Newman, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—Hapsburg Liebe, care of Adventure.

Taxidermy—Edward B. Lang, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N.J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—Raymond S. Spears. Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY NAVAL AND POLICE

Field Artillery: the cavalry arm, equitation and training of horses—Fairfax Downey. care of Adventure.

Federal Investigation Activities — Secret Services, etc.—Francis H. Bent, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N.J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police — Alec Cavadas, King Edw. H. S., Vancouver, B.C.

State Police—Francis H. Bent, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N.J.

U.S. Marine Corps—Major F. W. Hopkins, care of Adventure.

U. S. Navy—Lieut. Durand Kiefer, care of Adventure

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—Buck Conner, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

***New Guinea**—L. P. B. Armit, care of Adventure.

***New Zealand: Cook Island Samoa**—Tom L. Mills. 27 Bowen St., Fielding, New Zealand.

***Australia and Tasmania**—Alan Foley, 169 Castlereagh St., Sydney, Australia.

***South Sea Islands**—William McCreadie. "Ingle Nook," 39 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N.S.W.

Hawaii—John Snell, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1—*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet. Southern, Eastern and Central China—Seward S. Cramer, care of Adventure. 3 Northern China and Mongolia—Paul H. Franson, Bldg. No. 3. Veterans' Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. 4, Persia, Arabia—Captain Beverly-Giddings, care of Adventure 5*, Palestine, Captain H. W. Eades, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B.C.

Africa, Part 1—*Libya, Morocco, Egypt Tunis. Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian, Sudan—Captain H W. Eades, 3808 West 26th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. 2, Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland. British Somali Coast Protecorate, Eeritrea Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya—Gordon MacCreagh, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. 3, Tripoli, Sahara caravans—Captain Beverly-Giddings, care of Adventure 4, Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola. Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa—Major S. L. Glenister, care of Adventure. 5, *Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia —Peter Franklin, Box 1491, Durban, Natal. So. Africa.

Madagascar—Ralph Linton, care of Adventure.

Europe, Part 1: Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia.—G. L. Colburn, care of Adventure.

Central America—Robert Spiers Benjamin, care of Adventure.

South America, Part 1: Columbia, Ecuador Peru, Bolivia and Chile.—Edgar Young, care of Adventure. 2: Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.—Dr. Paul Vanorden Shaw, care of Adventure

***West Indies**—John B. Leffingwell. Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba

Iceland—G. L. Colburn, care of Adventure

Baffinland and Greenland—Victor Shaw, 11628¾ Mayfield Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif

Labrador—William T. DeBell, Severna Park, Md

Mexico, Part 1: Northern Border States.—J. W. Whiteaker, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. 2: Quintana Roo, Yucatan Campeche —W. Russell Sheets, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md

Canada, Part 1: *Southeastern Quebec.—William MacMillan, 24 Plessis St., Quebec. Canada. 3: *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario—Harry M. Moore, The Currier Advocate. Trenton. Ont., Canada. 4: *Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks Camping.—A. D. L. Robinson, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. 5: Yukon British Columbia and Alberta.—C. Plowden Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B.C. 6: Northern Saskatchewan Indian life and language hunting, trapping.—H. S. M. Kemp, 501 10th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—Theodore S. Solomons, 952 No Hudson Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U.S., Part 1: Pacific Coast States —Frank Winch, care of Adventure. 3: New Mexico (Indians, etc.)—H. F. Robinson, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N.M. 4: Nevada, Montana, and Northern Rockies—Fred W Egelston, Elks Newman, 701 N. Main St Peoria, Ill. 6: Arizona, Utah—C. C. Anderson care of Adventure. 7: Texas, Oklahoma—J W. Whiteaker. 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin Tex.

