
TIGER, TIGER
A TALE OF THE FLORIDA FRONTIER
by WILLIAM DU BOIS
25¢
Adventure
AUG.
A CHARLEY HOE HANDLE STORY
by JIM KJELGAARD
AUG. 1948
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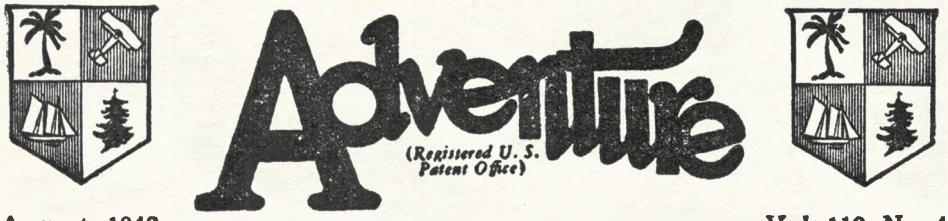

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BE OUT ON AUGUST 11TH ◆ ◆ ◆

Cover painted for Adventure *by Rafael De Soto*
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and

Adventurers Meet

AND artists, too, as we've hastened to add on various occasions. For instance, Gordon Grant, who has been illustrating sea fiction and articles in these pages for a good many years (that's one of his spots in the upper right-hand corner and you'll find another sample of his salty art accompanying Murray Morgan's "The Lost Fleet" on page 76) has never been properly introduced here in *Camp-Fire*. This seems like a good time to let you meet Mr. Grant in case you've been wondering what sort of man it is who can never seem to pick up his pen without launching a ship on what was a sheet of blank paper only moments before.

We often wonder if Gordon Grant's brushes and pens don't work a bit better when a little salt water is mixed with the paint and ink for the artist has been a lover of the sea and ships since childhood. Born of Scottish parents in San Francisco in 1875 he made his first voyage to attend school in Scotland in the crack Glasgow wheat ship *City of Madras* at the age of thirteen. He studied in the London art schools, subsequently returning to this country to become a staff artist on the San Francisco *Examiner*, the old New York *World* and the New York *Journal*. He covered the Boer War in South Africa as a special artist for *Harper's Weekly* and later joined the staff of *Puck* to do general illustrating. His work hangs in many museums throughout the country and his painting of "Old Ironsides" is in the White House in Washington. The Commodore's cabin of the U.S.S. *Constitution* contains four of his paintings illustrating her principal engagements.

A member of the National Academy of Design and of many other important art societies in the country, Mr. Grant is one of the organizers and a trustee of the Marine Museum of the City of New York. A distinguished author as well as artist, Mr. Grant has written and illustrated numerous books on marine subjects, among them "Sail Ho," "Ships Under Sail," "Greasy Luck," and in collaboration with Henry B. Culver, "The Book of Old Ships" and "Forty Famous Ships."

Do you wonder, whenever we have a sailing-ship story to be illustrated or a question of old-time marine lore to be answered, that we call on Gordon Grant? Or that we consider *Adventure* fortunate to number him among its friends?

AND concerning "The Lost Fleet" (a natural for Mr. Grant to illustrate, of course) Murray Morgan, the author of the article, adds the following notation—

I first brushed the story about the destruction of the whalers in the Far North while I was doing research for a history of the Aleutian Islands. At the time I didn't follow up on it very closely because it was a bit too far north for my subject matter. But last spring, while doing some digging in Civil War naval history at the Library of Congress, I came across a copy of a speech given before a Gloucester Church group by Thomas Williams Jr. in 1890. He described the voyage of the *Monticello* and her loss along with the other ships.

Young Williams' account was interesting —nearly all of the direct quotes in the story are from it—but it was incomplete. I recalled that the rescue ships had landed at San Francisco, so I went to the files of San Francisco papers. Sure enough, the destruction of the fleet was the top story for

(Continued on page 8)

THE WEST'S TEN MOST RUTHLESS KILLERS RIDE AGAIN !

Ten times the thrills of "Badman's Territory"— when the bloodiest band in history swoops down upon a lawless land as

THE SUNDANCE KID
THE YOUNGERS
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Produced by NAT HOLT · Directed by RAY ENRIGHT
Screen Play by CHARLES O'NEAL, JACK NATTEFORD and LUCI WARD

RKO RADIO PICTURES

(Continued from page 6)

several days, and all the papers, especially the *Alta California,* devoted more columns of five-point type to it than were good for my eyes. Another abundant source of material for the story were the files of the New Bedford *Whaleman's Shipping List and Merchants' Transcript.*

Assembling the story was a cinch. The material was abundant (I had about fifteen pages of single-spaced notes, in addition to the complete text of Williams' church speech), and the natural way of handling it was in chronological order. I merely had to choose a viewpoint from which to present it. Since I had much more material about Williams than about any other master or ship, I decided to center the story on the *Monticello.* It fell into shape easily. All the incidents are as described by some member of the expedition in the newspapers, or by young Williams.

WILLIAM DU BOIS, whose "Tiger, Tiger" you'll find on page 10 this month, sends the following apologia to accompany his latest exploit of the redoubtable Captain Carter and his nonesuch Sergeant Grady—

Certain graduates of Harvard have addressed me from time to time—following my reports on Brevet-Captain John Carter's Floridian saga—to suggest that the representatives of that university, as introduced in the stories, were somewhat less than typical. In other words, Carter & Co. were being far too hard on Harvard. Now that we're on record that the captain himself was once a Harvard man, I trust that your readers will accept his strictures on the species as first-hand comment. Also (with the publication of "Tiger, Tiger") that Harvard a century ago did not have a monopoly on hell-raising.

I hope, too, that graduates of the College of New Jersey (known as Princeton, these days) will find things in order on *their* campus, circa 1840. True, they will search Palmer Square in vain today for the signboard of Old Nass. We have only the archives to prove that boxing with bargemen from the newly-opened canal was one of the campus' best-loved sports. Whig and Clio, those twin debating halls, are permanent Ionic temples today. Nassau Hall is deep in ivy and memories, its walls unscarred by revolutionary bivouacs. But it's interesting to note that even a hundred years ago more than half the student body hailed from the South; that the orange colors affected by some undergraduates in the Eighteen Forties date back to William of Orange, in whose honor some of the college's early diplomas were bound in orange ribbons.

As for the tiger-mascot—that's another story. The Princeton tiger, as we know him, hardly goes back to grandfather's prime. But then, as Grady himself remarks, Ted Kerry was the sort of college man who'd bring a striped Florida bobcat back to the campus as a pet.

We wish we had handy to pass along to you here a couple of the diatribes directed at Mr. Du Bois from outraged Harvard alumni who took umbrage at the author for his somewhat less than awesome regard of their alma mater as expressed in an earlier story in the series, but the correspondence seems to have been consumed in the flames of its own fury. Possibly the fact that Mr. Du Bois is a Columbia man himself explains his lack of dignified regard when speaking of other learned institutions. So, just to keep things on an even keel, maybe we'd better dig up a yarn in which General Eisenhower's little campus on the Hudson flavors the atmosphere. A fine setting for a colorful tale, those hectic days (circa 1776-1784) when King's College, as it was then called, had to pack up and shut down while the students—Tory and Patriot—took time out to knock each other off!

Turning back to "Tiger, Tiger," it's interesting to note the appearance recently of two highly successful popular novels with a Seminole War background. "Bright Feather" by Robert Wilder, published by Putnam, and "The Flames of Time" by Baynard Kendrick under the Scribner imprint are both currently popular. Maybe *Adventure* and Du Bois started a trend for the first Captain Carter story appeared in these pages way back in '43 and his stories of the Florida frontier have been received enthusiastically from time to time ever since.

ROBINSON MacLEAN promised last month, you'll recall, to tell us of the time he owned the mineral rights to roughly half of The Land of the Conquering Lion of Judah. Here goes—

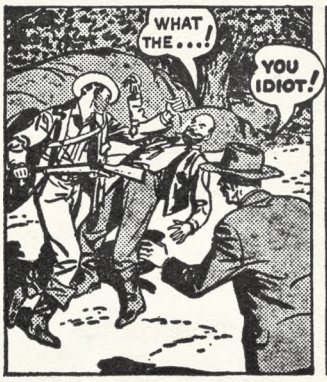
I started to write "The Devil's Left Tusk" because there was a time, in the fall of 1935, and before the fall of Ethiopia to the Italians, when I was given a full and exclusive option to deal for the mineral rights of that part of Ethiopia lying west of the west shore of Lake Tsana and covering an acreage only a few square miles less than Colorado.

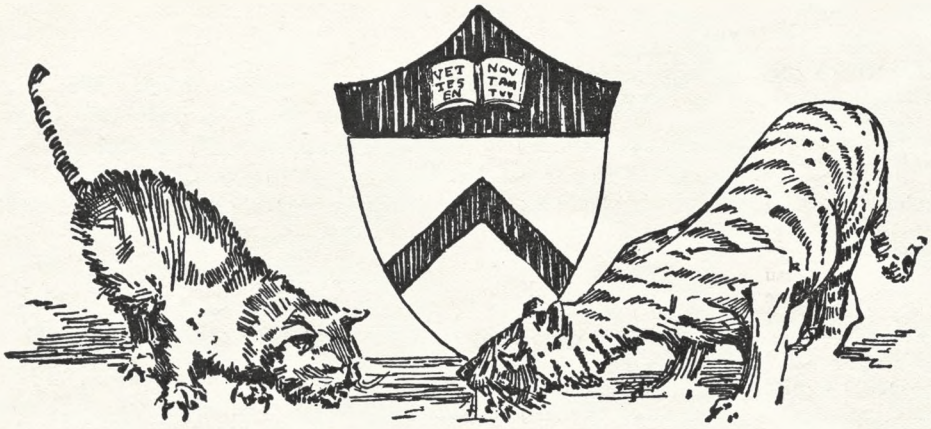
It started with my interpreter, a brilliant

(Continued on page 141)

JEFF LOST INTEREST IN FISHING WHEN...

WORKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE HEAVY BRUSH TOWARD HIS FAVORITE TROUT POOL, JEFF MILLER'S THOUGHTS OF A BIG CATCH ARE RUDELY INTERRUPTED • • •





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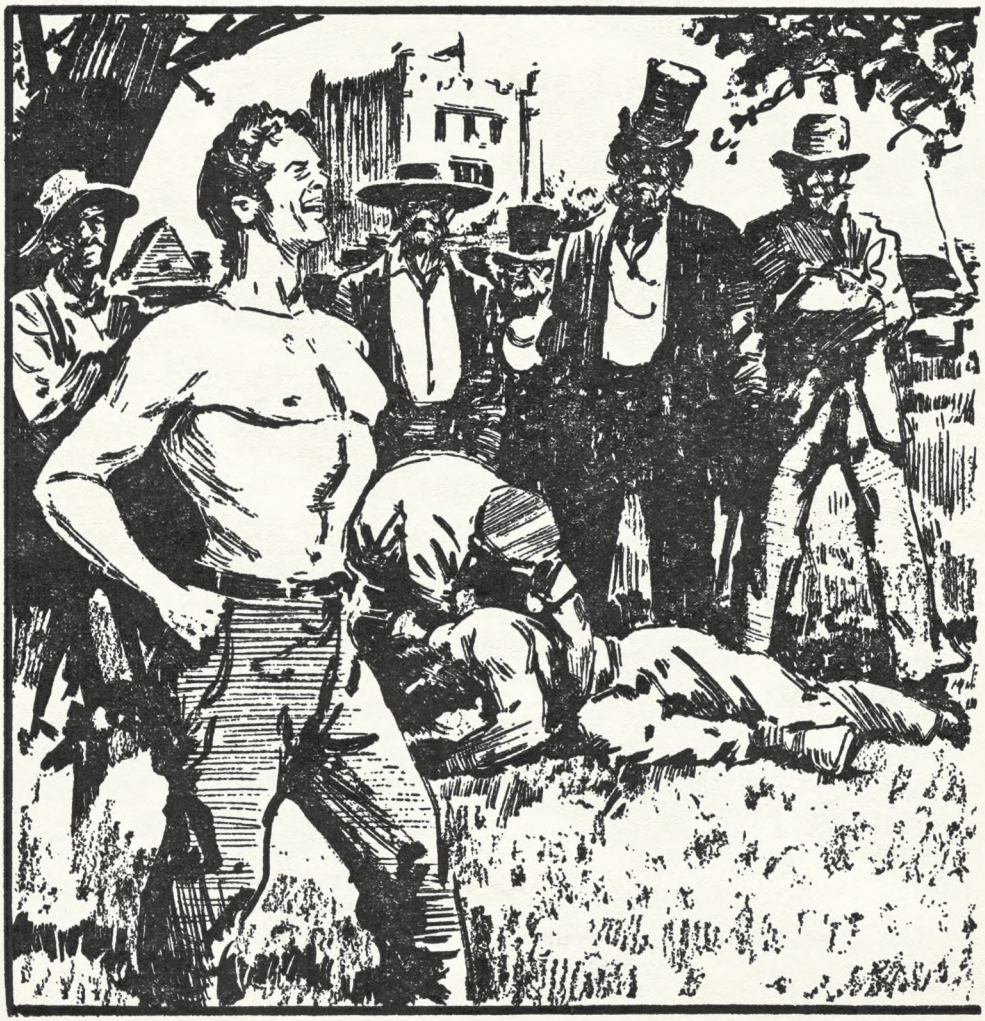


TIGER, TIGER

By WILLIAM DU BOIS

THOUGH he had stumbled upon it quite by accident as he came up the towpath at the Princeton landing, Carter knew instantly that this was a fight worth traveling nine hundred miles to see. Judging by the grin on Grady's face as his companion edged into the cheering circle, he guessed that the emotion was shared.

Carter did not return the grin, as he paused in turn to watch the two hard-slugging contestants within that intent circle: a gentleman traveling with his manservant could hardly afford such familiarity in public. Especially if that gentleman was, in reality, Brevet-Captain John Carter, United States Army, and the alleged manservant his own first

"Put up your fists, sprout!" Grady said.

sergeant... The captain had put aside his blue tunic ere now, and donned civilian garb on army business; Grady, who could ape his betters—or a gentleman's valet—with equal ease, had followed suit with alacrity. Today's pause by the towpath was only a welcome interlude, before they walked on to the college town beyond the screen of fresh-leaved maples, and the business at hand.

At first glance, the meadow beside the canal seemed an odd place for this Homeric combat, though the boxers' tanned torsos, magnificent as animate bits from some Greek frieze, seemed quite at home there as they caromed apart, sparred for an opening and crashed in a rain of hammer-blows that rocked both men on their heels. Carter looked again, and saw that the intent circle was actually two half-moons, bristling with hostility. On one side stood the muleteers who served the canal-boats—including several square-rigged worthies who had brought the two travelers up from the city of Trenton, only this afternoon. On the other side were students from the college—their burnt-orange neckcloths insolently gaudy in the dappled sunlight, their youthful, smooth-shaven cheeks, relieved, here and there, by Jovian side whiskers, a striking contrast to the mule-skinners' stubble, their fresh young voices no less defiant than the canal-men's bellow, as they urged their champion on.

That, too, was part of the picture, as the general had drawn it. The general (profane as usual, and just as informal, as he crouched in his undershirt over a map-littered desk in St. Augustine, and indicated Captain Carter's destination on yet another map) had sketched the situation in broad strokes.

"Princeton, New Jersey. Post-station on the Trenton turnpike, served by the Delaware and Raritan Canal. You can reach it by coach or boat when you dock at Philadelphia. Anyone can direct you to the young gentleman's college, Jack. I understand it's part of the town itself."

Carter remembered the general's glare, and his own discreet smile. "Will it be safe for a former Harvard man to venture on a strange campus, sir?"

"Never mind the Harvard background, Jack. Besides, you're a West Pointer now, not a Harvard man. With four years of Indian-fighting under your belt, don't tell me you're afraid to face a parcel of college boys. This is the year 1840; college boys don't shoot strangers on sight any more—even though they do say those Princeton boys will fight anything with fists."

"You're sending me to make friends with Ted Kerry, sir—not to fight him."

"Exactly. I'm just reminding you that he'd rather fight than eat, if I can trust my reports. So if he challenges you, don't say no. It may be the best way to make friends, after all."

"I'll remember that, sir."

"Sure you remember the rest?"

Carter had come to attention like a good soldier, repeating his orders: "Sergeant Grady and I are to proceed to the Nassau Inn at Princeton, New Jersey, in civilian garb. There we'll be met by a Professor Osborne, of the Faculty of Belles-Lettres, who is also the boy's tutor. As such, he'll accompany him to the Floridas this summer, on the hunting trip he's planning. As such, he'll introduce me to young Kerry, as a fellow-Nimrod who'll pay my share to join the expedition—"

"Osborne will see to that. Osborne is on our side. The boy takes his word for most things."

"Under no circumstances am I to reveal my true identity, or Grady's. With his uncle's death this spring, Ted Kerry became the richest man in the Floridas. He must be given his head, and watched, until we are sure where his loyalties lie. . ."

WITHOUT asking, without even pausing to check the image in his own mind, Carter knew that he was watching Ted Kerry now—that it was Kerry his classmates were cheering to the last echo, as the clean-limbed, hammer-fisted boxer sent his opponent spinning with a one-two punch that seemed to come from nowhere and explode above the swarthy muleteer's heart. Kerry was fighting for the pure joy of combat, and shouting a new challenge as his opponent sagged at the knees. *Muscled like a gorilla,* the general had described him. *Handsome as a pagan god, and just as positive that*

life's his special oyster. At the moment, Ted Kerry fulfilled that word-picture magnificently. . . Like the others in that avid, hostile ring, Carter let out his breath in a long sigh as Kerry's right fist, rising from the greensward with all of Kerry's brawn behind it, thundered against the muleteer's jaw. The muleteer rose ever so slightly from the meadow, his arms windmilling, his face frozen in a kind of shocked astonishment. Landing briefly on his feet again, and swaying like a tree in a cyclone, he collapsed face first, and lay where he fell, a tired warrior who would draw sustenance from the earth before he fought again.

The Princeton champion stepped back a pace, and dusted his hands affably. "Who's next, gentlemen?"

Carter touched an adoring youth on one shoulder with his cane. Like the others, the boy was still cheering his classmate; like the others, he had locked arms to keep the circle of the ring inviolate, as the champion marched round its perimeter, and looked in vain for takers.

"Is this a college custom, to fight with workingmen?"

"Ever since they opened the canal, sir." The boy did not look back, but there was an overtone of contempt in his voice. "No visitor is barred from the ring. If *you'd* like to step inside—"

"Who's next, gentlemen?"

The surviving muleteers growled among themselves, and held their places, though Ted Kerry stared into each face in turn as he made his round. Two of their number stepped forward gingerly to lift their fallen champion, who had continued to hug the earth.

"The ring is clear, gentlemen. Who'll be next?"

"Put up your fists, young sprout!"

Carter swiveled toward the challenge, and felt his jaw sag at a familiar angle. As always, Sergeant Grady had timed his moment—seizing the dramatic pose, and holding it grimly, an actor sharp on cue. He had already shed his bottle-green coat before leaping into the ring; now, he tossed shirt and neckcloth after it and faced the college champion with both fists up and a chest swollen like a pouter pigeon. Stripped to the waist and rocking gently on his toes, Grady looked every inch the boxer. If he resembled an alert chimpanzee still more, thanks to corded forearms and a chest tufted like a doormat, the resemblance did not spoil the first image.

"Put up your fists, sprout! You invited me."

But Ted Kerry had recovered his aplomb long ago. Carter saw the boy's eye sparkle as he measured this new antagonist, and found him to his liking. If the fallen muleteer had been an unworthy oponent, as easy to bowl over as a pigeon in a shooting gallery, this hairy antagonist seemed to promise a more exciting contest.

"You're new to the canal, aren't you?"

Grady spoke with a trace of aspersion. "I'm no mule-skinner, young man. I'm a gentleman's gentleman."

Kerry's eyes swept the circle, until they rested on Carter, who acknowledged the label with a slight bow. "Perhaps your gentleman will follow you," said the boy —and flicked Grady's chin with a long, searching left. Grady responded with a roundhouse punch that missed its target by inches.

"Keep your guard up, son, I'm calling the next one." Grady flicked both fists in the air, crossing his arms with an apparent awkwardness that masked the agility beneath. Carter leaned forward sharply —he had seen his sergeant use that same dodge a dozen times, to subdue drunken rednecks in the *bodegas* of St. Augustine. . .

"Right hook to the chin!"

Fist crashed to bone with all the precision of a lightning-bolt. Ted Kerry somersaulted backwards, to spread-eagle in the arms of his cohorts. He bounced back instantly, with the same wild, happy gleam in his eye.

"Nicely done, my friend. Now let's box in earnest!"

They stood toe-to-toe for awhile, trading punches. Watching Grady narrowly, Carter saw that the sergeant was nursing his own power. A blow like the last, planted squarely above Kerry's heart, should have felled that young giant instantly—if Grady had put his own heart behind it. A slashing frontal attack, fists pumping like pistons at the solar plexus, should have finished the job, on the sergeant's own terms—but Kerry seemed fresh as ever as he backed out of the

clinch and blocked Grady's next onslaught.

The sergeant's over-all purpose was clear to Carter now—if not to the wildly cheering college boys who were urging their champion to yet another victory. He watched Grady's next charge, saw that the sergeant had marked Kerry's nimble side-step as he bulled on, to crash headlong into the madly bellowing ring. Observing Grady's dazed recovery, the obstinate toss of his head as he turned heavily and plowed back for more, he knew that he was exposing himself deliberately for the kill.

It came in a flash, ending the fight as quickly as it had begun. A head-on rush from Kerry, while Grady was still shaking off his daze. A precise left hook, to set up his target—a smash above the heart, to drop his opponent's guard. Grady's iron jaw would never have yielded to the haymaker, though it was thrown from the ground with enough force to stun an ox. . . And yet, Grady fell, even as the muleteer had fallen—face down on the greensward.

"Any other takers? Will the gentleman avenge his valet?"

Carter had already knelt beside the fallen sergeant. To all eyes, Grady was dead to the world, *pro tem;* only Carter observed his solemn wink as he propped the fallen battler's head on his own rolled-up coat and wiped his brow.

"Will you fight, sir? Or are fisticuffs beneath you?"

Carter answered the collegians' concerted roar with a cold stare as he got to his feet. He watched his hands obey orders that did not come from his brain, saw them lay his beaver carefully on the grass beside the fallen Grady. . . Stripped to the waist, and flexing his biceps, he heard the murmurs die around the circle as a score of eyes remarked his saddle-brown tan, the rippling muscles.

"When you've caught your breath, young sprout!"

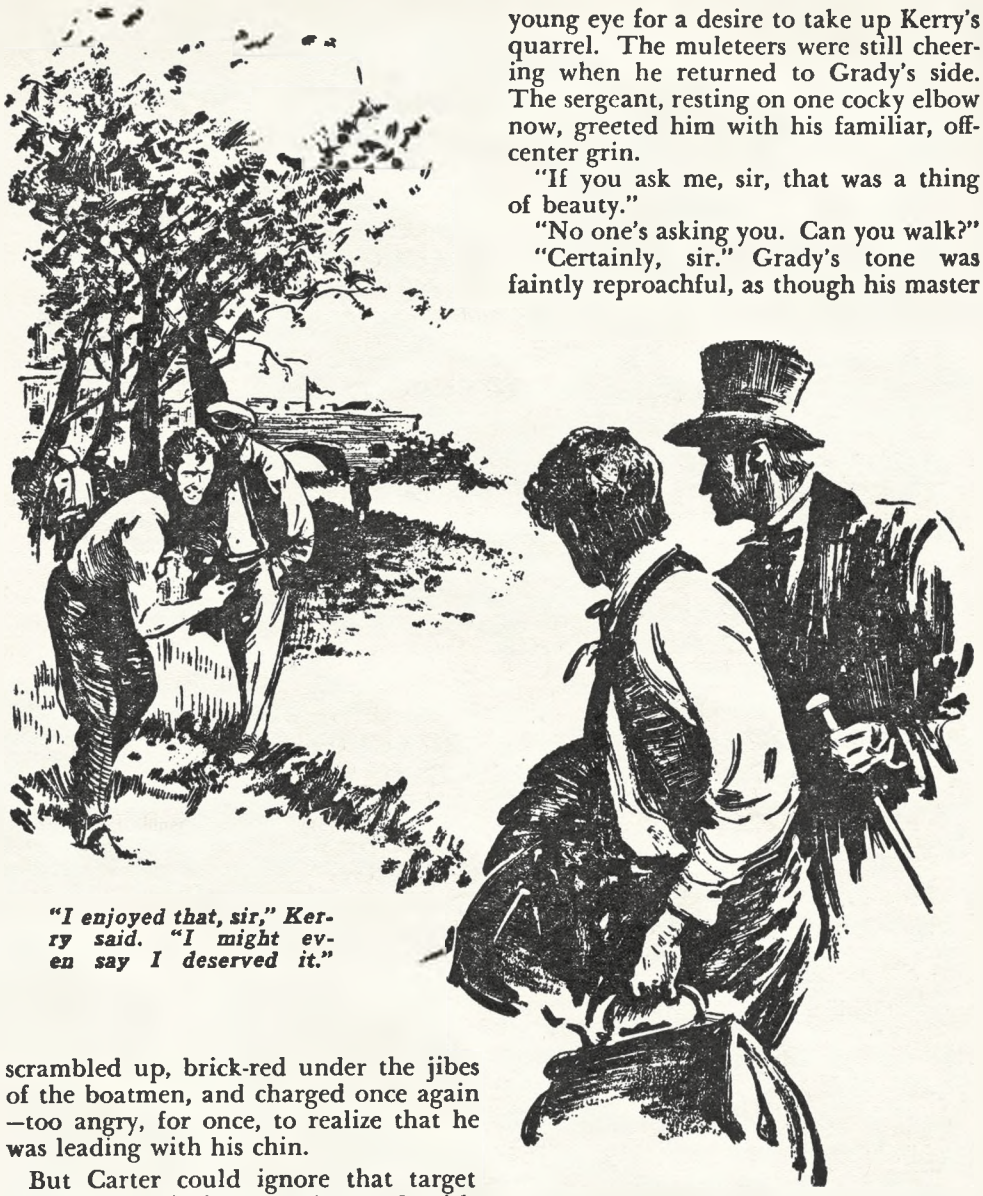
"Thank you, sir. I'm not even winded."

KERRY was dancing around him now, with the same light of combat in his eyes; Kerry's fists were teasing the air a scant six inches from his jaw. But it was Carter's own palm that started the fight in earnest, as he slapped the boy's face with lightning precision, and pulled back to stop the flailing fists that strove to avenge the insult. Carter who lifted his man with a blow that seemed to come from nowhere. . . Carter, in short, who was fighting with all the ease of a man who has made fighting his trade. A man who could afford to bide his time before he closed for the kill.

Already, he had forgotten his surroundings, the green beauty of the countryside, his reason for coming here. Nothing mattered but the bobbing fists before him, and the need to wear them down, to smash through their defenses and find his target. He marked it clearly, as he closed for the first burst of in-fighting—a shifting, deep-nested target, the cleft of Kerry's too-handsome jaw hugged close to Kerry's collarbone as the boy bored in, seeking the opening for his own knockout. And Carter smiled quietly as he blocked that seeking. Kerry could box; he had given abundant evidence of talent. But Kerry was no match for an Army captain who had fought for years in the Florida scrub—memorized the tricks of combat, until he had forgotten more twists of rough-and-tumble than this boy could ever learn.

There was no anger in this battle, though the savagery of his attack built steadily; Carter had gone beyond anger long ago. A man who has made fighting his business has no time for anger, in the consuming sense of that word. Success in combat, and a quiet pride in that success, is the only yardstick that matters. *I'm here to teach this boy a lesson,* he thought calmly—and rolled with a punch that would have stopped the fight instantly, had it found its target. *If I can begin the lesson now, so much the better.*

Would it be best to wear down young Kerry's strength in a long, gruelling battle? Or would it be simpler, and more dramatic, to smash through to a decision, here and now? Carter decided on the latter course, as the boy showed no signs of tiring. A slip of the left foot, carefully feigned, seemed to open his guard for an instant. When Kerry rushed to claim the advantage, it was easy to drop to both knees and send the champion sprawling. To capitalize on that fall when Kerry



"I enjoyed that, sir," Kerry said. "I might even say I deserved it."

scrambled up, brick-red under the jibes of the boatmen, and charged once again —too angry, for once, to realize that he was leading with his chin.

But Carter could ignore that target now. He was inside Kerry's guard, with all the quickness of a pouncing bobcat. A one-two punch, hard at Kerry's midriff, stopped the boy in his tracks; another smash, just above the heart, froze his opponent, just as neatly, for the *coup de grace*. Kerry seemed to sag into the uppercut, to rise with its impact. Carter swiveled away just in time, as the champion went down, with the battle-light gone from his suddenly glassy eyes.

No one stirred as he walked around the circle of collegians, and studied each young eye for a desire to take up Kerry's quarrel. The muleteers were still cheering when he returned to Grady's side. The sergeant, resting on one cocky elbow now, greeted him with his familiar, off-center grin.

"If you ask me, sir, that was a thing of beauty."

"No one's asking you. Can you walk?"

"Certainly, sir." Grady's tone was faintly reproachful, as though his master had carried a joke too far. "Watching you take the sprout's measure was all I needed."

"Then take up our bags, and we'll be on our way."

The circle parted respectfully to let them pass. Carter crossed the meadow with decorum, as befits a man who has just toppled a demigod from his pedestal. In the shade of the fresh-leaved maples at the meadow's edge, he paused to look back—and was somewhat disconcert-

ed to observe that the hero himself had already risen from the grass, and was bowing to him gravely.

"Your servant, sir. I enjoyed that." The boy's grin was infectious, under his ceremonial flourish. "I might even say that I deserved it."

Carter returned the bow, as curtly as good manners would allow. "You might, indeed." He turned quickly on that, and took the towpath that wound on under the maples to the Trenton turnpike, and the town of Princeton. Grady fell into step in his wake, swinging the two heavy carpetbags on carefree wrists.

"If you ask me, sir, he meant every word. I can remember when *I* enjoyed fighting more than eating."

"He should know better than to box with mule-skinners."

"Be honest, Captain. Didn't you fight a few navvies in Boston, when you were studying at Harvard?"

"My year at Harvard, if you insist, was only marking time. Even then, I was waiting to enter at the Point."

"Exactly, sir. You went through West Point with honor, and settled down to a job of Indian fighting. Give this boy time. Let him find out what he wants to be. My guess is he'll settle down too."

"He'll bear watching in between."

"Right again, Captain. Those are orders. Don't I always follow orders?"

"I'm still asking why you jumped into that ring, without my permission?"

Grady's grin was seraphic. "I was wearing him down for you, sir. Where would we be, if he'd knocked us *both* out? I knew from the start you had to fight him."

"How did you know?"

"It was a chance you couldn't overlook—even if we did stumble on it by accident, as it were. Our orders are to make friends with Ted Kerry. If you ask me, we've gotten off to a flying start."

CHAPTER II

SMUGGLER'S CHOICE

PROFESSOR Osborne stared thoughtfully into the depths of his pewter mug—and smiled at Grady as the latter came in with the refills. The bed-sitting-room in the Nassau Inn overlooked the elm-shaded street below, and the sweep of campus across the way. Osborne's snuff-brown tranquillity was part of the scene, though there was no mistaking the authority under that deceptive ease. Carter, who had liked the professor from the first, swung back from the window, and answered the question with a shrug.

"I quite agree. He seems a fine, high-spirited boy. In spite of his ancestry, I'd say he was a good American. But my orders are to watch him carefully."

"Does your general fear that this hunting trip to the Floridas has an ulterior motive?"

"So it would seem."

"Can't you be more specific?"

"The reason for the general's suspicions are obvious. St. Augustine, as you must know, is the only stronghold we can count on in our prosecution of the Indian War."

"I'd been informed that the Seminole War was virtually over."

Carter smiled thinly—and permitted Grady to edge into the conversation as he set down the two foaming tankards. "It's been over several times before," said the sergeant. "The present truce happens to be just that—and another more. There'll be Indian trouble in Florida until the last Seminole is transported to the west. Or should I say, until Spanish filibusters stop running guns to Coacoochee, from the Havana wharves?"

"Coacoochee happens to be the dominant chief at the moment," explained Carter. "He's well-ambushed in the Glades, as of now. My guess is that he has several thousand hostiles in his command. As Grady says, they're able to provision themselves from Cuba, almost at will. Whenever Coacoochee wills it, the war will resume."

"Are you suggesting that it's unsafe to organize a hunting expedition this summer?"

"No one in Florida can call himself safe, unless he's inside the city wall at Augustine." Carter permitted his thin smile to expand into a grin. "Not that I'm expecting that bit of wisdom to deter young Kerry."

"I'm still waiting for a formal charge against him."

"There is no formal charge, so far. All

we know is what I've already seen—that he's a young hellion who's always had his own way, enjoys fighting for the sake of fighting, and believes that the world will continue to play a three-ring circus for his benefit."

"Isn't that a common delusion of the young?"

"Unfortunately, your Mr. Kerry is a rather special case."

"He isn't *my* Mr. Kerry, Captain." Professor Osborne's snapping blue eyes leaped to life behind his spectacles; once again, Carter was reminded that this slender pedant was no weakling, despite his manner. "It merely happens that I've always tutored the boy, during his summer vacations. It was his father's wish that he graduate from the College of New Jersey with honors. Provision was made in Simon Kerry's will for a tutor, in case there was—well, work to make up at the year's end. I need hardly add that I've earned my fee; it's taken some doing to bring Ted through his junior year with passing grades."

Carter nodded soberly, with his eyes on the sun-dappled campus across the way. Nassau Hall, serene in its patina of memories, seemed to stare back at him with benign eyes of its own. For an instant, he knew a twinge of regret at his own choice of career.

"Simon Kerry was a good man. The fact remains that he moved from Trenton to Florida in his youth, married a Spanish girl in Augustine, and settled there while the peninsula was still a colony of the Crown. It's also a fact that young Ted is half-Spanish—that his real name is Arturo Kerry, in honor of his recently-deceased uncle—and that *that* Arturo was one of the most accomplished scoundrels that ever stood in the path of law."

"I'm aware of those facts, Captain. It is also a fact that Ted has lived outside the Floridas since his boyhood—that he never so much as laid eyes on his uncle—"

"He's still Arturo's heir. Must I remind you that his uncle's estate runs into the millions? Or that young Ted must settle in Augustine to administer it?"

Professor Osborne's jaw had set into a hard line. "And I say he'll fulfill his father's wishes, and graduate from the College of New Jersey—with honors, if I can keep his nose in a few books this summer." He drank deep to cover the outburst, and smiled at Carter over the beaded pewter. "Surely his uncle left a competent executor. Surely it won't be necessary to interrupt the boy's education for business reasons."

"Apparently you aren't aware of the source of Arturo Kerry's fortune."

"Ted's letter said it was based on land and shipping."

"The land includes a few thousand acres in Spanish grants on the St. Johns. I'll admit it'll be worth a fortune some day; at present, it lies fallow, thanks to Indian raiders. The shipping is another story. Since British times, Ted's uncle Arturo has been the most active smuggler the Floridas have known, with bases from Fernandina to the Perdido."

OSBORNE considered the information for a long moment. Watching him narrowly, Carter was sure that it had taken him by surprise.

"Are you suggesting that Ted has no choice but to follow in his uncle's footsteps?"

"Admit it's a strong temptation for a boy of nineteen. Admit, too, that he'll discover all sorts of old loyalties when he visits Florida, and meets his mother's people."

The professor just escaped smiling. "Let's be honest, Captain. Isn't smuggling an old American trade?"

"Not this sort of smuggling. Uncle Arturo's fleet has brought everything to our shores from guns to slaves. His crews are made up of everything from blackbirders to pirates with prices on their heads. His admiral, if you can call him that, is wanted in Augustine for murder. Would you throw your favorite pupil into that sort of college for his post-graduate education?"

"If that's the case, why haven't you brought Kerry's ships in as prizes?"

It was Carter's turn to smile, now. "I said they had bases from the Georgia line to Alabama. Look in your atlas, Dr. Osborne, and you'll see that's several hundred miles of coastline—most of it honeycombed with bays and tidal reaches. When old Arturo's fleet wanted to take

cover, it could make itself invisible at will."

"Surely you could have brought the man himself to book."

"Unfortunately, that was all but impossible. Most of his ships were coastal sloops, sailing under the Spanish flag; Havana was always listed as their port-of-call. Of course we had a case, if we could prove that they were using Florida bayous as their hideaways; that, too, was easier said than done. The American flag was planted on the peninsula less than twenty years ago; most of that time has been wasted in Indian wars. Washington felt that we must—how shall I put it?—introduce civilization slowly."

"In that case, precisely what is your complaint?"

"I'm telling you that Ted Kerry's inheritance has been used to run guns to the Seminoles. My job is to make friends with Ted Kerry, and follow every move he makes on this hunting trip. If I'm convinced that he's planning to take over the ships on his own, and continue the gun-running, I've authority to arrest him and deliver him to Augustine or Key West for trial."

"As a step in civilizing the Floridas, Captain?"

"As a step in social evolution, Professor, to make the Floridas safe. To end an Indian war by cutting off its armament. To convince your favorite pupil that law-breaking must be part of the American past, not of the American future."

Osborne subsided into another brown study—and emerged gratefully when Grady came in with yet another round of pewter mugs from the tap-room downstairs. "You haven't expressed your views so far, Sergeant."

"Grady's views are identical with mine," said Carter.

"Your general's letter said I should hear them, nonetheless."

Carter bit his lip. As always, he knew that Grady and their commanding officer enjoyed a certain *rapport* he could never quite share. Admitting, in the same resentful breath, that Grady's instinct was often accurate, he held his peace.

The sergeant put down the tankards, hooked a heel in a chair-rung, and smiled down at both gentlemen. In candy-striped waistcoat and skin-tight pantaloons, Grady could have passed for a valet in most circles, including the mellow background of Old Nass. Carter still remembered his air as they walked under the signboard of that famous inn, his swagger as he followed his master up the paneled stairwell. Grady, he reflected dourly, was enjoying his assignment, as usual; the fact that a boy's whole future depended on their actions had left him unruffled.

"If you ask me, Professor, I think our young nabob should be given his head. It's been my experience that colts on a short rope never clear the fences later."

"Never mind those warmed-over proverbs, Grady," said Carter. "Tell Dr. Osborne our plans for young Kerry, or must I say *your* plan?"

"It's really quite simple, Professor," said Grady, with his aplomb unshaken. "First-off, if you'll remember, it was the boy's idea to go hunting in the Floridas, not ours."

"It's one way to invest an inheritance," said Osborne, mildly.

"Maybe it's an honest way. We won't know until we've tried it. Your job is to convince him that we're both good companions and good guides. That he'll enjoy his hunting far more if he has a pair of professionals along."

"Consider that much accomplished now. Ted is delighted to have company." Osborne's eyes clouded briefly. "Naturally, I had to pretend Captain Carter was an old friend of mine."

"You won't regret that deception, Professor," said Grady. "Nor will Ted Kerry, if I miss my guess. Fact is, we *are* professional hunters. If a man alive knows the East Coast better than your humble servant, I'll bow my head in shame. 'Course, we've hunted red meat mostly—but you needn't tell the boy that."

Carter cut in hastily. "Does Ted realize we must rendezvous in Augustine?"

"On the island, sir," said Grady. "Not in Augustine. We're much too well-known in town; if he realizes that we're Army, the jig's up."

"Won't he think it strange that we insist on meeting at the edge of the wilderness?"

"Not at all, Captain—if you'll let me handle him my way. As I understand it, he must stay on here awhile—" Grady hesitated over the word—"for his examinations, as the professor calls 'em. That means we go on ahead, set up a camp on Anastasia, and keep the guns oiled. To say nothing of the gaffs on the sloop you'll be ordering for the trip south."

"So we're going by sloop. That's news to me."

"By the Inland Waterway, sir." Grady was faintly reproachful now. "With shore excursions, as desired. Bobcat and bear in the cedar-scrub on the islands. 'Gators in the marsh. Deer on the mainland, if the Indian sign isn't too thick for comfort." He smiled at Osborne. "The professor can stay aboard with his books. 'Course, I'm suggesting that Ted recruit his own crew in Augustine—"

CARTER leaned forward sharply, insisting on his authority, for the moment. "Grady merely means that Ted is to be given an opportunity for making contact with his uncle's men—if he so desires."

Osborne nodded. "I gathered that, Captain. Suppose he has no interest in his uncle's past—or his uncle's men?"

"Then our hunting-trip will be a simple vacation for us all. You'll take your pupil back to Princeton in the fall, and supervise his graduation. No one will be happier than I, if events follow that line."

"And if Ted makes the—the contact you fear he'll make?"

Grady took back the plotting, with a smooth assumption that his voice was welcome. "If you ask me, gentlemen, it's a temptation few youngsters would resist. Least of all a young brawler who enjoys boxing with strangers."

"You mean, when he learns that he's actual owner of a smuggling fleet, he'll want to survey his possessions?"

"He knows now, sir," said the sergeant. "He's had letters from Ruy, his captain. Delivered via Havana, of course. We know they've been sent—and received. Even if we don't know their contents. Or the reply Ted's made—if any."

Osborne's brow had clouded in earnest. "This is a bitter revelation, Sergeant. Are you sure it's accurate?"

"It's the reason for our masquerade, Doctor," said Carter.

"I thought I enjoyed the boy's confidence. Apparently I was mistaken."

"Uncle Arturo's estate was administered by Spanish lawyers, as well as American. Ted, as you know, has been bi-lingual since childhood. Perhaps it's the American part of the boy that is your confidant, Dr. Osborne—not the Spanish half."

"So the letters were exchanged via the lawyers in Havana?"