Middle Western U.S., Part 2: Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.—Geo A. Zerb, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P.O., Ingram, Pa. 3: Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas. Bottom.—Raymond S. Spears. Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U.S., Part 1: Maine—"Chief" Stanwood. East Sullivan, M. 2: Vt., N.H. Conn. R.I., Mass.—Howard R. Volght, 40 Chapel St., Woodmount, Conn. 3 Adirondacks, New York —Raymond S. Spears, Ingelwood, Calif 4: New Jersey—F. H. Bent, 43 Elm Pl., Red Bank, N.J. 5: Ala., Tenn., Miss., N.C., S.C., Fla., Ga.—Hapsburg Liebe, care of Adventure. 6: The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia.—Paul M. Fink, Jonesboro, Tenn.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *ADVENTURE* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *ADVENTURE* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Would like very much to locate my brother, Thomas Merchant Ross, from whom I have not heard since 1926. He left home near Childress, Texas, and was last heard from a few days later in Red Buff, California. In his letter he talked of going to Oregon. He would now be about 31 years old. He had a ruddy complexion, black hair and part of one front tooth missing. Any one having met him or knowing his present whereabouts, please communicate with his brother, Private Allen R. Ross, care Adventure, or his sister, Mrs. Alice Ross Archer, 1709 Mentor Street, Dallas, Texas.

I would like to locate Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred Franklin. Their last known whereabouts was in the Englewood district, close to Halsted St., Chicago, Ill., about ten years ago. They may have journeyed to Ontario—any information will be deeply appreciated by their old friends Mr. and Mrs. Bert Powell, 203 Buttrey Street, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

Would like information concerning Peter John Fifer, who resided last Jan., 1941, at 13 Spring Street, Boston, Mass. I have some souvenirs of his that he left in my care six years ago and would be glad to return them to him. M. Dollinan, 1459 W. 101 St., Los Angeles, Cal.

Would like to locate my father, George M. Calhoun, whom I have not heard from in many years. Last heard from, he was residing in Wichita, Kans., where he had spent many years. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his son, C. E. Calhoun, 304 25th St., Galveston, Tex.

William Foster Elliot, George Herzog, Justin Knox Miller and William R. Kaake, friends of my long-past youth, please let me hear from you. Walt Woestman, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Cal.

Would like to contact my cousin, Edwin F. Rowe, last heard of in Canton, Ohio, in 1912. At that time weighed 250 lbs., was working in a furnishing store as salesman; would be about 68 years old if living, probably in Ohio. C. Earl Drumm, County Home, Ebensburg, Pa.

Would like to get in touch with Preston Hurd who was formerly stationed at Albrook Field in the Canal Zone. Robert Owen, 103 Shultas Place, Hartford, Conn.

Would like to contact Hez or Robert Montgomery. Their mother, Mattie, in 1926 operated the Ivy Hotel, 39 North Fair Oaks Avenue, Pasadena. Also,

Chum McComb who, in 1917, was employed by A. B. Perkins & Co., wholesale produce, 3d & Water Streets. Bay City, Mich. Frank G. Batchelor, Room 312, 115 East 3d Street, Los Angeles, Cal.

George Henry Johnston, last heard of at Ewart, Man., in 1919. Age about 67, born in Renfrew, Ont. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his son, George Thomas Johnston, Box 95, Dunnville, Ont.

I am trying to find my brother, John de Gutis. Have not heard from him for fifteen years. He was seen by friends in New York. He is now in his thirties, and might be known by a different name. Any information about him would be appreciated by M. Mutroske, 806 Albert St., Dickson City, Pa.

Would like to contact some of my old shipmates in regard to getting a claim through for a pension. I served on the U.S. destroyer *Burrows* No. 29, all through the World War, was based at Queenstown, Ireland, and Brest, France. I was ship's cook, 1st class. I am at present in the Veterans' Hospital, Bronx, N.Y., and do not know how long I will be here. My mail address: Charles A. Miller, 847 4th Ave., Alleghany County, Verona, Pa.

Bert Oldham: Major Travis' widow desires to contact Marguerite Bean. Please write, or have her write, to Mrs. J. J. Travis, VCD *High Street, Tonbridge, Kent., England; or communicate through me if you prefer. J. K. Bodler, Lt. (j.g.) U.S.N.R., U.S.S. Regulus, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Cal*

Thank you for publishing the above notice.

I have heard from Mr. Oldham, so please don't reprint the item again.

With sincere thanks for your help and continued best wishes for Adventure, I am,

Cordially,

J. K. Bodler.

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This great issue on sale, Jan. 13th.

The CAMP FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

FOUR new faces for the fire to shine on this month. And it isn't just politeness that impelled us to give the lady of the quartet precedence on the contents page and here. The author of . . . *And So Will They* can stand on her own two feet and rates a place in the front rank of our Writers' Brigade any time she cares to answer the roll-call. We'd never heard of Florence Burrill Jacobs till her poem arrived on our desk but the verses stirred us mightily and it was no surprise to learn that she has published poetry in many other magazines. Nor did it surprise us to have her confirm the New England background we guessed she must have. It was inevitable, for no one not a New Englander could possibly have written in such a vein. We asked her to tell us something about herself and she replies, from East Madison, Maine:

For background. . . . And So Will They itself is as good as anything. It's sort of a family affair, John Alden being a grandfather nine times removed; and of course that makes William Mullins, father of Priscilla, one step farther back. James McLaughlin was an actual person, too, an ancestor on the other side who came here to East Madison, just north of the Plymouth Claim, in 1792; I couldn't resist popping him in for a little conversation with the rest! (Daniel Webster and Boone I have no claim on.)

I have always lived here, except for vacation sorties north to Cape Breton, west or south to New York State. Have taught, done secretarial work, and for a number of years now, housework . . . it is Mrs. Jacobs. Always, of course, scribbling as soon as the tests were corrected or the rhubarb stewed off.

JOCK CUNNINGHAM, whose novelette of Panama and the Zone gives a picture of the Big Ditch today as colorful as it is authentic, like so many *Adventure* writers, can't seem to get out of the habit of going places and doing things. He writes, to introduce himself and his yarn:

Several years ago I was born on the steppes of western Montana during a severe electrical storm; very soon thereafter I decamped for less hectic climates, which I realize now was a severe mistake; if I had braved out that first storm I would probably be a stern and rockbound character now, and live a peaceful life. But as it happened, I have met nothing since but hectic thunderstorms, and there is nothing stern or rockbound about me.

The feeling I get out of life is the same one that a Grand Central (short-tail) shuttle would have if it ever got switched onto the tracks just ahead of the Chicago Limited; or that of a mayfly looking for a century plant in bloom. It is a terrific life. After the war I am going to a rock I know about 60 miles west of Cheyenne and just sit on it for three or four years, or maybe I will buy a farm in Virginia and just sit on that. Right now I am in a very busy part of the Army called N.S.C.U. 1901. D.E.M.L.—(R.S.). This part of my life is what I call my public life. About my private life, even I do not know. A fortune teller told me in

April that I would be married in June and break my leg in July. Neither of these things happened, but as I am not one to throw down on a fortune teller, I have concluded that what she meant was that I am going to be hanged in October—she was just being polite.

Panama is a wonderful place. One of the nicest people I met there was Marcellina. The police lieutenant who lived in my house on the Avenida Norte brought her in one day and began asking her where she got all the silver ashtrays and bracelets she had up her sleeve and under her dress. She was about eight years old and three feet tall and she said: "Ha, ha, I will not tell." He said, "All right then, you will go to jail." And she said, "Ha, ha, I do not care, I have already been in there three times, it's like washing the dishes." After that she began sweeping the floor. She adopted everybody, and let us all stay there. Everybody was either her uncle or her aunt. I was Uncle Cuni, since she couldn't say Cunningham. I thought seriously of adopting her, but then decided that cubs are cute only until they get big enough to maul you.

Then I could tell you about the town of T, and how we did not go down the river to Colombia in a dugout canoe, but that would make a better story written, so I will write it.

As for "Warden of the Zone," I met Ramos in Cristobal one afternoon while discussing the Four Freedoms with a Panamanian fisherman. Ramos was wandering around looking for somebody to rob, and he saw me; but he got interested in the Four Freedoms and by the time the sun went down we were as good as brothers. He can't read, so he'll never know he got published, for which I am sorry.