"Precisely. As it happens, we have a spy in those Havana offices. We know that Ruy, and a good portion of the fleet, is at anchor some hundred miles south of Augustine, awaiting instructions from its new owner. We know that Ruy is anxious to show his loyalty, if he feels that he can work with Ted as he worked with Ted's uncle. On the other hand, it's obvious that Ruy will spread every stitch of canvas, and skedaddle, if he finds that Ted is honest after all."

"You think that they've arranged a meeting-place, to discuss the future?"

"What else can we think?"

"Surely Ted would plan to go to such a meeting alone."

"True. He'd also be at some pains to cover his intentions. That's why you've been permitted to invite us on this hunting trip. And why we must appear the souls of innocence, from the moment it begins."

Osborne smiled again, as though a weight had been lifted from his brain. "I'll take such a part naturally enough, Captain. It's my conviction that Ted Kerry is a good American. That he'll send those pirates packing, even if he has arranged to meet them." He rose briskly on that note, and consulted his watch. "For the present, I'm afraid I must proctor an examination at Stanhope. Will you stroll over with me, and meet Kerry on the way? I left him in the chemistry laboratory."

They crossed Nassau Street in silence, with Grady a respectful three paces in the rear. Quartering the great, green apron of campus in tempo with Osborne's sturdy strides, watching the changing shadow-pattern of elm and maple on brown, ivied walls, Carter found himself sharing the professor's ideal, however briefly. Perhaps Osborne was right about his charge, after all; certainly there was no better medicine for youth than this cloistered peace. No better proving-ground for the years that must separate youth from maturity. . . If Osborne could bring Ted Kerry to this campus in the fall with clean hands, Kerry's American heritage seemed secure. At the moment, Carter could pray for that ending with all his heart.

"Observe the new quadrangle, Captain, just back of Nassau Hall. And Whig and Clio, our twin debating-halls." Osborne gestured toward a brace of Grecian temples deep in leaves, their Ionic beauty all but disguising the fact that they were built of whitewashed wood, not marble. "Already, we've over three hundred students—nearly half of them from the South. Some of my more conservative colleagues think we're growing too fast. In my opinion, such growth is part of the pattern of America."

"You're proud of your campus, aren't you?"

"With reason, sir."

"And proudest of all of Ted Kerry?"

"I'll be frank, Captain. If he decides to be a Spaniard, and a smuggler, it will break my heart. Being a cynic, I suppose you've already surrendered him to the enemy?"

"Far from it. I have every hope that he'll see the light."

"That's all a teacher can hope for, isn't it? To open the door, and let a little light into the darkness. Perhaps you will be his teacher, as well as I."

THEY walked between a pair of rather grubby dormitories —redeemed, in their turn, by the purple blaze of wisteria on their raw clapboards. Knots of students were lazing under the canopy of wine-glass elms. Carter found that he must look twice to remind himself that these fresh-faced youths had howled for his blood beside the canal, only a few hours ago.

"The mind of youth is a strange jungle," said Osborne. He was smiling quietly now, as though he had picked up Carter's unspoken thought. "A teacher can hardly hope to explore it fully. The best he can do is cut a few paths, and hope that youth will find its own way out. Most of these young men, of course, are quite unregenerate. They're the sons of wealth, who have come here to idle away a few years, until they can claim their birthright. . . Occasionally, there's a Ted Kerry to vary the mulish monotony. It's boys like Ted who make the teacher's lot worthwhile. Even when he's at his wildest, he seems to know what we're striving for."

Osborne's voice was charged with an emotion that transcended the dry precision of his words. He shrugged off its threat, and fell back into the easy, professorial patter as he felt Carter's eye.

"We've produced a president and a poet in our time. And our quota of statesmen. Why shouldn't Ted Kerry turn out to be a territorial governor, instead of a pirate?"

"Why not, indeed?"

"I'm beginning to believe you're on our side, Captain."

"I don't enjoy the role of spy, if that's what troubles you."

Osborne smiled—and raised his voice a peg, as a group of undergraduates strolled by, and paused to tip their hats to the strolling professor. "Stanhope Hall lies directly ahead. As you can see, it's an integral part of the old college, as it'll be part of the new. Some day, our campus will spread far beyond this modest grouping on Nassau Street. Yes, and rival your fair Harvard for honors."

"That will take some growing, I'm afraid."

"You'll find us equal to the challenge, sir. Of course, we must alter our name, if we're to move with the times. The College of New Jersey is too cumbersome—and too modest. I'm all for changing from college to university—and calling ourselves Princeton. After the town—and the tradition—"

The blast slammed his last words into oblivion. At first glance, the whole gray flank of Stanhope Hall seemed to crumble in that crashing detonation. Carter, flattening to the walk with a soldier's instinct, and tripping Osborne to hands and knees at his side, heard the tinkle of breaking glass in the dormitory behind them, the hoarse shouts of students converging for a nearer view. Already, he saw it was a window that had gone, not the stone wall that surrounded it. That the wild spout of smoke and flame had subsided as quickly as it had come, though it had marked the academic ivy with a giant's sooty thumbprint.

"Easy does it, gentlemen," said Grady. "Is anyone hurt in there?"

Osborne, still on hands and knees, drew in his breath. "Let's hope not. That was the chemistry laboratory, I'm afraid."

But it was the sergeant, not the professor, who skipped nimbly to the blackened window-sill and handed out the lone occupant of the room beyond. In shirt-sleeves and leather apron, Ted Kerry was still handsome as some antique god—and just as debonair. Even the smudge on one cheek could not spoil his aplomb as he vaulted to the ground and offered Carter his hand.

Kerry vaulted to the ground and offered Carter his hand.

"My apologies, sir. I'm not always this violent."

"This is your hunting companion, Arturo," said Osborne. He got to his feet, dusting the gravel from his knees. The look he threw at his favorite pupil was both benign and stern.

"I'm aware of that, Doctor. I hope he still wants me."

"The pleasure's mine," said Carter. "Providing you're still in one piece."

"I'm afraid I'm rather hard to kill," said Ted Kerry. "And I'll admit I was a fool to try and make gunpowder on college time."

"What's the meaning of this?"

The bellow, thrown with stentorian vigor from the portico of a small, white house across the green, froze the group in its tracks. The bellower, a spare, sandy man with magnificent side-whiskers and

the glare of an aroused Cerberus, stumped through the open door and leveled a furious finger at Ted Kerry.

"Answer me! Were you making gunpowder *again?*"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Come into my study at once. You too, if you please, Mr. Osborne."

No one budged on the academic lawn as pupil and professor vanished behind the fanlighted doorway. When Grady spoke at last, it was in the barest of whispers, for Carter's ears alone.

"Stop me if I'm wrong, but isn't that the president's house?"

"And the college president, in person."

"If you ask me, young Kerry is bound to take to smuggling now. From where I'm standing, he doesn't have much choice."

CHAPTER III

SHARK'S BLOOD

FLAT on the foredeck of the *Inez,* with both eyes fixed on the green glass of the sea just below the sloop's bowsprit, Carter reviewed the last fortnight with all the tranquillity of an observer who has confirmed a first opinion. From this vantage point, it was impossible to dislike Ted Kerry—or to doubt the boy's obvious desire to please the companions of his hunting trip. It was even harder to doubt Ted's enjoyment of this sun-steeped adventure—whether he was hunting bobcat in the scrub of Anastasia Island, stalking 'gator in Ten Mile Hammock, or exploring the sea-bottom like a modern merman who can take shark and barracuda in his stride. . .

In the past fortnight, they had lived through all this together. They had ridden out an abortive hurricane under bare poles, off the Indian River estuaries —and drifted through becalmed midnights on that same great tidal river, while Osborne parsed the Iliad for his pupil's benefit, and Carter (remembering his own academic youth, however dimly) had felt his senses stir to the surf-like beat of the Greek dactyls. Deep in a nest of dunes, they had watched a peacock-bright sunrise paint the Atlantic, while Ted framed a cinnamon-brown bear in his sights, as that doomed target hunted for turtle-eggs at the merging of sea and shore.

Yes, it had been a good holiday for a hard-worked Army captain. He had enjoyed it all the more as he probed deeper in Ted Kerry's mind, and assured himself that the boy was exploring Florida's coastal bayous for the joy of hunting—and nothing more. It seemed quite natural now that Ted should walk the sea-bottom, a good five fathoms under the *Inez's* keel, as the sloop rode easily at her jury-anchor a half-mile off the sandspit of Flamingo Island. Natural, too, that Professor Osborne should doze over his book in the stern-sheets—a patient pedagogue who could wait to open the next study-period. Eminently natural that Sergeant Grady, naked as some fuzzy cro-Magnon and twice as nonchalant, should walk the ribbed ocean's floor at Ted Kerry's side to point out the beauties of nature under water.

Carter's eyes marked the faint, trailing filaments that anchored both men to the sloop. Attached to sizable slugs of pig iron, these two guide-ropes would enable Grady and Ted to gain the surface again in a twinkling, if danger threatened. It was Carter's job to warn the explorers at the approach of a shark, or the more-dreaded barracuda that cruised these waters in blunt-nosed armadas. A halved cocoanut shell, struck sharply just below the surface, would do the trick; they had practiced it this morning, as the divers swarmed up their guide-ropes for air.

The September sun was merciless on his back, etching a deeper mahogany from heels to shoulder-blades; his eyes were shaded by an impromptu hat made of palmetto-fronds, which protected the back knobs of his spine from the dangerous rays. Thanks to that shadow, he could concentrate on the water-mirror directly below the bowsprit, and ignore the cobalt glare that surrounded them. The Atlantic was crystal clear today, shading from green to midnight blue where the shoal tapered into the depths. The sunlight seemed to bathe the ocean floor, picking out Ted and Grady's shadows as though they were dancing in liquid air. Grady had gone down first; when he emerged, it would be Carter's turn to take the plunge. He placed the

cocoanut-halves precisely in the gunwale, where Grady's hand could find them instantly, tossed aside his palm-thatch hat, and began to arch his chest as his lungs drew in the last possible ounce of air.

Watching the sergeant rise from the bottom in a whirligig of bubbles, he ran lightly to the bowsprit, and plummeted downward—timing his dive to pass Grady en route, seizing the guide-rope firmly to draw himself down to its anchor, even as Grady gained the open air above. Ted, his forearm twined in his own guide-rope, beckoned eagerly, and pointed to a fan-like object he had just pried free of the sand with his clasp-knife.

"Coral?"

Reading the word on Ted's lips, Carter shook his head. The fossil sponge that the boy had just freed from its pedicle resembled brain-coral at a distance; rare enough in these latitudes, it would make an exotic addition to the other specimens that all but choked the last of the sloop's three dinghies. . . He watched Ted spurn the ocean floor and soar away toward the surface with his prize: alone for a moment in the depths, he took a tentative step downward, where the sand shoaled away into blue darkness.

He kept a firm grip on the guide-rope, knowing it was dangerous to venture far. Already, the singing at his ear-drums had sounded its own warning. Perhaps it was the slight deafness that delayed Grady's signal—though he realized that Grady had struck the cocoanut-shells smartly, just below the water-line. Carter turned on his toes, to stare up at the gleam of the surface thirty feet above, bright as rippling mercury under the sun. There was the great, oblate shadow of the sloop's hull, repeated on the ocean's floor. There, between him and that floating sanctuary, was a second shadow, that seemed only a trifle smaller in this nightmare moment.

As shadows go, this one was blue and lazily drifting. At first glance, it seemed a part of the midnight below him, a fragment that had detached itself somehow, to rise with deceptive speed from the depths, spoiling the clean brilliance of the sun. In that same flash of perception, he knew that the blue-gray oval was stalking him, even as it blocked his return to the air.

HE forced his mind to steady as he weighed his chances, forced his panic-riveted eyes to measure his Nemesis, from snout to wide, forked tail. The shark—blue as indigo along his notched dorsal fin, dirty-white from gills to tapered belly—was courting the larger shadow. Hugging it deliberately, as though the monster sensed the value of the ambush, while it waited for its prey to quit the bottom.

Carter jerked sharply on the guide-rope, and found small comfort in Grady's instant answer. Evidently, the sergeant had noticed the shark in good time to warn the captain on the ocean's floor—if the captain had not been wool-gathering at that precise moment. By the same token, it was evident that he could do nothing to save Carter now. The shark, blanketed from snout to tail by the sloop's hull, could not be dislodged for harpooning. The shark had merely to wait—and choose its moment.

His head spun, in the grip of a vertigo that went deeper than fear. He blinked away the black spots that circled before his eyes. Either he must breathe in another moment, or his bursting lungs would force his lips apart in search of air where no air existed. The shark spiraled easily, all but vanishing in the encompassing shadow of the sloop. As it turned, its small, hot eyes—yellow as sparks from some aqueous inferno—seemed to mark the man as its special quarry. The mouth—puckered as an ancient idiot's, as just as grotesquely misshapen—seemed to grimace at a joke all its own. . . He'll turn again before he strikes, thought Carter. I must wait until he's snout-down, if I want an outside chance. Even as the thought crossed his mind, he felt his anguished muscles take over, felt his toes spurn the sand as his air-starved body rocketed upward.

The guide-rope stung his palms, and his senses reeled in earnest as the blue-white shark bubbled down to meet him, lazy as ever, its forked tail piloting its easy parallel, its puckered mouth still smiling. He heard the crash of a dive above him, and dared not look up to identify this unexpected aid. His whole being was focused on the great fish darting for the kill. His last ounce of vitality

went into the upward lunge that met the shark, head-on. A fist closed about the snout, deflecting the yawning mouth just in time. He had a glimpse of notched, yellow-white teeth, clashing like a bear-trap gone berserk; he felt the creature's hide sandpaper a shoulder as it roared by, cutting a wide arc of bubbles in the blue infinity below, turning and darting upward for a second attack.

His deliverance had come too fast for thought. He knew that Ted Kerry was part of it—knew, just as surely, that the knife-blade clutched in Ted's hand would save his life. Forgetting his bursting lungs for the moment, he clung to the guide-rope and watched the meeting of man and shark far below. He saw the sunlight splinter on the knife-blade, just before the steel ripped home, haft-deep in the white belly. He watched it lash downward, disemboweling the monster from jawbone to rudder-fin. Then, as his senses reeled in earnest, he broke surface—letting his lungs claim the air in straining gasps, yielding to Grady's hands as the sergeant caught him below the shoulder-blades, and whisked him over the sloop's gunwale.

"If you ask me, sir, you came up just in time—"

Grady was wiping the captain's face with a bit of raw cotton. Carter stared incuriously at the red stain—and realized that it was only a mild nosebleed, brought about by the sudden change in pressure. He leaned overside as his head cleared, watching a vaster crimson cloud the depths as the shark lashed into its death-throes. Ted Kerry had already darted free, to join them at the gunwale, with all the nonchalance of a frisking porpoise. Treading water easily, with both elbows on the sloop's foredeck, the boy looked relaxed, and entirely content. The wide-open, candid eyes sparkled with a light that Carter had come to know too well.

"I've been wanting to do that all my life, Jack," said Ted Kerry. "Thanks for making it possible."

Carter found his voice at last, and rejoiced in the parade-ground bellow. "Get aboard, you young idiot! Don't you want to keep your legs?"

"That shark's as dead as he'll ever be, Jack—"

But Grady and Carter had already lifted Ted aboard, by both elbows. Grady's voice was apologetic, as he scanned the depths below. "It's the 'cudas, sir. Nothing like a barracuda for smelling blood a mile away—shark *or* human. They'll be swarming from all sides to feed on that carcass—and any loose legs that may be hanging overside."

Ted Kerry stood with a foot on the bowsprit and arched his barrel-chest in the bright blaze of morning. With the white dunes of Flamingo Island behind him, he resembled a pagan god more than ever. A rugged deity who made his own laws in a wilderness all but untouched by man.

"I still enjoyed it, Jack. Do you mind if I thank you?"

"Someday I'll thank *you* for saving my life," said Carter dourly. "For the present, you'd best look to Professor Osborne. It seems he's fainted dead away."

BY mid-morning, Osborne had recovered from the shock of watching his pupil brush shoulders with death. Sprawled in a cane-bottom chair amidships, under the canvas awning that Grady had rigged for just such moments, the professor was himself again—book on knee, pale eyes remote as he led Ted Kerry through the neat maze of French history before the Revolution. . . Ted Kerry's hunting companions, having conned the sloop through the sandspits of Flamingo Island to the broad tidal reaches of the Indian River, were preparing to go ashore and shoot their dinner—a ritual they had followed religiously, since they had dropped their first anchor in the shadow of Anastasia Island, more than a fortnight ago.

Ted himself, thought Carter, seemed to enjoy the intrigues of Louis Quinze's courtiers quite as much as he had enjoyed his meeting with a man-eater a few hours before. Stretched full-length on the starboard gunwale, with a notebook cradled in one arm, he was absorbing Osborne's quiet wisdom with all his mind—or so it seemed, from the vantage-point of the dugout, as Carter and Grady paddled toward the shore. Carter turned to marvel one more time as the canoe dropped the anchored sloop astern. Ted's

The knife-blade ripped home, haft-deep in the white belly.

concentration was absolute. He was stalking knowledge as intently as he had stalked bull-'gators in the jungle hammock. True, the president of his college had been unequivocal on that point; the president had mentioned a deficiency examination in chemistry (and others in history and Greek) as the *sine qua non* of Ted's return to Princeton in the fall.

"Believe it or not, sir, but he'll stay with those books until he's beaten them," said Grady, in his familiar whisper. "He's a good boy, Captain. For my money, he can't be beaten—by books or fish or men."

"What about his own romantic urge?"

"You've lived with that boy for two weeks, Captain. Do you think he'll sell out to his Uncle Arturo's pirates?"

They were still arguing in whispers, though there was no need to whisper; the dugout, moving like a fat brown ghost, had already left the *Inez* far behind. Carter looked once again at the sloop, her canvas neatly stowed, the last of her three dinghies idling like an afterthought at her stern. He remembered the two Minorcans who had come out from St. Augustine as Ted Kerry's crew—and how Ted had sent them back the first week, as the first two dinghies filled with hides and 'gator leather and egret wings. Grady was scheduled to return too—as far as the settlement of New Smyrna—in another day or two. If this was part of Ted's scheming, it seemed natural enough on the surface. If he argued with Grady now, it was merely to keep his mission at the front of his mind.

"Why did he bring those Minorcans out of Augustine—only to send them back? How do we know they aren't messengers to Ruy?"

"We don't sir—as of now. On the other hand we didn't *need* a crew, once we were underway. 'Course, neither of us let on in advance that we were expert sailors."

"Very well. Give him the benefit of the doubt on the Minorcans. Why is he getting rid of you?"

"Remember I volunteered for that chore, sir. That last dinghy is deep in hides. If they aren't cured in the next few days, they'll spoil in the sun."

"Very well. Let's assume you'll enjoy beating your way north to New Smyrna, with a boatload of stinking bear-fur."

"I'm not going that far, Captain. You know that as well as I."

Carter dismissed the interruption. "As you say, it may all be innocent enough. I'd still like to believe it is. On the other hand, every move we've made so far may be a step in Ted's plan to rendezvous with Ruy—and Ruy's fleet. How d'you suppose I'll feel, when I'm left aboard the *Inez*—with that young hellion, and his professor?"

"Don't forget that Dr. Osborne's on our side."

"Dr. Osborne believes his favorite pupil can do no wrong. That makes him unreliable in a crisis." Carter permitted himself a thin smile. "Even if he didn't faint at the sight of blood."

"It's a habit of schoolmasters, sir. If you ask me, Dr. Osborne is the best of his breed, even so."

"I've no quarrel with Osborne. I just don't enjoy the feeling that I may be drifting into a trap. I've been hunting Ruy for a long time now—he has every reason to hate me. Nothing would give him more pleasure than sinking me in the open Atlantic, with lead at my feet."

"Don't draw such a gloomy picture, sir. It's my guess that our Ted would protect you."

"Even if he knew we'd been spying on him, from the start?"

"Even so, Captain. Ted's young—and the young forgive easily."

"Not always, Grady."

"Easier than the old, at any rate. Easier than a veteran water-rat like Ruy. Ted's rich, in the bargain. When you're rich, you always have spies around you."

CHAPTER IV

AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS

THE dugout, bouncing awkwardly in the slight groundswell that still rolled in from the sea, was skirting the beach of the island, now. Even at this easy view, the scrub that choked the shore seemed carved of yellow-gray metal—a glistening wall of palmetto and water-oak, green and sad and sinister, a wilderness unspoiled by a machete. From the dugout, the sloop had diminished to a toy ship, floating in an endless, pale-blue millpond; the Indian River, so-called, seemed more an inland sea at this moment; the mainland, a good two miles away, was a mere pencil-smudge against the coppery noon sky. Carter sat quietly at his paddle, and breathed deep of the loneliness, as though he had sensed it for the first time.

"It's a good country for piracy, Grady. How can civilization ever get a toehold?"

"Give it time, sir. Give boys like Ted a chance to grow up with the country, and understand it. You'll see steamers in this river someday, and orange groves on both banks. Yes, and rich men from everywhere, getting back their health in the sun on those beaches."

The Seminole raised one arm palm-outward, the immemorial gesture of peace.

"What about the Indians?"

"We'll keep a few around, for souvenirs. The rest will be learning to farm in the West." Grady's paddle bit deep into the murky green shallows, driving the dugout against the spongy bank. Carter found that he was almost smiling as he forced his way through the dense thicket of dog-fennel and wild grape. As always, Grady had restored his humor, if not his confidence. His sergeant might be an unbridled optimist, certainly, his picture of this prickly wilderness as a rich man's playground was fantastic to the extreme. And yet, Carter had seen Grady's optimism translate itself into reality too often to argue now.

Once they had forced their way through the dense tangle along the shore-line, the jungle scrub thinned away abruptly, as spongy muck-land yielded to the sandy reaches of the dunes on the island's seaward side. Dwarf cedar replaced the tufts of cabbage palm; the tapered green spears of the Spanish bayonet took precedence over blue gum and water oak. Carter walked warily in this green stillness, from long habit; without glancing back, he knew that Grady was nursing cover with the same instinctive caution. Habit dies hard, he thought, with that same thin smile. We might be stalking Ruy in his hideaway, instead of waiting for Holata's signal. . . And yet, when the rifle barked among the hump-backed shoulders of the dunes, he found that he had dropped, as always, to the am-

bush of the palmetto roots, with a cheek hard on the stock of his own carbine.

It was Grady who answered the signal with his own squirrel-gun—Grady who rose first from the scrub as Holata himself walked into view. The Seminole's face was impassive as he raised one arm—palm-outward, the immemorial gesture of peace. Like their own elaborate precautions, the gesture was automatic—and quite needless. Holata had been one of the United States Army's most trusted scouts since the Indian wars were joined on the peninsula. Holata had met them thus, a dozen times, as the sloop glided southward. The two shots were part of the ritual. Shots were necessary, if Carter was to return with game for the sloop's larder. So, for that matter, were the brace of plump mallard that Holata presented to Grady with a ceremonial bow.

The sergeant weighed the ducks between his palms—and licked his bearded lips, as though he could already picture the plump flesh basting over a wood-fire. "A welcome change from bear-steak, Holata. So far, it seems, our aim has been perfect."

"You have not missed a pot-shot yet, *amigo*." The Indian's Spanish was flawless; Holata had been well-educated in the mission schools when the Floridas were still a province of Spain. "May I congratulate you on your marksmanship?"

But Carter brushed aside this ceremonial wit. "Has Simpson kept pace with you?"

"He has done better than that, *señor Capitán*. At this moment, he camps at Bird Inlet, four miles to the south, awaiting your orders."

Carter nodded his approval. For the past fortnight, fifty picked marines from the St. Augustine garrison had followed the *Inez* by land, marking every change of course from their well-ambushed bivouacs along the Indian River shore. Amphibious in every sense of the word, they had waded through gumbo and wet hammocks, forded tidal marshes and 'gator-infested lagoons to keep the sloop in sight. Commanded, *pro tem*, by Corporal Simpson of Carter's own company, they had merely kept their liaison through Holata—and waited. . . . Once again, Carter wondered if this elaborate escort was really necessary. Certainly, it was a tribute to Ted Kerry—and Ted's importance in the future of the territory.

Holata said, calmly enough, "Ruy awaits young Kerry now, *Capitán*—in the tidal reach beyond Bird Inlet. I counted his masts this morning, before I came to you."

Carter scowled over the news. Now that it had come at last, he found that he was strangely calm. Stumping up the shoulder of a dune, settling in the grateful shade of a clump of Spanish bayonets, he asked the questions he had framed a hundred times—and accepted the answers with the *sang-froid* of a soldier.

"How many vessels?"

"Ten sloops, as large as the *Inez*. Ruy's own ship, a ketch-rigged yawl. A small schooner for supplies. Six cats."

"And the crews?"

"We outnumber them, *Capitán*. The cats are handled by Negro sailors—one man to a tiller. There are crews of three aboard the sloops. The schooner is careened, with no crew at all."

Carter nodded his approval. Holata had counted noses for the Army in tighter corners than this.

"Are the vessels armed?"

"Not to the naked eye, *señor Capitán*. Ruy would be too wise to bring cannon into American waters. Or even to show a musket at the gunwale."

"How can we be sure that Ted Kerry is going to a rendezvous?"

"This morning, I watched Amadeo go aboard Ruy's yawl with a message."

Carter nodded again, with his thoughts on the fast-forming pattern. Amadeo was one of the Minorcans Ted had engaged in Augustine; Amadeo had been the last to leave the *Inez*. His appearance on Ruy's flagship could mean only that he had been assigned, by Ted himself, to report on their location.

HOLATA said, with that same easy calm, "We made sure of his purpose, *señor Capitán*, when he quitted the fleet. Ruy had given him one of the cats as a reward, and enough provision to take him back to Augustine. We stopped him at Bird Inlet, just as he was

setting a course for the open sea. If you remember Amadeo, you will know that he is a great coward. It was not difficult to learn what he knew."

"Did he see the message he delivered?"

"He saw every word, *Capitán*. Unfortunately, Amadeo cannot read, so he could only guess at its contents from Ruy. The pirate said that he would wait for Ted Kerry to choose his moment. Since the *Inez* is no more than five miles from the rendezvous, they should meet tonight, at the latest."

Carter scowled at the logic, and let his eyes meet Grady's. "What do you make of this, Sergeant?"

"Holata has stated the case fairly. I'll go further, sir: if we returned to the *Inez* now, and arrested our boy, no one could blame us."

"He's committed no crime, so far."

"True enough, Captain. I'm only saying that circumstances are on our side. If you ask me, we should still give him his head—and go on hoping."

"So you're suggesting that I remain aboard the sloop, until its sails into that pirate's nest?"

"Isn't that the way we planned it from the start?" Carter knew his sergeant's seraphic grin too well to resent it now. "How else can we be *sure* that young Kerry is throwing in his lot with the smugglers?"

"Thank you for casting me in the hero's role. I'm not too sure I'll enjoy it."

"It's the only way you can play it, sir. Remember *his* point of view. You're still a northern gentleman who enjoys hunting for its own sake. *I'm* a gentleman's gentleman, who's about to be sent back to Augustine with a boatload of sun-cured bearskin. That's part of the picture. If you left the sloop tonight, he'd be sure to smell a rat."

"Very well. Let's assume he believes my innocence till the end. Let's even say he keeps me aboard the *Inez* until he shakes hands with Ruy. That fleet is still his property, by his uncle's will. As Holata says, it's sailed into American waters unarmed, with empty cockpits. Are you suggesting that Simpson and his web-feet take the lot of them as prizes —merely because their new owner comes aboard for a formal visit?"

"By no means, Captain. You must still prove that young Kerry means to go outside the law—with Ruy's help, or without it."

"And how can I prove that—and still go on playing a gentleman on holiday?"

Grady's grin was still dazzling in its trust. "Suppose I leave that to you, Captain. My job is to find Simpson, and take command of the land forces, as it were. From that point on, you can rely on us to assist you all we can."

"How can we make contact?"

"Holata has Ruy's anchorage marked. We'll move into the dunes with nightfall, and board on signal. Remember, Ruy doesn't know that he has an enemy within a hundred miles. It's unlikely that he'll post any pickets."

Carter ignored the optimistic picture. "Pickets or no pickets, he'll still be afloat, and you'll be ashore. And *I*, if I may remind you, will be floating in his midst."

"Exactly, sir. An innocent bystander, as it were. Keep your eyes and ears open, and when you need us, signal. We'll do the rest, Captain." Grady's eyes were earnest. "Have I ever missed a date, when I was really needed?"

Carter, admitting the truth of the sergeant's words, took refuge in brusqueness. "Very well—we'll risk it. As you say, there's no other way to be sure of Ted's intentions. How can I signal you without giving myself away?"

"Stand on the foredeck of Ruy's ketch," said Grady. "Light yourself a cheroot, make sure the lucifer is flaming after, and throw the light overboard. I'll be atop the tallest dune with a nightglass. We'll board them before they know it."

"Suppose they cut their cables?"

"The tide will be against them until morning," said Grady. "Even with the worst of luck, we can account for the ketch, and the sloops. The cats won't matter—or their skippers. Without an admiral, they'll have to turn honest."

"Show me the map, Holata."

THE Seminole squatted on the sunbaked sand at their feet, spreading the Army parchment between his hands. Carter saw at once that this por-

tion of the Florida coast was suggested rather than marked precisely. Geodetic maps of the area were detailed enough, especially in the vicinity of such established settlements as St. Augustine, Fernandina, and Cowford. The principal channels of the Indian River were clearly drawn; Army surveyors had simply been unable to cut their way into the scrub of such coastal islands as Flamingo, or measure the tide-marks of a remote estuary like Bird Inlet.

"I have sketched the tidal reach, *señor Capitán*. And the moorings of the vessels."

Grady's grizzled head hovered over the map, as Carter indicated the location of Ruy's yawl. "I'll keep that in mind, sir. It may make all the difference in our plans."

Measuring the bottleneck entrance to the anchorage, Carter felt his spirits rise. Like many such tidal harbors along the coast, this one was all but landlocked, blocked off from the sea by a high wall of dunes, boxed on three sides by marsh and dense scrub. The Indian River (of which this tidal reach was actually a part) meandered through that same tangle of scrub and marshland, a good half-mile to the west, joining it through a broad slough at its western end.

"As I see it, sir, Ted will sail in from the river side, and enter the anchorage from the west. Even if they try to skedaddle, we can snub them off from the dunes. There isn't more than two hundred yards of seaway there, even when the tide is right."

"Suppose they back-track, and try to get away through the slough to the river?"

"I've thought of that too, Captain. Ted will do well to scrape through that slough, even with his center-board up. Ruy would go aground in a minute, if he tried to push through the marsh."

Carter permitted himself a final scowl. "As usual, you've thought of everything."

"We planned this trap carefully, sir. Won't you trust me to spring it properly?"

"With me in the midst, as usual."

Grady took the accusation with his aplomb unshaken. "Admit that your part is simple, Captain. Make sure that our Ted is a pirate among pirates—light a cigar—and take cover. Could you imagine an easier tour of duty?"

Carter got up from the sand and dusted his knees. "Corporal Simpson will be relieved of his command when Sergeant Grady joins you. Go with God, Holata."

"Go with God, *señor Capitán*!"

The Seminole vanished into the scrub as silently as he had come. Still moving by rote, Carter found that he, too, had ghosted for cover among the dwarf cedars —that he was moving into the deeper green shadow of the coastal jungle, eyes straining for a first glimpse of the *Inez*. That he was praying—just as silently—that the *Inez* had lifted her hook long ago, and departed on business of her own.

"Call it an easy tour of duty if you insist, Grady. It's one I've little stomach for."

"I don't blame you, sir. He was a good boy, wasn't he? I hoped he'd *stay* good."

Grady's voice was bland as cream, and quite empty of emotion. Carter glanced at him sharply as they pushed out to the river bank.

"I thought you were fond of Ted Kerry. Won't it hurt your feelings a little to clap him into irons for consorting with pirates?"

"I'm an Army sergeant, sir. My job is to carry out orders—not to have feelings."

Carter knew that tone well. Grady, who could be inquisitive as a questing beetle at times, could assume his martinet's manner just as readily, when the occasion demanded. Evidently, their conference with Holata had made up Grady's mind, once and for all, where Kerry was concerned. Just as evidently, he was determined to do his duty, as a good soldier should—and just as woodenly. Carter stepped gloomily into the dugout.

"Sometimes, Sergeant, I wonder if you have a chronometer where your heart should be."

"So do I, Captain. It'd help tonight. Timing is going to mean everything on this job."

They did not speak again as they leaned on their paddles and sent the dugout careening into the wide tidal

river. Feeling the spanking breeze slap the bow, Carter permitted himself to look up for the first time. The *Inez* was heeling smartly in mid-river now, taking the wind on her quarter as she bore down upon them. With her last stitch of canvas bellied in that fresh breeze, she moved as daintily as a white sea-witch who had dared the shadow of the land. Ted Kerry, handsome as ever in his tattered nankeen sailor's trousers and broad-brimmed planter's hat, shouted a full-throated greeting. Steering with his knees as he brought the sloop up into the wind, he could have passed for a god in bronze, from a happier century. A god who could smile down from his pedestal at the follies of mankind, and do no wrong of his own. . . Carter closed his mind against the absurd symbolism, and hardened his heart for the work ahead. Once again, he wished he had Grady's facility with that unpredictable organ. He had never liked Ted Kerry better than now, when all available evidence condemned him.

CHAPTER V

RENDEZVOUS AT BIRD ISLAND

LATE that night, watching the moonlight silver their wake, watching that same magic strike high-lights from Ted's bare shoulders as the boy babied his tiller, Brevet-Captain John Carter found that he was far as ever from resignation, as he contemplated the calling he had chosen.

Ever since dusk, when they had beaten their way up the wide tidal reaches of the river to give Grady a head-start for New Smyrna, they had danced before this following wind. Thanks to that sweet balance in the canvas, the helmsman could handle the sloop with ease. Ted had held that post for an hour now, while Carter lolled on one of the bunks in the tiny cabin, and Dr. Osborne—placid as ever, with the same thick tome on his knee—continued to explain the skulduggery of the Bourbons at home and abroad.

It was a bewitched moment, and Carter could not escape the conviction that they had been seated thus forever. There was Ted, in the full wash of the moonlight, with the tiller between his knees and his brows knotted in concentration, as he strove to memorize the principal events that contributed to the French Revolution. There was Osborne, purring like a model pedagogue in the light of the binnacle. There, patient as time, was the well-disguised Army captain, playing his part to the end. . . Perhaps it was not quite the end, after all. Perhaps Ted Kerry would still renounce his dark inheritance, put up his tiller before this endless gray river narrowed into the tidal slough of Bird Inlet. Carter found he had spoken the thought aloud, without pausing to shape the words.

"Isn't it time we dropped anchor?"

"Not for my money, Jack. This wind is too good to lose."

"It seems rather marshy ahead."

"I've a fair map of the waterway. We can cut into the open Atlantic at a dozen points, and reach St. Lucie's Inlet by dawn. St. Lucie's, as you know, is famous for its Indian mounds."

The boy had spoken casually, quite as though he meant every word. Osborne looked up owlishly from his book. "Since when have you been interested in Indian mounds, Ted?"

"Timucan, not Seminole," said Ted Kerry. "The aborigines who were here when the Spaniards came. Ask me a few questions about Florida history, Doctor. I know it by heart."

"Unfortunately it's French history you're learning now," said Osborne dryly. "You must learn a great deal, if you expect to return to Princeton in the fall."

"Why can't we study Florida awhile. Florida is my future, too."

"Princeton comes first," said Osborne. "And your degree."

"Suppose I'd rather tame this wilderness, and forget my degree?"

"Taming this wilderness is the United States Army's job," said Carter. "Your job is waiting for you—at the College of New Jersey."

Again, Carter had spoken without conscious thought. He forced himself to meet Ted's lazy smile, and went on, with mounting resolution: "Hunting through a wilderness is fun enough. But it takes more than a few rifles to blast out all the animals."

"Meaning. . . ?"

Carter rose from his bunk, and glanced briefly at the mounted head that graced the cabin wall. A giant bobcat, with fangs bared and green-glass marbles for eyes—a tiger-sized bobcat, that seemed about to spring from its neat oak plaque. Ted himself had shot the tiger on Anastasia Island, a good fifteen days ago. Since it had been their first prize, Grady had mounted it in the sportsman's honor. . . Carter stroked the tiger's fur absently, as he waited for the words to form.

"It was easy to kill this bobcat, Ted. But there are a thousand others to be killed along this coast, before it'll be safe to walk in the woods unarmed. There are Indians to round up, and rednecks turned smuggler, and runaway Negroes. The Floridas have been an asylum for runaways—and renegades—since the republic was founded. They must be driven out, or taught law and order. It's a long, hard job—and the Army will manage it."

"Why can't I help?"

Again, the boy's tone seemed quite sincere. Carter ignored the sincerity, and plunged on. "You just said that Florida was your future. I hope you meant that, from your heart. Florida will need men like you tomorrow—with money and brains. But you must grow up to Florida."

"I'm as grown as I'll ever be."

"Not in your mind. Osborne's right. There's no substitute for education. Let the pioneers tame this frontier. Bring them your learning when they can use it most." Carter let the rest go, stopped dead by Ted Kerry's unwinking stare. For no reason he could name, the boy's eyes seemed to match the eyes of the mounted tiger-cat on the cabin wall.

Ted said, slowly, "Isn't your lecture a bit late, Jack?"

Osborne cut in, with the air of a man who can smell a crisis in advance. "It's never too late to beat sense into the young."

"I'm not as young as that, Doctor. Look dead ahead, if you doubt me."

Carter had swarmed over the coaming long ago, to gain the foredeck. The sloop had danced briskly into a marshy slough while they talked. Now, as the dipping bowsprit seemed to part the pale-green barrier ahead, he saw that the tidal marsh was opening into a landlocked harbor. That a screen of dunes masked the outlet to the open sea, though he could have sailed the *Inez* by memory from this point on. . . Point by point, he checked the landmarks on Holata's map, obscurely glad that he had etched them in his memory. There was no mistaking the rendezvous—or the fact that the anchorage was empty as the moon.

Ted spoke, as easily as ever. "Will you take the tiller from now on, Jack—or do you trust my seamanship?"

"Stay where you are. There's plenty of sea-room."

"And just enough time to explain why I've brought you this far," said Ted. He was smiling in earnest now. Even in the wash of moonlight, Carter could see the familiar gleam in his eyes. The same gleam that had greeted him in the muleteers' ring at Princeton. The wild sparkle that had laughed up at him this morning, when Ted had gutted the tiger-shark.

"Let's start at the beginning," said Ted. "You wanted to test me. You and Sergeant Grady—"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You understand me perfectly. You wanted to see if I was a good American, or a bad Spaniard. So you pretended to be a wealthy sportsman with a valet in tow. You bought into my hunting expedition; you were hell-bent to prove that I was a pirate at heart."

"Are you giving me the proof now?"

"Stay with me, Jack. Perhaps I'll surprise you yet. Let's check a few more points. You know, of course, that I've been in constant touch with Ruy?"

"I won't deny that now."

"You know that his fleet was anchored here this morning. You dropped Grady, hoping he'd round up your leathernecks in time to capture me—in the act of sealing a pact with my uncle's captain."

"Right again, Ted. Don't blame me too much for that. It's my job, after all. Have you some idea how long and hard that job can be, at times?"

"I've a perfect idea. So perfect, that I'm suggesting you let me handle my own affairs—in my own way."

"Which is just what you're doing?"

"You've almost caught up with me, Jack. Let's say that I saw the trap being set and baited. Let's say that I warned Ruy just in time."

THE *Inez* heeled saucily in the breeze, as Ted Kerry took the wind on his port quarter. Leaning on one ear without losing her grace, the sloop ran into the narrow channel that led to the Atlantic. Already, the ground-swell was a tangible thing under that flying keel. Carter stared straight ahead, into the moon-silvered ocean. He did not dare to glance at the dunes on either side of their seaway, though their white bulk seemed almost near enough to touch.

"Don't look for your Army, Jack. The timing was all on *my* side, thanks to that following wind. I know your sergeant can move fast, but Ruy had orders to put to sea at sundown." Ted offered the silver immensity of sea, in a generous flourish. "He's waiting out there for me now. Two points off the starboard bow, to be exact. Behind the dunes of Bird Island."

Carter stared hard at the spot in question, as the *Inez* ran sweetly away from the land. Bird Island, he noted, was merely a final splinter of Florida, a wave-creamed sandbar that broke the full force of the ground-swell a good mile offshore. Outlined against the rising moon, it was only a white smudge against the dark cobalt of the open ocean—a wind-swept dune or two, a broken series of shoals that flashed like restless phosphorus in that cold bath of light. Already, he could make out the nest of masts that was Ted Kerry's legacy, dancing easily at their jury anchors. Even at that distance, the hulls seemed dark as the moonless nights they favored. Sea-bats all, that waited warily in this bath of moonlight, eager to spurn the land.

"Suppose I went overside now. Would you try to stop me?"

"By no means." Ted leaned hard on the tiller, letting the full force of the quartering wind wet his canvas in the racing sea. "I know you wouldn't leave me for the world, Jack. You're much too anxious to see how I'll handle Ruy."

"You'll find him a bit different from a Princeton mule-skinner."

"I know. He's a black-hearted murderer, with a rope awaiting him in Augustine. He's also the best captain my uncle ever had. Why shouldn't he take my orders too?"

"Why not, indeed?"

"Even money says I can give them—and see they're carried out. Will you cover the bet?"

Osborne spoke at last, in a shaken voice. Carter smiled grimly as he felt the pedagogue's emotion. You're watching an idol crumble, he thought swiftly. It isn't a pleasant sight, I'll grant you.

"Turn back, Ted, for God's sake!"

"Even money, gentlemen. Any takers?"

Osborne's voice cut through the boy's exuberance. "I've given a good bit of my life to educate you properly. To make you realize that such derring-do as this is—" He seemed to grope for words. Ted Kerry spoke instantly, as though he were picking up a cue.