REESE WOLFE'S *Slow Bell* is no mere figment of a fictioneer's imagination. About the genesis of the yarn and to introduce himself at *Camp-Fire* the author says:

When Charles L. Wheeler, guiding genius at McCormick Steamship Company told me that one of their ships, the Charles R. McCormick, was at last out of the clutch of the Nazis and on her way home from Norway, her log when she got in because "maybe there's a story in it," I agreed that maybe (!) there was. Your readers probably recall how this American vessel, together with the Flying Fish, were nabbed by the Nazis when they made their way into Bergen three years ago, but when the Flying Fish got away and steamed safely into New York Harbor with several million dollars worth of gold bullion in her hold smuggled out of Norway, most of us war-jangled newspaper readers promptly forgot the Charles R. McCormick and her gallant skipper, Captain Schutz, who was kept creeping in and out of Norwegian fjords for nearly two months, trying to save his cargo.

When I read the log of this voyage, and the thick file of telegrams, cables and letters that flew between Captain Schutz, his owners, his consignees, a Norwegian general, a German admiral, and finally even Secretary of State Cordell Hull, my story jumped right out at me and tumbled practically written into the typewriter. The result was Slow Bell.

I would like to be able to say that I write sea stories because I know the sea, but no honest sailor would say that anymore than an honest landlubber would say that he knows women. I've done some knocking around though, firing a tramp in the Java Sea, mining in Spain, cadging drinks in Hong Kong (and keeping my rice bowl full) with some rusty piano playing; worked in a succession of sea jobs embracing cadet, A.B. seaman, quartermaster, fireman, wiper, and junior officer on ships that included the old George ("Peace Ship") Washington, the President Taft, the President Madison, the Panama-Pacific Line's old Finland—and some others a dog wouldn't mention. In common with the rest of the breed who gather no moss there have been other jobs and climes too numerous to mention. But there's a happy ending. I live on an island in San Francisco Bay these days (not Alcatraz) and write stories with a bead drawn on ADVENTURE.

O.K., Mr. Wolfe. Keep us in your sights and we'll be glad to sit right here and play target!

FRED D. McHUGH has knocked about a bit himself and is too modest by far when he writes:

That a tenderfoot from the city should be invited to come up to the Camp-Fire among all the old-timers is an awesome experience—for the tenderfoot. And, rightfully, he takes

the position of the respectful listener —well back on the fringe of this friendly circle of wanderers and raconteurs. There is so much for him to learn from them.

There is much he can learn by listening. So he refrains from cooking up a yarn about a trip beating down the Malabar Coast in a little, wallowing red-rusty tramp. About shining, lazy waters that throw back the sun to burn one under the chin and squint the eyes into slits. And about reek of native streets, the aeolian-like tinkle of temple bells, the plah-ang of elephant bells. And of a visit to Trivandrum, just before rounding Cape Comorin into the Gulf of Mannar and on into Palk Strait where the Jap menace has been great since the little yellow sons of heaven's very yellow sions bombed Colombo and Trincomalee. That would be quite a yarn for he's long wanted to visit Trivandrum, capital city of Travancore, since those days when, as an editor in New York, he used to answer many queries from the Maharajah of Travancore. But that yarn will have to wait; just now, the newcomer at the Camp-Fire had better stick to facts.

He submits that that is his forte, that he is just a matter-of-fact writer of semi-technical matter for the scientific journals. Certainly he's used bales of paper for that purpose. For many years he was the executive editor of "The Scientific American." After resigning to free lance and doing one book for youngsters ("How to Be an Engineer"—McBride, 1941), he accepted, early in 1942, an invitation from Washington to head an editorial section set up in the office of the Secretary of the Navy. And there he is now—reading and editing and otherwise handling some of the most exciting material he has ever seen. And he can't use any of it! Not until after the war, at any rate.

In my present story, "Captain of the Cows," I have made use of a locale which has interested me since 1918 when I passed through Cherbourg's rest (sic) camp on my way into France. Just outside the camp entrance is the chateau where, it is said, Alexander Dumas wrote "The Three Musketeers." I was the queer American who guarded German prisoners with an empty pistol as they did the chores—and I'm only five feet five! There are other funny things that happened in that relatively tame war (remind me to tell you about the time I drank dry old Moselle wine from a barrel through a rubber tube!) but this is no time for them. One thing, however, of which I may boast a bit is that I enlisted a one of the very few thousands who made up the first United States Army Tank Corps! My, how we've grown! And what a hell of a licking we're going to give to some surprised aggressors when we can come to grips with them.