"Are you telling me that piracy is a thing of the past? That I can't buy power and sell it here—Army or no Army?"

"You can do as you like, Ted," said Osborne. "No one can stop you—for awhile, at least. That's the pattern of America today. It can't go on like that forever."

"Why not?"

"Captain Carter has told you why. The rascals will be rounded up in time. You among them—if you insist on casting your lot with those cutthroats across the water."

Ted Kerry threw back his head and roared. His laughter seemed to race ahead of them with the brisk wind. "Who said I'd throw in my lot with cutthroats? I've come to take back what's mine, in my own way. Isn't that every man's right?"

"Of course, Ted. But—"

"With no help from the Army, or your history books. Even money says I can handle Ruy. And Ruy's crew. *Are there any takers?*"

No one spoke for a long moment. The *Inez,* straining at her guy-ropes, spun away before the offshore breze, talking a language of her own, from forepeak to foaming cutwater. Carter leaned for-

ward to count masts, beyond the thin screen of dune and sandbar dead ahead. Ruy's fleet looked larger than life now, against the moon. Holata's count, he noted, had been accurate to the last restless cat bobbing on the fringe of the flotilla. There were the massed hulls of the sloops, dead-black to the last scupper; there, beyond a doubt, was the swinging boom of Ruy's own ketch-rigged yawl.

Osborne broke the silence at last. "Are you telling us that you're taking those vessels back to Augustine?"

"Where else would I be taking them?"

"Single-handed, Ted?"

"I'm the owner. If I can't give orders, who can?" Ted dropped his voice a peg, as though the wind might carry his words to Ruy. "One more point, Jack. Does this gentleman of the coast know you by sight?"

"We've traded shots in the scrub, more than once," said Carter. "We were both too wise to show our faces."

"Then would you mind pretending to be my crew awhile—and watch me handle him?"

Carter took the tiller without another word. The *Inez,* spinning away from the wind with her boom-end awash, accepted the change without losing an iota of her speed. Dead ahead, the waiting forest of masts seemed to sway apart gently, as though welcoming their arrival. Carter glanced just once at Osborne—the pedagogue's face was rigidly set.

Ted Kerry's pose at the moment was no less in character. Knee-deep in spindrift at the bowsprit, he seemed part of his own flying jibs as he leaned forward to embrace his flotilla in advance, his eyes darting ahead of their headlong approach to pick out Ruy's ketch—and the looming figure of the smuggler himself as he stood with a hand raised in greeting.

CHAPTER VI

PIRATE'S NEST

THE fleet danced in the ground-swell, bowsprits locked to taff-rails in a solemn circle. The breeze had died as captain and owner conferred in the cabin of the ketch-rigged yawl. Now, the Atlantic was slick as oil under the high round moon. The chatter that had linked deck to deck had subsided to a lazy murmur now, one with the slap of cutwaters in the ground-swell, the sigh of a half-furled sail as it picked up a capful of wind from the distant land. Watching those masts roll against the starlit sky, hearing the polyglot whispers rise and die from sloop to cat and back again, Carter knew that he had expected anything but this instant welcome.

The *Inez* had snuggled into place, between the stern of the yawl and the next sloop in the wide circle. For the past hour, he had done nothing but save the sloop's paint, as the circle drifted gently and re-aligned its proportions, there in the open sea. Ruy's voice had boomed a greeting as Ted jumped from sloop to yawl; at intervals thereafter, the pirate's voice had rumbled up from the cabin where an oil lamp glowed and papers rustled. . . . All the scene needs is a lawyer with his ink-pot, thought Carter resentfully. And yet, Ted had promised to bring the fleet back to land, on his terms.

For the tenth time in that hour, he told himself that the boy was too young to fight this battle alone—that he, as befitted a hard-bitten Army captain, should vault the gunwale and join his voice to the endless murmer. He tried to glance at Osborne, and dared not meet the professor's eye. So far, they had kept to themselves aboard the *Inez.* The crews of adjacent sloops—mahogany faces in the moonlight, a gleam of earrings and white-fanged grins—had left them to themselves—though Carter's Spanish was fluent enough to warn him that they were being analyzed in a hundred whispered conferences.

Ruy, at least, had been true to his legend in the one brief glimpse Carter had been granted, before the captain plunged for the sanctuary of his cabin. Ruy was a corsair to the manner born, from the black blizzard of his whiskers to the simian toes that gripped his deck. Even in that flash, he had noted that Ruy and Ted stood eye to eye, that they were measuring each other, quite frankly, as they went below.

"Shall I cross over to the yawl?"

He shook his head, not daring to turn toward Osborne's hoarse whisper.

"They may have murdered him by now."

"Ted doesn't murder that easily."

"I tell you it's madness. Did you see that scoundrel's face? He'll never yield an inch."

"He seems to be yielding a point now," said Carter dryly.

The last voice stilled in the waiting circle as Ruy burst above deck, backing from the cabin with cat-foot quickness, keeping his eyes riveted on the spill of light at the doorway, as though he did not quite credit the evidence of his senses. Ted's reappearance, by contrast, was curiously quiet, and a bit too nonchalant to seem natural. Carter felt his hand slide to his belt as he watched the boy lean back against the stepped-in mast at the yawl's stern. He cursed quietly as they came away empty of the derringer that usually nested there.

"Hola, amigos!"

It was Ruy who had bellows that demanded attention—Ruy, who scampered into his own rat-lines to point a long brown finger at Ted, as though the boy needed an identification, even now.

"Listen to the orders of your new master. See if you'll obey them."

There was a defiance in the guttural Spanish, an open mockery. Carter watched Ted stride out into the bath of moonlight with his head up, and both hands hooked in his belt. God help him if he talks back to these *Cubanos* in any language but their own, he thought. Ruy's their master, and they'll take orders from no other. Least of all from a fresh-faced boy. . . He swallowed his fear as Ted began to speak, conscious that the boy's speech was perfect *Cubano* Spanish, the final consonants hard as stones, with none of the lisp of Madrid.

"I have ordered my ships back to Augustine. All of them but a single catboat. Your *capitán* is relieved of his command tonight. He may use the cat to return to Havana—" Ted lifted an imperious hand, to still the murmur. "Mine is not a hand to stretch the rope for Don Ruy's neck. He may still escape it, if he wills—"

Ruy's voice cut in. Carter noted that the tumult stilled instantly as the captain spoke. "I have told *Señor* Kerry that we have made him rich in Havana. I have offered to take him there, to make him still richer. And I have explained that it was his uncle's wish that the flotilla continue to work from Cuba. But *Señor* Kerry will not listen—"

Ted's palm slapped the cabin-roof; Ted's bellow took over the yawl, and the circle of masts around it. "You have my orders. As your captain says, I'm master here. Will you obey them?"

Ruy's voice was almost chiding. "Will *Señor* Kerry give proof that he is master?"

The watching boatmen roared with laughter at this challenge; even the masts seemed to rock with that mirth. It ceased abruptly when Ted twined his fingers in the captain's black whiskers and slapped him hard across the mouth.

"Will that do, Don Ruy? Or will you go overside with me?"

No one stirred on the other decks as captain and owner circled one another cautiously. When Ruy spoke again, his voice was thick with surprise.

"Naked, *Señor* Kerry? Or as we are?"

"Naked, of course. Each man with his knife, and no other weapon. Whoever climbs aboard this yawl again gives orders in the future."

CARTER kept his place with a mighty effort. He had witnessed such decisions before, on the St. Augustine waterfront, when rival skippers had tumbled into the Matanzas, with clasp-knives in their teeth and murder in their brains. He knew that it was an ancient solution for argument along this coast, when arguments could be settled no other way—and, even as he stilled the shout of protest that rose to his lips, he knew that he was powerless to interfere.

"Are you forcing me to kill you, *Señor* Kerry?"

"I'll take my chances on that. Or would you prefer to yield now?"

"I would prefer to serve you from Havana."

Kerry slapped Ruy once again—a stinging blow that sent the captain reeling. A few voices rumbled in protest around the waiting circle, but there was no at-

tempt to spoil the impending struggle. There was a rough justice, even here. Ruy's raffish crews had heard a challenge they could understand. They would permit Ted Kerry to prove himself, on his terms.

By the same token, Carter kept his place at the gunwale of the *Inez*—and restrained Osborne with a hard hand at the professor's shoulder. They watched in silence as Ruy and Ted stripped to the buff and edged to the side of the yawl, still eyeing one another warily. They did not stir as Ruy's clasp-knife snapped open in his palm. Kerry paralleled the gesture to the second; even at distance, Carter noted that the boy's thin smile was intact. *He's enjoying this too,* he told himself incredulously. *Just as he enjoyed skewering the man-eater, and beating the best mule-skinner on that*

Princeton canal. For the hundredth time, he marveled at the discovery that some men are born without fear. Heroes, and no one knew this better than Carter, are not always made of such mettle—but there was no doubting Ted Kerry's heroic stature at the moment, as he stood poised beside the bowsprit of the yawl, as though daring Ruy to plunge first.

"If you ask me, sir, it's the quickest way to settle things."

Grady had spoken in the barest of whispers, but there was no doubting his presence, there in the deep shadows of the sloop's gunwale. Carter dropped his eyes quickly, to note that the sergeant was treading water easily in his hiding place—and watching the preparations for battle with obvious relish.

"Don't tell me you swam out from the mainland."

"Only from Bird Island, sir. 'Course, we had no other choice when we saw that Ruy was anchored here."

"Did you say *we,* Grady?"

"Simpson and fifty leathernecks, sir—as per instructions. They're waiting now, for your next order."

Carter glanced toward the faint white line of dunes and sandspits that marked

The knives winked in the moonlight as the two swimmers churned closer.

Bird Island. To his surprise, he saw that only two hundred yards of open sea separated them from that outpost of the land. Evidently, the flotilla had drifted shoreward with the tide, while Ruy and Ted argued in the cabin of the yawl. Just as evidently, it would be a simple matter to bring his amphibians into action now. To overrun this floating circle, while the crews concentrated on the fight within. Grady, as always, had made a virtue of necessity. He might even save Ted, before it was too late . . .

In that same instant, he knew that he must not interfere, that Ted Kerry must win this fight his own way.

"Sorry, Grady. But this is one battle where the Marines will be spectators."

"And quite right, sir, if you ask me. Just wanted you to know that the situation was accounted for. *There they go!*"

Grady had spoken in his natural tone, there in the shadow of the gunwale. There was no need to whisper in that mounting roar of voices, as Ruy plunged deep. Ted went overside too, smashing flat on the surface as Ruy vanished. Carter choked down a warning just in time as the boy spread-eagled on the surface, searching the moonlit depths for his antagonist. "He'll sound, and strike from below," said Grady. "Praise Heaven for phosphorus."

Carter nodded grimly, with his eyes riveted on the moonlit circle. Both swimmers were bathed in pale radiance as they circled for an opening—Ted at water-level, Ruy a good twelve feet below. The phosphorescent particles, teeming in these sub-tropic waters, outlined both bodies in an eerie silhouette of their own. When Ruy struck upward, he resembled nothing so much as a deadly meteor; when Ted deflected the thrust, and locked on the captain's back with arms and legs, it seemed that the fight was over before it had begun.

Ruy rolled free just in time. The knives winked in the moonlight as the two swimmers churned closer, wrists locked like grotesque duelists as they thrust and parried at arm's length, and trod water wildly to keep their balance. Then it was Ted's turn to sound. Carter leaned out as far as he dared, to watch the boy's lithe body plummet into darkness. He knew he was shouting from bursting lungs as Ruy jack-knifed and plunged into Ted's bubbling wake, with the knife in his teeth and simian arms flailing. He heard Osborne's gasp behind him, and thrust the professor back.

"I wouldn't look, if I were you—"

But Grady, at water-level, was more cheerful. "Doesn't matter now, sir. They've locked for the last time."

A faint tracery of phosphorus-tinted bubbles rose from the depths, a roiling disturbance tinged with red. As Grady had said, it was the only sign of the battle below—both contestants had plunged from view, for the moment.

The bodies were spiraling upward now, still locked for combat. He marked their progress dimly at first, as they swayed together, still far below the surface. Long before they could break the quicksilver shimmer at water-level, Carter knew that only one of those bodies was living, though the other clung in a bizarre caricature of life. And he knew that it was Ted Kerry who had lifted Ruy's dead weight from the depths, long before Ted could spurn his enemy in one clean-limbed lunge and swim to the yawl. The knife, washed white by the sea, gleamed briefly in the moonlight as Ted tossed it overside, feather-kicked his body from sea to gunwale, and vaulted upright to the deck. Ruy's body, as the last air hissed from the skewered lungs, vanished in a red whorl. No one marked its vanishing. Every eye was on Ted Kerry as he unlashed the yawl's tiller and leaned hard on the sail.

"Break out canvas! We're sailing north!"

The tumult died at last as Sergeant Grady, scorning the shadows, whooped aboard the yawl and broke out the flying jib. Bare feet pattered on a dozen decks as willing hands paralleled that move. With no sense of transition, Carter found that he was at his own tiller, jockeying for a place in the flotilla that streamed away across the moon-silvered Atlantic to follow its leader's orders—and his course.

DAWN found them tacking briskly across the mouth of the Flamingo Island estuary, a flying wedge of sail. The *Inez* was the leader now, thanks to her

spread of canvas. Ted Kerry, as befitted a brand-new admiral, sat at the sloop's tiller to count his following one more time.

Ted's voice was oddly withdrawn when he broke the silence. Watching him guardedly, Carter knew that he was still struggling with an unresolved problem. "I'm glad you approve, Jack. Now that it's over—"

"Grady said it was the quickest way. I'll go further: it was the only way."

They looked back together at the tight-sailing flotilla. The ketch-rigged yawl was directly in their wake, handling wonderfully in that rousing breeze. For an Army man, Corporal Simpson was managing the sails remarkably well. Counting noses on the other decks, Carter noted that Grady had spaced out the marines with tact—and saw, too, that the leathernecks were doing their share of the handling. Well-manned as it was, Ted Kerry's fleet of coastal vessels should reach St. Augustine in record time.

Grady entered the conversation with his usual air of diffidence. "Don't deny it helped, sir—calling those boys aboard when we did."

"I don't deny it for a moment. Still, you'll admit that the fleet was following Ted without question—down to the last cat-boat."

"True enough, sir. Ted's the captain now. I only said it'll do no harm, having a few of ours aboard."

They fell silent on that, enjoying the dance of the sloop for its own sake. It was Osborne who broke this silence, from his customary post in the shadow of the cabin door.

"It's an evil thing to kill a man. Remember that always."

"I was on Army business, Doctor. Even if the Army didn't know it."

"But you're going back to Princeton now. I hope there'll be fewer fights next term—and more passing grades."

"Couldn't I *stay* on Army business—now I've promised to turn these boats over to the quartermaster?"

Osborne's eye sought Carter's. "Will you answer that for me, Captain?"

"I've answered it once, Ted," said Carter. "The war's still our business. The war, and the renegades that feed it. You belong with what comes after. Florida's your future—not your present. The present is my tour of duty—and Grady's."

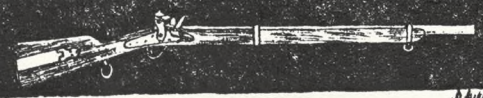
Ted smiled—but Carter knew that it was a smile of resignation. The battle-light still glowed in Ted's eyes, but there was discipline behind the glow this morning.

"So I must go back to my student lamp—and take that tiger-head for a souvenir?"

Silence was his answer. The sort of companionable silence that said more than words. The silence of friends, who understood one another at long last. Grady summed up as always, as he leaned forward to pat the mounted bob-cat's head that stared so defiantly from the cabin wall.

"A tiger-cat from the Florida scrub. If you ask me, it's a first-rate souvenir for a Princeton man."

WARRIOR OF KIRGHIZ



By

JOHN GODEY

KHABAN examined his shaggy pony, and felt satisfied that the animal had recovered most of its strength after the hard-riding ordeal of the past three days. Ignoring his own fatigue, he returned to the fire and set to work by its fitful light, readying himself for the new journey.

With careful hands, he cleaned the breechloader that was the prize of his chase after the murderers of Hailar, son of Tokart. His white teeth shone briefly in his dark face as he recalled pleasurably how the rifle had been coveted by the

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

The Chinese cut at Khaban's head, but Khaban came under the blade and sliced the razor edge of his own saber deep into the biceps of the soldier's sword arm.

men of the village. Chuban had offered thirty sheep, Nailah had offered thirty-five; and even Zilakh, who was miserly, had offered fifteen, as well as the wily goat which shepherded his flocks in the grazing areas. Yes, Khaban thought, fondling the breechloader speculatively, he might have driven a good bargain, with the weapon as a lever. . .

He shook his head, dismissing the idea. It was unworthy of one who sought to uphold the ancient tradition of the Kirghiz. No matter that the other young men of the *kollus* stooped even to ingratiating themselves with the Reds; Khaban led the uncompromising life of his ancestors: hunting, adventuring, taking his needs where he found them by guile or by force. . . No, even though he might have traded his rifle for a hundred sheep, his principles would not permit it.

A hundred sheep. Token price for the hand of Serai, daughter of Tokart, who was chieftain of the *kollus* and Khaban's foster-father. Yet there was another reason for Khaban's refusal to barter his rifle. Such a gun, rifled, easy to load, could be the most important possession of a Kirghiz; protection against wolves, two-legged and four, breadwinner when winters were hard and migration to the grasslands forbidden by the Red bureaucrats.

To be sure, Tokart had not expected Khaban to trade away his rifle, and his demand of the customary bride-purchase had been made only in conformance with tradition. Tokart had made this clear. It was his fondest dream to have Khaban as son-in-law as well as foster-son; Hailar was dead, but his murder had been brilliantly avenged by Khaban. Still, Tokart could not himself flout the ancient law; his own example as chieftain must help keep the people to the old ways in defiance of the new ways of the Reds. And so he must insist on the bridal price: one hundred sheep.

Khaban counted the empty cartridges in the captured bandoleer, and set about filling the cases with black powder, pouring lead into the mold for the bullets, shaving the pellets to fit the case. As he completed each of his makeshift cartridges, he marked it by notching the brass with his knife. These would not be as good as the regular cartridges, for they would misfire or would not carry as far.

He worked steadily until dawn and then he was ready. Khaban saddled his pony, strapping the old breechloader to the saddle. He made a bundle of jerked meat and of dried milk. He mounted, carrying the breechloader across the saddle bow. There were already a number of women awake, moving in the entries of their black felt *kibitkas.* Khaban thought of Serai, still asleep, warm under her sleeping furs, and his dark jaws tightened in resolution and anticipation. He rode out of the *kollus,* his narrowed eyes set straight ahead, the rising sun glinting on the rifle barrel, on the naked blade of his saber. . .

THE moon was no more than a thin curve of silver in the sky, but Khaban could see as well as if there had been a full moon in a cloudless sky. For the past week he had been living at night, sleeping by day in the brush of a ravine. He lay on his belly now, peering over the top of the hummock, his head shielded by the tufts of grass. Again he swept his eyes over the tableau. Sheep grazed in groups of ten and twenty, some lying down, some standing stiff-legged with their eyes closed, and the herdsman sleeping with his head resting on his knees. Khaban wriggled forward until he reached the top of hummock, and then he rose to his knees and slid down the other side.

He reached down, tore out a clump of grass, and hurled it at the herdsman's pony.

The pony reared, snorted, and broke its hobbles. Urged on by a second clod, the pony broke into a run and galloped off to the north. The herdsman woke with a start, stared about him in confusion, and then took out after his pony, cursing, but with no thought to the safety of his sheep. Khaban waited briefly, and then he ran over the hummock, caught his own pony and rode into the flock. Deftly wheeling the pony in and out among the dazed sheep, Khaban cut out a group and whooping loudly, started to drive them to the south. A lamb fell by the way, unable to keep up

with its frightened mother. Khaban bent from his galloping pony and swept it up, holding it in his lap. He heard a single shot, and looking back he saw the herdsman starting in pursuit on foot. Another minute of riding and Khaban was well out of range.

He drove the sheep relentlessly, urging them on with weird yells, whipping their flanks with his quirt. He had little trouble with strays from his own flock. He never took so many sheep that he would have difficulty herding them to his hiding place. Fewer sheep traveled faster with less annoyance, and were less likely to bring on a concerted search for the raider. If he were to spread his activities among the various herds that grazed in the southern steppes, he would not have to fear reprisals until such a time when he would already be moving back to his own *kollus*. The Kara-Kirghiz would suspect each other, and would not cooperate until it became evident that they were all losing sheep. Khaban knew the habits of his fellow-men as well as he knew the habits of the sheep with which he was providing himself. He would have just as much time as he needed, but no more.

Khaban drove his sheep for nearly an hour, keeping them in a steady run. Suddenly, with no warning in the topography, the steppe gave way to rocky foothills, the bunch grass and hard soil were replaced by bare rock. Here Khaban slowed the pace of his drive, allowed the sheep to walk. He knew that if the tracks were followed, they would peter out on the rock, and his pursuers would be baffled. His route moved to the east, threading in and out of the crannies between the granite outcroppings of the hills. He now had to herd the sheep closely to keep them from wandering off and becoming lost in the little canyons and ravines. One night he had lost five sheep when he had unthinkingly dashed off after a single ewe.

Khaban guided his pony around to the flank of the flock and forced the leader-sheep toward an apparently impenetrable wall of brush. The ram hesitated, and then, lowering his head, moved into the brush under the sting of Khaban's quirt. The brush gave way, and the ram led the flock into a long ravine so overhung by brush that it was practically invisible from above. Khaban checked his pony, and taking a knotted string from his belt, began to count the sheep. Thirteen in this haul. Good. He rode ahead of the flock, and dismounted to move aside the log barrier which served to pen the sheep within a natural corral.

When the last of the sheep had entered, Khaban set the lamb down and watched it run to its mother. Then he fingered the string once more. He felt well satisfied. He already had his hundred sheep, but he knew that in the drive toward his home *kollus*, working alone, he must expect to lose several on the way. One more foray, and he would have a comfortable margin upon which to work. He stowed the string in his belt and unsaddled his pony. He looked again at his sheep, and then lay down to sleep.

The moon was larger, not yet a crescent, but bright enough to render a man's face visible at ten yards. Khaban's

pony was moving at a walk as Khaban cautiously circled the strange *kollus,* mentally plotting his strategy. A single fire burnt among the huts, but its flames were low, and would shortly become embers. There was no sentry of any sort, although the sheep had been rounded up and brought back to the village. Evidently, Khaban's depredations were having their effect; the herdsmen were bringing in their sheep, penning them in with improvised fences of rope stretched from stakes. The sheep milled restlessly within the enclosure, bleating, complaining against their imprisonment, against the lack of grass.

Khaban halted his pony and sat rigidly, keeping an sharp watch with his eyes and ears. There was no one stirring in the shadows of the village despite the sheeps' continuous complaint. He sat motionless in his saddle for perhaps fifteen minutes, and then he started the pony slowly around the village toward the rope enclosure.

When he reached the far side of the corral he dismounted and stepped over the ropes. Pushing his way through the closely packed animals, he bent down, lifted a ram, and carried it away. He put it outside the enclosure and paused to watch its behavior. The ram crowded against the ropes, nosing its fellows, trying to rejoin the pack. Khaban was content, and he moved back into the flock, choosing sheep with an eye to size and richness of coat. The sheep bleated continuously as Khaban went calmly about his work. This would be a wonderful story when he returned; to tell how he had virtually walked up to the village and carried off fifteen of the choicest sheep under the sleeping noses of the villagers.

When he had completed his pick, he mounted his pony. He slapped the sheep with his quirt and headed them south, toward the hills and the mountains that lay behind them. As soon as he was out of earshot of the village he whooped, shouting at the sheep, forcing them to a run. He began to sing, casting about for words to a song of his own devising, a song relating his raids upon the Kara-Kirghiz. The tune was an old one, and his words did not fit the rhythm of the chant, but they pleased him, they commemorated the completion of his task. He leaned forward against the pony's neck, and stung the sheep with his quirt. The sheep's fleece gleamed in the faint moonlight as they continued their rushing flight. Then, suddenly, the lead sheep seemed to disappear, and Khaban glanced upward at the moon.

THE sky, cloudless an hour before, was crowded with thunderheads, and the slight curve of the moon was completely obliterated. He whipped his pony, went to the head of the little flock, and checked the wild career of the leading ram. He forced the sheep into tight little group and then pushed them ahead again at a slow walk. The ease of the previous swift drives was now forgotten. No longer forced to concentrate on their run, the sheep were taking it into their dull heads to wander, to graze. Khaban pushed his sturdy pony mercilessly. Even when the moon appeared once more, Khaban kept the sheep together, and moved them slowly, for he knew that soon another cloud would pass across the moon, to obscure the sheep.

If they were on the move he might well lose them all.

The drive was a long one. Khaban had gone far afield to thwart the watchfulness of the herders. The moon disappeared again, and Khaban rode close herd on his flock. When the moon reappeared, a ewe was placidly loping to the east. Khaban dug his heels into his pony's sides and took after the wanderer. Just as he caught her and had started back, the moon was obscured once more and he and the lone ewe were lost. But just as quickly, although in the darkness the wait seemed endless, the moon showed itself and Khaban managed to rejoin the flock.

He was spurring the lead sheep into the brush masking the mouth of the ravine when the clouds broke and the rain started in solid sheets. He worked frantically with the frightened sheep. When the barrier had dropped behind the last one, he ran his hands over his string, and realized for the first time that he had lost two sheep in one of the interludes of darkness. But he had secured

his margin. He could afford to lose sheep on the home drive.

He became aware of the rain soaking through his quilted cotton jacket, beating down on his head. He jumped to his pony, unsaddled him, and sought refuge under a thick clump of brush that jutted from the side of the ravine. He broke off several twigs and attempted to strike a fire. But the wood was already wet and would not catch. Khaban contented himself with wrapping himself in his blanket and huddling under the brush. He bowed his head on his chest and closed his eyes. After a while, despite the beat of the rain and the soaked blanket, he slept.

He woke suddenly and ran his hand across his eyes to clear them of the dripping from his brow. Then he was on his feet and running down the slope to the floor of the ravine. But he checked himself in time, just before he plunged into the miniature river that tore through the ravine from the high wall at the closed end and out over the log barrier. A glance showed Khaban that his sheep were lost, entangled in the brush, struggling to keep their heads above water, being swept out of the ravine. The pony was desperately breasting the torrent, and its efforts showed Khaban that the speed of the water would sweep him off his feet if he dared venture into it. Instead, he reached out and grasped the bridle, bracing his feet on the slippery bank. He reached out for purchase on a bush, and hauled the struggling pony out of the torrent.

Khaban took alarmed note of the rapidly rising waters. He gathered up his rifle and blanket, and tied them in a bundle to his back. He struggled with the pony up the steep slope onto higher ground. His own feet, as well as the hoofs of the pony slipped in the mud, gouged out deep channels. Above the floor of the ravine the slope was rocky, but even here the stones came loose beneath their feet and went tumbling into the stream. Khaban could feel the rising waters lapping at his heels, and he threw himself frantically into his work.

When at last he had the pony on the ground above the ravine, Khaban was numb throughout his body. He threw himself on an outcropping of rock, and disregarding the downpour, slept. He woke to a gray morning. The rain had long since ceased, but his body and clothing were still wet. He roused himself feverishly, made his way to the edge of the ravine, and looked down. His sheep were gone. A few carcasses lay where they had been ensnared by the brush, or impaled on the log barrier. The rest had vanished, swept, he knew, from the ravine into the steppe, into the shallow bed of the little river that had been dry since the spring before and would again be dry until the next heavy rain.

Khaban rubbed his body to restore his circulation and then he looked to his gun and cartridges. Mercifully, they were safe. He saddled the pony, strapped on the breechloader, and started down to the steppe.

The sun was a red-hot ball, its heat overpowering. Khaban rode along the margin of the desert, in the amorphous belt of half-steppe, half-desert. Here the land was neither plain nor wasteland, but showed the characteristics of both. The bunch grass was sparse, and its roots were sunk deep in the loose sand. The water holes were few in number, brackish, and many miles apart. Here along the edge of the great desert he did not dare push his pony, nor exert himself. As he rode under the sun, slouching in his saddle, the sweat poured from his body, and he kept a sharp lookout for waterholes in this land he had never seen.

He had not taken this route of his own choice, but had been forced to it by the ruthless suspicion of the Kara-Kirghiz to the west. When he appeared in their villages, they looked at him darkly, and hinted that he was the unknown raider who had cost them so many sheep. They turned him away with threats, not even permitting him to travel north and west through their pastures. These hostile demonstrations drove Khaban to the east in an effort to circle around and thus return home. He had not yet given up his quest, but he had tentatively outlined a new campaign. He would work around to the north, and then in a series of lightning forays he would take sheep from one flock after another, keeping always on the move, veering always in the direction of his own *kollus*.

HIS mind was constantly on sheep; they obsessed every waking moment. He was imagining sheep, hearing their bleats as if they were supernatural voices. He raised his head for the hundredth time, but now it was not his imagination playing pranks. He saw a sizeable herd, limping toward him across the desert, harried by a scampering dog, policed by a lone herdsman who rode placidly behind the flock. Khaban sat his pony, turning over plans in his head. But he realized that this was not the time for subtlety. Instead, he must act boldly, quickly. He roused the pony to a trot and moved across the loose sand to the herdsman.

Khaban allowed the flock to pass him, and then he raised his rifle in his hand, over his head. The herdsman called to his dog and the flock was skillfully halted and rounded into a tight group. Khaban rested his rifle across his saddle, muzzle pointed at the herdsman, his thumb on the hammer, easing it back to cock.

"I am Khaban, the Kazak-Kirghiz," he said. "Are these your sheep?"

"I am called Pandat. I am of the Uzbek," the herdsman said. "These are my sheep."

"Are they part of your flock?" Khaban said.

"They *are* my flock," Pandat said. He smiled. "I have tended them since yesterday, when I acquired them." He patted the muzzleloader strapped beneath his leg.

"I intend to take them from you," Khaban said calmly.

"Your talk is a boy's talk," Pandat said scornfully. "I am Pandat, and I am a *taker* of sheep. They are not taken *from* me." He pulled out his musket and rested it on his saddle, pointed at Khaban.

"I am Khaban." He beat his expanded chest with his fist. "I am Khaban, the Kazak-Kirghiz. Not one of your cowardly Kirghiz who obeys the Reds and lives and dies at their command. I am a free Kirghiz and no one is my master other than myself. I am Khaban who has killed many men, who has taken many sheep, and never asked to whom they belong. My rifle shoots all day without reloading and it can take out the eye of a winging eagle in the dark of night. When my pony gallops, he covers ten versts in each stride and he can run day and night for a week without tiring. And when at last his legs give out, I take him on my back and cover twenty versts in a stride and run forever without being winded. . ."

"I have told you that I am Pandat." The herdsman took up the challenge, and prepared to equal Khaban's boasts. "I advise you to take your pony on your back and run to the other end of the earth. I am Pandat of the Uzbek, and the Uzbek bow to no man, and I, Pandat, bow to no man of the Uzbek. I am the terror of the desert, and the scourge of the Chinese border. The Red flag turns white upon sight of me, and the Reds keep miles from my path. When the name of Pandat is heard, men form armies to halt my coming, but I brush them aside. I dam up rivers with my little finger and I dig my heel in the earth and make a lake with a single spit. When I cross the desert, I command the sands to give me water, and they obey with a spouting fountain. . ."

"When I ride across the steppe," Khaban said, "The grass is scorched in my wake. Where I lie down to sleep, the grass never grows again. When I lay my curse the mountain trembles, and when I seek passage it flattens itself to nothing, or else I step over it without raising my foot."

Pandat said, "When my horse crosses the desert, the seas rage and the winds howl. I hold villages in the palm of my hand, and nations along the length of my arm, and all the peoples of the world do not come up to my knee. When I smile at women, men weep; when I frown at men, women howl in sorrow."

"But I will take your sheep," Khaban said calmly.

He wheeled his pony and galloped away from Pandat, without looking back over his shoulder. Suddenly he flung himself low on his pony's neck, and swung the animal in a wide circle. He pulled in on the reins, the pony reared, and he raised his rifle to his shoulder, the trigger hand holding three extra cartridges.

He fired quickly, and the sand spurted

behind the flying feet of the Uzbek's horse.

While Khaban opened the breech plate and slipped in the second shell, Pandat took aim and fired. Khaban had already flung himself from his saddle and the ball screamed through the space he had just vacated. Khaban was on one knee, aiming under the pony's belly. He squeezed the trigger and Pandat's convulsive stiffening told him he had hit the mark. But the Uzbek was still struggling to pour powder down the barrel of his musket. Khaban stepped out from behind his pony, reloading, and as he walked he took aim again. He halted, fired. A puff of dust flew out of Pandat's hood, and his body lurched forward over the pommel and began to slide downward, his fingers still gripping the musket and powder-bag. Khaban reloaded and continued his cautious advance. When he reached Pandat, he turned him over with his foot, and, satisfied that he was dead, took his horse by the bridle and led it toward the flock.

PANDAT'S dog was a miracle worker; he had kept his charges motionless despite the shots. He nipped at their flanks, barked into their faces, was ever on the move. Now he turned toward Khaban, his teeth bare and gleaming white, his head lowered, his tail a stiff unwavering warning. Khaban eased back the hammer of the rifle and dropped the bridle of the Uzbek's horse. He bent over, holding out his left hand, but keeping his rifle ready. He made a motion to touch the dog's head. The dog retreated stiff-leggedly a foot or two without relaxing his vigilance. Khaban advanced again, and the dog backed away, growling. Khaban took another step forward, the dog another backward. At Khaban's next movement, the dog did not give ground. He sank back on his haunches, his muscles taut and trembling, ready to spring. Khaban hesitated, pondered the use of his rifle.

Then he looked up at the sudden movement of the sheep and saw the flock break for the desert. Khaban yelled, pointed to the sheep, and the dog was away instantly, barking menace. He caught up with the lead sheep, nipped its shoulder and turned it about; he butted the next and succeeded in making the entire flock move toward Khaban. Running madly around the flock in steadily smaller circles, the dog pulled it together and brought it to Khaban. Khaban approached the dog again, reached out his hand and scratched its fur. The dog growled, pleased, and wagged its tail. Khaban rubbed the dog's head. Then he mounted the horse and rode to get his pony. When he returned, the dog was awaiting his orders.

"Hail Khan!" Khaban shouted, and leading his pony, he began to ride toward the forest, still a dim black line on the horizon. The dog moved the sheep and Khaban watched him. He was pleased, and he knew that he had named his new dog fittingly.

Khaban had been in the forest only once before when he had spent several months in the company of Hailar and Tokart. He had lived all of his life on the plains, and he looked upon the forest

with mistrust and some fear. But in the months with Hailar and Tokart he had learned enough of the forest to be able to move constantly in one direction. He would not get lost, he would not travel in circles. Yet there were other dangers that did not exist on the plains. There were wolves, which were seen on the plains mostly in the winter. And the Siberian tiger, seldom seen, but making its presence known by regular killings of men and stock, building up a legend of fear. Khaban had never met this tiger, although he had once seen his work and his tracks. On that occasion he had measured the stride of the killer, and Tokart had said that the tiger was bigger than a man from tail to muzzle. Khaban had no desire to meet the tiger.

Driving the flock through the forest was no simple matter. The sheep were prone to wander, and keeping them together was a difficult task. Khaban realized that without the dog, Khan, he would never have been able to succeed, and would have had to take the great swing around the forest, up to the tundra, too close to the Red posts for comfort. He had no choice but to drive through the forest. He had three days in the forest, and he fervently hoped that he would not lose too many sheep; he had too few for that luxury.

The first day was good. The wolves had not appeared, and the tiger was only a half-remembered legend. The sheep kept together, and at night Khaban penned them in a rude fence of brush. He slept with his rifle across his knees, his back against a tree, and he woke only once. Then he thought that he had heard a wolf howl, and he remained awake a while longer before falling asleep again. But he slept lightly and awoke with the dawn. Khan was already making the rounds, moving about the pen, inspecting his charges.

On the second night Khan barked and Khaban awoke. He came to his feet and saw Kahn facing a single snarling wolf. He fired quickly and the shot knocked the wolf flat, but the marauder was up again, and disappeared in the bush. Khaban slept no more that night, and he moved the sheep with the first glimmering of light. The sheep were restless that day, and Khan and Khaban toiled endlessly. Yet at the end of the day Khaban had lost four sheep, strayed or killed, he could not be sure; for he suspected that the wolves were in the underbrush, skulking, waiting their chance to make a kill. He constructed his pen again that night, and as an added protection built four fires, one on each side of the brush pen, and he remained awake, feeding the fires. He felt safer, but he began to doubt that he would be able to hold out for the fourth and last day. He was very tired, and the dog was no fresher.

On the fourth day, Khaban lost only one sheep, and he reached the edge of the forest. He collected branches for his corral and his fire, and then lay down to sleep. He was exhausted, and slept like a dead man. When he was roused by Khan's barks, he realized that the dog must have been barking for minutes without waking him. He picked up his rifle and loosened several cartridges in his bandoleer. Khan barked again and stared at the darkness in the direction of the forest.

The fires were down, and cast little light beyond a small radius. He gathered some wood and threw it on the embers. The fires flared, and Khaban stared at the forest. For a moment he could see nothing, and then his hands tightened on the rifle as he made out the dim green glow of a pair of eyes. He knew that this was the tiger.

He slipped the cartridges out of his bandoleer and held them with the small fingers of his hand. He felt the breech and waited to measure the tiger's distance. He wondered whether he should chance a shot. If he missed. . . The green phosphorescence had not moved. Khaban raised his rifle, cuddled the stock against his cheek, and took careful aim. He fired, and was blinded momentarily. When he looked into the darkness again, the eyes were gone. He did not know what to make of the tiger's disappearance. He was certain that he had not made a kill, but he could not be sure that he had scared off the prowler. The tiger might yet return.

So Khaban did not return to his blanket. He paced around the pen, accompanied by Khan, and finally, deciding that he was overcautious, contented himself with periodic feeding of

his fires. He sat before one fire and stared into it. Khan still seemed suspicious and wary. Later, Khan barked, and Khaban jumped to his feet. He heard a hissing growl, and saw a heavy body hurl Khan aside like a chip. Stock still with amazement, Khaban saw the huge tiger leap into the pen, crack a ram's neck between his teeth and with the sheep still hanging from his jaws, leap out of the pen.

Khaban threw up his rifle and snapped a shot at the striped body. He knew that he had made a hit, although the tiger showed no hurt. It disappeared in the darkness. Khaban fired another shot after the invisible raider, and strained his eyes into the darkness. Then he wheeled and moved toward the sound of Khan's whimpers. He found that the dog was only stunned, with a deep gash in the shoulder. He worked over the dog, washed the wound, bandaged it rudely. He spent the remainder of the night in a ceaseless vigil over the dog and the sheep pen.

The morning found Khan fairly steady on his legs and Khaban anxious to travel. He did not know whether or not the dog could cope with his task. But he felt no desire to linger in the forest. He broke down the side of the pen and started to drive the sheep. By noon Khaban felt that he was on his last lap homeward. He had a two-day journey ahead of him, but this would be across the steppes, his home. The dog did not seem tired and the sheep were obedient. Khaban halted the sheep by a sink and allowed them to drink. He unsaddled the pony, and transferred the saddle to the Uzbek's horse.

Then he sat down on the edge of the sink and began to sing to himself. He was very happy; he was almost home with a great adventure behind him and many tales to tell.

NOT until the shadows fell over him did Khaban know that there were horsemen all around him. He sprang to his feet, but his rifle lay on the ground, under his blanket and saddle pack. He looked up and stared into the weathered face of a Red cavalry commander. He counted the cavalrymen out of a corner of his eye. A troop of ten. He looked back arrogantly at the commander.

"What is your name? Where do you come from?" the commander said sharply.

"I am Khaban, from the *kollus* of Tokart."

"And what are you doing two days from home? Stealing sheep?"

"Stealing?" Khaban said. He lifted his eyebrows as if amazed. "I was merely leading my sheep to graze. The grass is poor around our *kollus*. One must feed the sheep."

The commander smiled coldly. "Your *kollus* is forbidden to graze its sheep beyond a day's ride from the village. You are more than two days' away."

"A man on a fast horse might make it between sunup and sundown," Khaban said. He smiled, and his eyes slanted.

The commander looked angry, and then he laughed. His men laughed with him, all except one who rode forward to the commander.

"Comrade Commander, this Kirghiz is lying. He is a sheep thief and likely has been raiding the collectives," the man said.

The commander straightened his face. "Possibly, Comrade Commissar. I will question him further." He turned to Khaban, sternly. "Comrade Kirghiz, we do not believe your story. You have been raiding our collectives."

"I have not come near your collectives," Khaban said. "These sheep are mine." He set his mouth stubbornly.

"These sheep are from the collectives," the commissar said. He made a motion with his hand. "We will take them with us."

The commander raised his hand, and two of his men strode forward, unslinging their rifles, clicking the bolts. Khaban stared at the commander, the commissar, the two cavalrymen.

"These are my sheep," he said. "I fought a tiger to keep them, and I will fight you if it must be, barehanded."

The commander looked at Khaban approvingly. He motioned his men to a halt. "A tiger?" He looked toward his men. "Old Kolchak, I'd say."

"I did not ask the tiger his name," Khaban said. "He did not ask for mine."

"Did you kill old Kolchak? I can see

that he did not kill you," the commander added quickly.

"No," Khaban said. "But one day I will go back to the forest, and then. . ."

"Comrade Commander," the commissar said, "we are not visiting with this thief. The sheep must be returned to the collectives."

"These are my sheep," Khaban said.

The commissar signaled to the two men and they moved toward Khaban. Khaban lowered his head and charged at the commissar. One of the men swung his gun, caught Khaban with the barrel. The sight tore his skin. The butt of the other gun hit him on the back of the neck. Khaban fell under a rain of blows. The commander looked down pityingly at his huddled body. He sat motionless while the commissar led the men toward the sheep. Khan faced the Reds, snarling. He nipped the commissar's horse and the animal reared, unseating his rider. The commissar sprang to his feet, drew his saber and cut at the dog. Khan dodged and caught the commissar's wrist, tearing at skin and bone. The commissar pulled at his holster with his free hand, his face writhing with pain. He freed his automatic and pumped the entire clip into the dog.

The cavalrymen rounded up the sheep while the commissar's wrist was being bandaged. The commander waited, and then gave the order to move.

The remounted commissar said, "His horses. Take them." A rider made to go after them, but the commander checked him.

"Unsaddle the horse. Take it, but leave the pony," he said.

The commissar protested. "Comrade Commander, we must teach this man a lesson. It is enough that we leave him his life and freedom."

"Without his pony, a Kirghiz has no freedom," the commander said. He hesitated. "It will make him hate us less."

For the greater part of the next two days, Khaban was unconscious. But at one time he must have been strong enough to go to his blanket, for when he finally opened his eyes, he lay beneath the blanket with his aching head pillowed on the saddle. He struggled to his feet, and ascertained that, apart from the bruises on his head, he was quite whole. He had no recollection of the passage of time, and it was only when he had bathed his head that he realized fully that the Reds had left.

He inspected the tracks of the horses and sheep and found that the tracks were at least two days old. They had a long start on him. He saddled his pony, looked to his gun, and started to follow the tracks. He mounted, took a last glance at the dead Khan, and rode off, his eyes hard and ruthless, fixed unwaveringly on the tracks.

He did not come up with the soldiers the first day. They were evidently traveling faster than was customary. But he pushed on through the twilight until it was too dark to make out the tracks any longer. He had no plan. He expected to formulate one according to circumstances. He knew that he could not charge the troop rashly, as he had Hailar's murderers, for these were seasoned soldiers, equipped with modern firearms. And they were many for a lone man to cope with. He made camp for the night, and was up with the dawn.

He had ridden only a short distance when he came upon another set of tracks. Two horsemen and a wagon. The new tracks merged with those of the cavalrymen and the sheep, proceeding in the same direction. Khaban did not pause to make any deduction from these new signs, but merely whipped his pony to a gallop. He stayed off the tracks, riding to one side, so that if he came upon the enemy suddenly he would be shielded by the swell of the plain. He kept a sharp watch as he rode, and then suddenly he came upon the wagon. He dashed behind a high swell of the terrain. He dismounted and crept on hands and knees to the top of the rise.

LYING flat, peering through the grass, Khaban made out two cavalrymen and a wagon. The tracks had not lied. He immediately forgot his original plan of retribution, for here were three Reds upon whom he could wreak a part of his vengeance before hurrying on after the others. The wagon and horsemen were moving slowly, one rider in front of the wagon, one some lengths behind. The

wagon was drawn by two ponies, or at least Khaban took them to be ponies because of their size and despite the inordinate length of their ears. He had never seen the like of these animals, and he was amazed at the ease with which they pulled the big canvas-topped wagon. But he could satisfy his curiosity later. Now he had to lay plans. He looked ahead, saw that the wagon would move in between two steep hillocks. He caught his pony and dashed for the little hills, keeping well under cover all the time.

Khaban lay under the swell of the hill, drawing a bead on the second rider as he followed the wagon. He brought his rifle to his shoulder. He could not afford to miss. He lined up the sights, and set them on the cheek of the soldier. The rifle threw upwards and slightly to the right. He squeezed the trigger and almost at once started to reload. A quick glance showed him that the cavalryman's face was red with blood, that he was slowly tumbling out of his saddle. The second shot was not long delayed; the rifle roared, and kicked hard at Khaban's shoulder. The driver of the wagon fell under the wheels. Khaban watched, satisfied, and then ducked back quickly as three shots tore up the ground beside him. The remaining soldier was galloping up the hillock toward him.

But he had been prepared for this; his pony stood close by. He vaulted into the saddle, and charged around the curve of the hill, bent low over the pony's neck, just as the Red cavalryman came over the crest of the rise. As the soldier stared confusedly about, Khaban was making for the wagon. He had not far to go, but a shot gashed the flank of his pony before he made the shelter of the wagon. The soldier threw himself from his horse and sought the shelter of the grass. Khaban killed his opponent's horse with a single shot.

He now had all the advantage of the fight, had only to bide his time, to keep a sharp eye out for the soldier's moves. Khaban felt confident, and even a little giddy, as he exposed himself momentarily to draw fire. He drew the shot, and saw a big splinter torn from the wagon-body close to his head. He tried again, this time holding his hood on his rifle barrel, but the old dodge failed. His man had been fooled once, would not be fooled again. He began to think of new ways to draw the Red soldier further into the open.

Finally, Khaban cut a piece of canvas from the wagon with his saber and fastened it to the end of his rifle. He poked it out. He wanted the Red to accept a truce, and then he would use his rifle. He paused, and then stepped out cautiously, ready to jump back to the protection of the wagon. But he had no chance to jump. The soldier, as if knowing Khaban's motive, smashed the stock of his rifle with a shot that should have caught him in the chest. But the shock was enough to stagger Khaban, to send him sprawling. The Red stood up, rifle to shoulder, but Khaban was already rolling back to the wagon. The bullet screamed between the spokes of a wheel and whacked into the ground near Khaban's thigh. Khaban pulled himself over onto his belly, and then stopped, astounded. The Red had dropped his

rifle, and was rapidly disappearing over the top of the hill. Khaban guessed that the soldier had emptied his rifle and had not been prepared with a reload. He sighted his smashed rifle, then threw it down and sprang to his pony.

As Khaban came pounding over the hill, the soldier was turning to face him, drawing his saber, setting his feet for the shock of Khaban's rush. But Khaban pulled up short, staring at the cavalryman. He was amazed to see that the man was a Chinese. He felt momentarily cheated of the full measure of his revenge. But it did not really matter, as long as the uniform bore the hated five-pointed red star.

"I am Khaban, the Kazak-Kirghiz, killer of Reds, terror of the steppes," he said. "I have been robbed by the Red dogs, and I have taken a vow to kill them all. I shall kill you."

"You may kill me," the Chinese said. "But there are too many for you. If you fight me on equal terms I will save the Red Army the trouble of exterminating you."

"You will not kill me," Khaban said. "The man does not live who will kill me. I have met and conquered Pandat, the king of the desert, and Kolchak the tiger ran from me in fear. When I fire my gun I kill three men with the one shot, and when I swing my saber a hundred heads roll, and the wind I create is like a cyclone following the blade. I will kill you and use your head as my club to beat out the brains of the commissar. I will blow down your collective with a puff and scatter your army in the mountains. All this I will do alone, like Genghis Khan, and when men hear my name they will dig holes in the ground to hide from me."

The Chinese laughed derisively. But he could not refrain from issuing a challenge. "I am know as Wang Chen, cavalryman with the army of the Republic. I teethed on the bones of landlords, and as playthings had the skulls of tax-collectors. When I learned to walk, my first game consisted of strangling war-lords with my bare hands, and as a youth I killed Japanese all day and all night. When I sneeze, the black tents of the Kirghiz are leveled to the ground. When I belch, the whole tribe of Kirghiz are felled by my breath. . ." He laughed. "Will you dismount and fight, comrade Kirghiz, or shall I pull you down?"

Khaban swung from the saddle, holding his saber loosely in his hand, and slapped the pony on the flank. The pony moved off a few feet and turned to watch the two men. At the Chinese's first move, Khaban sized up his opponent's style. The Chinese swung his saber like a cavalryman, prepared to cut, and not to parry, except in a similar wild cut. Khaban had played with a saber most of his life, and to him swordplay was an art. He knew that the saber had a point as well as an edge, and as a Kirghiz he had been well-drilled in its use.

Khaban circled the Chinese, who also moved, but not with the studied grace of the Kirghiz. The soldier planted his feet firmly, as if he must put all his strength behind one blow which would finish the fight. The Chinese cut, and Khaban did not even bother to parry the blow with his blade. He stepped back and the thrust missed. He closed in and slashed the Chinese lightly on the arm, just deep enough to break the skin. The Chinese cut at Khaban's head, but Khaban came under the blade and sliced the razor edge of his own saber deep into the biceps of the soldier's sword arm. The Chinese contorted his face in pain, and the saber fell from his limp hand. Khaban measured his man and plunged the blade deep into his body.

The duel had not lasted two minutes, and Khaban had taken the wagon, the long-eared ponies and a horse as booty, as well as the contents of the wagon, whatever they might be. He began to compose new stanzas to a song about himself as he rode the pony back to the wagon. When he climbed into the wagon his eyes started from his head. He had taken a load of arms! Lying in their long crates in the wagon were more than a hundred rifles and ammunition. He picked up one of the weapons, turned it over, worked the bolt, then scooped out a handful of shells and jumped from the wagon. It took him a few minutes to master the mechanism, and then he filled the magazine and fired six times, as fast as he could work the bolt. He shook his dark head in amazement.

He tied his pony and the horse to the

tailboard of the wagon and turned around, heading for his *kollus*. Forgotten were his dreams of revenge on the commissar. He had a great treasure at his back.

AFTER the first two months had passed they began to fear that Khaban would never return with his sheep. Khaban *did* return, but he brought with him no sheep. Instead he rode on the seat of a big wagon drawn by two long-eared, smooth-coated ponies; and a horse followed alongside Khaban's pony.

The children followed him in silence and wonderment. The horde of dogs yapped madly at the wheels of the wagon, and the adults covered their open mouths with their hands in polite expression of astonishment. Khaban drove his wagon to the *kibitka* of Tokart, brushed aside the flap and entered. Tokart said nothing. He embraced Khaban warmly. Then he brought Serai forward by the hand.

"I give you Serai as your wife, my son," Tokart said. "We will celebrate the wedding this very night."

"But I have brought no sheep," Khaban said.

"You have brought more. You have brought yourself. And if the elders will not disregard the laws of the purchase, I will accept these animals—" he strode to the entry and pointed to the wagon—" in return. I have seen them before. They are stronger than a horse and very dangerous, but capable of much work."

"Wait," Khaban said, and held the flap open for Tokart and Serai to pass out of the *kibitka*. He walked up to the wagon and reaching inside drew out a rifle. He tossed it to one of the men, and the gun was passed about an admiring circle. "Who will buy this from me?"

"Fifty sheep," Chuban said. He gripped the rifle tightly, and played with the bolt like a child with a toy.

"I offer fifty sheep also," Nailah said.

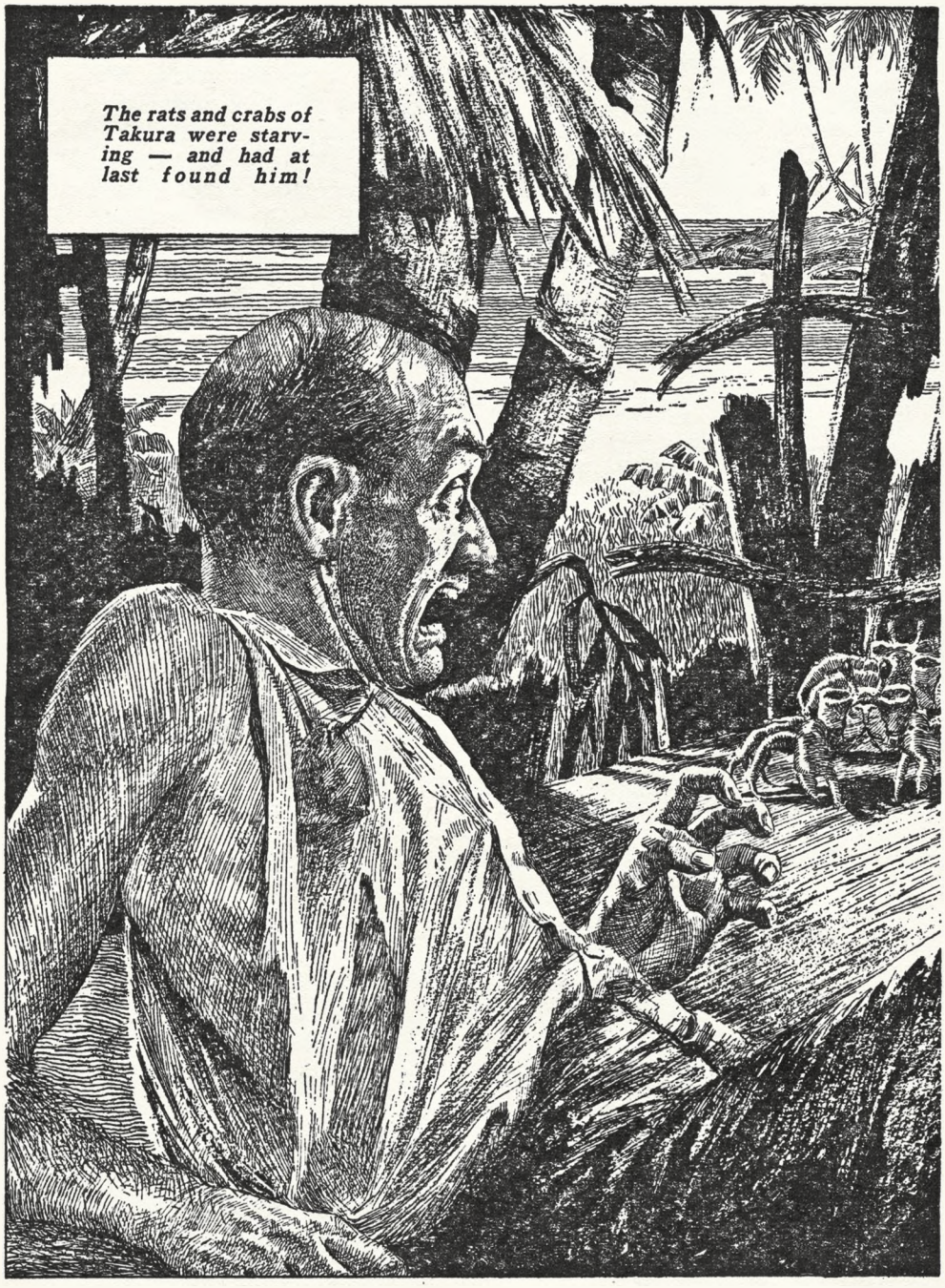
"I will take fifty sheep from Chuban," Khaban said. He addressed the crowd, meanwhile reaching into the wagon again. "And I will take thirty-five sheep from Nailah. . . ." He gave a gun to Nailah. "And ten from Kara . . . And fifteen from Zilakh, and five from old Orut . . . And one from every young man. . . ." He turned to Tokart, "Thus I pay for my bride, and add the animals as a gift."

Khaban passed out rifles to all the men of the village, and had the remainder carried into Tokart's *kibitka*. Serai stood by, smiling softly, never taking her eyes from his lean dark face. Tokart, glancing in their direction, nodded indulgently. But when he had finished inspecting the rifles he no longer smiled.

"This wagon belongs to the Reds," Tokart said gravely. "And so do the guns. The guns can be hidden, but not the wagon or the animals."

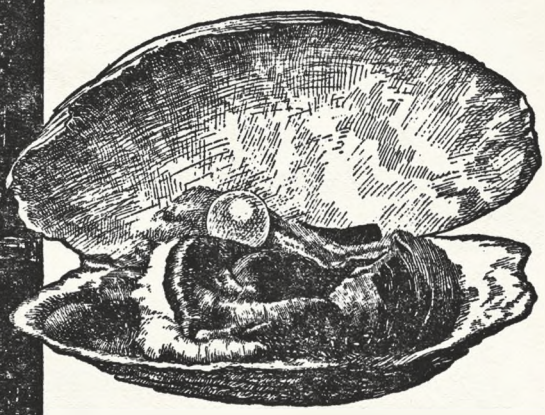
Khaban explained how he had come by his booty. Tokart listened, nodding occasionally. "The guns we can hide," Khaban said, "if the Reds come to the *kollus*. But we will burn the wagon in celebration of the wedding, and we will eat the animals. . ."

When Tokart had left, Khaban and Serai sat close together. Serai spoke of the wedding, and Khaban listened patiently. But a part of his mind was across the steppe, in the forest, thinking of the tiger. With one of the new guns, he could surely have killed old Kolchak. Would it be possible for him some day to return to the forest and hunt the tiger. . . ?



ESCAPE TO TAKURA

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS



By
WILMON MENARD

IF YOU could have seen Harry Sexton, assistant bookkeeper for the plumbing supply house of Hadley & Hadley, sitting quietly in Joe Severino's Bar that night you wouldn't have imagined for an instant that such a self-effacing, meek little man could possess murderous instincts. And, what's more, he had no thought of homicide, until passing along the bar to place a nickel in the juke-box, he saw the fat, loud-mouthed boozer and the thousand dollar bills he was waving in his fist. He heard the bartender tell him, "I wouldn't flash that kind of dough around here, if I were you." The lush downed a shot of bourbon and then leaned forward confidentially.. "There's more where it come from, pal old pal! I gotta system for making the ponies pay off!"

Harry Sexton went back to his stool at the end of the bar and sat down and silently contemplated his victim. Slowly the plan for murder seeped into his tidy mind. There were, of course, other extenuating circumstances that formed his notion to kill another human being. Three months previously his wife had divorced him and went off with another man, and right on top of that an efficiency expert showed up at the office and Harry Sexton had received his two weeks' notice. This gave added verification to his wife's last parting-words, "You're just a nonentity, Harry Baxter Sexton, a spineless, wishy-washy pipsqueak!"

Harry Sexton was also a pathological

worrier. He had always had a horrible fear of poverty, and now that fear was intensified. The future looked precarious and dismal. He was fifty years old and his brain refused to handle figures like it once did. He saw himself starving and walking the lonely streets in the cold and rain or huddling in dark rescue missions. The contemplation made him ill with worry.

He slipped quietly off his stool and went out into the night. There was no panic in his soul or mind. He knew what he must do and planned the entire procedure without undue alarm. Six blocks from Joe's Bar he came up on tip-toes behind the staggering, mumbling drunkard and struck him hard over the head with a short length of gas pipe. In his small hotel room, Harry Sexton methodically laid out the bills on the top of his bed and counted them with practiced fingers and eyes. He carefully packaged them, as if he were about to deposit it all in Hadley & Hadley's safe, and placed the small bundle under his mattress. He had five thousand dollars. Then he walked down the flight of stairs to the dark street. His reaction to the heinous act was surprising, even to himself. He ate a midnight snack, read the early morning paper and then returned to his room. Just before he fell off into deep slumber he gave a short laugh and said aloud, "So Harry Sexton is a nonentity, a jelly-fish, eh?" When he awoke the next morning he felt neither remorseful nor conscience-clear. He was resigned to the fact that he had done wrong, but he felt it would have been much worse had he permitted himself to become a human derelict. A psychiatrist would have gone into raptures over Harry Sexton's brain. It was the most normal and abnormal mind imaginable. He read of the murder and robbery without emotion, and when the newscaster spoke of it on the radio, he was reading travel literature. All he cared to know was that the police were completely baffled. No clues, no suspects.

TWO months later in Papeete, Tahiti, Harry Sexton persuasively fixed his small sad eyes upon Captain Oro, the fat skipper of the trading-schooner *Tamara* and announced, "My name is Harry Sexton, and I've come many, many miles to escape civilization. I've been told on good authority I can do this on some uninhabited coral atoll in the Dangerous Group. And they tell me at the land office that you have an island there for lease."

Captain Oro scratched his chin and stared speculatively at the melancholic man. A Polynesian is an instinctive appraiser of human nature, and the schooner captain had seen many white men come to the islands—misfits, escapists, artists, madmen—all with an affected passion to own a small island far from the noisy world of cities. But in this man he was reminded of a whipped dog who was searching for a dark corner. In this man's guileless, humble eyes he read deep pain and a desperate yearning for solitude that was movingly genuine.

"I think Takura blentay hokay for you," Captain Oro said quickly. And they drew up a long lease on the remote coral isle.

On the morning of the fourth day out of Papeete they sighted the picturesque coral island. From the sea the atoll appeared fairy-like. Coconut palms were waving gently in the southeast trade winds, and the blue ocean was pounding a white ruff of breakers on its encircling barrier reefs. Sexton was taken ashore in the schooner's long boat and he made an enthusiastic inspection of the atoll. Takura had a circumference of only two and a half miles and had a rise of less than five feet above high water level. The wide ring of coral reef which enclosed the deep central lagoon was heavily covered with coconut palms, and here and there were clumps of pandanus (screw-pine) and scrub brush. When he came aboard the schooner again he was grinning. It was the only time Captain Oro had seen him really happy.

"It's actually quite a little paradise!" Sexton exclaimed. "I know I'm going to be very happy here. It was very kind of you to lease me Takura." There were tears in his eyes, and he blew his nose emotionally.

Captain Oro, when he was sailing away from the coral atoll, was sorely beset with a troubled conscience. He wasn't so sure

he had been so kind to Harry Sexton. For a Polynesian native it was one thing to live on a coral atoll, but for a white man who had only known city life and city ways . . . The Tahitian skipper took a long, long swizzle of rum and felt a little relieved.

But Harry Sexton was more adaptable than Captain Oro imagined him to be. In three days' time he had made himself a high foundation of coral rocks, cemented by a mortar of limestone, upon which he built himself a snug thatched shelter. For a watertight roof he affixed lengths of corrugated sheet iron. The atoll was totally devoid of fruits and vegetables, as are most of the coral isles of the Tuamotu or Dangerous Archipelago, and there were no fresh-water streams. The only water seeped up brackish and saffron-colored in an old abandoned well back of his hut. But there was an abundance of young green coconuts, and the liquid which gushed forth from a punctured nut was cool and sweet. He placed some oil drum cisterns at each corner of his dwelling to catch rain water and the heavy night-dew for cooking and bathing.

Sexton had brought a large supply of tinned vegetables and fruits from Tahiti, but he lost no time in acquainting his stomach to the food the lagoon yielded. He had no other alternatitve, as most of his money had been spent for the lease of the atoll. Early in the morning he paddled out in the outrigger canoe he had brought with him from Tahiti and hunted turbos, urchins, and shellfish on the wide barrier reefs. His first traps for lobsters and crabs were clumsy, but they were always filled. For fishes he had his choice of anything from small mullets to tuna and bonito. The pandanus, growing on aerial roots, had tender root tips which were edible and yam-like in flavor, and the cone-shaped fruit contained endosperms not unlike barley-corn in shape, which he ground and made into tasty meal patties. Harry Sexton ate as did the early aborigines of these atolls and he thrived.

Now, for over thirty years he had adhered to a strict routine. Six full days a week had been spent carefully putting figures down in gray-covered ledgers. Habit had become an integral part of his life, necessary as breathing. And he knew this. He didn't permit his mind and body to become torpid. Every morning, after he had gathered his food for the day, he made a careful search of the grove to pick up any coconuts that had fallen during the night. When he had collected a large pile, he split them open and left them to dry in the sun. The half sections of white meat he eventually spread out on long racks for further dehydration, and then, when they were sufficiently cured, he sacked them in burlap sacks and stored them in a lean-to behind his hut for the call of the copra-schooners which paid him the coconut syndicate's price of Papeete.

The large rats and coconut-crabs *(birgus latro)* did considerable damage in the groves, snipping off the nuts before they had matured, so he nailed wide strips of tin high up on the trunks of the palms which their claws could not cling to, and so thwarted them. Within a few months' time he had cleaned the frond-

littered groves and tinned most of the bearing palms. For a man who had spent most of his life in a stuffy office, Harry Sexton showed surprising energy. He had brought with him many of his well-thumbed volumes of carpentry and woodcraft as well as island life instruction. True, he had never been an enthusiastic camper as a lad, but the small knowledge helped him now and he had the strong, necessary will to survive nature. There was, of course, the very important consideration of having a mate. Captain Oro, on one of his calls at Takura, took it upon himself to bring a pretty Tahitian girl, thinking by this time Sexton would be plagued with loneliness for female company.

"I'm quite satisfied by myself here," Sexton curtly informed the Tahitian skipper.

So Captain Oro had to transport the huffy Tahitian strumpet back to Papeete. Harry Sexton had had one bleak experience with a woman and he didn't dare chance another. He saw no reason to endanger his almost perfect peace and security by bringing a Polynesian Eve into his atoll paradise. Besides, his financial budget had not included a native mistress, so he saw no reason to alter the figures. He had never made any erasures or alterations in his commercial ledgers, so why should he here with his life on Takura? He had made certain, through a violent deed, his island kingdom, and he would permit no encroachments that might undermine this actuality.

HARRY SEXTON was also a man of foresight. He realized that Takura was a low island and that, in event of a hurricane, he would be in considerable danger. So he set about building a hurricane shelter of sufficient height to escape the highest raging seas which might overleap the barrier reefs. Inside would be plenty of storeroom for food. Planks were needed for the forms to hold the mortar of coral rock and limestone. He suddenly remembered a sunken schooner on the far side of the lagoon in two fathoms of water, and he paddled out to investigate its deck planking. In the minute or so he was underwater on its tilted, shattered deck, he saw that he could pry loose with a crowbar some of the lengths. He was about to rise to the surface, when he saw the large pearl oysters spread out on a sandy sunlit area at the stern of the schooner. He quickly ripped two from their byssus and ascended to the outrigger canoe. In the second shell, under the soft, fringing mantle of the oyster itself, his groping fingers brought forth a perfect pearl.

Harry Sexton, as you must have already gathered, was not a demonstrative person. He did not give a loud shout of happiness, nor did he feel his heart pound against his ribs. He accepted his good fortune, momentarily, with quiet satisfaction, as if he were entitled to it. He had felt the same way when he had delivered the killing blow to the head of the drunkard and took the wallet containing the five thousand dollars. Now he was sure his violent deed had been condoned. Otherwise, fate would not have shown him the pearl oysters. Harry Sexton had a quiet chuckle at the idea of retribution in life.

He dived again and again, and by sundown he had cleared the floor of pearl oysters in the vicinity of the schooner—and had eight more flawless moon pearls.

Just before nightfall that evening a cutter arrived from the large pearling-island of Hikueru. The Tuamotu skipper had obligingly stopped at Takura for any mail Sexton might have for Tahiti, or to give him passage there if he cared to go. Most of the trading-schooner captains called at Sexton's atoll because the predicament of a lone white man living on an isolated coral atoll made them solicitous of his welfare.

"And what would take me to Tahiti?" Sexton snapped at the skipper.

The sudden and marked unfriendliness of the white man convinced the Tuamotu trader that the solitary dweller of Takura would some day go mad. He had seen *popaas,* or white men, trying to live like natives before.

Sexton was relieved when the sails of the cutter dropped below the horizon. The full sense of his great wealth was beginning to take possession of him, and if the skipper had stayed longer he might have broken down and shown him the pearls. This would have started a pearl rush on Takura.

The morning after the cutter's departure, he went back to the lagoon and began diving for more pearl shells. But, although he explored a radius of more than a hundred yards around the schooner, he found no more pearls. Then he was sorry he had not taken the cutter to Tahiti. It was going to be difficult waiting three more months for Captain Oro's schooner. Still he had the satisfaction of knowing he had found the only pearls in the lagoon of Takura.

Harry Sexton, for a few days, kept up his daily routine, collecting coconuts, keeping the groves tidy, and going ahead with the construction of the hurricane-shelter. One morning, while he was splitting coconuts with an axe in the southern grove, he suddenly gave a dry chuckle and stopped his labor. The utter uselessness of his occupations was just too droll. Copra each month only netted him about twenty dollars. So he left the coconuts for the rats and the crabs. As for the hurricane shelter, by the time the squalls began to sweep across Takura he would be seated on the wide veranda of a swanky hotel in Papeete, Tahiti, sipping rum punches.

Thus Harry Sexton forsook the daily occupations on the coral atoll which had kept his life free of monotony and listlessness. He was a creature of habit and when that slender thread was broken, he found himself floundering about helplessly in the deep slump of stagnation and impatience. The once clean groves became littered with fronds and coconuts. The long racks of coconut meat he no longer bothered to cover with the waterproof pandanus mats against rain and dew, and the copra quickly spoiled. His entire life had been changed, reorganized, upset. Why couldn't Captain Oro for once be ahead of schedule?

But something was to come before the *Tamara*—an element of extreme danger which Harry Sexton had long been planning for and which he had foolishly forsaken in the obsession of his sudden wealth—a hurricane!

THE forewarning white squalls swept in suddenly from the northeast and struck their first stunning blows to the coral atoll just after nightfall. No other islands had weakened its swift, mad rush across the south ocean, and Takura, southernmost of the Dangerous Archipelago, received its full fury. Sexton then felt the same wretchedness that a slight error in bookkeeping had always caused him. In his orderly mind he had no excuse for blunders. What a damnable thing to have stopped his work on the hurricane shelter!

He stood alone in the heavy, surging darkness at the edge of the coral beach, partly protected by the smooth annulose trunk of a coco-palm and peered anxiously through puckered rain-and-wind lashed eyes across the wide reef-locked lagoon. The black surface skin of the water was torn up here and there in white spindrift wounds by the flaying force of the low, sweeping gale. The roar of the sea over the barrier reefs had become cataclysmic now, and he knew that the ocean had breached across the lower southern end of the atoll and was destroying the mature, bearing coconut palms. Once, the loss of coconut palms would have worried him as they represented his only income to buy supplies, but now he was sick with anxiety that he had not completed his protection against this very storm.

He fought his way back through the grove to the hut. The weird sirening of the wind in the tops of the palms was frightening and bent the trunks far over until they strained and cracked. He moved with caution. The gale was shearing off fronds and coconuts and hurling them down with killing force. A direct hit and a man's head would be shattered like an eggshell.

Inside the hut it was close and humid, but he didn't dare risk opening one of the shuttered apertures he used for windows. He turned up the hurricane lantern and brought his pearls out from the chest in the corner. Wrapping them carefully in separate cloth cocoons, he packed them tightly in a tobacco sack and tied it by a length of fish-cord around his throat. Then he stretched out on his canvas cot and tried to rest.

He slept fitfully through the lull in the storm, which lasted two hours. But when it veered around to the east and began blowing like a thousand trumpets heralding Judgment Day, Harry Sex-

ton knew he had better get out of his hut and climb a coconut palm, as the natives did when a hurricane struck. Earlier that evening he had prepared a palm, lopping off its fronds with a machete, so its leaves would offer no wind resistance. He frantically put on his sodden clothes again, grabbed up the lantern, and rushed out into the increased fury of the tempest. Although the palm was only a short distance from his hut, he had to fight fiercely every inch of the way, crouched low, shielding his face against the wind and the hard, driving rain, his lantern swinging violently from the crook of his elbow.

He at last reached the palm of refuge and, with an agility born of desperation, scampered up its wet smooth bole and straddled a frond-butt. He looped the handle of the hurricane lantern over another above him, and peered anxiously about him. At least, he would have some light in his misery, but this expectancy was short-lived. The wind lifted the lantern and flung it off into space like a comet, and an intervening palm smashed it.

The experience was a strange one for Harry Sexton—to be perched high up in the top of a palm with the suffocating blackness of the night on the stream of storm rushing violently past him. The hurricane built up swiftly and in an hour's time it was laying waste to the atoll. Harry Sexton no longer tried to think. He closed his eyes and clung to the palm trunk with a frenzied strength. The typhonic wind almost tore him loose many times, and occasionally the coco-palm bent far over, making a sickening cracking sound, but its myriad roots were buried deeply in the coral limestone and they held. Below, the broiling seas, which had overleapt the barrier reefs, swept two feet deep over the atoll.

He raised his head from the side of the trunk to see if his hut was still standing, and just at this precise moment a flying frond struck him a grazing blow on the side of the head. For a moment he felt his arms go limp, then with superhuman strength he gripped the palm tighter and stopped his sliding descent.

The hurricane blew for seven hours, and then it went roaring off to the northwest. Harry Sexton was still alive and, fingering the small bag around his neck, he found he still had his fortune in pearls. Ha! Nemesis hadn't caught up with him yet. This thought gave him strong comfort. He slid painfully down the trunk, and when he had his feet on the hard coral, he stood in the water up to his hips, holding to the palm, suffering excruciating agony as the circulation of blood came back to his numb, battered limbs. Then he stumbled to his hut. One wall had carried away, but the water had drained out of it, and he flung himself, more dead than alive, on the wet pallet.

WHEN he awoke he could hear the sound of the gentle southeast tradewinds in the plumes of the palms and the pleasant music of the small combers on the reefs. It was dark and he surmised he had slept far into the night. He had to feel his way to the door and down the steps to the ground. The water was now only ankle deep. He splashed through the swirling, draining water, arms outstretched, so as not to collide with any palms. Then, when he had taken several steps, he stopped short with a startled cry. He had felt a strange warmth on his face and arms. He walked forward a few more steps, and he felt a coolness strike across his face! Harry Sexton gave one high-pitched scream and sank to his knees in the stinking water. He knew it was not night, but daytime! The heat on his body was the sun—and the abrupt variation of temperature the shadows of the coco-palms falling across him as he walked.

He crawled frantically on his hands and knees back to his hut. He lay on the cot, his aching body wracked with sobs as he pantingly said aloud over and over again, "I'm blind! I'm blind! Blind as a bat!"

Harry Sexton remained in his hut for two days, eating the meat of the coconut and drinking its water, waiting fearfully for his eyesight to return. He had heard of blows on the head causing temporary blindness, and the hope was growing within him that, with a little rest, his vision would return and be as good as before. But when he was still stumbling about sightlessly a week later, guided by

sound and feel, panic seized him. His only salvation now was the *Tamara*. He cursed himself for not taking the Tahitian girl Captain Oro had brought that trip. Now she could have cared for him and hunted food.

Food wasn't plentiful. He found this out when, for three hours, he explored on his hands and knees the shallows of the lagoon for shellfish. All he could scoop up was a small handful, and the next day he found only three. The heavy seas had torn loose his marine food. The hurricane had also dislodged every coconut on Takura and what the rampaging seas hadn't washed into the ocean, the draining water had carried off. He climbed coco-palm after coco-palm and explored with eager, trembling fingers below the frond-butts, but only the naked spathes raked his fingers. Taking his bearings by the sound of the surf (to windward the breakers beat louder), he staggered along the coral strand, hoping to find a fish trapped in a shallow pool. But most of the time his feet slipped on dead fishes. And he knew it would be suicide to eat their decomposed flesh. Once, he did hear a splash close by, and he desperately sprang headlong in that direction. He arose wet and cut by a growth of stag-coral, listening tensely. Only the rustling of the water and the sigh of the tradewinds in the palms!

Then a day came when he could no longer leave his cot. He had not found a coconut for four days and his tongue was swollen and black.

"Captain Oro will surely come for me tomorrow." he kept telling himself to bolster his waning courage. His belief in orderly fate was still quite remarkable.

But the next morning the *Tamara* didn't put into Takura, and then Harry Sexton began to lose faith in human nature. Why couldn't humans add up as efficiently as figures in a ledger? One of his arms had fallen over the side of the cot, and he was suddenly diverted from his dark broodings by a sharp pain at his fingertips. He raised the throbbing hand, and then he heard the shrill chattering cries of rats and the dry scraping of scuttling crab-legs. A rat had suddenly nibbled his fingers! He had forgotten all about the rats and the crabs of Takura, who had lost their food too, and were starving—and had at last found him!

Harry Sexton began to scream with the last spark of life that remained in his wasted body. And a lone sooty-tern in flight over the ravaged tops of the coco-palms swooped low to listen and then circled off toward less damaged atolls for food. The solid mass of green crabs remained motionless, and the rats, closest to the cot, stood on their haunches and preened their nervously agitated whiskers with delicate feet. They waited patiently until only dry rattling sounds came from the man's swollen lips and, even before life left the frail body in a fluttering little snuffle, they had closed in voraciously. One fat hairy crab even took Harry Sexton's bag of pearls and carried them into a hole on the beach of Takura.

Two weeks later when Captain Oro stopped at the hurricane swept atoll, he found what was left of the white man he had brought there. He crossed himself piously and repeated a few sacred words he had memorized from his Catholic-missionary school days in Tahiti. He had a wild-eyed sailor gather up in a copra sack all that was left of Harry Sexton, and off Takura they weighted it with some coral rocks and dropped it into the sunlit sea.

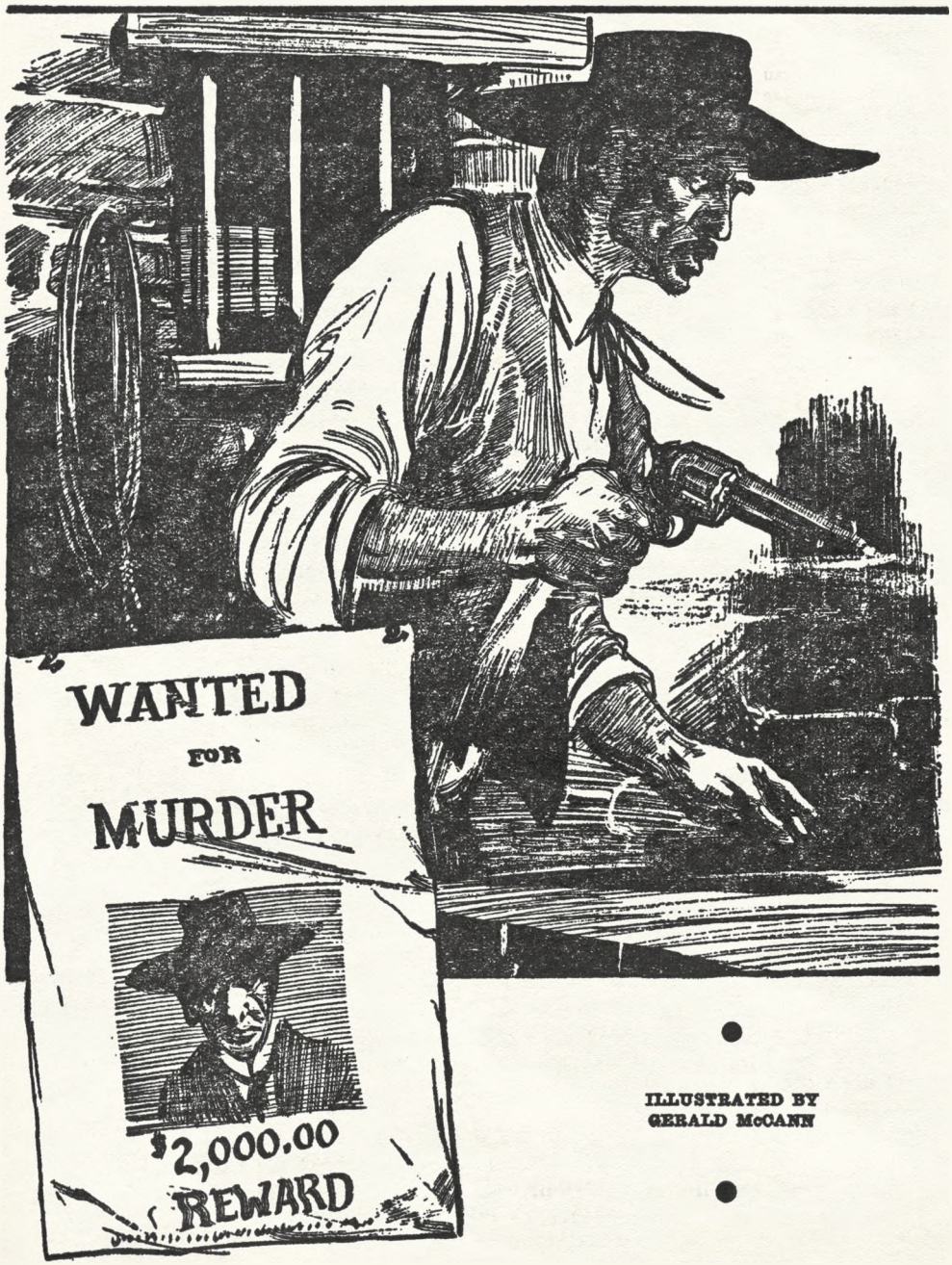
The next afternoon when the *Tamara* was becalmed in the doldrums, the engines broke down under use and Captain Oro went below to have a talk with Tu, his engineer. Sexton's death had been preying upon his mind. He found the herculean Tahitian cursing over a defective fuel pump. The captain squatted down in the cramped space and said in the native tongue, "My brain is troubled with doubt."

"Eh?" grunted Tu.

"Sometimes I am not so sure all our ancient laws are true. You know as well as I the Great Law of Tangaroa, which says that crabs and rats are the souls of evil-doers who eat the flesh of those who murder. Crabs and rats ate the little *popaa* Sexton, and he could never have been a murderer. I tell you, Tu, I think the stories of the old days are false."

Tu nodded his head ponderously. "Anyone who believes in them is certainly an old woman," he said, with finality.

NEVER REACH WITH



ILLUSTRATED BY
GERALD McCANN

YOUR LEFT

By GEORGE C. APPELL

I heard the crash of the marshal's gun and felt the pain flash up my arm.

I HEARD the thin whoop of the daily train from Denver and knew it would roll into Boulderbush in four more minutes. It was the loop railroad that came from Denver and circled down through Cactus Crossing, then went back to Denver. It ran once a day and once every other night. So I undesked my feet and strapped on my spurs and pulled the poster off the wall and stood a minute in the sunlight of the doorway, trying to look like the deputy sheriff I'm supposed to be. My boss, the sheriff, swung around in his swivel chair and glanced at me

over the top of the Boulderbush *Weekly Coyote*. "You got a hoss f'r them spurs?" he wanted to know. Great kidder, the boss.

"Iron horse comin' now," I told him. We talk like that a lot.

He folded the *Coyote* and frowned and fingered his chins and took off his glasses. "That's right." He eyed the wall clock. "Your turn to look 'er over."

We rotated the job, day on and day off: the railroad wanted all local peace officers to put a drop on passengers in case any of them checked with the "wanted" posters. And today I had a hunch I might find me something. You never know. I stepped across the plank walk and ambled over to station shack, and those spurs chinked like silver dollars. I felt pretty good at the thought of picking up a nice, plump reward. Even half a nice, plump reward. I'd seen Denver, I'd taken Knuckles Noonan up there just the month before to deliver him to a stronger jail than ours, and I knew I'd never waste *my* life in Boulderbush.