IT WILL be no news to anyone, by this time, that Elmer Davis has been made head of War Information in the United States and is acclaimed by all as the best man for the job, but we'll wager that not many members of *Camp-Fire* are aware that years ago when this long-headed young Hoosier first came back from Oxford, where he had performed the spectacular stunt of learning all there was to learn without losing his American accent either in speech or thought, he began his career—and can you think of a better way?—by going to work on *Adventure*. That was his first job.

Joseph E. Cox, who was on the staff of our magazine for many years as associate editor under A. S. H., editor for a time himself and again associate under H. L. B., writes from his home in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, commenting on Davis' appointment. What Joe has to say will be of special interest to old-timers but there's meat and sense in what he says for new readers, too. We are delighted and proud to have received such a communication and happy to have

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a chance to pass it along to you here in *Camp-Fire*. Joe writes:

Elmer Davis has held other and bigger jobs since the ADVENTURE days, on his way to the biggest one of all, and he is what he is because he has more sense than almost anybody, but you and I will see a special significance in the fact that for the terrifically difficult task of telling the nation about the war in a way that would make the nation know it was being told the truth, the most able man they could find was one who had learned his first practical lesson in accurate presentation by looking up the sea terms for some Dingle story in the big dictionary under the shaggy eyebrows of A.S.H.

Where there is a war, there you will find ADVENTURE, whether in the high places or the low. I remember during the last one a big young sailor coming down to our offices in the Butterick Building to tell a little story. He said that he was one of a crew on a submarine that was doing active duty in the North Atlantic. He said there were times—long, long times—when they would have to lie at the bottom of the ocean, waiting. Just waiting. The gloom would get very deep at these times, he said, but when it got to its darkest and deepest there was always one thing they would do. One of the men would get out the little stack of ADVENTURES they had and with the others lying around on their bunks or wherever would read aloud, one after another, the old Piperock stories of W. C. Tuttle. Gradually the gloom would begin to lift, and pretty soon the blind fishes bumping their cold noses on the iron hull outside—is it too much to imagine it?—would hear the sound of American sailors at the bottom of the sea laughing at the antics of Magpie Simpkins and Dirty Shirt Jones and the Plutes and prospectors and crazy cowhands cavorting through a sunburnt Western town that never was. So, said this tall young sailor, twisting his white watch cap between his hands and looking down at me there in the dimly lighted old reception-room, while gentleman dress designers fluttered in and out of the Delineator across the way, he and his shipmates wanted to thank Tut and the rest of us for what we had done for them.

They wanted to thank us!

Now see what this means. Maybe—though I doubt it—some other funny stories in some other magazine would have amused them just as much as they lay there waiting for whatever they were waiting for. But they did not have the other magazines. They had ADVENTURE. My brother used to say, before he left the sea to fly with the China Clippers—he is back at sea now, and will be forever, but I forget—that you could always find a copy of ADVENTURE in the forecastle of any ship he was ever on. He himself had first read it between the decks of the old Arizona in World War I. Yes, that was the same Arizona and it was read on all the other battle wagons and in all the army camps of that war. Do the literary gents in New York still doubt this sort of thing, that ADVENTURE is read by adventurers? I wish I could show them the filing case that used to stand, shoulder high, just inside the door of the old office, filled to the top with the cards of volunteers who had answered A.S.H.'s call for fighting men to form an expeditionary force that would be ready to go the minute we got into that other war. Selective service ruled that out and the filing case stayed there until two husky leathernecks came and took it away so the Marine Corps could use it for recruiting. The Marines could give you an idea of how many ADVENTURE readers were in World War I.

But no matter how many went to war, a great many more had to stay behind. They used to write to Camp-Fire, wanting to know what they could do to help. You will remember some of the departments we started in the magazine so they could help. There was no other group in the country so war-minded as the readers of ADVENTURE.