The train was slowing into the straightaway with her pistons gasping and her smoke whuffling up to the hot sky. I leaned on the edge of the telegraph window and nodded to old Leary, the agent.

He nodded back and raised his eyeshade and peered down the rails toward the train. "On time today, cowboy."

"Only thing around here that is." Sometimes I get 'em off like that.

Leary looked at me as if he didn't like me. "You expectin' Jesse James or whoever?" I was thinking of an answer when I saw the telegraph blank on the hook. It was a carbon and it was smudged, but I could read the name. It was the same as the one on the poster in my pocket.

The engine grumbled past and I had to wait till it was beyond the platform before I asked, "Who's that to—John D.—who? Crofton?" I tried to sound as if I didn't care. "Who sent that?"

The cars were clicking by and Leary said, "A Mex kid sent it yesterday. I don't keep the messages. Now, you're supposed to know it all. Hah-come a Mex kid sends a wire to Denver?"

"Maybe I'll tell you someday," I answered, and wondered about that Mex kid sending a wire to Denver.

THE train had stopped and Charley Rouse, the conductor, climbed down and waved to Leary. "Got two for yuh!" he hollered. The first one was Mrs. Lane, who goes up every month to get treated at the sanitarium north of here. She'll be cured soon and then she'll have to stay in Boulderbush—which is what I won't have to do.

The second passenger was an elderly man with a pale, dredged-out face; you could see that he was nothing but a cage of bones under his fine, light overcoat and worsted suit. He carried a new suitcase that looked as if it hadn't been carried much.

Now here's luck, I thought; here's the first man who ever got off a train at Boulderbush and answered-up to a "wanted" poster. And in my hand I held that poster. I banged my boots together once, and the spurs chinked again and reminded me of all that money. . . I'd get a ranch. . . A trap and team. . . I'd go to the St. Louis Exposition next year. . .

The train slid out of the station. Charley Rouse waved goodbye until tomorrow and climbed aboard, and the old fellow with the suitcase was left alone on the platform, blinking after Mrs. Lane as if she had the answer to where he wanted to go.

I walked up to him and tilted my hat back and reached for the bag. "Mr. Crofton?. . . Let me help you."

He jumped back as if he had a case of conscience. "Who are you, sir?" His eyes flickered all over me and finally rested on the badge. "Oh-h-h? The sheriff, hey?"

"Almost." I yanked the bag out of his hand. "Come on and visit our jail."

"Hey?" He twisted loose, breathing hard. Then he began to cough. "Jail?"

I got him by the arm and crushed quickly into his withered bicep. "Your name's Crofton, isn't it?"

"Yes. John D. Crofton." He hung away from me, not trying to break free but hurting, a little, where I had him.

I dropped the bag and showed him the poster. "That's you, isn't it? That's your picture, isn't it?"

He coughed some more, his tired old hand to his mouth, and then he looked

at the poster. "Ye-es. . . That's—that's me. But what's this all for?" He read the printing and went waxen under the white. *"Wanted For Murder.* Why, I've never harmed a soul in my life!" His watery eyes swelled out of his skull. "I never murdered anybody! I came here to see my—to see somebody I know and help him out!"

"Sure, I know." I picked up his bag and forced him across the platform toward the jail. A lot of times they're all alike, these innocent hombres. You've got to know how to handle them.

He didn't say any more, but his eyes were sure suspicious and hard. His breathing was making little flutter sounds in his nose. I kicked open the door with my right foot and jogged Crofton inside with my left knee.

"Here's one off the iron horse, boss." I tossed the poster over the top of the *Coyote* and shoved Crofton forward. "Old for his age, but still alive."

"We don't keep dead ones," the boss grunted, and we both laughed. We get that way, him and me. "Well, well, well. An' what for does a ol' hand like you wanta kill folks f'r?"

I rammed my .44 between his kidneys so he wouldn't try anything; he winced all over and snapped backward and shook his head. "Please. . . Please, don't. . ."

The boss began searching him, mumbling something about did the victim have time to say, Please, please, don't? There was a punched leather wallet and a key ring with a slim gold knife on one end of the chain. And a folder with the latest pictures of William McKinley and Wiliam Jennings Bryan, with a heading that said in a land where you can always take your choice, choose Crofton Products first.

"That's all," the boss said. "Lock him up."

Crofton bent straight, and for a minute I thought he was going to cry. His lips sucked in and out and he blinked and coughed some more. Then he whispered, "This is an awful mistake. You'll find out in the morning."

The boss winked at me, and I winked back. Crofton bubbled in a breath and said, "He's—crossed me—again. . ."

I locked him up.

The boss went over to Leary to notify the federal marshal in Denver. I spread the *Coyote* on the desk and took off my spurs and put my feet up. I took out my .44 and flipped out the cylinder and spun it a few times, watching the cartridge cases flash in a fuzzy metal circle, and that circle became a dollar in my eyes, and then a thousand of 'em. And I spun it some more and pretty soon it was ten thousand bucks, then fifty thousand. The reward said only five thousand, but I felt sure I could parlay it up a few notches. I heard a cough from beyond the door leading to the cell, and I flipped the cylinder back into the frame and holstered the gun. I'd be ready for Crofton if he wanted trouble. He was my future.

The boss waddled in and sat down in his swivel chair and shook his head like a man who's just heard bad news.

"What's the matter, boss—don't the marshal want him?" That was no joke, so I didn't laugh.

He shook his head again and creaked back in his chair and folded his fingers across his belly. "Ain't that. It's jes' that the marshal's got the sufftest job a man ever had. Hangs 'round the Brown Palace all th 'time, an' gits to the thee-ayter w'en he wants, an' c'llects good foldin' money f'r doin' it." He looked at me. "An' which reminds me—what'll yuh do with all that reward money? Blow it'n the bright spots?" He chuckled all over. He doesn't know dollars from horseshoes, and he'll be a sheriff all his life.

I said, "I'm goin' to give it to the poor people—like me." I started to laugh, then stopped as I thought about blowing the money in Denver—because that's one town that won't see my dollars again. They go too fast, as I'd found out the month before when I turned Noonan in and wasted a day or two around town. I had enough headache from that, even if I didn't pay the bills. That was some party, but not one I'd like to go through again. Nossir. A ranch for me, and a skiddoo up to St. Louis to see the sights. . .

Another cough scraped from the cell. Then Crofton's cracked voice called through the door, "Sheriff, are you there?"

The boss heaved himself to his feet,

blowing from the effort, and shuffled back to the cell. I heard him say, "I guess so, why not?" and he came out and closed the door behind him. "He wants to shave. See he gets his razor kit." The boss put on his hat and yawned. "See I get called, now, if'n the marshal wires or the priz'ner gits loose."

"He won't leave," I said. I thought about the night ahead of me, my night on duty, the way we'd planned. I didn't expect to wake the boss up.

"He shore has a fine kit," the boss said on his way out. He thumbed the leather and shook his head. "Well. . . You call me."

I waited till he had crossed the square to the Okay Restaurant before I stood up and inspected the kit. I opened the bag and took out the shaving stuff, just like the boss had told me, and it surely was a fine kit, just like the boss had said.

I hadn't slept all night, only it felt more like all week, and when the boss came in at seven o'clock he asked me what was the matter.

"Nothin'." I stabbed a thumb toward the cell. "Keepin' an eye on him don't leave much time for sleep."

The boss lighted a cigar. "Money'll make folks do strange things." He aimed the match at a cuspidor. "In this case, it shore kept m'depity awake. . . Go git breakfas'." He saw the open bag and lifted a brow my way. "Did he git his kit?"

"Sure. Like you said."

He grunted and tugged air through his cigar. "How is he?"

"As happy as he can be, I guess." I stretched all over and yawned out loud. "Shall I bring his breakfast back?"

"Yup. . . Usual prisoner fare. No eggs, thuh. Murderers don' git no eggs."

I was finishing the second mug of tough black coffee and palming my cigarette papers when Ned, who runs the Okay, raised his face and looked out at the square. He wagged his hand at me and I looked out. There was the boss squinting in through the window and his eyes were all tight and twitching. I slapped down a quarter for the meal, licked my cigarette and stuck it in my mouth. I knew what the boss was nervous for, so I stopped by the gaslighter to draw a puff, then went out.

"What's up, boss—the marshal send his answer?" I let smoke run through my nostrils as if I wasn't worried.

He played his pudgy thumbs up and down his suspenders and peeked around the square like a criminal. "Crofton!" he hissed. "He's daid!"

I WENT stiff in my boots. My throat dried up. "Crofton?" It sounded silly, later, because who else could it have been but Crofton? "Crofton's. . . Dead?" We stared at each other. Old Leary left the restaurant on his way to work and said good-morning. We waited till he'd crossed the square. "What'd he die of, boss?"

"He scratched his wrists and throat. Cut hisself to death." He pouted at me. "Didn' yuh take his razor away from him? Yuh didn't leave it with him, did yuh?"

"No. . . In fact, I watched him shave. Then he gave me the kit, an' I put it on the ledge beside the door in case he wanted it again. He might have been with us for a day or two." It wasn't a very good excuse. I felt guilty inside.

"Well, I dunno." We started walking back to the jail. "His collar was on the floor, an' it was 'bout the only thing didn' have blood on it. Wah!" The boss made a face. "I never figgered a skinny ol' gent like that to hold so much blood."

I held the door open for him. "That's how he got it, then. The razor."

"How?"

"Reached through the bars with his collar. It was stiff, wasn't it? An' curved. He must've hooked the kit toward the edge of that ledge, then grabbed onto it."

We went in and looked at Crofton. The cell was a mess, just like the boss had said. Blood all over the place, and blood all over him, and that beautiful bone-handled razor on the floor by his hand. His eyes were half-open and glazed; his mouth was wide open and you could see his false teeth hanging loose.

"Too bad," I muttered, and almost gagged. "A rich guy like that."

I got a mop and pail and went to work on the cell.

The boss held his dead cigar in his right hand and relighted it with his left. "How'd yuh know he was rich?"

"Look at him." Peace officers have to be observant at all times. "His clothes, his gear—that bag. An' what was in his wallet?"

"Six hundred an'—some."

"Well?" I finished cleaning the cell, then laid out Crofton and covered him with a fresh blanket.

The boss puffed on the cigar. "I don' know rich from poor, m'self. Guess it don' make no difference after yore daid."

The outside door squeaked open, and I followed the boss to the front. Leary was there with a telegram from Denver.

"Signed by the marshal," he said, and read the message: " 'Arriving next train Boulderbush. Standby.' " Leary gave the message to the boss. "What's up, gents?"

"Nuthin'," the boss told him. "Jus' a pickpocket."

"Oh?" Leary looked undecided for a moment, so I held open the door and pushed him out.

The boss's cigar crackled as he drew on it. "Guess that ol' marshal musta bin wukkin' f'r once. Has to miss the dance-halls an' sech to come down here an' earn his pay."

"He's not goin' to muscle-in on my play," I yapped. "The reward's mine! Five thousand or more!" I whipped out my gun and began side-stepping around the room, backing, turning, whirling—the way they do on the stage.

"Mebbe they ain' gonna be no reward."

I stopped acting like they do on the stage. "I caught him, didn't I? Is it my fault he cashes himself in?"

"Well. Let the marshal decide."

"Marshal hell!" I spun the .44 on its trigger guard and grabbed the butt and faked a hip-shot at the clock. I was beginning to suspect the marshal, now. I was almost afraid of him.

The boss grinned sadly, watching my dance. "Look, yore sendin' signals with thet ol' southpaw o' yores." He chuckled. "Don't you know never to reach with yore left? It'll git yuh in trouble."

I went into a final fling-around, then holstered the gun. "Left-handed shooters are generally best."

"Not w'en they send signals, they ain't." And he looked at me kind of funny, as if maybe I wasn't up to my job. "Mebbe if the reward's declared yores, yuh can go up to Denver with th' body. It's gotta be escorted by someone."

"I'll do that, boss. Just for you."

"W'en the marshal clears it fur shipment, thet is."

I was sweating then, but not from the gun-play. I was all hot inside, thinking about that reward and of how the marshal might muscle into it and spoil the whole thing.

I didn't like him already.

The train whistle whooped in the distance, and the boss put on his hat and sighed. It was his day to check passengers, and it would be his night to take duty. The way we planned it. He went over to the station, and I went back to the cell and looked at Crofton. I held the blanket up and stared into those wide, dead eyes. They seemed to fix on me and glare. I dropped the blanket, shuddered a little, and went to the front to wait for the boss to return from the train.

HE had the marshal with him, and the marshal looked mad. He was a big, slope-shouldered man who seemed to hang downward from the top of his head. Pouches hung under his eyes, his mouth hung on lines from his nose, and he had a small hanging paunch. He wore a wide-brimmed black Stetson. He looked crooked, to me.

He came in and gave me a glance, and one of his big hands moved, as if he was going to shake. But he just nodded instead. "You've got to be sure," he said, as if he'd been saying it before.

The boss blinked and thumbed his suspenders jerkily. He slid his eyes at me, then looked away. "It's what thet poster said, Marshal. That's all we got to go on."

"I want to see that poster!" the marshal blasted. He rubbed his big nose and sniffed. "Seems incredible. The whole damned thing seems incredible." His eyes hardened on me. "You made the arrest?"

"Yessir." I hadn't ever meant to call him "sir", either. My voice choked.

"Show me the 'wanted' poster," he commanded. He turned to the boss. "This man is a top-drawer citizen, Sheriff. *If* he's the man I believe he is. He's

never caused anyone any worry, any trouble. He's rich, too. Very rich."

I gave the boss an I-Told-You-So look, and handed the poster to the marshal. "Here it is." I tried to stop there, but "sir" came right off my tongue.

He tore it away from me and held it under his eyes. Then he crumpled it up and slung it across the room. "My office never issued that poster! It's a damned forgery!" That reminded him of something, and he lowered his head to the boss's face and frowned as he spoke. "Say, Sheriff—has a young stranger been around Boulderbush lately? Pasty-faced youngster with black hair and"—he rubbed his lips quickly—"and a weak mouth? He'd be well-dressed, probably, and perhaps drunk."

The boss and me searched each other's eyes. "No, Marshal. Not thet I recall." He shook his head a few times. "Not many strangers' round here. No-o. . ."

The marshal jammed his hands into his pockets and shot those hard eyes at me again. "A nephew of Mr. Crofton's. Only relative, as a matter of fact. And interested in crime. Bad men. Wants to be one, for all I know, though God knows he's bad enough anyway." He shifted his eyes to the boss and I felt better. "Haven't seen him, eh?" He nodded wearily as if he'd hoped for too much.

He straightened suddenly and whacked his palms together and let out a breath. "All right—let's see Mr. Crofton now. And Sheriff, if he's the *real* John Crofton, you have some fast apologizing to do!"

The boss's face went sick. I felt sorry for him then. He raised his eyes to the marshal and the lower lids showed like little red halfmoons. "Thet's—what I meant—to tell yuh. . ." He swallowed, and you could hear the inside of his throat.

The marshal snorted. "Meant to tell me what, man?"

"Crofton." The boss groaned from his belly up. "He—he's daid. . ."

"He's—" The marshal grew three inches and all the small veins in his face became big ones—"*what?*" The word banged like a shot.

The boss shrugged limply. "Cut hisself to death this mornin'." He gulped once or twice, then told what he knew and explained about the collar going through the bars.

I decided to help him a little. "The guy must've been guilty, sir, if he did a thing like that."

"Guilty! Guilty of what, damn it?"

I decided not to help any longer. This marshal was a bad omen all the way through. I saw that nice, plump roll of bills shrinking away; the ranch vanished and there'd be no trap and team. St. Louis would have to wait.

The marshal marched through the door leading to the cell and bellowed for the key. I swung back the bars and he went in, peeled back the blanket and bent over John Crofton. He studied the waxy face, the clothes, the teeth. He lifted the hand that hung loose and peered long at the finger ring. Then he drew the blanket up and turned away and he was very, very thoughtful. We walked to the front without saying anything, and as the marshal paced up and down the floor, the tick of the clock kept time with his feet.

He stopped, facing the boss and me. "That's John D. Crofton, owner of the Crofton Products Company. I know—I knew—him well." He stooped and picked up the crumpled poster and uncrumpled it. He nodded sharply. "This came in the usual way?"

"By train mail from your office," I said as evenly as I could. I didn't add "sir."

"Well—it didn't come from my office." He shoved it in his pocket. He put the heel of his palm to his forehead. "Why did he do—that?"

The boss found his voice at last. "Mebbe, Marshal, mebbe this yere nefoo blackmailed him, or. . . Or somethin'."

"Nonsense!" The marshal lowered his palm and studied it. "Crofton was too respectable." He glanced at the cell door, frowning hard. "Of course, he was sick. No doubt about that. But this!" He pursed his mouth and let a soft whistle come out.

The boss cleared his throat sandily. "What about thet reward? No reward now, is they?" He tried to grin and couldn't.

I said, "I guess the marshal, here, will escort the body to Denver." I gave him a cold eye. "Which puts me out of a nice trip." I was feeling safer. A puzzled man

is seldom dangerous, and the marshal was puzzled.

He ogled me the way a man stares at a steak before he orders it. "Maybe you'll make it yet," he said queerly.

He was really a suspicious gent, and my face must have showed my own suspicions, because the boss began looking at me again in that funny way, like he had in the morning when I threw down with my left. I stretched and yawned some more; it had been a long night and I was tired. "Well, Marshal, shall I box the body?" I wanted to get rid of both of them. "There's a night train north every other day." The boss's duty night, too. The way we planned.

The marshal nodded.

OUR one coffin was pretty dusty. The month before, while we had Knuckles Noonan in the cell, we thought we'd have to use it if he tried to escape and we plugged him. But tough as he was, he didn't try to escape; I guess he enjoyed his reputation too much and wanted to be seen. His picture was in all the papers.

I fanned out the dust with a rag and put a leather pallet in the box in case more blood dripped, but by then most of it was out. No need to call our doctor who lived down Cactus Crossing way. The Denver doctor could declare the obvious.

I tried to close Crofton's mouth, but it wouldn't work. So I put him in and lowered the lid, then stuck some nails in my teeth and got the hammer. I could hear the marshal's rubbly voice talking to the boss as I hammered home the nails. I heard the boss's squeaky tones answering. They seemed to be having some sort of an argument. Just to make sure who would win if any rough stuff started, I opened my holster-flap. A peace officer must be observant at all times.

I dragged the box out by one end and let it thump to the floor; I placed the razor kit in the traveling bag and put the bag on top of the box. "There he is, Marshal. F.O.B. Denver."

"I don't think that's funny." He levelled his eyes on me. They were like flint chips and I felt the fear of him tingle my chest. I looked beyond him at my boss; he tried to smile at me but he never did. He just made his lips jump once or twice, and his eyes were sad. He looked at the clock and snapped his suspenders and patted his stomach and did all those things people do when they're embarrassed. He had a paper in his hand, one I hadn't seen before, and he pretended to be searching for a pen. There was one on the desk next to him.

The marshal coughed into a bony fist and said to me, "Sorry about your ride."

I didn't like the way he said it. I eased my elbow down my ribs to the bare butt of the .44, because this man was dangerous.

The boss padded over with the pen in his hand and gave it to me with the paper. "Routine," he mumbled. "Sign the form. As arrestin' offi'cer, yuh got to sign over the body to the escortin' officer."

We'd never done it that way before. Noonan had been brought in by a posse, but nobody signed him over to me when I took him to Denver.

"Isn't this new, boss?"

The marshal took a step closer. His coat was open and I saw the gray glint in the shoulder holster. "Do what he says."

The boss looked green, as if he'd just been sick. "Jus' routine," he said.

I took the pen and dabbed at the air with it and watched the blue globes fall off to the floor. I heard the clock ticking louder than it had ever ticked before. I brought my right hand across my body and rested it on the holster, and with my left hand I started to sign my name.

Through my top eyelashes I saw a big, bony hand creep toward that shoulder holster. The rasp of the marshal's breath filled the silence.

I flung the pen at his face and whipped back my left hand for the .44. I heard the crash of his gun and felt the pain flash up my arm. I gripped my shattered left wrist, tried to retain my gun, saw it slip down my fingers and dangle for a moment, then clack to the floor. I started to sag over the desk when my boss caught me and helped me into the chair.

The marshal kicked my gun across the room and held his on his hip where I couldn't grab it. He stood over me while my boss tied a handkerchief around my hand.

I began to cry. I couldn't help it. The salt sobs welled up in my throat and I tried to swallow and got wet on the chin. My eyes stung and I sensed tears traveling down my cheeks.

The marshal's mouth twisted nastily. "Almost got away with it, didn't you?"

I shook my head and shook it again; the pain was going to numbness and my whole arm ached like a sore tooth. Then I heard my boss husk into my ear, "I tol' yuh never to reach with yur left." He looked guiltily at the marshal. "I'm right sorry, I am." And I knew that he was.

"Handcuff him," the marshal ordered. He spun his gun once, spun it airily. Then he put it back in the shoulder holster and sat down opposite me. "Want a smoke?" He placed a tailor-made between my lips and lighted it for me. I couldn't raise my busted hand, the cuffs were so heavy.

My boss shook his head and walked away. He sat down in a far corner, not wanting to hear anything, but helpless to avoid it.

The marshal said, "Where'd you bump into Crofton's nephew?" He didn't sound mad anymore; the thing was over for him. It was over for me, too.

I TOLD him, "Denver." I inhaled and exhaled and squeezed my eyes shut for a second. The tears had stopped and my chin was drying off. "When I took Noonan up."

"Uh-huh. Had his picture in all the papers, and half the town came to see him arrive. Also, the jackal who was the only living relation to Mr. Crofton, here." The marshal cocked his head quizzically. "Tell me—did he approach you?"

I nodded. I was beginning to feel dizzy, and my head hurt. "After I left the prison. He asked me how I'd like some easy money—to buy a ranch with." I snuffled and tried not to cry again. "We did the town for a couple of days. He picked up the checks."

The marshal leaned back and half-closed his eyes. "I do the town a lot myself. I like to see people." He buttoned his coat. "I saw you. You and your new friend. And I said to myself as I carved my steak, 'That's odd, seeing that wastrel taking the Boulderbush deputy around town. The jackal needs money, the deputy hasn't any. . .' You know, I could hardly finish my steak that night." He crossed his legs and leaned forward and locked hands around one knee. "Then the nephew vanished and John Crofton got worried. He called me. I searched that no-good's rooms and found—what? I found a picture of dear old Uncle John. That boy didn't even like his uncle, let alone keep a picture of him. All he wanted was the money. And you know, I found another thing." He fished in his pocket and pushed aside the balled poster and pulled out the printer's order. I recognized it; I'd signed it.

"I went to the printing shop, and the printer"—the marshal flipped his fingers—"innocent of collusion, of course—the printer told me a stranger came in and ordered the poster made. This stranger said he wanted the picture back, that was all. And do you know what he told the printer?"

"Yep." I spit out the cigarette and flattened it with my boot. "He told the printer that this was a joke on the town's leading citizen, that we were goin' to hang it up at a party for him."

"Some party, wasn't it?" The marshal released his knee and stood up. "And there was one more thing—one more little thing. This stranger—who gave a fake name—signed the printing order with his left hand. And when he came to pick up the poster, he was dumb enough to accept a copy of the order form." The marshal beamed at me. "He took that with his left hand, too. So when he got back to the nephew's rooms with the poster, he discovered that order and threw it out. Threw it in the fireplace. But the fire wasn't lighted and the nephew left too fast to clean it out. . . Sloppy of him, wasn't it?"

I looked at my writing on the printing order and looked at the half-signed escort-release on the desk. I wondered about the telegram. "Marshal, go on over to Leary, the telegrapher, an' get the rest of the evidence."

The marshal sank his hands into his pockets. "I've already tried that. Leary, though, doesn't save messages. He only sends them." The marshal winked at me. "Messages are like signals, aren't they?

Sometimes—you get 'em crossed." He sat down again. "How'd you do it?"

"Gave the telegram to some Mex kid along with five dollars. I told him to turn in the wire, then beat it. Cabbage outa here an' never come back." I let him have the rest of it. "I wired Crofton to come get his nephew who was in trouble here. He came." I stared at the box with the bag on it. The marshal was waiting for something. My boss, in the corner, was waiting for it too. It didn't seem important to me at all, anymore. "Oh-h . . . I went in an' sliced him while he slept." I nodded at the box. "He was goin' to die anyway—wasn't he?"

The marshal sniffed shortly. "He had about a year to live with that condition. But he never told anyone because—as I said—he hated to worry people." He got up and looked at the clock on the wall. "Well . . .The train's about due. Your friend'll be on it."

I didn't think anything could surprise me again, but that did. "Crofton's—"

"Nephew. I wired him in Denver—in your name, Lefty, telling him to come down, that there was a little trouble. He'd gone back to his rooms after his uncle and I both left town."

I got up and the marshal put my hat on for me. "Leary can help you with the box, boss. The marshal here, has to watch me."

"And your friend," the marshal corrected nicely.

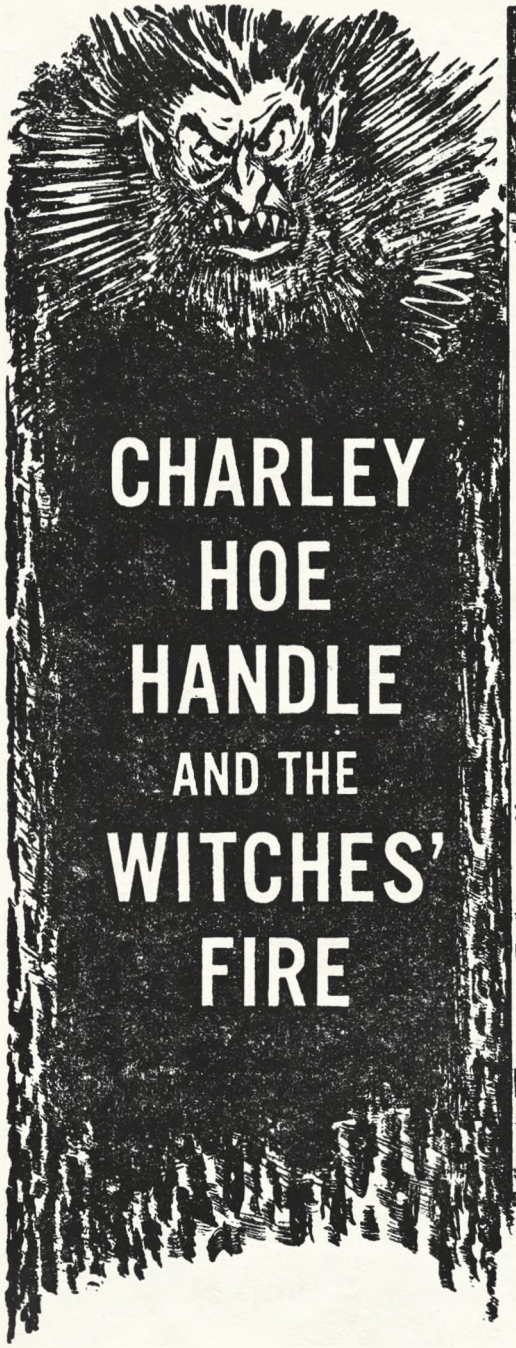
I said, "It's too bad that where he's goin', he won't have a chance to spend all that money."

"Money?" The marshal walked beside me, coat open again. "Crofton left his money to the sanitarium north of here. That's why he wanted to straighten the jackal out before he died . . . There's the whistle." He turned to my boss walking to him. "Come on up sometime, and I'll show you the town."

"Well . . . If yuh kin fit it into y'r job, Marshal." He was the only one who laughed.

The train rolled in and I saw Charley Rouse on the steps of the coach. He waved to me, then stopped, his arm in the air and the coach clicked by slowly.

The marshal, a dangerous man, snapped the links on the nephew before he left the steps, and there wasn't much to say. I waved my cuffs at the boss, but he only shook his head and walked away across the square. Charley Rouse waved goodbye until tomorrow and climbed aboard. As we slid out of Boulderbush, I saw my boss through the window of the coach and felt sorry for him. He's left-handed too, but he's never reached with it yet, and he doesn't know dollars from horseshoes anyway. He'll always be a sheriff.



CHARLEY HOE HANDLE AND THE WITCHES' FIRE

ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER KUHLHOFF

By

JIM KJELGAARD

HORSE JENKINS, the warden of Stick County, was settin' in his office at Beaver Junction mindin' his own business when the stranger come in. He was quite a well set-up man, but he wasn't too used to the outdoor clothes he was wearin'.

Without botherin' to take their clothes off, Horse and McAlester jumped into a deep pool and ducked their heads.

"Howdy," says he. "Your name Jenkins?"

"Yup," says Horse.

"Mine's McAlester," says the stranger, "George McAlester." Then, all of a sudden, he whipped a bottle out of his pocket. "Here. Try that."

Now if Horse had been anything except a game warden he would have been surprised, but bein' a warden he had learned long ago not to be surprised at anything. Besides, good likker didn't come so cheap he could afford to pass up a free drink. Horse tried it.

"Hmm," says he. "Not bad!"

"A native product," says George McAlester. Then, "Did you ever hear of a shiftless old Indian named Charley Hoe Handle?"

"Off and on," says Horse, cautious-like.

He sat back to wait what was comin' next. Charley Hoe Handle was just about the slickest thing what had ever set foot in a Stick County swamp. He done what he pleased when he pleased, which included takin' game and fish when he felt like it. For more than thirty years Horse, and all the wardens before him, had been tryin' to put Charley in jail.

Charley had never been there yet.

"Hoe Handle," says McAlester, "is up in the Coon Crick section. He's got a still there, and he's makin that nectar you just tasted. The trouble is, he sort of forgot to get a Federal license or to pay Federal taxes. I'm a Guv'ment man and here's proof." Horse looked at the proof. McAlester went on. "I've found out that you know more than anybody else about Hoe Handle. I want you to go up on Coon Crick with me and help make the arrest."

Horse sat back to think. He was a game warden, not a revenooer. Besides, oughtn't a man who made likker that good keep right on makin' it? On the other hand, wasn't it his life's ambition to see Charley Hoe Handle in jail? Did it make any real difference how Charley got there? Horse decided it didn't.

"I'll go with you," says he.

ALL the way to Coon Crick, which was a hundred and thirty miles from Beaver Junction, Horse was troubled in his mind. He could tell from the way McAlester talked that he really thought Horse was just sort of a guide, and there would be nothin' to catchin' Charley Hoe Handle red-handed. Charley was just an ignorant Indian who thought he could get away with somethin', and a white man could out-think an Indian any day. It was awful plain to Horse that McAlester didn't know Charley Hoe Handle.

They got into the Coon Crick country, which is the wildest and thickest part of Stick County, and Horse thought he knew Charley Hoe Handle good enough so he could put a finger right on him, or at least right on where he had been, if he was up here at all. Just the same, on account he knew Charley so good, he figgered he'd better find out more'n he knew now. So when they come to Cannon Jessup's place Horse says to McAlester, "Stop here a minute. Lemme do the talkin'."

Now Cannon Jessup was a good hunter and trapper, and he knowed the back woods, but otherwise he come a lot nearer bein' a Mortimer Snerd than he did a Einstein. He shuffled out to meet Horse and Horse says, "Hi, Cannon. How's fishin' up the left branch of Coon Crick?"

Cannon Jessup shook his head so hard his teeth rattled. "I dunno, Horse. don't got up thar no more. Thar's witch fire up thar."

"Witch fire, huh?"

"Yes sir!" says Cannon Jessup. "Me, Pete Malone, and Tom Henty all seen it one night. It's the awfullest thing I ever seel Yup. It's witch fire."

"Well, thanks a lot, Cannon."

"What'd you find out?" says McAlester, when Horse got back into the car.

"I found out Charley Hoe Handle's up the left branch of Coon Crick," says Horse. "We'll go up there."

There was a good trail up the left branch of Coon Crick, but even though McAlester thought it foolishness, Horse was too smart a warden to take that trail. He wouldn't leave the car on the road, neither, but backed it into a bunch of hemlocks and hid it. Then, with McAlester pantin' along behind, he cut up the side of the hill that overlooked Coon Crick.

He was still troubled in his mind because everything was goin' off so easy, and when anybody set out to trip Charley Hoe Handle nothin' ought to work easy. It was possible, Horse thought when he crawled through a laurel thicket and looked down on the snuggest little peeled log cabin he had ever saw, that Charley was losin' his mind. The oldest and wisest fox was bound to slip sooner or later.

The cabin was beside the crick, but

there wasn't nothin' else in sight. The chimney wasn't smokin', the door was shut and, hot as the day was, no windows was open. For sure and certain it must be Charley's cabin, but Charley wasn't there.

"Do you think that's the place?" says McAlester.

"I think so," says Horse.

"What are we waitin' for?"

"The cabin's empty," says Horse. "We'll just sit tight and see what happens."

They sat tight while the sun beat down and mosquitoes chewed at them, and it was just about dusk when they saw what they had been waitin' for. Charley Hoe Handle come down Coon Crick in a canoe, hauled in, took a lot of packages out of the canoe, and carried them into the cabin. The chimney begun to smoke and Horse wondered.

Everything was awful plain to him now, but it still didn't add up. Charley Hoe Handle was makin' his likker nights in the cabin. Some time before mornin' he loaded what he'd made, and his still in the canoe and took everything to some up-crick hideaway. Probably he took his finished likker to the head of the crick and a car that would be waitin' on the road.

Horse shook his head. All they had to do was walk right down and arrest Charley—only they couldn't get down. There was a forty-foot ledge on both sides of the valley here. The only way you could get to the cabin was by cuttin' back to the valley and goin' up the trail. Horse told McAlester what he knew.

"Well," says McAlester, "let's go back to the valley and up the trail."

AS SOON as they got back on the trail, which was a wide and smooth one and easy to follow even at night, McAlester took the lead. Horse hung behind because it still didn't make sense to him. You didn't just walk up a trail and in on Charley Hoe Handle. There had to be a lot more than that to it. Horse says to McAlester, "Watch out for traps."

McAlester laughed. "I been on these raids before. You don't have to worry about me."

They got on up the trail and were within about three hundred yards of the cabin when McAlester stopped.

"What the dickens!" says he.

Horse looked where he was lookin'. There, maybe thirty feet ahead, the awfullest face he ever did see was leerin' at him. It was to one side of the trail, about level with a man's head, and in spite of hisself Horse shivered. The face glowed in the dark, and it was no wonder Cannon Jessup had been scared of it. Then, sudden-like, Horse knew what it was.

"Fox fire," he whispered to McAlester. "That stuff what glows on rotten logs and such. Charley's took and made a face of it to scare people away.

"Is it dangerous?" says McAlester.

"No."

"I told you he was a ignorant Indian," McAlester whispered. "Huh! Thinkin' he can scare me with a kid's trick like that!"

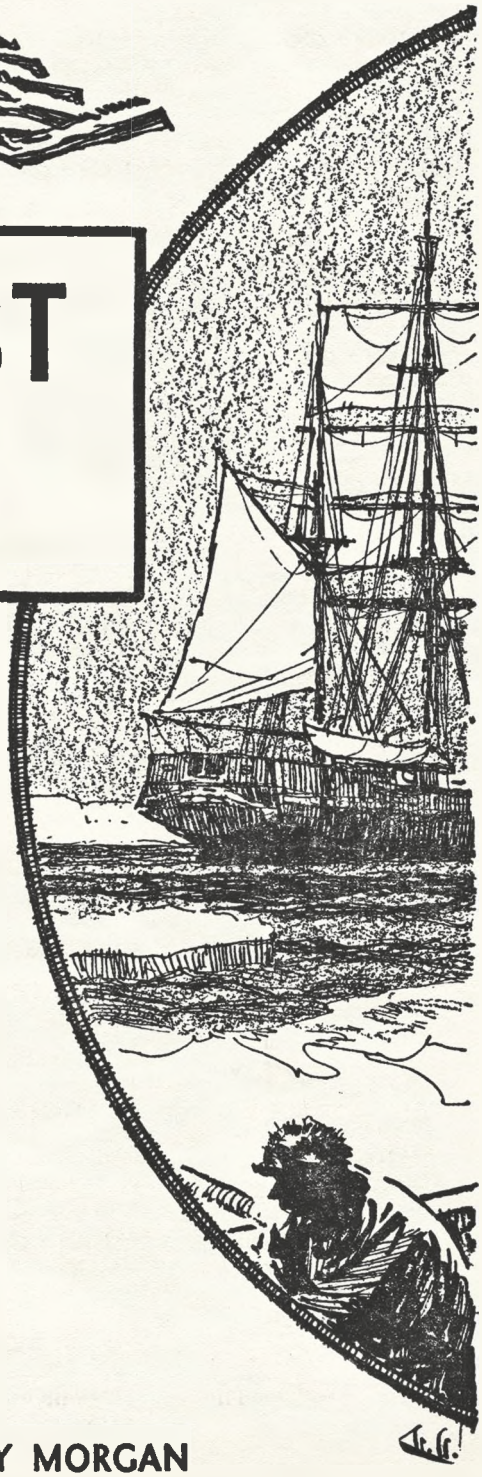
McAlester drawed his gun and went on up the trail. Horse wiped the sweat from his face and stood where he was, still troubled in his mind. It didn't seem Charley Hoe Handle would sink low enough to try to scare anybody except Cannon Jessup with a face that glowed in the dark, and a second later Horse knew he wouldn't. McAlester smashed his gun right into the face, and up at the cabin Horse heard bells start to ring.

A quarter of a second later McAlester yelled. Then he yelled again, and again, and cut past Horse at full gallop. Horse felt it now, a needle full of hot acid punched into his neck. Then it punched his ears, his nose, and before he could brush it off it seemed to be punchin' all over. Payin' no mind to the brush in his way, Horse followed McAlester to the crick. Without botherin' to take their clothes off, they jumped into a deep pool and ducked their heads. Horse came up, sputterin' and cussin', but went right down when another needle punched him.

He knew now what had happened. Anybody could paint a witch fire face and rig an alarm to it just in case the witch fire didn't work.

But only Charley Hoe Handle would have thought of painting that face on a wasp's nest.

THE LOST FLEET



A FACT STORY

CAPTAIN Thomas Williams of the whaling bark *Monticello* was worried. Drift ice was unusually thick around St. Lawrence Island for mid-June. Great blocks had ridden the winds and currents south through Bering Strait; dazzling white against the dark waters of the Bering Sea, the ice sparkled in the midnight sun. It was fantastically beautiful—but not to Williams or the other skippers of Yankee whalers threading north to the Polar Sea. To them the ice was an ugly danger.

Williams, a veteran, was especially cautious. His wife and three children were aboard. He was new to this vessel, having transferred to her at Honolulu. This was the first time he had handled her in ice. His experienced eyes swept the seas, alert for trouble.

By MURRAY MORGAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
GORDON GRANT

No sooner was he struck than the monster sounded.

Four sails were in sight—three astern and one, the *Oriole* of New Bedford, about five miles ahead. As Williams watched, the whaler veered sharply to starboard and, a moment later, seemed to rise from the water. The captain swung his sypglass toward the *Oriole,* knowing too well what he would see. Two blocks of ice, caught by capricious subterranean currents, had converged on the oak-ribbed vessel. They were squeezing her up from the sea like a cherrypit between a schoolboy's fingers.

Then, as unexpectedly as they had come together, the blocks parted and the *Oriole* slid back into the sea. A few minutes later (after the men on the wounded ship had had time to try the pumps and find them drawing water) the *Oriole* raised her flag, Union down—the signal of distress. Her hull was stove.

The winds were light and variable. Williams estimated it might take two hours for the *Monticello* to reach the stricken ship. He dispatched two boatloads of men to give what assistance they could. The rescue parties found the *Oriole* in a bad way, shipping water so rapidly there was no chance to shift her cargo and roll the hole above water.

Desperately all hands worked the pumps, straining at the levers until their muscular backs ached and their calloused hands bled. Slowly the ship limped north to St. Lawrence Island. She was on the verge of floundering when the helmsman rammed her onto the black sand beach of Plover Bay.

THE *Monticello* was the first to reach her, but all through the long day the whalers gathered. Williams and his fellow captains boarded the *Oriole.* After a quick inspection they pronounced her hopeless. They signed a statement agreeing that she could not be saved and gave the document to Captain Henry Hayes, so he could prove to the insurance company that he had not needlessly abandoned the $48,000 vessel.

The *Oriole's* fittings were sold, members of her crew signed on other whalers, and the fleet prepared to move on. But first the masters went from ship to ship in their gigs, swapping stories and dinners and advice.

Among the visitors to the *Monticello* was a tall, bearded bony man whose clothes hung loose on his gaunt frame. He was Edward Barker, former skipper of the Australian bark *Japan.* The season before, his vessel had turned back from the whaling grounds too late. Trapped in the ice off the Siberian shore, the *Japan* was ground to bits. Eight of her crew drowned or died of starvation. The rest lived through the winter on the bounty of Siberian Eskimos—a diet of rotten fish, blubber, and putrid walrus meat cooked with the hair on.

Over a dinner of lobscouse—hard bread and salt meat sprinkled with pepper, chopped to bits and boiled in water—Barker described his efforts to avoid the native diet. The last meal he had eaten before tackling the Eskimo provender, he told Williams, was "a few tallow candles I found washed up on the beach."

For years afterwards, Captain Williams wondered if the wreck of the *Oriole* and the story of the *Japan's* skipper were not omens of the impending disaster.

Leaving the *Oriole* on the beach, the whalers pushed north. The St. Lawrence Eskimos, who paddled out in their swift kayaks to trade ivory for metalware and liquor, reported that large numbers of whales had been seen swimming north through the Strait a few weeks before. The skippers pressed hopefully on.

On June twenty-third, the *Monticello* passed through the Strait with Asia in sight to the left and America to the right. With the other whalers she followed the north-sloping Alaskan coast toward Point Barrow, but the pack ice was still too thick. The fleet withdrew temporarily. Some ships cruised off in hope of sighting whales; others, including the *Monticello,* went after walrus.

The walrus hunt was a recent sideline for whaleships. In 1867 an enterprising captain had killed a few of the thousands which swam around his ship. He found they yielded almost as much oil per pound as a whale. Thereafter, whaling captains found walrussing a profitable pastime to pursue while waiting for the pack ice to break up.

The 2000-pound beasts were killed with harpoons. The length of the shank of iron was reduced to save it from

getting twisted out of shape by the thrashing beasts. The *Monticello's* four whale boats brought in nearly 500 walrus during a month-long hunt. But even during this peaceful and profitable period, disaster continued to brush against the vessel.

On a rare, fogless day Williams let his twelve-year-old son, Bill, go hunting with the first mate's crew. "To make matters interesting," the boy recalled later, "the first walrus we harpooned promptly drove his tusks through the side of the boat tearing out a piece of plank large enough to have sunk us in a few minutes if the crew had not been used to such experiences. The walrus was promptly dispatched by a thrust of the lance, the boat pulled to the ice, hauled out and a canvas patch tacked over the hole in about the time it takes to tell it.

"After enough walrus had been killed to make a boat load they were hauled on the ice, skinned and the blubber packed in the boat. At times the water around the boat was fairly alive with young and old walrus. At first my nerves got a few bad jars when upon hearing a terrific bellow at my back I would turn to find myself almost within arm's length of a rather vicious looking combination of a round head, wicked black eyes and a pair of long, drooping white ivory tusks. But I soon learned that he was the more frightened of the two and promptly escaped if possible, either by diving or swimming away from the boat.

"Now and then a female walrus separated from her young, or an old bull slightly wounded would make a rush for the boat, sometimes causing an accident to some member of the crew, although I do not recall any that were fatal. The boats were frequently stove, so much so that it took about a week after the walrussing was over to put them in repair."

The day after seeing his boy attacked by a walrus, Williams had another bad fright. The bark was sailing through a channel between two fields of floes. The ice suddenly shifted. The vessel was cut off from open water except for a narrow passage which looked straight—but wasn't. An elbow of ice, almost at water level, jutted from one of the blocks. The officer of the deck saw the danger at the last moment, bellowed orders to the helmsman. Not in time.

The bark struck the ice a glancing blow, careened off, and banged full sail into the opposite floe. The impact was enough to knock every man off his feet and tumble the watch below from their bunks. The ship echoed with the shriek and groan of strained timbers. But the pumps pulled no water; the sides had held.

LATE in July a strong northeast wind broke up the ice pack near the Alaskan coast. The entire whaling fleet, forty strong, stood eastward, racing for the chance to be first on the whaling grounds off Point Barrow, which in 1870 had yielded a rich catch.

The procession of white-winged three-masters streamed down a narrowing channel between the great Polar ice field and the Alaskan shore. Near Icy Cape (where James Cook, the first captain to probe these water for the Northwest Passage, had turned back) the channel between ice and shore dwindled to a matter of yards. Four ships pushed on. Captain Williams, along with the other skippers, declined to take the risk; they waited at the Cape for a shift in the wind to widen the channel.

The wait was not a pure waste of time. Whales appeared in the waters off Icy Cape. Several of the ships made kills. The thick smoke from the boiling blubber pots mingled with the Arctic fog. Williams' men took two whales—but continued to flirt with disaster.

The first whale was harpooned less than a hundred yards from the *Monticello.* No sooner was he struck than the monster sounded. When he came up he was directly beside the whaleboat. From the deck the captain watched in horror as the whale beat the boat with his great flukes. But the prize was a bowhead, less vicious than other species of whale, and his fury soon vanished. The killer crew, who had crouched in the bottom of their craft, escaped without injury. The only damage to the boat was a broken oar. The whale was killed.

A few days later another whale, harpooned from Williams' own whaleboat, took its captors for the Nantucket sleigh-

ride. The wounded giant raced along the surface, towing the boat like a surfboard. A sudden swerve by the whale whipped the boat sideways, up against the smoothly sloping sides of an icefloat. The thirty-foot boat shot over the ice, sailed into the air, turned over—spilling its occupants into the freezing ocean—and landed, keel up, in the water. The line parted and the whale swam free. Shaken, shivering but unhurt, Williams and his crew climbed onto their overturned craft.

Several Eskimo villages lay along the Alaska shore. From time to time the natives paddled out to the ships in open boats to trade furs for knives and liquor. Young Bill Williams was dismayed by the visitors.

"They have a disgusting fad of making a hole through the cheek near the corner of the mouth," he recalled later. "In this hole they place polished pieces of ivory or stone, and sometimes empty brass cartridge shells. Then they gradually enlarge the opening by increasing the size of the ornament until not infrequently it tears through into the corner of the mouth. You can imagine the appearance and the results, especially when they are chewing tobacco, by such an addition to an already liberal allowance for a mouth."

These ugly, friendly people warned Williams and his fellow captains that the ice pack would soon close in again. It was to be a bad winter, they said gravely. The skippers laughed off the prophecy of the savages.

In the last week of August the winds worked the ice farther off shore. The *Monticello* again pushed toward Point Barrow, followed by seventeen other ships. But on August twenty-ninth the wind shifted, snow squalls spurted from the gray sky, the ice began to close in. Williams decided to turn back. It was a beat to windward, but he hoped to get behind a line of shoals which would hold off the pack ice. Again calamity scored a near miss on the *Monticello*.

"We were on the in-shore tack," one of the crew reported later, "trying to make every inch possible. The order was given for tacking ship, all hands were on deck, starboard watch aft, port watch forward, as was always the rule when working ship in close quarters. The ship was almost in the wind and coming beautifully. Another minute and she would be safely on the other tack. The calls of the leadsman in the fore chains showed that we still had water under our keel, when of a sudden out of the gloom of snow there loomed a floe of ice right under our weather bow.

"There was a bare possibility that the ship would swing enough to strike it on her other bow, in which event we were all right, but luck was against us. She struck on her weather bow, hung 'in irons' for a moment, then slowly swung off and stopped. We were aground.

"The sails were all quickly taken in and furled, an anchor laid out to windward to try to keep her from going on hard. It was not rough as the ice had made a perfect lee, and as night had then set in nothing more could be done until morning.

"The next day was clear and fair. Our condition was soon known to the other ships and all sent crews to assist in getting us off. More anchors were laid out astern. The chains were taken to the windlass and hove taut. Casks of oil were hoisted out of the hold and rolled aft. Finally she floated and was towed off to the other ships and her anchor dropped—for the last time."

Almost the entire fleet was trapped. The pack ice had closed in against the land to the north and to the southwest. The whalers lay in a narrow channel of water, fifty miles long but barely a mile across at its greatest width.

YOUNG WILLIAMS later described their strange foe—the ice pack. "It is an enormous accumulation of cakes or floes of snow-covered sea-frozen ice, of all sizes and shapes, but containing very few whose highest points are more than ten feet above the sea level and those have been formed by the crowding of one floe on top of another. There are very few level spots of any extent, the general effect being very rough. There are no icebergs as there are no glaciers in these northernmost parts. The pack is not, therefore, in its individual parts imposing, grand or beautiful, but as a whole under all the varying conditions of an

Arctic sky, from brilliant sunshine to a leaden gloom, it is a magnificent spectacle. When you consider that it represents ages of accumulation and that there is beneath the surface nearly ten times more bulk than what you see, you realize that there is something to be considered besides beautiful effects. There is within it a power which cannot be expressed and can only be partially comprehended."

And slowly, inexorably, the pack pushed toward the whalers. The ships were clustered in four groups. The most northern included four ships caught in the ice off Point Belcher. About ten miles to the south, off Wainwright Inlet, were eighteen more, including the *Monticello.* These were bunched in a small area of clear water about three-quarters of a mile in width. A few miles south were eight ships, some in ice and some in clear water. And just in sight from the *Monticello's* masthead, still farther south, were three more. Seven vessels were out of sight; it was not known whether these seven were also caught.

At first the skippers were only slightly worried. They fretted more over lost time than about the danger, though the memory of the *Japan* gnawed at their nerves. "Everybody prayed and whistled for a strong northeaster," Williams recorded in his log, "but it did not come."

On September first the *Roman* of New Bedford, most northerly of the ice-locked ships, captured a bowhead. The whale was dragged alongside, the trying works were fired and the crew began cutting blubber. And as the men worked the rich oil from the beast, the ice crunched closer about the bark. Two great floes, each more than a mile across, pushed against the *Roman.* Her timbers broke with reports like cannon-shot. The ice receded and the punctured ship plunged to the bottom. She went down head foremost, leaving her mizzenmast and stern out of water. The crew barely had time to abandon ship. They escaped by dragging the heavy whaleboats over the rough floes.

Now the captains were thoroughly alarmed. Day after day the natives came out and pointed warningly to the ever approaching ice. Day after day they prayed for a northeast wind. Day after day the wind blew from the southwest, pressing the floes still nearer. And every minute of every day the fate of the *Japan's* crew loomed more ominously in the background of their thoughts. On short rations none of the ships had food enough to last more than four months.

Dawn on September seventh revealed that during the night the ship *Comet* of Honolulu had been pushed against shore and ground to splinters by the inexorable advance of the ice. The next day a gale roared in from the south. The floes pitched and tumbled and the bark *Awashonks,* trapped in the ice, had her hull stove and her masts ripped loose.

A calm followed the storm, and with it came the most ominous development of all. A skin of fresh ice began to form on the clear water of the channel, threatening to cut off the possibility of escape to the south in whaleboats. An emergency meeting of ships' masters was held aboard the *Monticello.*

With three ships already lost and thirty more known to be frozen in, the skippers put their hope of escape in the seven vessels out of sight to the south. A double-barreled attempt was organized to reach these vessels and advise them that the fleet might have to be abandoned. Two whaleboats under Captain David Frazer were to try to reach the rest of the fleet. While they were gone, an attempt would be made to work the shallow-draft brig *Kohala* over the shoals and into a clear-water channel.

The whaleboats left at once. There was no time to lose. Already the fresh ice in the channel was so thick that for long stretches the crewmen had to chop a path with hatchets.

Before the two boats were out of sight to the south, work had started on lightening the *Kohala.* She was hauled alongside the *Charlotte* of San Francisco and her oil and stores were transferred. Lightened, she still drew nine feet, and the shoal water was six at best. Still, the attempt was made. On the morning of the tenth the *Kohala* was firmly stuck.

IN the meantime the scout boats under Captain Frazer reached Icy Cape. They found a narrow channel still remaining open between shore and land. Be-

yond it, in clear water, hovered the seven missing vessels. Joyfully the scouts rowed out to them. Two of the captains were reluctant to stay in such dangerous waters, but the rest echoed James Dowden of the *Progress,* who said to Frazer, "Tell them all I will wait for them as long as I have an anchor left or a spar to carry a sail."

Word that the rescue ships were standing by off Icy Cape reached the trapped ships on the afternoon of the twelfth. Signal flags were raised, and all captains gathered for a meeting aboard the *Florida.* In Frazer's absence, Williams—who had been master of the *Florida* for eight years—presided over the meeting.

Theirs was a sad choice, he said solemnly. To stay meant to risk an eleven month agony of starvation. To leave meant to abandon nearly two million dollars' worth of ships and cargo—the pride of the old New England fleet, the last survivors of the days of Yankee sailing supremacy. Many of the ships were insured—but by co-operatives in which their owners held shares. It was ruin to go and death to stay.

Ugly though both choices were, one was far more dreaded than the other. The decision was unanimous. One after another the captains filed up to a mahogany table in the *Florida's* cabin. By the light of a whaleoil lamp each master scratched his signature with a quill-pen on a document announcing their decision to go:

Point Belcher,
Arctic Ocean
September 12, 1871

Know all men by these Presents:

That we, masters of the whaleships now lying at Point Belcher, after holding a meeting concerning our dreadful situation, have come to the conclusion that our ships cannot be got out this year and, there being no harbor that we can get ourselves into, and not having enough provisions to feed our crews to exceed three months, and being in barren country where there is neither food nor fuel to be obtained, we feel ourselves under the painful necessity of abandoning our vessels, and trying to work our way South with our boats, and, if possible, to get on board the ships that are South of the ice.

We think it would not be prudent to leave a single soul to look after our vessels, as the first Westerly gale will crowd the ice ashore and either crush the ships or drive them hard upon the beach. Three of the ships have already been crushed, and two are now half out of the water, which have been crushed by the ice and are leaking badly.

We have five wrecked crews distributed among us. We have barely room to swing at anchor between the pack of ice and the beach, and are lying in three fathoms of water. Should we be cast upon the beach it would be at least eleven months before we could look for assistance, and in all probability nine out of ten of the men would die of starvation or scurvy before the Spring.

Therefore we have arrived at this conclusion after the return of our expedition under command of Captain D. F. Frazer of the *Florida,* he having with whaleboats worked to the Southward as far as Blossom Shoals, leaving in several places only a sufficient depth of water for our boats to pass through and thus liable at any moment to be frozen over during twenty-four hours, which would cut off our return, even by the boats, as Captain Frazer had to work through a considerable quantity of young ice during the expedition, which cut up his boats badly.

The document was signed. The *Florida* ran up signal flags announcing to the other ships the decision of the masters. It was agreed all boats would leave the ships on the morning of the fourteenth. The men had thirty-six hours in which to get ready, and to say goodbye to their ships.

It was a sad parting for all, but especially so for Williams. Not only was he abandoning a fine new bark, but nearby lay the *Florida,* on which during the eight years of his command three of his children had been born.

On every ship the colors were set. Everything below and on deck was left in perfect order. All liquor was destroyed so that the natives would not rip up the vessels. The whaleboats were sheathed with copper as protection against the ice. And then, early on the morning of the fourteenth, the crews left the vessels. Almost awash with their heavy loads, the whaleboats moved away through the young ice.

Behind were left thirty barks and ships —nearly a third of the world's deep-sea whalers. Among them were beautiful new vessels like the $80,000 bark *Concordia,* and old hulks like the *Carlotta.* Some bore great names from the great days when the New England whalers were the best ships built: *Emily Morgan, Elizabeth Swift, George Howland.* All had had great adventures. Only six years before the *J. D. Thompson* had been cap-

tured by a Confederate raider in the last battle of the Civil War, and had escaped destruction when her captain ransomed her for $10,000. All had escaped many dangers. Now none could escape the ice.

All through the drizzly day the whaleboats pushed south toward Icy Cape. A favorable breeze stirred the cold air, and most of the boats put up sails. When night fell, the crews camped on the frozen shore. The wind freshened during the night. The open sea beyond the ice grew choppy. Squalls of snow swept over the gray sea. When the blustery night gave way to a dismal dawn, the boats set out again.

Beyond the ice seven waiting ships rode at anchor, bucking against their chains. The heavily-laden whaleboats edged out from the lee of the ice into the stormy sea. The captains' wives and children bailed frantically as the choppy waves broke over the gunnels. The seamen maneuvered the close-reefed sails; others threw their weight behind the sweeps. One after another the craft lurched alongside the pitching whalers. Four of the seven rescue ships lost anchors—but not a life was lost in the transfer. Every boat came through. By evening all were aboard.

Twelve hundred refugees from starvation and cold stared sadly back at the spars of the ghost fleet as the rescue ships stood off to the south.

The Wreck Season of '71 was the final disaster suffered by the whaling fleet. The industry, already hard-pressed by the introduction of kerosene as a substitute for whale oil, never recovered. The old ships were never replaced. Many of the captains quit the sea, and their crews shipped on lesser vessels.

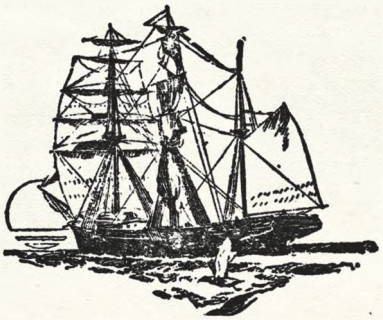
But not Thomas Williams. All through the winter he brooded over the disaster. He was determined to salvage what he could from the calamity. In the spring of 1872 he left San Francisco in command of the bark *Florence*. By August he had reached the graveyard of the whalers.

He found the bow of the *Monticello* sticking from the water. She had sunk while still at anchor. The broken hulls of four others were pushed high on the shore. One bark, the *Minerva* of New Bedford, still rode at anchor; Williams put a crew aboard her and claimed her as a prize of the sea. He picked up 2500 barrels of boiled whale oil, 300 barrels of natural oil from the head of sperm whales, ten tons of whalebone, and twenty tons of ivory, and, from a tobacco-chewing Eskimo, some information.

The native told him of the destruction of the fleet. The Eskimos had boarded the ships as soon as the white men were gone. They helped themselves to the remaining food—as had been expected. But on two ships they broke into medicine chests and sampled the contents. Several died. In revenge five ships were burned. Williams sighed. And what of the other ships?

Two weeks after the whalers left, the Eskimo continued, a great wind came from the northeast. It blew all the ice away from the land. Some of the ships went off with the ice. The others sank.

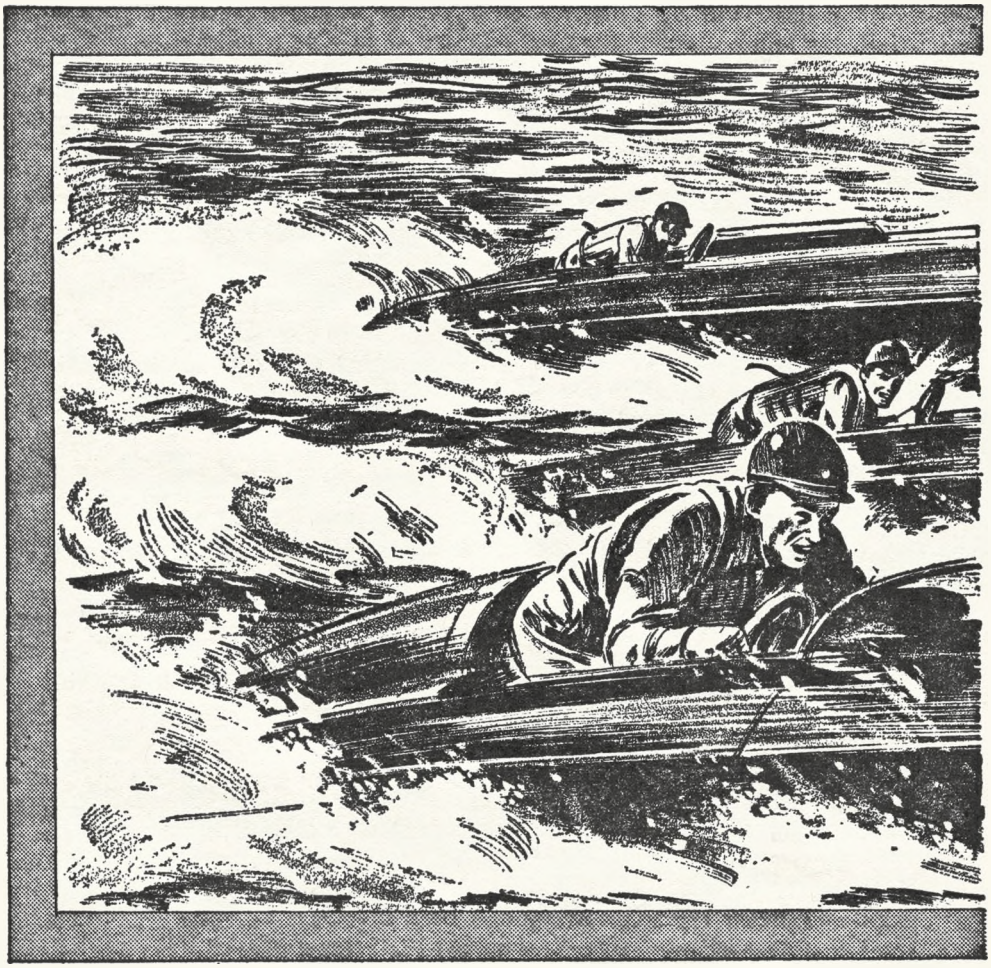
Williams wished he had not asked. For the rest of his life he was haunted by the knowledge that if the captains had waited two more weeks, the fleet would have been saved.



ILLUSTRATED BY
JOHN MEOLA

DON'T LIVE

The stretch run was a thundering, seventy-mile-an-hour affair.



WHEN your hair gets as gray as mine you have little left on which to pride yourself beyond your judgment and your memory.

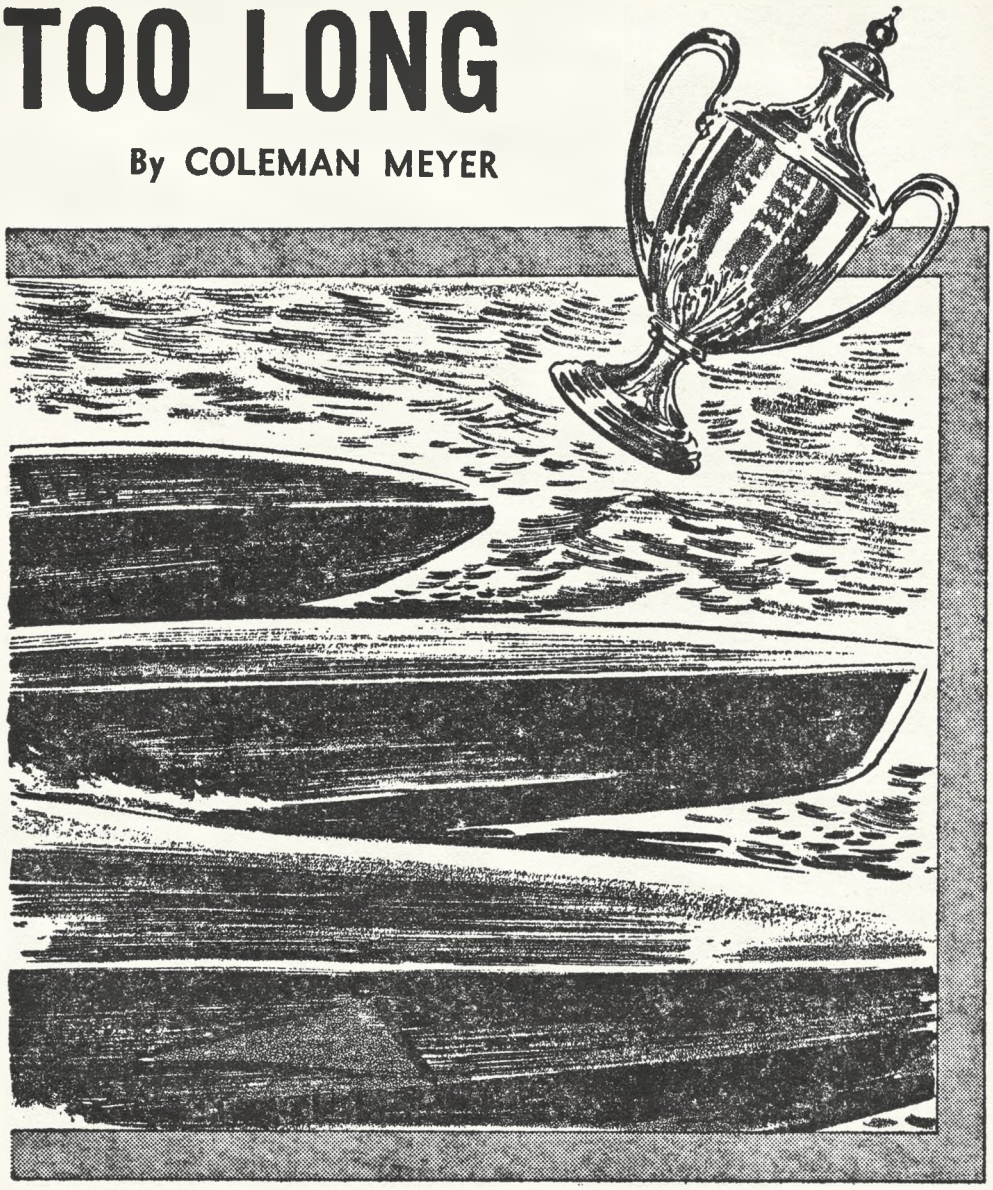
To find that the first is faulty is somewhat galling to the second and I winced a little as I thought of Willie Howard. Willie has a rock-ribbed Republican jaw, a serene faith in his own infallibility and he would be speaking with me shortly with all of the candor that thirty years of friendship can engender.

That's why I was swallowing small morsels of profanity as I watched four tiny racing hulls lay sharp *V's* of foam-frothed water as they charged for the far turning buoy.

Jim Holland, the starter, grinned at me from out of a fat face. He gestured with a rolled-up checkered flag. "Your

TOO LONG

By COLEMAN MEYER



boy, Clayt," he said slyly. "He doesn't seem to be doing too well."

I grunted an ungracious something and moved along the float from his vicinity. Jim belongs to the Westchester Yacht Club anyhow and that automatically puts him in a class with Communists.

But he *was* right. There were two of my boys out there; two boats with the stiff little white pennant of the Bayshore Yacht Club painted on their sides. Rick Deran was out in front with his snow-white *Playgirl*. I didn't have to worry about Rick. It was little Tommy Turner, hunched down behind the tiny windscreen of *Stardust*, who was earning my load of mental unease.

There were twenty-three miles behind the screeching hulls. And only

two more to go. It was a point race for the Maguire Oil Trophy. Bayshore needed the points. And I knew right now that we weren't going to get them.

The stretch run was a thundering, seventy-mile-an-hour affair of nose-down, quivering plywood smashing the cement-like water of Clear Lake, the boats running two and two with the trailing pair riding in the flat of the leading wakes. There were some smart racing men there. *I* knew that. You just couldn't pass over boys like Ben Owen and Al Estelle, even if they did fly the Westchester flag.

And, right now, the pair of them were sucking little Tommy into a nice position to knock his brains loose.

I couldn't restrain a groan as I focused them in my glasses. Rick Deran had the pole slot and was out in the fresh air. Tommy was even with him which was technically correct but—I groaned again—Tommy was wide. He was leaving holes you could put a a B-29 through. And the pair behind didn't need a B-29 hole. All they needed was the eye of a needle.

Rick's helmeted head turned. His arm came up impatiently as he waved to Tommy to close in so they could pair up on the corner and leave nothing but rough water.

Tommy saw the gesture. There was a moment of hesitation. Then he nodded and fed left rudder. *Stardust* started to squeeze in slightly. The first turning buoy was racing back at them.

But it was Ben Owen behind him. Ben had seen the gesture, too. And Ben knew most of the answers. Right with the squeezing rudder Ben heaved on the coal. His flaming orange hull seemed to squirt forward like you pinch an olive pit. The blunt nose wedged open the slot that *Stardust* was trying to close.

And right behind him, dancing and unsteady on his sharp wake, was Estelle. I swallowed a "Damn!" for I knew the play.

There was just a moment of static action, four boats relatively motionless, being almost thrown at the first buoy.

Then they were in the corner. And everything happened at once.

Rick pivoted sharply at the turn marker. *Playgirl* stood on her side, breathed for a silent moment. Then he stabbed it. Right to the floor. There was a hell of a noise as his engine blasted. And *Playgirl* squared the corner off like she was on rails.

Ben and Estelle never even tried to square it. That wasn't the game. Ben came off the gun. The orange hull pitched. And Estelle picked up the ball right where Ben passed it. His boat took wheel and two hundred horsepower together. Two feet of daylight showed under it as he leaped Ben's wake, going straight ahead. It was a thousand pounds of roaring, airborne, plywood projectile.

I saw Tommy's head flip upward. His left arm came up as though to fend off a half ton of racing boat. Then *Stardust* squatted as he broke his power, squatted and then started to pitch crazily.

Estelle landed just beyond him. Just hit and then bounced as a deft foot stamped on his horses. Then there was froth and foam and flying water.

I dropped my glasses and grunted. I didn't have to look at the rest. I knew there was a boat lurching madly. And that the pilot would regain control without turning over. And that the pilot would finish fourth. I also knew that Willie Howard would have some words to speak.

I WAS glooming into a bourbon and plain water at one of Clear Lake's darker pubs when Willie came in, took a stool beside me. They spell it J. Willingham Howard on the office doors of ten of his companies. Around Bayshore we just call him Willie and forget the size of his income tax.

"It looks," Willie said, "like maybe I'm right once in a while."

"Could be," I assented sourly.

"I told you when I first saw this Turner that he wasn't the right boy." Willie paused, ordered from the white-coated barkeep. "This is his second ride. And he doesn't look any better than he did in the first one." His rock-ribbed jaw had a pleased tilt. "In my business I have to judge men—"

"The hell with your business," I broke in equably. Friendship since the first Roosevelt was in office lets you do that without starting a fight. "Turner was

one of the smoothest hands on the water once. I can't believe he's any different now."

"Maybe so," Willie replied unconvinced. Then he added flatly, "He just hasn't got any guts, Clayt. When they rough the water up on him he's all done." He eyed me tentatively from beneath shaggy brows. "Bayshore should have a better boy at the wheel of *Stardust,*" he suggested hopefully.

Willie had the right to suggest. *Stardust* was eight thousand dollars of Howard money just to win a sixty-five dollar urn of plated metal.

He drained his glass, arose to leave. "You're the Racing Secretary, Clayt. And maybe you know what you're doing. But we've only two more races left in the Maguire schedule and two more rides like that . . ." Willie departed.

I ordered another bourbon and soda and returned to my glooming. Willie was right. The Maguire Trophy wasn't important—not until the Westchester Club boasted that they would win it and started spending money to prove it. We matched them on that score; there was a freshly-minted engine in Rick's *Playgirl* and Rick was proving that he knew what to do with horsepower. *Stardust* was brand-new from blunt nose to razor-edged prop. And Tommy was proving only that I wasn't too smart.

I remembered him from before the war, a small, quiet youngster with fine, sensitive hands for the feel of seventy-miles-an-hour worth of boat. He had all of the cool skill that went with it. And that's why I had been happy to see him acting the part of spectator at a race-meet and happier when he took the racing seat I offered.

Footsteps "shusshed" on the waxed plastic of the bar floor. Tommy slid onto the stool alongside me, said, "Bourbon. Water chaser." Then he relapsed into contemplation of the blue glass of the back bar.

After a while, I said, "What's wrong, son?"

His eyes were steady as they sought mine. He shrugged.

"Owen and Estelle aren't—weren't—in your class. They've made you quit, twice . . ."

"Yeah," he said. "I know it." He resumed his contemplation of the back bar.

I worked on my drink. Finally I said, "Willie Howard is getting upset."

He spoke to the blue glass. "He want me to give up the seat in *Stardust?*"

"*I* pass on that," I corrected. 'He's just curious." I took another sip. "So am I. *Stardust* is a first-place hull. The guy I put in it was a first-place man."

He turned to face me. Strong fingers ran through his dark hair. "Willie says . . .?" His eyes were tired, strained.

I narrowed my gaze, considered for a moment. "Yeah," I said candidly. "Willie says no moxie. I know better."

Tommy nodded slowly to himself. Then he turned back to the bar, drained the small glass with one swallow. "Maybe," he said, "Willie is right." And with that he walked out.

THE following Sunday was Vallejo, a twenty-five mile affair over a short-cornered, three-buoy course. Tommy had *Stardust* untrailered and was launching when Rick's big shoulders cast a shadow over my scoring table on the float. "Look, Clayt," he began with faint truculence, "I can carry my share of the load and I don't mind doing it. But when it comes to tossing away a hull like *Stardust* on a guy—"

"Take it easy, Rick," I said sharply.

"Easy, hell!" the big man exploded. "I'm knocking my brains out at every race just to stay up there. And what kind of help did I get! Maybe you want it cold turkey. I can give it to you in a couple of words. The guy is yellow! He just hasn't any guts!"

"Now, now," I soothed. Racing guys are always edgy when the heat is on. Rick was no exception.

" 'Now, now' nothing!" Rick growled coldly. "How about last Sunday? And the Sunday before that?" he demanded. "One good corner would have set the rest of those guys up like pins in a bowling alley. But, no! Turner's floundering around. . ." He spat disgustedly. "Them Air Force guys are all alike."

I clutched at the conversation-changing straw. "Air Force? I didn't know that. Was he a—"

"I don't know what the hell he was,"

Rick glowered. Rick was Navy and two years out of uniform hadn't made his opinion of the Air Force anything that could be printed on other than asbestos paper. "All I know is that I saw him with one of them dented caps one day," he added briefly. "I tell you, Clayt—" he ignored my frantic gesture—"a guy's either got a stomach for this business or he hasn't. This Turner hasn't."

Tommy had just come up behind him. He couldn't have missed the import of Rick's hot harangue. His tanned face drained white. Then he spun on his heel and walked back toward his boat.

"That's fine, Rick," I offered sarcastically. "Just dandy. As if the kid hasn't enough trouble. . . Here, you wait here and keep your mouth shut. Tommy! Oh! Tommy!"

The trim, small figure turned, came slowly back. His lips were tight. "Rick's always talking," I said. "Don't pay too much attention to him. I want you two to go out for a few miles. Maybe running together will sort of polish you up on the corners. O. K., Rick?"

"Sure. O. K.," Rick assented sheepishly. Now that his momentary anger had passed it was replaced with some embarrassment. "C'mon, Air Force," he said with reluctant graciousness. "We'll put on a few miles, Maybe it'll help."

The two boats idled away from the dock, throttle well back to keep from flooding the float. Vallejo is a tight, choppy-watered course and solid water broke over blunt noses as the insufficient freeboard ploughed through the tufts. In mid-channel Rick looked over toward the impassive figure in *Stardust*. A helmeted, goggled head dipped a curt acknowledgment.

Instantly both hulls blared noise, lunged free of the water and jumped on the step. We don't race three-pointers in this circuit, just V-bottom outfits with a step, fine rough-water boats. I put the glasses on them as the engine racket changed from machine-gun staccato to a sheet-tearing screech.

The first corner was simple. Speed hadn't been built up yet. The backstretch run was a sizzler; hulls flat on the water, slapping with a rippling, flailing cadence as a mile a minute turned small, erect ripples into cement curbs. Tommy was inside on the pole slot, goggled eyes peering through the tiny windscreen, foot flat on the floor. *Stardust* was a taut, vibrating shell of plywood hurtling for the turning buoy with the speed jumping close to the seventies.

Rick was making amends. He was running level with him, would fight him on the turn. Just the same as Ben Owen or Estelle. A hundred yards before the turn *Playgirl* pulled half a length ahead. This was right in the book. All Tommy had to do was hit the buoy with everything unbuttoned, use the knowledge I knew he had . . .

Seventy-five lengths before the corner. Hull and hull. Tachometers nudging 5000 revolutions per minute. Chines clear of the clutching water. You could see the fin.

Fifty lengths. Engines shrieking that high thin note of tortured metal. Two left hands high on two steering wheels. Getting ready to reel it in. Heels back off the throttle. Getting ready to play it in with toe pressure . . .

Then they hit the turn.

Rick was half a length. The same half length Ben Owen might have had. A brutal wrench of inside rudder, he stood straight up on the throttle. And ham hands simply pulled *Playgirl* square across the corner. It was Ben Owen's play and it was simple to beat.

Only Tommy didn't beat it. Rick's boat boiled water white as two hundred horsepower clawed for traction. *Stardust* simply disappeared in a welter of flying spray. I heard an engine note break.

Then, out of the spume, was only one boat chewing at the turn.

Tommy was under control after a moment. *Stardust* simply cut across the course, planed steadily for the starting float. He cut his switch a hundred yards from the mooring. *Stardust* squatted abruptly, then leveled to flotation and drifted slowly in. His coveralled figure hoisted free of the tiny bucket seat, tethered the bow rope to the float ring.

"That's all, Clayt," he said quietly, fingers working on his helmet strap. "Better give George Vargas the seat in *Stardust*."

I considered him out of narrowed eyes. Then I matched the even repression of his tone. "All right, son. If that's the

way you want it." I shook my head slowly, ran fingers over my five o'clock shadow. Then I made an observation. "You're not afraid." It was a statement, not a question.

His eyes thanked me. "You'll never get Rick to believe it," he said simply. He hitched his crash helmet under his arm. "Thanks a lot, Clayt. I'm sorry it didn't work out."

The Vallejo club staged a dance after the racemeet and I drifted to my usual spot at the tiny club bar. George Vargas had taken the wheel of *Stardust* and George had worked hard at his trade. But despite some beautiful blocking by Rick, George simply didn't have the kind of hands it took to drive better than a fourth place race.

I contemplated the small dance floor. It was crowded and Rick was the belle of the ball, dark, handsome features showing his white-toothed smile as everyone congratulated him on his victory.

Nobody had much time for Tommy. I don't mean that he was shunned. But everyone was just normally polite. Finally Jim Holland arrived with a party that included a tall youth with captain's bars on his shoulders, wings on his chest. There were introductions as I watched idly. Suddenly the tall officer spotted Tommy standing over by the palms that guarded the door to the clubhouse veranda. He said something to the group he was with, broke away and walked over to Tommy. They pumped hands, talked a moment, then moved out on the platform that overlooked the waters of the channel.

Willie Howard nudged my stool. "Now that seemed smart, Clayt," he offered with a sort of obnoxious smugness. "Putting Vargas in, I mean. It's my business to judge men and, psychologically, Turner—"

I made an inelegant noise with my lips. "Nuts! And I didn't put Vargas in. Turner took himself out."

"So . . ." Willie pursed his lips. "Well, that's to his credit anyhow. You'll leave Vargas in for next Sunday's meet? It's the wind-up for the Maguire Trophy."

"I suppose so," I shrugged. "It's a hundred miles. The last forty or so is open channel. Vargas can't drive bad water."

Willie considered that. "Maybe so," he assented. "But he'll try."

"What do you think this other kid was doing?" I demanded impatiently."

"Nothing," Willie answered stiffly. "That's what I was talking about." Then he wandered off.

I renewed the contemplation of my glass. A few minutes afterwards Jim Holland came over with the tall youth in tow. "Captain Miller, Clayt. He's from Hamilton Field."

I acknowledged the introduction, invited them to drink. Jim excused himself as the tall officer slid onto the bar stool. "I see you know Tommy," I remarked.

"Turner? Hell, yes!" the captain replied. "We were together out in the islands."

The white-coated barkeep slid two glasses in front of us. I said, "Here's how." Then we sat and talked for a while. That is to say, the captain talked. I mostly listened.

And when I got up from the bar stool things were going on between my ears.

THURSDAY night we held our final pre-race briefing at the Bayshore clubrooms. All our racing men were there including Tommy. Mentally I gave him full marks for that. A lesser guy would have just failed to show up. I took the floor.

"You fellows all know what sort of a scramble it is Sunday—the last fifty miles is going to break some boats up. Maybe some guys, too. We've got enough points to insure the Maguire Trophy with either a first place or a second and third place collectively. We don't want to fudge it with a second or a third. We want to win it with a Bayshore boat first at the San Francisco dock.

"We're allowed two boats. I've nominated Rick in *Playgirl*. We'll run *Stardust* for our second hull."

Rick eyed me curiously from his hard seat in the front row. His lips clamped off a question as he remembered the small, tight-lipped youngster who sat on the far side.

I grinned at him. "Vargas," I said, "will drive *Stardust*." He relaxed in his seat. "Now, the rest of you who won't

get a chance to run all have a job . . ." The stations were apportioned out. "This affair is going off first-cabin," I continued. "Willie Howard is bringing up his amphibian. We'll keep you posted by radio."

The meeting broke up after that. I collared Vargas before he got to the door, drew him aside and talked earnestly. He dissented violently at first, shook his dark head. Finally he listened closely, grinned and nodded. I patted him on the shoulder and said good-night.

There was quite a crowd on hand for the start, which was as it should have been. The Channel City to San Francisco race is a man-killing affair that separates the men and the boys—swiftly. Fifty miles of narrow, twisting sloughs that map out like a carelessly-tossed piece of string—sloughs that are tule-walled tunnels at seventy miles an hour.

Then, breaking free of the prisoning bands of sidewalk-width channels, fifty miles of vast, open water that is San Francisco Bay. It's always late afternoon when you get there. And, if it's white-topped. . . I've seen boats pull into San Francisco with no more planking than a barbecue grate, drivers bleeding at the nose and mouth.

A dozen hulls were receiving the fussing, last-minute touches. A check of the engine hood hooks. Lose one at a mile a minute and you'll clean off half your hull. Chart board clipped and in order. You have to read fast with the water speedometer hanging in the seventies.

Tommy was doing my book work. He had the release forms and entry blanks and was stoutly gophering with a stub pencil.

The five-minute cannon boomed. The loudspeaker called, "Man your boats." Rick came lumbering up the dock, a worried expresion on his heavy features. "Clayt—where the hell is Vargas?"

"Vargas?" My tone was innocent. "Isn't he with you?"

"No," he frowned. "One of the other guys brought *Stardust* up. Said George would be along later."

Willie Howard had just rowed ashore from his anchored plane. He caught Rick's words and looked at me quickly.

I checked my watch. Shrugged. "No time to ask questions now. There's only four minutes left. Hey!" I shouted at Tommy. Sixty seconds of confusion had him in coveralls and shoved protestingly into a tiny bucket seat, Rick following us around and bleating. And Willie Howard aiding too. Only Willie was not bleating. He was only gazing at me darkly.

In another thirty seconds *Stardust* was waterborne under power. I hustled Rick frantically to his boat.

I read somewhere that the Gettysburg Address only took seven minutes and made history. My speech didn't make history. But then I had only two minutes and thirty seconds, my mouth pressed close against Rick's ear, shouting over the noise of a dozen racing engines as the float erupted into confusion.

At a minute and a half it was touch and go. At two minutes his helmeted head nodded a slow, reluctant agreement even as his goggled eyes expressed doubt. Then he punched the starter button.