They did not change when World War I was ended. In no time at all after the Armistice, as magazines have to reckon time, we began to print the war stories of Leonard Na-

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son. They were an immediate and amazing success. Better known magazines which had been timid about even mentioning the war tried printing war stories, too. You might think they would have been more successful than ours. Do not take my word for it that they were not. At that time the tops in book reviewing was in the New York World, in a column written by Laurence Stallings. This was the Laurence Stallings who had been a captain of marines and was to become the co-author of "What Price Glory?" and "The Big Parade." One morning every one was startled when the column appeared full of praise not for a book but for a series of stories in a magazine, and no highbrow magazine at that, but ADVENTURE. He had to praise these stories by Leonard Nason, wrote Laurence Stallings, because they were the kind of literature that comes out of life—in this case out of an intense and terrible kind of life that he knew very well and had nowhere else seen written about with anything like the art that appeared on the rough pages of this pulp magazine. There was one story about the bombing of a field hospital. He had been in that hospital when it was bombed. It had been like that. He had not thought to find anybody who would be able to tell about it. But the way Nason told about it, that's the way it was. Ex-service men know what he meant. other readers who had never been to war liked Nason just as well as those who had, they seemed to know just as well that Nason knew what he was talking about and was telling it straight.

So strong was the interest in war stories that as World War I faded into the past that interest did not fade too, but widened. ADVENTURE printed stories of the American Army all around the world and the readers welcomed them. Mostly they were written by Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and George Fielding Eliot. Whether any critic wrote that these two knew their stuff, I do not know. They needed no critic's word.

For as World War I faded into the past another and far worse war began to gather its strength. Last year the threat had grown so great that most of us went to our radios and our books not for lazy pleasure but to learn what we could of how this war was going and how ready America would be to withstand it when it came to us. Men who could tell us the military truth were in demand. The names of the men you heard most often when you turned your dial or asked at the library desk were those

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of Major Leonard Nason, Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson and Major George Fielding Eliot.

ADVENTURE and accuracy and the war. There is indeed a special significance about these three. I want to say just what I think it is. I want to speak straight to the comrades of the Camp-Fire, to the boys with sparks in their beards and smoke in their pants. Let me stand up.

Their war is here now. Twelve years, off and on, of sitting in the ADVENTURE office make me know how you must feel about it. I do not mean the ones who will go. I mean the ones who will have to stay at home, myself among them. As in the other World War, so in this, we, perhaps more than any other body of men, want to do what we can. Because it is a far worse war we want to do far more than we did the other time. There are more things we can do. There are jobs as air-raid wardens, auxiliary policemen, plane spotters and all the rest. We can do these things and we can buy bonds, as the others are doing. But there is one thing we can do better than the others, no matter who they may be. it comes out of this special interest in war. We are the men to stand up every time some liar or fool starts spilling stuff we know is meant to help Hitler, whether the liar or fool knows it or not, and say in good plain American: "I heard different!" We have the will to do it. We have the wit to do it. I am not talking about honest criticism of the war effort, which is needed, which helps. We can tell that from the other. That is just what we can do. I am quite sincere in saying that the fact that the Director of War Information had his first job on ADVENTURE is significant. It is a symbol. That the military experts of the early years of the war were men who used to write stories for us is an even greater symbol and more significant. It was our all-out interest in war and insistence on accuracy that made them ADVENTURE authors. Without us to read it their fiction might never have been printed. I know what I am talking about. We are a special group, with a special instinct for accuracy about war. Let's put it to work for our country. Let's stand up and say: "I heard different!" It takes guts sometimes—about one millionth of the amount of guts used by the most ordinary seaman standing watch on a tanker these days, about one billionth of the amount used by the boys who are reading this issue of the magazine in a submarine somewhere at the bottom of the sea. Maybe the members of the Camp-Fire haven't got that kind of guts.

I heard different.

That's a pretty heart-stirring letter, Joe, and thanks for it. We heard different, too! And next month we want to give you news of some of the men of our Writers' and Readers' Brigades who are proving it every day of their lives.

K. S. W.

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