WILLIE flew the small amphibian in a lazy circle. Below, the narrow sloughs were dotted with blunt-nosed hulls that looked like water-beetles. Like water beetles, that is, until you looked behind them and saw moored craft pitch crazily as the shallow *V* of water was dragged by. Then you knew that they were screaming, slashing racing hulls and that tense, goggled men with sensitive hands were on the prowl.

The start had been a massed affair that settled into spaced hulls. No one got too excited this early in the game. Just hold your place and wait for late afternoon.

Rick had made good use of *Playgirl's* speed and was out in front. I picked up the flaming orange of Ben Owen's boat a short ways behind and then knew that the closely tailing hull was that of Al Estelle. *Stardust* was two positions back. I motioned for Willie to go on down.

He eased off the engine, gazed at me sharply. "I don't know what happened to Vargas," he said a little grimly. "But I have an idea. Maybe it'll work out all right. We've got a boat in front. But if anything happens to Rick . . ."

The amphibian came down to a hundred feet. Hung there over the black and chrome that was *Stardust*. Even

above the amphibian's engine I caught the banshee wail of a wide-open racing mill, saw the straining grunt of the hull as it thudded over the rippled surface.

It was a straight run for perhaps half a mile, a run that dead-ended into a hairpin and abruptly reversed its course. A helmeted head was low behind the screen. I knew that narrowed eyes were gauging the seemingly solid earthbank that was streaking back at the charging boat.

Sixty on the air-speed, sixty-five. Then seventy. I dug my nails into my palms. *Wasn't he ever going to shut off?*

Then the banshee wail cut, like a violin bow lifted from the string. *Stardust* was wide to the outside of the tiny channel. A sheet-tearing screech, a jolting jump from a hull that was banking slowly as if preparatory to a slow roll.

Stardust rode the corner deep on the chines, smashed heavily through tules that fell like murder victims before machine-gun fire. There was a shuddering impact as the fin lost grip. Half a yard of earth slid from the bank as half a ton of boat clawed through the cushioning vegetation.

Then the prop and the fin caught. She lurched wildly. Quick hands relieved and applied pressure. And suddenly she was gone and out of our vision on the other side of the hairpin.

I poked Willie, pointed to the west. He lifted the amphibian's nose, was silent for a moment.

"You know of anybody who can do it any better?" I asked.

Willie shook his head slowly. "No-o-o," he admitted in an unconvinced tone. "But this is smooth water, Clayt. It will be late afternoon in the Bay—and probably showing white. The boy just hasn't the stomach—"

I settled myself back into the amphibian's seat, reached for the microphone. "The boy who 'hasn't any stomach'," I remarked with elaborate casualness, "was a sixteen-victory fighter pilot in the South Pacific!"

An hour and a half later we were circling lazily over the point south of Sausalito. Willie nudged me, said, "Here they come!" I didn't look for streaking dots for a moment. I had eyes only for the scene below.

San Fransisco Bay was chromium-plated in the lowering sun, a flawless piece of polished plate. Four miles to the south sat the jutting pier that housed the Westchester Club and held, I knew, a man with a checkered flag.

Four miles, that was. One of them was below, dance-floor smooth in the shadow of the shore. And the other three frosted the sheen of the chrome.

I knew what the frost was.

White-caps. Gentle, tufted heads that boiled a lazy white where the sweeping winds from the Pacific poured through the Golden Gate. Moist, changing fronds that parted gently before the knife bows of a cruiser plodding home.

And I also knew that they were other things, other things for shuddering pieces of three-eighths plywood at seventy miles an hour. They were cement blocks that knocked on the bottom planking for admission.

I took a swift look back. Four boats raced down the lee shore. The leading hull white, nose-down and planing flat. A minute and a half behind was a black dot. I grunted in satisfaction. Tommy had done all right. Behind him, maybe a minute rearward was a tight-knit pair. I knew that Ben Owen and Estelle had done all right, too.

I sighed. This had to be the place. I nudged Willie. "Waggle your wings—and land!"

"Land!" Willie's face showed heavy-jowled amazement.

"Land," I repeated firmly.

The amphibian tipped sharply. Abruptly, the snow-white hull sweeping beneath us squatted in her tracks. And, as we circled to land, I saw that Rick had the hood up, was fiddling inside.

We taxied up, Willie sliced off the engine and Rick caught the rope. There wasn't much time. We'd used up the minute and a half in landing. *Stardust* came roaring down from the north, wavered a moment to indicate the surprise of the pilot. Then the engine softened. Tommy idled up.

"What's the matter?" he called anxiously.

"Rick," I shouted. The engine bonnet was down now and Rick was sitting in the cockpit holding his right wrist. "Unfastened the belt to check his hood

fasteners. Hit a swell and sprained his wrist to keep from getting chucked out."

Stardust bumped Rick's hull. Tommy's gloved hand caught the vent fitting even as his head turned to catch the swelling thunder of engines behind him.

There was a moment of silence. Then I said, "I guess it's up to you. Owen and Estelle will be here in a minute. You've got a mile of smooth water. After that. . ."

Tommy stared at me levelly. Then he looked at Rick, met a cool, appraising glance. "O.K.," he said soberly. His yellow-gloved hands slid down goggles. "O.K. It's my baby." He reached for the starter button.

"No!" Rick shouted. I looked my amazement. This wasn't in the script. He was scrambling free of the cockpit even as he issued swift instructions. "Take *Playgirl*. She's faster. Handles the same way, same controls. Hurry!" Now he was sprawled on Tommy's deck, hanging onto *Stardust*.

Tommy accomplished the transfer in one bewildered, awkward leap, grabbed the belt and cinched. "Hand throttle's open, right against the dash," Rick snapped. "Leave it that way! Don't touch it until you hit rough water! Get going!" Tommy nodded. Then his finger punched the button.

Playgirl gave one startled bleat of power, lifted her nose to the sky and then slammed down on the step with a vicious smash as two hundred horsepower boiled water. Owen and Estelle swept by as Tommy hunched behind the windscreen. I punched Willie in the ribs. "Let's go."

The amphibian lifted free of the water. Willie looked at me sharply. "Well . . ."

I shrugged. This was where I got off. From here on in, it was Tommy Turner's.

THEY tell about it to this day around Bayshore. Every time somebody points at the Maguire Trophy. Some saw it through straining eyes across the three rough-water miles. Others, the more fortunate, through field glasses.

We saw it from fifty feet up. And it was worth watching.

There was a minute perhaps, a minute from that first startled bleat of *Playgirl* to the sharp range-fence division that marked the end of the protected lee shore. Five hundred yards separated the twin streaking hulls and the snow-white that was *Playgirl*. For twenty of the seconds Tommy was standing, coveralls whipping in the wind, free hand checking the hood locks.

Twenty seconds more. You could almost feel the tensing of shoulders . . . Owen and Estelle were at the Point now . . . Then they burst free. I saw the first leap, two shells, airborne. And I caught the veteran timing as they leaped the first crest, were a little long on the landing. And I caught the easing of the power as they gauged the next one, the further easing—God! It *was* rough!—until they had it snubbed to the precise point that lifted them from the first and deposited them on the second precisely in the center. The tufts were too high. Too high and too close. This was no place for a wide open shot . . .

Then Willie shouted. *Playgirl* was nose down and pegged, a roaring white streak as Tommy burst from behind the point. There was no easement, no preparation. There was nothing but a thousand pounds of boat screaming off into space.

I saw Tommy's hand on the dash, saw the throttle come back. And I heard the wild wail of the unleashed engine racing away from the camshaft as the prop broke free. His hand tugged at the throttle. The engine pitch didn't change, reached even above the rumble of the amphibian's motor.

Then she hit.

From fifty feet up I thought I could hear the bottom going as sixteen feet of hull crashed into a rock-like white-cap. It was a center hit, a lucky center hit four troughs wide. The screaming prop buried, bit. . . "Space it, Tommy. Space it!" I heard myself shouting.

The wildly spinning wheel took hold. *Playgirl* sling-shotted from the top of the crest, a V-2 rocket in three-eighths plywood.

And then suddenly I saw Tommy's fingers fall away from the hand throttle, saw him wedge himself against the belt and from fifty feet away I saw his lower

lip clench under his teeth, his hands firm upon the wheel . . .

They told me afterward that the three miles took under three minutes; that *Playgirl* finished with no more bottom than a piece of chicken wire, a prop shaft that was twisted nearly a full turn and a driver whose face was a bloody mask.

I didn't get to check that. I only got to see him pass Owen and Estelle while he was in the air, a thundering thing of shaped plywood and mechanical frenzy. A half-ton of maddened boat that smashed crest after crest. I didn't get to see it because I punched Willie and said, "That's it. Let's go. If he still has a bottom—in fact, if he still has a boat—it's in the bag. Let's be on the water when he gets in. . ."

Willie taxied slowly to the shelter of the pier, cut the engine, faced me. "All right," he said. "Give!"

I nodded. It was time to give. "Miller," I replied a trifle wearily. At his look of uncomprehension, I added, "Captain Miller—the guy Jim Holland brought to the dance. He told me."

"Told you what?" Willie demanded brusquely.

"Among other things that Tommy had been a top-notch fighter pilot. That's why I knew you were wrong when you blamed everything on a lack of courage. That's all Tommy talked about—boat racing and how he loved it." I paused, eyed the rowboat putting out to pick us up. "Then he got shot down in the sea. He spent eleven days in a one-man rubber boat, the last three in one of the worst storms they had had there. It turned the raft over three times and only the fact he had a Mae West and a line tied to the raft saved him."

Willie grunted. "Well—at least, when I'm wrong about a guy I'm wrong in a great big way." I ignored the interruption.

"The three days left a mark on him. He was delirious for a while and all he could scream about was white water, white water that was dumping him over." Then I shrugged. "Well, that's it."

"So you—" Willie mused.

"Explained things to Vargas," I interrupted. "That's why he didn't show up. And I fixed it with Rick to shut off and say he was hurt if Tommy was anywhere up in the running by the time we got to the Gate." The rowboat bumped the amphibian and we got in. "I figured, if the chips were really down, if Tommy had it all in his lap, maybe he'd get through the white stuff once. And maybe that once would be all that was needed."

Willie was silent for the moment to the pier. We clambered up the ladder. "But," he frowned, "how come Rick shifted him to *Playgirl*?"

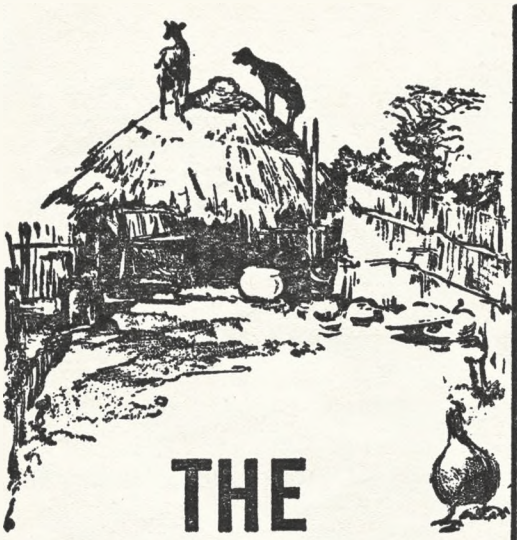
"That," I answered, "we'll know in a moment. Here they come now."

Tommy was mopping at his face with a bloody handkerchief. But there was almost a swagger in the shoulders that had Rick's big arm draped over them. They paused as they drew near. Tommy looked up, mumbled from bruised lips, "Thanks, Clayt. Thanks." Then he took the handkerchief away, added simply, "I'm all right—from here on in!"

I nodded in some embarrassment, turned to Rick. "Your boat. That wasn't in the script. And why was the hood up?"

Rick grinned. "Everybody has to get into the act. After all— I'd just put in ninety hard miles holding that pig in first place. It would be a shame not to have it pay off—just in case you had guessed wrong," he replied. "So I unhooked the control and wired the throttle wide-open! It's pretty hard for a guy to change his mind with just the switch!" He grinned again, slapped Tommy with a ham-hand. "Not that it was necessary—as I found out. This guy's all right. He don't want to live too long. C'mon, Air Force, I'll buy you a drink!"

I looked at Willie who was gazing after their retreating backs. "You and your psychology . . . C'mon, Willie. You better buy *me* a drink!"



THE DEVIL'S LEFT TUSK

By
ROBINSON MacLEAN

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROGER L. THOMAS

THE STORY THUS FAR:

ALL THE world knew my brother MATT MURPHY and his broadcast "From Here On Out." But now that famous voice was stilled forever. And as I stood in the rainswept Gullaly Cemetery in Addis Ababa and said goodbye to Matt for the last time, I knew that somehow I, MALCOLM MURPHY, must solve the riddle of Matt's sudden death. I had come to Addis to meet Matt only to learn that he had died several days before, supposedly of a heart attack. But two callers at my hotel thought otherwise: PHILEAS LUBIN, a broken-down French doctor who told me flatly my brother had been murdered; and GUBRU DAVID, an Ethiopian who made an appointment with me for later in the evening. In the hotel bar, presided over by the Greek manager, CYRIL DOURAS, I met a Swedish girl, MARI TORNQUIST. We went on to a cabaret where, after a few drinks, she warned me to quit Ethiopia as

From each side, behind us, horsemen were riding in. "Hold your hat," Lubin said. "We're going to run for it."

soon as possible. I left her to meet Gubru David, but was waylaid by several Ethiopians, who knocked me down and repeated Mari's warning.

At the American Legation, I talked with the huge Negro guard, VAN BUREN, who took me in to CEDRIC SIMMONS, the consul. Simmons belittled the murder rumors. All he knew, he said, was that Matt had received permission to go to Debra Markos in Goijam Province. After an argument, I left. On the way out, Van Buren offered to help. He got me a taxi and suggested I see DESTA MASAL, a special representative for the Emperor, at the Foreign Ministry.

Masal was very helpful. He agreed that Matt had probably been murdered, gave me a passport signed by Haile Selassie himself—and a list of possible suspects: four men all of whom had recently applied for permits to take a caravan out on the road to Debra Markos in the direction of a place called *Gera-Kond-Zaytan*—"The Left Tusk of the Devil." They were DR. VALTER GRANERUS of Helsinki; JOAM

SALDANHA of Lisbon; and ROMEO FALCONI and ARTHUR FINCH-WEST of Addis Ababa. Masal thought Matt may have discovered something of great value out there and had been killed to prevent his broadcasting his discovery. Back at the taxi, Van Buren was waiting. He insisted on accompanying me to Debra Markos. A few miles out of Addis Ababa we ran into a road block: two sedans parked crosswise on the rutted highway. Our driver jumped out and took off cross-country. Van Buren and I climbed out to confront three Ethiopians, and a white woman and two white men. One of the white men, a little fellow who looked like a muskrat, held an automatic rifle. When Van Buren objected to the holdup, the "muskrat" almost cut him in two with rifle fire. I went for the killer and something hit me from behind . . .

PART II

IT WAS dark when I woke up, and cold. I was tied with leather straps, smelling of rancid fat. Something was kicking me in the back of the neck, but it didn't stop and I realized it was my own blood, pounding in the lump at the base of my skull where they'd clipped me. I was lying on a clay floor, and there were chickens grumbling in their sleep around me. I remembered the way the little brown bastard had cut Van Buren up, and I wasn't cold any more. The sweat of thwarted, impotent rage dripped along the insides of my upper arms.

It may have been five minutes, or an hour, when I saw the light. An ancient crone, bundled in a filthy white wrapper, lifted a curtain and came into the hut. She had a tallow candle in a tin can, with a wire handle, and she was making little whistling puffs through her empty gums.

She pointed to her mouth, and cackled. I nodded to show I understood and she came back with an olive-oil bottle full of a sickly, aromatic liquid and a fragment of black comb honey. She squatted beside me, and poked the honey in my mouth. I gagged when I tried to chew, and she spilled the liquid over me, getting a little in my mouth.

I held up my bound hands, as far as the leather would reach, and asked her with my eyes to free them.

She shook her head. She held up the empty bottle.

"Lela tej?" she said. I nodded. All I could think of was that the more time I could get her to spend with me the more possibility there was that something would turn up.

She cackled again, and went out through the curtain. I tried to remember if there was room for another grave beside where they put Matt.

She brought me another bottleful of the medicinal liquid. It was liquor of some kind, from the way it warmed me, but you wouldn't know it from the taste. She went again, and I could see a faint light in the triangle where the curtain lopped open at the door frame. It wasn't raining, I realized.

I managed to get a corner of the strap to my teeth, and started to chew. It smelled like a jar of butter they used to keep in the chemistry lab at high school. It tasted worse. It was untanned leather, and there were bits of hair sticking to it. I remembered that Masal had told me to cook my meat.

The rain started in again, and I got through the first strap. It must have been four hours later when I had my hands free and worked the knot out of the thong that bound my feet. The hut, round-walled and mud-plastered, with a thatch roof, was the same as every other hut in Ethiopia—even the rooms in the annex at the hotel. There was a wooden bed, with crossed leather thongs for springs, in a corner, and a dozen scrawny chickens. The door-curtain was a hodge-podge of scraps of cloth and leather, put together with big, lazy stitches of heavy cord. I edged to the corner where it gapped and looked out. I couldn't see much.

CHAPTER V

HYENA BAIT

ABOUT forty feet away there was another hut, but the door was on the other side. There was a baby version of the same thing off to the right, with two young goats playing king-of-the-castle on it. It must be a grain-bin, I thought. And around all of it was a four-foot wall of close-woven brush. From the look, it was thorn.

I tried to estimate the chances of a high-jump over the fence, but I knew I couldn't make it. The clay was slippery

It was silent and it came damn close to being a tie.

underfoot, my clothes were wet and heavy, my legs were still numb from the leather thongs—and I'd never been able to jump that high in my life.

There were wisps of yelling from the other hut, and after a few minutes I saw the old hag come around the corner of it, with a covered basket in her hands. She came straight toward the door.

This was my class, I told myself, pulling back flat against the wall beside the curtain. Boys and men are too smart for you. But you can count on Murphy to take care of old women that dropped their teeth centuries ago. The squelch of her steps came up over the rain and she pushed through the curtain. I caught her elbows from behind and started to push her over onto the empty bed-frame. She hesitated for a second, because she didn't want to drop the basket on the floor, then she lit into me.

It was silent, and it came damn close to being a tie.

I'd forgotten that native women, even after they're eighty and toothless, do more physical work in a day than most stevedores. She fought clean, but she fought. It must have been ten minutes before I had her spread out on the leather webbing of the bed-frame, and lashed down with the half-tanned buttery thongs I'd chewed off my own body. She didn't say anything. I had to look at her close to see why. Her lips were moving a little, and she had nothing in her eyes—they were off someplace, and I knew she thought I was going to kill her and was too busy getting ready for the next world to see.

I crossed over and patted her shoulder, to let her know I didn't intend any immediate execution, but she just mumbled, and her eyes were far away. I went to the door then, wondering if the tussle had made enough noise to draw attention from the people in the other hut.

There was no sign of anything. I crouched beside the door frame, peering out under the edge of the curtain, and tried to figure a next move.

All I had to do was head back to Addis Ababa, and dig up somebody trustworthy, and get the police after the guy that murdered Van Buren.

Then I tried to figure who was trustworthy. That was tougher.

No matter how I stacked it, there was a husky chance that any one of the people I'd talked to was deep into the deal. Masal, the little politician at the Foreign Office, looked best on the surface, but it was kind of funny that I had no sooner run out the road he picked for me than I ran my neck into a noose. Simmons, at the American Legation, wasn't any more use than yesterday's street-car transfer. And the chances that any of the others were dependable were as shaky as half-set jello.

"I got to play it alone, it looks like," I told Grandma, lashed to the couch. "I don't know how I'm going to do it, or where it's going to end. But I'm going into the boondocks and trail some of these characters and see where we end up."

I was going to need food, and some kind of weapon. I remembered the basket she'd brought, when I jumped her, and I found it in the corner with the chickens. It was a round contraption, of woven grass. The lid was still on. Inside there were half a dozen gray pancakes, over two feet across, with a little mess of hash of some kind stacked in the middle. I took a pinch of the hash and tasted it. It brought tears to my eyes. It made chili look cold.

I tore a piece off one of the pancakes, to cut down the burn of the pepper-stew, and stuffed it in. It was sour, and flabby, but it took the edge off the burn. I suddenly realized I was hungry as a fresh-weaned pig, and I polished off the mess. I felt better then, except that I was burping and every burp burned all the way back up my gullet.

The old woman had hooked her eyes back onto her brain, and she was watching me. Her white cloak was trailed on the floor, from where we'd wrestled, and I picked it up. It wasn't much, but it might give me cover long enough to make a break out of the thorn fence. I wrapped it around me, trying to remember how she'd had it when she came in.

I looked at her again and she was laughing, the way a convict might laugh if the hangman got the rope kinked.

I picked up the empty basket, and got a big rock out of a pile near the door.

I waited until the rain came heavy again. Then I held the basket up by my face, pulled a flap of cotton down over my hair, and paddled out into the mire. I made the shelter of the wall of the next hut, and there was nobody watching. I stuck close to the wall and sidled my way around it until I could get an idea of the layout.

There didn't seem to be any gaps in the fence. There was a gate but it was closed. And it was right in front of the door of the big hut—the one I was huddled against. There were two other huts but their doors faced away.

I'd walk straight out to the gate, I decided, and untie the ropes that held it shut. It'd take anybody about that long to see I wasn't Grandma and get into action. From then on out it'd be straight cops-and-robbers. I waited for another heavy spell of rain to start.

While I was waiting, the voices started inside.

I couldn't make out much at first but it got clearer.

There was a girl speaking. And from the answers, she was talking to the little muskrat that killed Van Buren. I wasn't sure at first, but the more he talked the more certain I was that he was the guy that met me, outside the Goritza, and took my money and papers.

"I still say it would have been safer to kill him," the girl said. "I don't see how we can afford risks."

"That's why," was the answer. "His brother may have written him—said something, and he might have told someone else, or left the letter where it could be found."

"And what are you going to do about it?"

He laughed. It was a little-boy laugh. But it was crazy. Either the guy was hopped up, or he was a couple of steps over the side of the line that fences off sanity.

"He'll tell us, dear," he said. "Don't worry about that. We'll leave him sweat for a day longer, then I'll question him."

"You're sure of the money?" she asked. "I'd hate to go through with this and then find out we weren't going to get it."

"You've seen the bids," he told her. "I'm sure of two million. And there's an excellent possibility it'll run closer to five."

"I guess so," she said. "Lord, how I need the money. I've got to get out of this place."

"We all have to get out," he said. "They'll find the pieces, as time passes, and put it together. But we've got at least five months. Now show me the papers again."

The voices sank to a mutter I couldn't follow.

There was no time to think it out. I had to decide. There was a chance I could break in on the hut, and surprise them. And there was a chance it'd be wiser to get out, while I could.

The decision settled itself.

A car honked, outside the gate, and I went back to the hut where I'd been tied, keeping my back to the other buildings and trying not to hurry, to walk like an old woman. Somebody yelled something at me, but I pretended not to hear. I ducked under the curtain and lay on the clay, to see what was happening. I saw a woman and one or two white men, with three Ethiopians, leave the main hut and go to the gate. They stood talking for a while, then the girl came back and passed out of sight. All the men seemed to go, and the gate was tied again, from outside. I could just make out the sound of a car starting—maybe two. I looked at the old woman lashed to the bed, and she spat at me.

"I'm getting ready for the next round, Grandma," I told her. "Killer Murphy versus another woman."

She tried to spit again, but she was out of ammunition.

I shouldered the basket, hitched the wet cotton around me and over the red hair, and went back toward the hut.

Close to it, I could hear someone moving around. I started to circle it again, to get to the door. It was silent now, and the rain had let up a little. I held the basket so it covered the lower part of my face and pushed the door open.

God only knew who or what was inside —but he was going to have company.

THERE was only the girl in room, I made sure with a quick look, and closed the door. She was sitting on the edge of a bed, getting dressed or undressed. She looked up at me and I guess she took me for the old woman because she looked back down to where she was hooking her stockings onto the garters.

"Wogij," she said. "Go away, you old fool."

I was busy looking around the room. There was a fire burning, in a stone hearth, at one side, and the walls were hung with trophies—a rhino, a couple of big deer, things like that. There was a rack of guns, too. I walked quietly across the room to the girl, trying to get in grabbing distance before she looked up again.

She was a brunette, maybe thirty. She wore orange-red lipstick. And her complexion was warm-tan, and firm, with a soft shine like the handle of an ax that's used every day and oiled every night. She was good-looking, but she'd been good-looking longer than she'd been good. She was sin on a stick.

She didn't glance up again, just fastened the other garter. Then she twisted sideways and under my elbow, toward the rack of guns. She didn't make it.

I caught her, wherever I could, and she struggled for a second and then relaxed, pushing her body into my arms. I threw her over onto the bed and she lay back, her lower lip caught between her teeth, watching me under her upper lids.

"Don't be so rough, honey," she said.

I got a carbine off the rack and threw the lever out and home. A cartridge spun out onto the rugs that covered the floor. She got up off the bed, lazy, and came toward me.

I held the carbine low, on her stomach. She walked in until she was touching the muzzle.

"You don't need a gun, baby," she said. "I was just getting dressed to come out and get you. Now I don't need to bother." I told her to get back but she pushed in, reaching down to hold the muzzle. I turned it a little and raked the front sight across her, clearing the gun.

"Put some clothes on," I told her shortly.

"Where do you think you're going to get, talking tough out here?" she said. "We could have fun together if you'd calm down a little."

"We're not playing for fun any longer," I told her. "Put on your clothes fast or you're not going to have enough body left to cover."

There was a black dress, silk, on the bed, and she picked it up.

"Not that," I said. I was making up the program as the act went on. "Get on something warm enough to sleep in. And get it fast."

"Where are we going?" she said. "Don't be a fool, Murphy. You haven't got a chance against these local boys. I know."

"You got about five minutes," I told her. "You can spend two getting dressed—warm. I'll give you two more to rake together any papers you got that refer to this deal. The fifth one's for getting food, and any clothes around that might fit me."

"Where are we going?" She wasn't fooling any longer.

"Don't be a fool, Murphy. You haven't got a chance against these local boys."

"Into the bush," I said.

"You're a fool. Nobody can live in this country in the rainy season. The hyenas'll get us the first night."

"That's fifteen seconds. Shoot another minute that way and you'll come as you are."

She got busy then. I checked the other guns on the rack, and hunted cartridges. I found a little Italian pistol, a Fiocchi 7.65, with a box and a half of cartridges. But there were only a few scattered bullets for the rest of the guns, and three full boxes for the carbine, so I let the others stay in the rack.

She had good clothes for the bush. A pair of leather slacks, stuffed into rubber boots with oiled leather tops. A warm sweater, and a thick cape that looked waterproof. It was a dark gray-green, that might have been Italian Army issue.

"You're nuts, but if that's the way you want it, let's go," she said.

"Papers," I told her. "Dig them up quick.

"What papers?" she asked, but I saw her eyes flick across the dark carved wooden chest under the side window. There was a game-bag on the rack with the guns, and I took it down and opened the chest. It was half-full of papers and I scooped them in, making no effort to sort them. There's be time for that later.

"No food?" I asked.

She shook her head. "It's in the other *tukul*—the servants' *tukul*," she said. "I'll slip out and get—"

I brushed her back with a stiff left forearm.

"Skip the food," I said. "I want a coat. Or a cape. Something waterproof and heavy."

She shrugged and opened the big wardrobe. "Pick your own," she told me. I told her to get out the black one. It was ankle-long, with a hood, like those Lukin and David wore. I took it and threw it around my shoulders. I'd slung the carbine, but I had the pistol handy.

"Sure, you haven't forgotten anything?" she taunted.

I told her if I had she better dig it up —she was riding in the same boat. She got a dozen boxes of matches out of a desk, and a hunting knife. It was a kind I hadn't seen—in a fur scabbard, with a curved, pointed handle. I held out my hand and she gave it to me. It was Swedish steel, sharp enough to slice hairs.

"I don't know about you, Cowboy, but I'm going to have a drink."

I told her to make it quick. She opened the desk again, and I saw green canvas as she got the bottle out. They were my thalers. I sliced one bag and put about forty in each pocket. I had to leave the rest.

She drank straight out of the bottle and set it down. I took it with my left and swallowed five or six heavy gulps. It was the same stuff the old woman had brought me, sweet, warm, sickish and strong.

"Take the bottle," I told her. "Go out the front door and walk straight to the gate. Then untie the ropes and keep close to the wall, to your right. If we're not in the woods in another minute you're never going to get there."

She thought of a couple of angles, but you could see her drop them, without speaking. She was beginning to believe me.

We made the woods all right, and waded into them. The only trees I'd seen around Addis Ababa were eucalyptus, but we ran into a raft of other brands. There was a tall grass, with sharp edges, that caused some trouble, but mostly it was just pushing aside springy young stuff, like tall dogwood, and feeling the slap of water from the branches as it snapped into place again. I guess we made three miles before the country opened out and we hit a shelf of level ground. Far off to the right there was a hut with a cluster of goats around it, and a wisp of smoke. Ahead there were the slopes of steeper hills, but you couldn't see how tall they were because of the overcast.

The girl was doing all you could expect. She was wet to the waist, and her hair was stringy under the hood, but she wasn't breathing too heavy and her color was good.

"Any time you get around to it, Tarzan, I'd like a smoke."

I looked back but there wasn't any movement in the woods behind us, and the sound of birds, stirred up by our passage, was dying down.

I realized I'd been carrying the pistol, and it was wet through, and there wasn't any need. I wiped it and slid it into the slash-pocket of the cape.

"Now's as good a time as any," I told her. I fished out the Nationales. There were only four left. "You've got two coming," I said. "You decide when you want them."

She said, "Now's as good a time as any," and laughed at me. I lit two and handed her one. We sat down on a rock, and smoked a little.

"This isn't going to pan out, Tarzan," she told me. "When the time comes, remember I told you so. Penny Blair."

I told her O.K., I'd remember.

She started to flip her butt away, and then remembered there weren't many more.

"What the hell did you want me for, anyway?" she said. "You go to sleep, I'll knife you. You try to cover country I'll hold you back. And for a wolf you're

colder than the roof-end of an icicle." She slid the butt into her pocket and watched me.

"On your feet, Penny," I said. "We're moving camp again." She'd just started to stiffen, but she got up and started walking. I could have answered her, but I didn't want to, yet. I was twenty-five years old before I learned you could drive a woman practically crazy by not saying anything. What I wanted out of Penny Blair was information. Truthful information. She wasn't ripe yet. But she would be.

CHAPTER VI

THE LOST MOUNTAIN

IT WAS early enough for the sun to give a pretty good rough easterly bearing, and I picked a mountain someplace between north and west. An accurate direction wasn't very important. If you ever looked at a map of the country north and west of Addis Ababa you'd see you couldn't go more than forty or fifty miles without hitting a river that ran into the Blue Nile. And once you hit the Blue Nile all you had to do was follow along until you came to the ford where caravans crossed. There were only three on the map, and the first two led to Debra Markos, where I was headed.

There was just one thing I was afraid of with the girl. But when it got on toward noon and she hadn't mentioned it I figured I didn't have to worry any more. If she'd claimed she was pregnant, right at the start, I would have been in a fine full-blown predicament.

I guess it was close to two o'clock when she stopped, and waited for me to come up. I'd been letting her set the pace.

"I'm getting hungry, Tarzan," she said.

"I'll keep my eye open for a coconut," I told her. "Just stay headed for that mountain and keep moving."

She started again, and went on without looking back. About an hour before sunset we were up on the flat shoulder of a broad ledge that lay below a range of hills. It was wet but grassy, with a spread of tall yellow flowers, like daisies. She was beginning to slow down, but she hadn't turned back again, or tried to argue. Off across the valley there were half a dozen Ethiopian *tukuls,* each in its thorn fence, each with its own herd of black-and-white sheep spread around it like a fringe.

The grass began to thin out, into rock, and in the clay between the rocks there were occasional pad marks of the hyenas. We hadn't seen any yet, but I knew they were there. There were guinea fowl, in pairs and flocks. There was one flock of nearly a hundred birds, and I unslung the carbine. She waited, sitting on a rock, until I fired. I shot low, trying to spray gravel through them. I thought I'd missed, at first. The birds didn't fly—just slithered away along the ground, into the crevices of the rock. But when I ran up there were three dead, and two half-stunned. The hollow-point bullet had burst on the rock, making an effective barrage.

"Can you clean them?" I said.

She had her lips parted, and she was watching me. She nodded.

"But I'd need the knife," she said. "And you wouldn't trust me."

I gave it to her, and she went to work. She didn't try to clean the whole bird, just laid the feathers off from the breastbone and cut away the breasts. There was about a quarter-pound of meat on each of them. She cleaned the knife and handed it back to me.

"Do you do anything?" she said, "Or are you just *Geta,* Number-One Man?"

"I'll get a fire started," I told her. "You try to figure out how we can get some sleep without too many hyenas."

"We're going to have to have a talk," she said. "We can't just wander along like this until we hit Egypt."

"I'll get a fire going," I reminded her. "You pick out the bedroom."

The fire was harder than it looked. The twigs of the brush were brown and greasy, but they wouldn't burn. It was almost sundown when I'd collected enough dry cattle-cakes, from the shelter of the scattered rocks, to start a small fire and keep it going for the night. She'd been up-hill from me, clambering around the slick black lava boulders.

"The best place is up there, behind that gray rock," she said. "But we better get there soon. It'll be dark in a few min-

utes." I told her to take off her cape and help me carry the fuel. There was a light mist, but it wasn't raining.

"You expect me to carry—manure?" she said.

"If you want to eat."

The second load I brought the fire, burning nicely in a lump of the dry dung. The rocks, where she'd chosen camp, formed an open cave. The footing was dry, and I set the fire in the opening, just inside the drip from the rock that formed the roof. I blew it up, and added fresh fuel.

I got out the butt of my Nationale and lit it. It was comfortable to sit down again, and lean back. She just watched me. Then she shrugged and broke a stick off the greenery in the niche of the rock outside. I handed her the knife and she spitted the meat on the stick and squatted to roast it.

"Gee, you're talkative," she said. "How do you know I'm not going to kill you tonight? And what the hell good do you expect out of dragging me across Northern Africa?"

"We'll figure that out after supper," I told her.

WE ATE in silence. The guinea-hen wasn't cooked through, but it was tender and she got a nice brown on the outside. She got out her butt then and smoked.

The rain was strong again, but the fire made the shelter comfortable. She leaned back, resting against my shoulder. Once in a while you could pick up the sound of the hyenas, snuffling downhill over the remains of the birds, where she cleaned them.

"Have you still got that bottle?" I asked her. "We might as well finish it now. We'll get something else for tomorrow."

There was about half of it left." I took a swallow and gave it back to her. She took a little and offered it to me again, but I shook my head and she drank what was left.

"*Tej*," she told me. "They make it out of honey. It tastes like hell but it's got more bang than Scotch."

I didn't answer. If she was going to talk, she'd do it now. If she wasn't, talking wouldn't make her. I got the Nationales out and gave her another.

She looked at me, and shook her head.

"You'll need them," she said. "I got almost a whole can of Gold Flakes." She went into the other pocket of her cape and brought out the round yellow can. We both had one then, but I kept my mouth shut. She kept watching me, with her lids hung halfmast over her eyes. Then she reached up and patted me.

"You're a nice kid," she said. "I ought to kill you tonight, but you know damn good and well I won't. You'll never make it, though. Even if you don't get hung up, crossing country, the boys'll get you on the other end."

I waited a while, and she spoke again. "You want to know about it? You want to hear what I know. Is that it? Is that all it is?"

"If you feel like it," I told her. "There's plenty of time. We'll be five or six more days getting to the Nile." I slid out from under her head, and fixed the fire for the night. The cape, spread on a couple of sticks, threw the fire back in, warmer. I got my jacket off and spread it to dry out a little.

"Let me dry out some of your clothes," I told her. She handed me her cape, watched me for a second, then peeled off her sweater. It was warm, and the clothes we still wore steamed a little from the glow. I sat down again and she kept watching me. Then she sat beside me and put her head back on my shoulder.

"Are you just going to sit there?" she said. "Aren't you going to pull those papers out of the bag and question me? Or make passes? I may not be exactly a little boy's dream, but you're going to be a long time in this lousy country before you run into anything better."

"We got six days," I told her. "I'll split another cigarette with you."

We smoked, passing the cigarette back and forth. Her sweater dried out, and I gave it to her. Then I slid an arm around her and we watched the fire.

She had the butt when it got too short to hold.

"Done?" she said. Her voice was lazy, companionable, next my ear. I nodded and she stubbed it out on the rock. Then she kissed me and sat up straight.

"All right," she said. "I'll tell you

"How do you know I'm not going to kill you tonight?" Penny said. "And what the hell good do you expect out of dragging me across Northern Africa?"

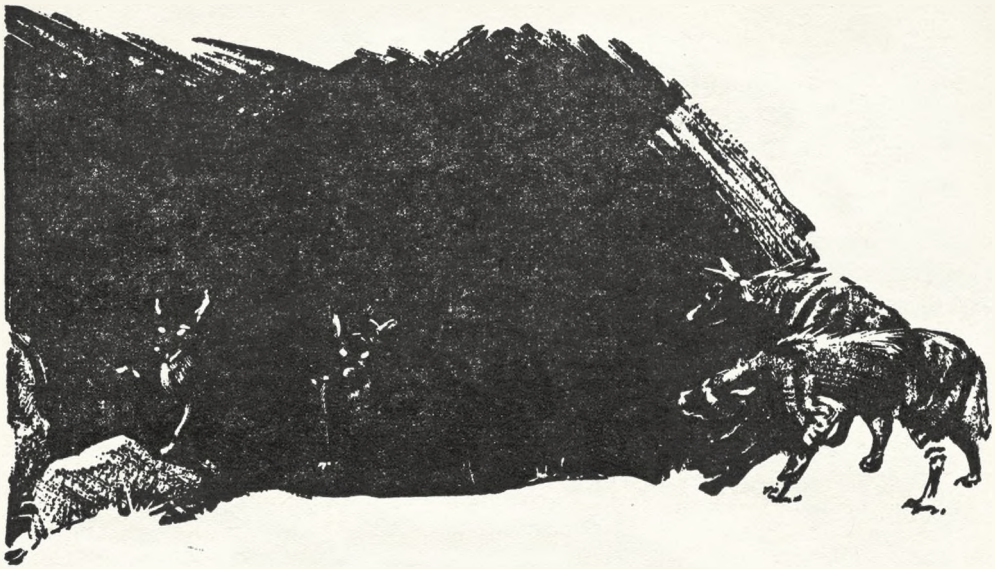
what you want to know. Neither of us will get anything out of it, because even if you trusted me I don't think we could make it stick, with those guys. And you don't trust me. You're not that crazy. Nobody could be that crazy." She was quiet for a while.

"You couldn't trust me, could you," she said. It wasn't a question.

"What do you want out of it? Money? Or just to find who killed your brother? Why in hell did you have to come here anyway, you and him? It could have been all right, otherwise. I wouldn't get much of the money, but enough, enough to get out. That's all I want, a chance to get out of this lousy country."

I'd get her out of the country, I said. I could promise that much. All I wanted was to find who killed Matt, and settle things up. Who killed him? I asked her. All I wanted was the name. She could keep the rest of it, and I'd get her out if she was ready to go when I was.

She turned and watched me for a few seconds. Her eyes had a shine in them,



like opals. Brown opals. There must have been a time when kids made plans around those eyes, plans that included a kitchen stove and going to the beach with the baby.

The wind stirred a little, restlessly, and the drip from the rock overhead twisted and spattered a few drops on the fire. Someplace below a hyena laughed. She shuddered a little, against my arm, and I patted her shoulder. There wasn't any reason, particularly. And she blew her top.

"Oh for heaven's sake, leave me alone," she said. "You're just a lousy Galahad chasing whoever killed your brother. No, you don't want any money. No, you wouldn't take advantage of a lone woman. You make me sick to my stomach."

"Get it off your chest," I told her. "I don't blame you. This is a tough country."

"You don't blame me. And who the hell are you, to blame, and who the hell cares? You got yourself a nice, smug little job, back in the States, and a nice, antiseptic little girl. But you got to butt in."

"When you get done crying in your beer," I said, "either go to sleep or make sense. We got twenty-five miles to cover tomorrow."

She reached a toe out, and kicked the bag of papers.

"Read it for yourself," she said. "It's there. It's all there." I got two more Gold Flakes out of her can and handed her one without saying anything. I got a light from the fire and she lit from me. She blew smoke out, and laughed.

"Why not?" she said. "They'll be waiting for you at the other end, anyway. At Debra Markos. It's kind of a screwy story, but everything in this whole damn country's screwy. It starts with a tough old black bugger that was emperor of this country, thirty-forty years ago. Menelik, they called him. . ."

IN the flicker of the fire, and through the sifting rustle of the rain, she made some kind of sense out of it. Menelik, the long-dead emperor, had given mineral rights of nearly a third of the whole country to a tough old graybeard who had stuck with him through the first war with the Italians, and the border wars that followed. Salodi, his name was. Likemakwas Chiffara Salodi.

Once in a while Salodi would try to peddle his concession, but it never came to anything because nobody could prove there was anything in his huge claim but scattered dust and nuggets of gold, occasionally panned out of the rivers.

Meantime, Salodi was busy in other ways. He took a white mistress, a Portu-

guese girl, and had a son by her. His own son, of a dead black mother, walked out on him at this. When the Italians came into the country the second time, Salodi took to the hills, with a Swedish military officer from the emperor's school at Addis Alam. They were firm friends when they got back to Addis Ababa, on Haile Selassie's return, and Salodi gave the Swede a *plein-pouvoir,* sort of power of attorney, to his mineral rights.

That left three people with some sort of claim to Salodi's minerals, whenever he died, but it didn't mean anything because he wasn't dead, there'd never been enough minerals located to make the concession worthwhile, and the claim was only good, according to the contract with Menelik, for thirty-five years.

Then a drunken Texas oil man, fired out of his job in Arabia, and bounced out of the bars in Addis Ababa where he'd been sponging drinks, bounced out as far as Debra Markos and started panning gold around Gojjam Province to raise enough for his ticket home.

He started with seven feet of Turkey carpeting, to make a grizzly, and he ended up with enough gold-dust to outfit a caravan deep into Wallega Province.

He didn't find much gold, but he ran into a strange mountain, shaped like the snag of a boar's tusk, made of a dirty, cream-colored ore he'd never seen before. He sent samples in to Addis Ababa, to Cyril Douras, at the hotel. Cyril, who could smell money through the small end of a French horn, got busy.

With an air-tight contract for a three percent commission, he started to try to peddle the theoretical share of the estate belonging to Salodi's half-caste son. He sent word out to Cairo, and the experts from other countries started to flock in to bid on the proposition.

Douras had learned that the dirty snag of mountain, if it matched the oil man's description and his samples, was a solid, ugly, priceless tusk of practically pure wolframite, the easiest-refined source of tungsten, one of the atom-age's scarcest metals.

"That's what all the fuss is about," she finished. "Just trying to make sure the development rights are solid, on one end, and making this Texan show where the mountains is, on the other."

"Who killed Matt?" I said.

She shrugged, restlessly. "Any of them. Any damn one of them."

"You've talked a lot, but you haven't mentioned any names," I reminded her. "You stopped giving names right after old Salodi."

"Could be any one of nine or ten people," she said. She checked off her fingers.

"You run into Anastasia Lasta, her that runs the Goritza? It might be her. She was sleeping with old Salodi, years back. And had a son.

"It might be their child. Bobolini, he calls himself. Ticket clerk at the railway station.

"There's Salodi's legitimate son, a native named Gubru David. It might be him.

"There's a girl named Tornquist. Mari Tornquist. She's got the papers from her brother, Kaare Tornquist. He was the Swede that Salodi gave the *plein-pouvoir* to, but he's dead.

"And if he wasn't so damn careful, I'd say it might be Cyril Douras, at the hotel. He's handling Bobolini's claim, and for three percent he'd do anything."

"That's five," I said. "They all seem to have some piece of a claim to old Salodi's rights. Who're the others?"

"Vultures," she told me. "They're hanging around waiting to bite into the carcass. There's Saldanha, from the Portuguese Tungsten Combine. Granerus, he's a Fascist Finn with mining connections through Scandinavia. Falconi, a broken-down Addis lawyer that's got rich friends in France. And your little friend Finch-West, who killed your Negro helper. He's out for anything he can make."

"Nine," I said.

"You took your eye off the guy with the ball," she said. "Harry Carlin—of Texas, Arabia, Addis Ababa and Debra Markos. He's the only one who's ever actually seen this mountain. He's the key man."

I thought it over for three or four minutes. It made a kind of sense, but there were holes in it.

"What about old Salodi himself?" I asked her. "Where does he come in?"

"He doesn't," she said. "Early in August somebody put a spear in his mouth and worked four feet of it down his gullet."

"You don't mean four feet," I said. "It'd—"

She cut in. "It did. What the hell do you think this deal is, mister, Sunday School? Look, this chunk of land Salodi had is the same size as the whole damn state of Colorado. If development starts, before the option runs out, it's worth way up in the millions—and I don't mean Ethiopian. Any one of those three—Mari Tornquist, Gubru David, John Bobolini—would have a clear title if they staked a good claim, and got rid of the others. All any of them got to do is dig up Harry Carlin and dig under the other two."

"Where do you come in?" I said. "How'd you get into this?"

She'd lost most of the hardness, and the rain had washed the paint off, but the lines came back and the shine went out of the brown eyes. She spat the remnant of cigarette out toward the fire, savagely.

"Figure that our yourself, you damn fool," she said. "Now let me get some sleep."

She lay down and put her head on the bag with the papers. She was limp as last month's celery. I got her cape from near the fire and spread it over her. Then I put my own on and stepped out into the drizzle. The air smelled good, without the dung-smoke, and I edged along between the rocks, thinking. The hyenas were still snuffling, down where the birds had been cleaned, but the rest of the night was silent as an ant in an inkwell.

CHAPTER VII

THE HOLY HERMIT

I TRIED to weigh the possibilities of truth in what the girl, Penny Blair, had told me, and I couldn't find a place where it didn't seem to be completely frank.

And the more I checked it against my plan, the sounder it seemed.

The only thing possible, as far as I could see, was to get to Debra Markos as fast as I could make it. If I got there before the caravans—so much the better. If not, I could pick up their trace, and follow them out. The vultures were going to gather someplace off to the northwest, and I'd be there when they started fighting. If I could find Carlin, he'd be able to tell me what Matt had learned. When I knew that, I'd have enough to try to spot the killer.

I didn't have any doubt, now, what Matt had been going to broadcast. He was going to tell about one of the richest mineral concessions on the face of the earth, and the tangled claims that hid its ownership. He was going to tell about *Gera-Kond-Zaytan,* The Devil's Left Tusk, a lost mountain of ore for a metal of new-found uses.

And somebody made sure he didn't live to broadcast.

Finch-West was my favorite candidate. The way he'd shot down Van Buren, on the greasy clay highway, would make it a pleasure to be able to kill him as Matt's murderer. But the others stood a chance, and I was going to see they got it. It might even be Mari Tornquist—or Gubru David—but I didn't think so. It was hard to picture either of them killing the old man, Salodi, and I was pretty sure whoever killed Matt was the same one that stuck a spear through Chiffara Salodi.

The fire was a little brighter, from the mouth of the shelter, when I started back to get some sleep. I went slowly, with the pistol ready. I'd left the carbine in the cave, on purpose.

If Penny Blair was planning on a stab at killing me tonight, the chances were good she'd be ready with the carbine when I got back.

And since she'd be lighted by the fire and I'd be in darkness, she wouldn't have a chance.

If the carbine was still set against the rock, and she was still lying down, I figured it would be safe to try to get some sleep. If she was playing games, I'd find out before I went into the light.

I came quietly, making sure not to stir the gravel, or scrape my feet along the rock. And all the time I came the fire kept getting brighter. About twenty feet from the opening I edged out from the rock, so I could see into the shelter. When I saw the carbine I grinned, and walked directly toward it. It wasn't until I was right in the drip from the rock roof that I saw that Penny Blair was gone.

I started, then thought she'd probably left the cave for a moment for the same reason I had.

"Don't go too far," I called. "The place is crawling with hyenas." There wasn't any answer.

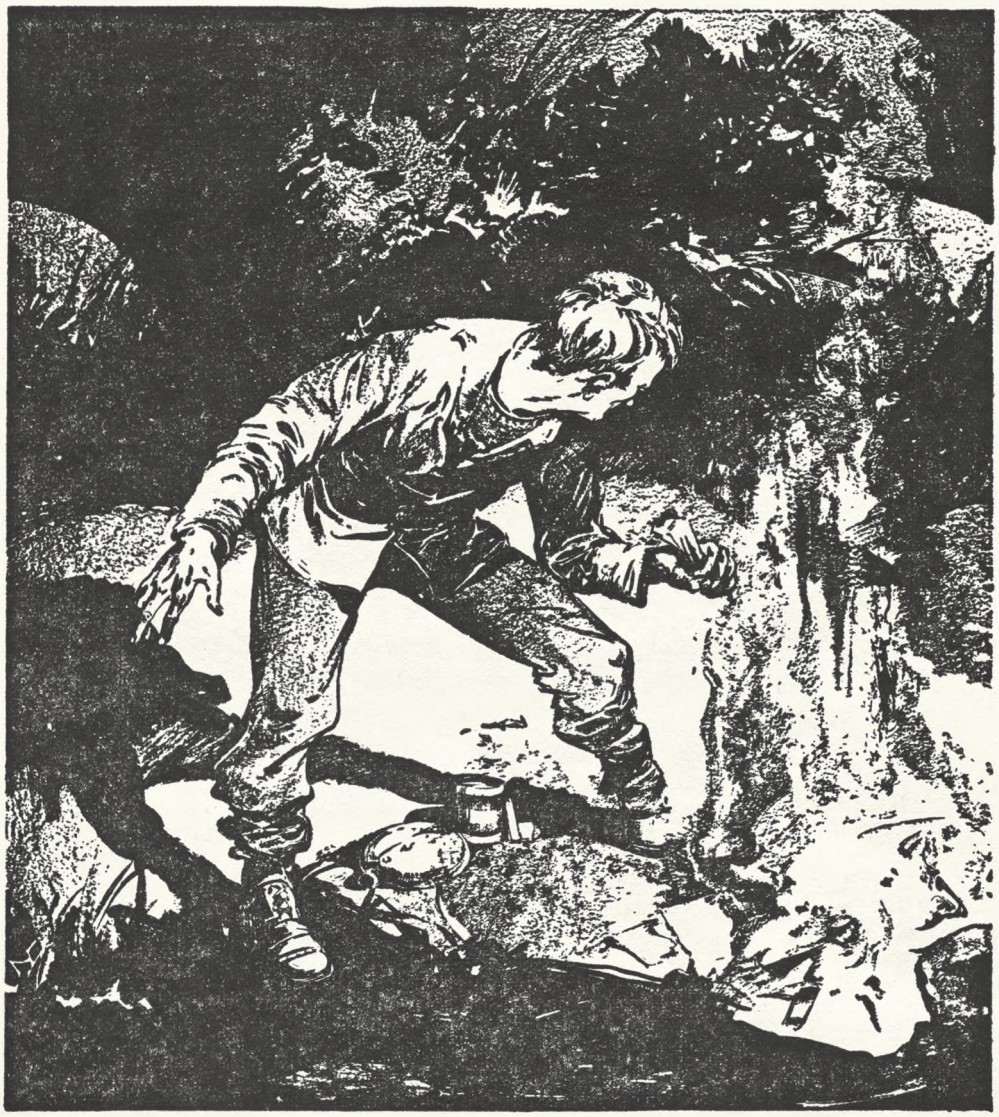
"Hey," I yelled, louder. "Can you hear me?"

All I heard was the snuffling sound—the hyenas, contemptuous of my noise. And the fire was getting brighter all the time. Right at my feet, where I hadn't thought to look at first, the papers from the game-bag were blazing like a beach bonfire.

I pulled some from the edges, and slapped out the flames. I got a handful of half-burned pages. The rest were gone. And there wasn't any more doubt that Penny Blair was gone, too.

By the foot of the carbine, stuck in the open cigarette tin, were three or four rolled papers. I pulled them out.

It was my letter of credit—the one



I started to reach for the pistol and then caught myself in time . . .

they'd hijacked off me outside the Goritza—my passport, the yellow special passport Desta Masal had given me, and a half-sheet of plain paper with "Oxo" on it. Only the "Oxo" was written in orange-red lipstick, and it wasn't "Oxo" at all, it was two hugs and a kiss.

For a second I thought the girl liked me, because I hadn't crowded her, and then I knew it was just sarcasm, and then I wasn't sure.

I could make twice the mileage without her, but there wouldn't be any chance of trying for more information—and when I heard the hyenas snuffling again I knew I was sorry as hell she was gone, and almost certain she couldn't make it back alone.

Then I started on the papers.

Three or four didn't mean anything. One, in French, seemed to be a part of the translation of the original grant, from the Emperor Menelik to Likemakwas Chiffara Salodi. I could make out something about all land north of 6 degrees south latitude and west of 37 degrees east longitude. And something more about 10,000 square kilometers. The rest was just French. I put it away.

All that was left was charred paper, and parts of five-by-seven photographs. They weren't pretty photographs. Each of them showed the same girl. And each of them showed a different man. One of the men, where the head wasn't burned off, was little Bobolini from the railway station. Another looked like it might be Simmons, from the American Legation. The rest were charred past identification. The girl, of course, was Penny Blair. There weren't any clothes in any of the pictures.

. . . It was Phileas Lubin, the doctor.

THE funny thing was I wasn't mad at her, finding out she made a living out of blackmail. I was mad at Bobolini, and Simmons, and the men she was with—and I was killing-mad at that sleek, crazy little bastard-muskrat that must have taken the pictures. I put the scraps back into the fire, and fished another cigarette out of the tin.

That's when I noticed she'd left them all. She'd hit out into the dark without taking a single smoke. I put the one back I'd started to light. The fire was brighter now, and it wasn't until he was only four or five steps away that I saw him. He was grinning at me.

"It was considerate to leave a light in your window," he said. "Aren't you going to ask me in?"

I started to reach for the pistol, then I saw he might have anything under the spread of his black cape. Then I caught myself in time. It was Lubin. Phileas Lubin, the doctor that'd been too far down the ladder to climb back up.

"This is a long way from the nearest bar," I said. "What the hell are you doing out here in the middle of the wet hills?"

"One of us had to have some brains," he said. "And you weren't using yours."

He came in under the overhang, and squatted beside me. He reached his long, stained fingers out and broke the fire into little pieces, killing the flame, leaving just a few coals glowing in the dung.

"You could see that fire halfway to Kenya," he said. "The others are after you. There's no need to put up signs." I asked him what others, and he told me. Finch-West had reported to the police, and the American Legation, that I'd shot Van Buren in a drunken brawl outside his compound. Simmons was after me, for the Legation, and Desta Masal for the Ethiopian Government.

"What makes you think I didn't do it?" I asked him. "You weren't there. There wasn't anybody else there but a couple of Finch-West's boys—and the driver, Jesus. Amda Jesu." That was it, of course. The driver had gone to Lubin, told him what he had seen.

"I'm damn glad the driver saw it," I said. "He'll tell them what happened. I suppose he's hiding out—afraid of Finch-West."

"He's not hiding out. He's been to the police."

"That's good."

"Not so good. He said he saw you kill Van Buren."

"He couldn't," I said. "He was a pleasant kind of guy—a friend of Van Buren's. He couldn't lie like that."

"He was a better friend of Van Buren's wife," Lubin said. "For God's sake, don't you understand that this is a poor country? Most of the whites haven't got the ability, or the money, to go anyplace else, or they'd go. And the natives scratch together enough to eat and think they're lucky. And then this huge, wild, crazy, possible plan for money—millions of dollars of money—gets into reach of their fingers. Don't you see you can't trust anybody? They're all turning on each other, snarling like hyenas over a fresh kill. Won't you ever get it through your thick red thatch that there isn't anybody to trust—not anybody at all."

"Then you don't fit. You got no reason to think I didn't kill Van Buren, and you said yourself nobody could be trusted."

He laughed. It wasn't at me, it was at himself.

"I don't count," he told me. "Ask the natives around the markets. I stopped being human five or six years ago. I'm a *Buda,* a sort of he-witch." He made the evil-eye sign, old as the crumbled mountains, and spat through the fork of his fingers.

"How did you find me? How did you know I was here?"

He laughed again. The hyenas did it prettier.

"I told you. I'm a *Buda.* Listen, Malcolm Murphy, for years I've spoken all the languages of Addis Ababa. Tigre and Tigrinya, Amhara and Galla, Gourage and a dozen tongues of Islam and Shankalla."

"So?"

"So I know more about the things that happen, here in the Empire of the Conquering Lion of Judah, than any twenty people you can put together—you or John Hoy."

"John Hoy?"

"Haile Selassie. *Negus za Nagast. Atayi. Sa Majesté.* The Ethiopian, *'John Hoy,'* means 'His Majesty.'"

The fire flared up again and he put a palm over it, crushing it back to glowing embers.

"Why did you come out here? What makes you want to help me?"

"Your brother was a gentleman. You are an irresistible damn fool. The combination is the first thing I've struck in five years that has more amazing potentialities than morphine. I assure you that my motives are purely selfish. And that if I could think of anything that was more amusing I would be delighted to leave you to the hyenas and follow it, for my own delight."

I didn't say anything, and after a little he asked me if I'd ever gone barefoot, as a kid.

I pulled off my shoes and showed him. You can always tell. The big toe stands out by itself, instead of leaning across on all the rest, pushing them into a painful pyramid.

"Do you want to play the game my way?" he said.

There wasn't much choice, I reminded him.

"Then take off your clothes," he told me. "We're going underground."

HE was fishing in the pockets of his cape, bringing out bottles. "Hurry up," he told me. "Get off your clothes. You're going to turn into an Ethiopian for a couple of weeks." I started to unbutton my coat, and he spoke out into the darkness.

"Libs amta," he said. *"Abasha-libs, tolobel."*

Before I was naked there was a butter-haired servant, behind him in the doorway, holding an armful of tattered clothing. He got the boy to hold up the cape, screening the fire, and he stirred it into flame.

"Iodine's a little reddish, but it'll do for Somali," he said. He'd mixed oil and tincture of iodine and was slapping it, cold, on my skin. When that was done he made me bend over and doused my hair with something out of another bottle. My eyes stung, and I knew it was a bleach of some kind, chlorine.

"Red's bad enough," I said. "But you bleach it out it'll be hopeless."

"I'm stage manager," he reminded me. "Lots of them soak their heads with henna. I'll bleach out this carrot-top of yours, spotty, and it'll look like a fancy henna do. Very stylish. There. Now let me look at you."

"Nothing a little mud won't fix," he said, finally. "Except the coiffure. Kneel down here." When I knelt he took a razor-blade from his pocket and started to hack at my hair. He didn't just cut, he pulled the hair hard across the blade, pulling some out, cutting off more, and tangling what was left.

"A little frizz is becoming," he said. "You're lucky I'm doing this with a sharp blade. The regular market barbers use a piece of broken bottle."

He looked me over, searchingly.

"O.K.," he said, finally. "Now we'll mud you up a little. Get it good under your toenails, and fingernails." With him helping daub, I was caked in clay.

"Now rub off what you can," he told me. "Whatever sticks, leave."

The clothes didn't take long. There was a pair of white cotton jodhpurs, skin-tight around the leg, tied around the middle with a rope, with the bag of the seat hanging down to the knees. The jacket was a tattered, bleached khaki tunic left behind by some British or Egyptian soldier in a campaign of a generation past. Then the white cloak, the *shamma,* and over it a black wool *burnoose,* with a funny spiked peak sticking up over the left shoulder.

"Sling your carbine," Lubin told me. "That's what that peak is for—leaves room for the muzzle."

"Do I get a hat?" I asked him.

"Let me watch you for a minute, first," Lubin said. "I was going to toss in a Somali turban—but I got a hunch you look mean enough to be a Christian. Maybe a priest. Bend over."

I leaned my head into his knees. He worked a salve of some kind into my hair, over the bleach, leaving it in greasy strings. Then he took a white cloth, like a bedsheet torn into long strips and sewn together, and started winding it over my hair. He tucked the ends in, and told me to stand up. Another long white strip he wound around my waist. I counted the turns. Forty.

"You'll do," he said. "The mud is a little new, but tomorrow'll take care of that."

"I suppose you teach me all the Ethiopian languages, while you're at it," I said.

"You don't do any talking," he said. "You're a *Batawi*—a kind of holy hermit. If you were a real church priest, I'd have to shave your head. You've taken a vow of silence."

"This whole program looks crazier every minute," I told him. "But I haven't got any ideas of my own so I'll play along. Pass me my shoes and we'll get going."

"You don't get shoes," he said. "We're going to ride—and the Ethiopian stirrups don't have a place for a shoe. There's just an iron ring to stick your toe through."

"It's still your party," I told him. "Bring on the horses and I'll start learning to keep my mouth shut."

He had taken off his own cape, as he spoke, and I saw he was wearing a *shamma,* too. He had a black uniform, with red buttons, and two red-leather

"You'll do," he said. "The mud is a little new, but tomorrow'll take care of that."

belts of cartridges strapped around his waist. He picked another wool burnoose out of the pile of clothing the boy had brought, and slid into it.

"It isn't horses," he said. "It's mules. We're going to make forty miles today—across country that would founder the best horse living."

"I'm a little heavy for a mule," I suggested.

"Not these. A good Ethiopian mule is big as a horse, and chunkier. They cost

twice as much as a pure-bred Arab. And if they're sagar, trained to singlefoot, they're smoother riding than a gaited pony.

I fished the double handful of thalers out of my discarded pants. But there weren't any pockets in my new garb.

"Where do I carry money?" I asked.

"I'll take it," he said. He stuffed it into the folds of the twisted white cotton belt around his waist. "You're a hermit. You don't need any money. Come to think of it, you don't need the gun."

HE told me to give the carbine to his boy, but he let me tuck the pistol in my sash, with my passports and letter of credit. Then he took a flat pint out of the side-pocket of his uniform and we drank. It was Greek brandy, with a resin-taste like licking a fiddle-string.

"Do I have a name?" I asked him. "I know I've taken a vow of silence, but it'd be interesting to know what I was called. I can't very well run around as Malcolm Murphy."

Lubin chuckled.

"Why not?" he said. "It's very fine Amharic. The word for good, splendid—is *'malkam.'* And needle is *'murfee.' Malcolm Murphy.* Splendid Needle. That's wonderful—*malkamino.*"

While he was talking he had stirred up the fire, and was tossing in my clothes. He got up, flipping the empty pint on the floor.

"Come on," he said. "We got miles to travel. It'll be light in an hour."

He took the cape from the boy and added it to the flames. Then he went off to the left, along the ledge of the rocky hill. I followed him, mostly by sound, but there was a gray glow in the sky and I could see him when my eyes got used to it. The boy led the way, ahead of him, and we came to a rocky draw where another boy stood, holding four mules. Two of them were thin and tan. The other two were black and chunky, with silver trimmings on their bridles, martingales and saddles. The saddles were just saw-horses, padded and covered with red leather.

The boys cupped their hands for a step when we mounted. One of them helped me get my big toes into the stirrup-rings. Then Lubin kicked his mule. "Let's go," he said. *"Hit! Hit!"* I copied him, and the mule rippled into action. He was right. The damn thing was strong as an ox and smooth as a baby's bottom.

The boys straddled their beasts and came after us. Lubin turned in the saddle and waved a hand at them, sending them back.

"Yellim!" he said. *"Ba-bate wogidu."* They halted, and sat watching us as we mounted the crest and started around the north side of the hill on which I'd spent the night. Lubin waited until my mule had settled to a steady running walk, then eased back until we were riding leg-and-leg.

There was something wrong. He'd spent what must have been a couple of hours making me up like a native priest, but he hadn't touched his own skin, or hair. He was a patent European. When I asked him, he laughed.

"With me it doesn't matter. They take me for a Greek. Most of the villagers think there are three broad races of mankind—*Abasha,* the Ethiopians; *Faranji,* the foreigners, and *Yagrik,* the Greeks." He talked on, telling of his plan. It was Tuesday morning. By Thursday noon he planned to reach Debra Markos. We'd hunt up Harry Carlin there, and tell him of the caravans that would be moving up behind us, and the foul-up over ownership. With Carlin's help I could track down the one that killed my brother.

"What about you?" I said. "Let's stop kidding. You're not doing this for fun. What are you after?"

He mocked me with a smile.

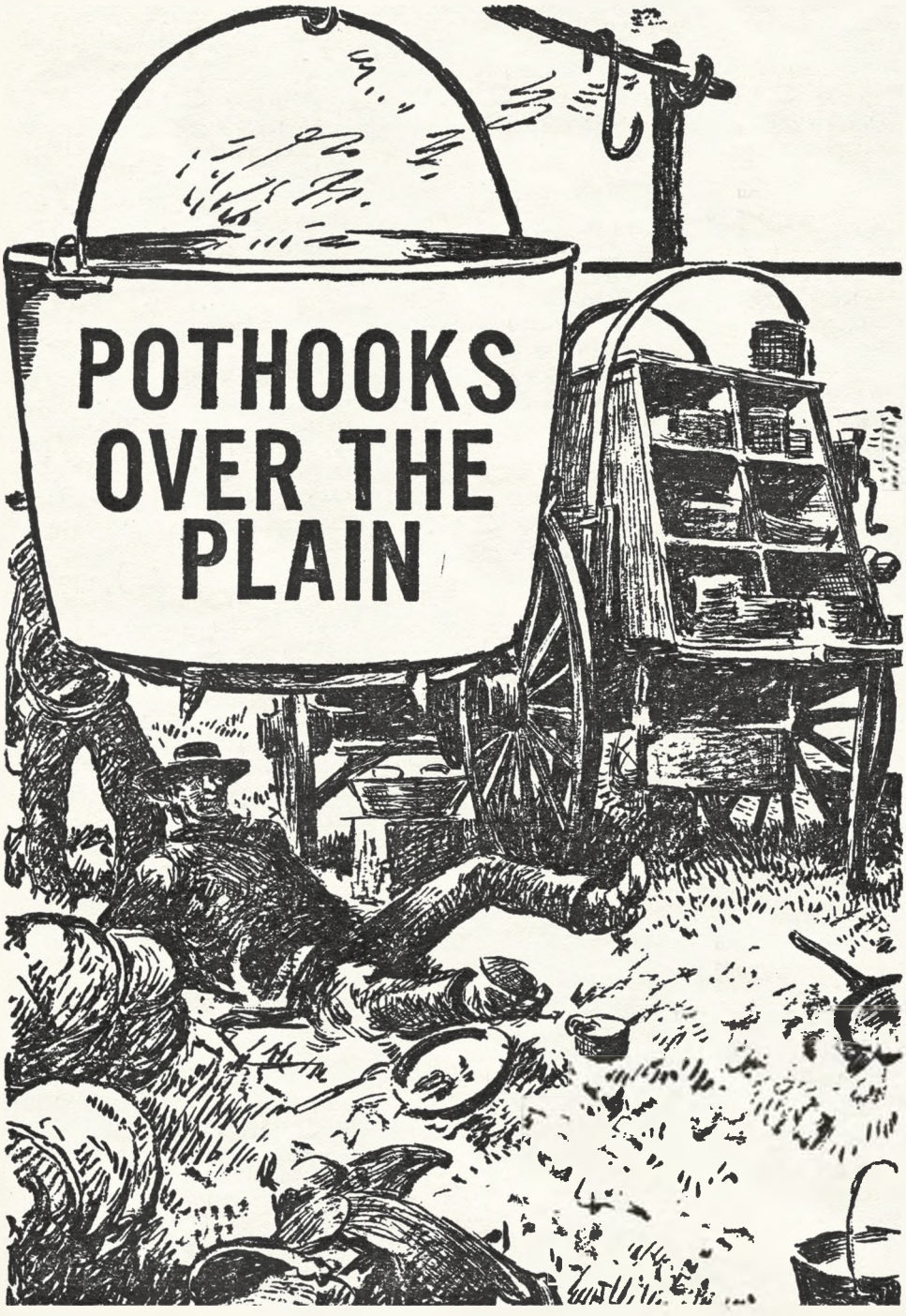
"Money," he said. "The necessities are very expensive, now. I have found that the only way to get money is to be where it will be changing hands. The rest is largely a matter of inspiration."

We crossed a low range of clay hills, and saw the smoke of a village below us. "Jeldu," Lubin said. "We'll buy meat here—and *talla* beer." I don't know why I turned. From each side, behind us, horsemen were riding in. I pointed them out to Lubin.

"Damn it, they got here first," he said. "Hold your hat. We're going to run for it."

(End of Part II)

A FACT STORY



ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER

By DABNEY OTIS COLLINS

"Bacon in the pan, coffee in the pot;
Get up and get it—get it while it's hot;
Wake up, Jacob! Day's a-breaking!
Peas in the pot and hoecakes a-baking!"

THE old-time trail and range cook had many names: cookie, pot rustler, old woman, biscuit shooter, sop and 'taters, dough wrangler, gut robber, and grub spoiler. He was called other names not so complimentary, but never within his hearing. For the chuck wagon cook was a rugged individualist noted for his general cussedness—" as cranky as a cook" was a byword of the range.

He might have learned his trade in the kitchen of a river steamboat, small

Lord have mercy on the cowhand whose bucking horse tears through the cook's holy ground!

town restaurant, or ranch house. He has been accused of learning it in a blacksmith shop. Usually he was a middle-aged man who had been a cowboy. Although handling a team was as important in his profession as handling a dutch oven, the range cook was a notoriously reckless driver. A disgruntled puncher expressed it simply. A grub wagon cook, he said, was a man who had a fire and who drew the same wages he would have earned had he known how to cook.

There is evidence that not all chuck wagon cooks were masters in the art of cooking from the ground up. There was once a D Bar S cook who would not roast the coffee unless he had plenty of time, but boiled the same grounds over and over, thus violating the first law of cow camp cookery: that coffee should be strong enough to float a horseshoe and most of the water left out of it. His soda-streaked, cannon ball biscuits, when thrown in the creek by a disgusted cowboy, sank like the rocks they were. Another cook, unaccustomed to the ways of dried apples when soaked in water, was discovered in the act of frantically digging a hole in the earth and burying the swelling pie makin's as they pushed over the edge of the pot.

REGARDLESS of his cooking ability, the chuck wagon cook was the autocrat of the breakfast table, and the dinner and supper tables. These names, though, were too dignified for range chuck. All the meals were simply called grub pile. The cook ranked next in importance to the boss, who treated him with respect, even paid him five to ten dollars more a month than the twenty-five drawn by the hard-riding cowhands. Anybody could ride a horse. Who, though, but the cook, could build a marrow gut stew and sourdough biscuits to side it, over a cow chip fire in the rain, a thousand miles from a slice of lemon pie and one foot from hell?

So this king of the kettles, this sultan of the skillets inflicted his orneriness on the cowhands with impunity. Cowboys who staked out their horses too close to the wagon would surely incur the cook's displeasure. This might take the form of biting ridicule, of which he was master, or profanity, of which he was pastmaster.

A laughing remark on the quality of the grub might cause him to tear the coffee grinder off the chuckbox and hurl it at the offender's head. Missing, as he probably would, because any man who can dodge a cow on the prod can easily duck a coffee grinder, the cook would then begin to talk some Comanche and Spanish and threaten to walk out on the whole outfit.

Or the form of punishment might be indirect, even subtle. The coffee could become suddenly weak, the sourdough bread salty, or pie withdrawn from the menu.

This sly tactic of making the whole outfit suffer for the offense of one usually resulted in punishment of the culprit by his fellows and complete victory for the cook.

Sometimes punishment took the form of "chapping" the guilty cowhand with his own chaps.

He might be as tetchy as a skinned rattlesnake rolled in sand. But as long as he could cook, and was reasonably clean, and had the grub ready and hot when the boys rode in, they would not infringe on his regal rights. They would drag in dead wood for his fire; they would help him hitch up, they might even, some time, pitch in and help him wash the dishes. By "reasonably clean" they meant that the cook should not, like the X I T Negro cook, pat down the red-hot coals on his skillets of bread with the soles of his bare feet; that his flour sack apron should be as immaculate at least as their saddle blankets; and that he should use a towel, not the biscuit dough, to clean his hands. The cowboy, a man of huge appetite and robust humor, was not squeamish about his grub, but he had certain rules about such things.

By virtue of his position, the cook was the official stakeholder of bets and judge of quarrels among the punchers. Forgetting his cussedness, they came to him for help when hurt or sick, and his chuck wagon cupboard never failed to yield some kind of remedy. They sought his advice on subjects ranging from politics and religion to women, but

there was nothing about cow work that he could tell them.

A tale is told of a range cook who gave unasked counsel. He had left his outfit in the town where the herd had been delivered and had promptly proceeded to cut the alkali from his throat. During the third week of his bender he came unsteadily into a line camp where two cowboys were bunking. It was summertime and they had been cooking on a sheet iron box stove. But the cook, disdaining the use of such a stove, built a roaring fire in the fireplace and was frying a skilletful of beefsteak when a pair of rattlesnakes, dislodged from the rock chimney because of the heat and smoke, plopped into the skillet. With a yell, the cowboys dived for their shooting irons. The cook merely stared at the tongue-darting serpents writhing in the sizzling grease. He turned slowly to the eye-bulging punchers.

"Boys," he said fervently, "I want to give you some advice. Don't never tetch hard likker."

The cook was frying a skilletful of beefsteak when a pair of rattlesnakes, dislodged from the rock chimney, plopped into the skillet.

THERE were two phases of the chuck wagon cook; the trail drive cook, from 1866 to about 1890; and the round-up range cook, from the late '70's until the combination of homesteaders, bob-wire and windmills ended the open range. This was, generally speaking, in the early '90's.

Let us now accompany our cookie up the Chisholm Trail, remembering that in all discussions of range customs and cowboy life allowances must be made for local habits and conditions. The West was, and is, a big country.

It is May, 1870. The herd of some two thousand longhorns has been roped out of the brush country of the southernmost tip of Texas, branded and vent branded, and tallied over to the wagon boss. Past San Antonio, Fort Worth, Wichita Falls the Chisholm Trail has led them, through Elm Springs in the Indian Nations, across the Cimarron River, and now the herd is bedded down over the Kansas line. It is headed for the Crow Agency in Montana, more than two thousand miles from the receiving point.

Beneath the glitter of the stars the bedrolls, each containing two sleeping cowboys, are scattered like giant cocoons on the prairie. Beside each bedroll are the riders' hats and boots; nearby their night horses are staked to picket pins. Except on southern ranges—or where the outfit carried tents—riders doubled up for warmth. Economy of weight of bedrolls in the wagon was also an important consideration. The average bedroll was made of 18-ounce white duck, size 7x18, equipped with flaps, rings and snaps, enabling the sleepers to keep dry even in a downpour. The bed proper consisted of a couple of heavy quilts or "soogans" and a pair of blankets. Pillows were saddles. Oversize and too-heavy beds were definitely frowned upon, and a cantankerous cook would fix the jiggers who maybe had a mattress in their bedroll. Some evening they would discover that their bed—together with their extra clothes wrapped in it—had been left at the last campground, or had been dumped off along the trail.

The chuck wagon, its four hickory bows stripped of canvas, stands with tongue pointed to the North Star. Each night the cook points the tongue of his wagon to the North Star. It is the outfit's compass. A short distance from the wagon is a two-wheeled cart or trailer which fastens onto the back of the wagon. This is the wood, bull chip, or hoodlum wagon. For carrying fuel, a rawhide was sometimes swung under the wagon box; it was called the possum belly or coonie.

On gently sloping ground a quarter of a mile away, the bedded-down herd is a great blotch of darkness in the starlight. Occasionally a pair of sweeping horns lift out of the shadowy mass as a steer gets up to stretch or relieve himself, and to stand motionless, looking south. Is he thinking of his old home in the Brazos River bottoms, of the juicy prickly pear pods and the tall black chaparral among which grows the fern-like guajilla? He sinks to his knees. An old cow at the edge of the herd gets restless for her calf. An ornery steer horns a sleeping cow from her warm bed and takes it himself. The cow wanders away. But the two guards, slowly circling the herd in opposite directions, have no fear of a stampede tonight. They do not even feel the need to hum a song, except for their loneliness.

No star has yet faded when the bedroll under the wagon opens and a trap-jawed little man with ropey mustache throws back the blanket, yawns mightily, and reaches for his battered old hat. The cook's day has begun.

He kindles a fire in the trench over which dangle the soot-blackened pothooks, spreads a shovelful of cow chips over the flame, fanning it with his hat. From the keg fastened to the side of the wagon he fills the two-gallon tin coffee pot and hangs it over the fire. Working fast, for the prairie air is chill, he grinds the coffee, kneads the sourdough into biscuit shapes, places them in two large dutch ovens which go over the now blazing fire. From the quarter of beef hanging to a side of the wagon he cuts thick slices. The boys will have tenderloin steak this morning fried in a huge long-handled skillet, and sop to dip their biscuits in.

While breakfast is cooking, the cook places a pitcher of molasses, called "lick," on the lowered lid of the chuck-

box and sets out the tin plates, cups, knives, forks and spoons. Under the chuckbox lid which supported by a prop forms the cook's work table, is the wreck or roundup pan, and heaven help the waddie who fails to drop his dirty dishes into it.

Any discussion of chuck wagon cooks and cookery without a description of the chuck wagon would be like leaving the dough out of the cook's sourdough biscuits. This rolling kitchen is said to have been the successor of the ox cart, which in turn succeeded the pack mule of early Texas cow hunts. These first cows hunts were formed by neighboring ranchers to cooperate in gathering a herd to go up the trail. But when it came to taking a herd up the trail through unpopulated country on a long journey, a substitute must be found for the pack mule.

THE first camp wagon, according to old-time trail drivers, was an ox cart, equipped with water barrel and hoops covered with a tarp, and drawn by a double yoke of oxen. Colonel Charles Goodnight is said to have first used this camp cart on a drive from west Texas to New Mexico. Other drives, using this conveyance, headed toward New Orleans about the time of the outbreak of War Between the States, and still others went up into Missouri.

Ox-drawn carts could keep pace with the plodding herd, but there were times when more speed was needed, such as setting up camp before the herd arrived or crossing a stream in advance of the herd. So the mule-drawn chuck wagon was evolved.

The chuck wagon was a regular farm wagon with the chuckbox bolted into the rear of the wagon box when the end gate was removed. Although the size and design of the chuckbox varied according to the notions of the carpenter who built it, it was usually about four feet high, two feet deep at the bottom, the sides sloping upward to a depth of six inches at the top. Or, it was the same size at both bottom and top. It was held in place by the end gate wagon rods and cunningly fitted with drawers and shelves.

On a trail drive from south Texas to Abilene or Dodge, the chuck wagon carried three months' food supply; to Montana or Canada, six months' supply. In later years, when towns were established along the route, the foreman was sometimes authorized by the shipper to draw on him for needed additional supplies. The bulk of the food was carried in the wagon box. This consisted of flour or corn meal—used mostly on very early trail drives—sugar, bacon, beans, dried fruit, a supply of canned goods or "air tights," and several jugs of lick. There was also a can of kerosene.

The bottom compartment of the chuckbox held the sourdough keg or crock, flour and other bulky groceries. In the middle compartment were cans of beans, sugar, rice, and roasted coffee beans. The small upper section contained soda, salt and pepper and baking powder, together with a few bottles of calomel, quinine, chill tonic, black draught, and maybe a bottle of wahoo tonic belonging to one of the riders.

Cooking utensils were stored in a hinged box under the chuckbox and bolted to the floor of the wagon bed. A box under the driver's seat held grain for the team. Lashed to one side of the wagon was a ten or twenty-gallon water keg, to the other side usually a tool box was bolted. Stake ropes for the night horses and the big corral rope hung coiled from the wagon side and fastened to the chuckbox was the coffee grinder, in which coffee was ground fresh for every meal.

A better camp kitchen was never devised. But the chuck wagon was more than that. It was a cowboy's home, where there always awaited good food, a fire's friendly warmth, and companionship. He never refered to it as chuck wagon, but as *The Wagon,* and to it he pledged allegiance. When a cowboy on roundup, who had lost his direction in the riding of a circle in unfamiliar country, asked, "Which way's the wagon?" he was asking which way was home.

With the first light of dawn, when night still shrouds the big, silent land, the cook sounds his breakfast call. Tradition has it that the mighty pause between night and day could dwarf the ego of even a chuck wagon cook. Feeling

that he alone walked the earth at this hushed hour, as close to his Maker as man would ever be, he might be moved to shout, "Roll out there, fellers, and here the little birdies sing their praises to God!" Or he might chant, "Arise and shine and give God the glory!"

Being what he was, though, with a reputation to be upheld, he would more than likely profane the matutinal stillness with a leather-lunged bellow, "Come an' git it 'fore I th'ow it in the crick!"

The bedrolls disgorge bleary-eyed cowboys who pull on the rest of their clothes in split seconds, build a cigarette and head sleepily for the wash basin or the creek, if the herd is camped on water. The cowboy on trail and roundup duty averaged less than six hours' sleep and this was broken by two hours' night guard. In the event of a stampede or a night drive there was no sleep for anyone. A cowboy once rode out on an outfit with the remark that a man could sure spend the night quick riding for that brand.

AS DOUBLE tiers of bunks in Colorado gold miners' cabins gave George Pullman his idea for inventing the pullman car, so the chuck wagon meal is said to have been the prototype of the cafeteria. Taking their eating tools from the chuckbox table, the cowboys help themselves from dutch ovens, skillets, molasses pitcher and coffee pot. They sit cross-legged about the fire, eating breakfast as it is meant to be eaten, with ravenous appetites and little talk.

Now from the distance comes the tinkling of a bell and the leisurely tramp of horses' hoofs, and out of the lifting shadows a dark mass moves upon the wagon. It is the saddle herd being brought in by the night wrangler. The cattle are motionless on their bedground, slowly circled by the two guards on cocktail shift.

Breakfast soon over, the cowboys shake out a smoke, drop their dishes into the roundup pan, roll and tie their beds. One of the trail hands fastens a rope to the end of the wagon tongue and stretches it taut. Another likewise with a rope from a hind wheel. Into the open end of the triangular corral whose base is the wagon the cavvy is herded by the nighthawk, who then takes hold of one of the ropes. The riders rope and saddle their mounts. Then the virgin breast of the prairie echoes to the machine-gun pounding of hoofs as the broncs pitch, kick, sunfish and pinwheel in mighty efforts to get those riders off their back—or perhaps it is because of sheer exuberance. No matter if they bucked like they had a bellyful of bedsprings, the horses had learned respect of a rope the hard way. The corral, made of a single rope, might as well have been built of cedar logs eight feet high.

There were other ways of building a rope corral. Stakes could be used in connection with the wagon. In New Mexico, a rope corral was sometimes formed by cowboys standing in a circle, each holding the end of a thirty-foot rope.

While all this commotion is taking place, the cook is washing dishes and stowing away his plunder. But Lord have mercy on the cowhand whose bucking horse tears through the cook's holy ground, knocking over his pots, kicking dust and gravel into the grub! That poor devil must do penance by dragging in more than his share of wood. Before he could hope to reinstate himself in the cook's good graces he might even be forced to offer his services with the dish towel.

The guards ride in and eat, and at daybreak the herd is moving slowly as it begins looking for grass. Two riders point the steers in the right direction without difficulty. They know the old trail herd axiom: Never let 'em know they're being driven, but never let 'em take one step back.

His cooking equipment carefully replaced, the cook wraps the quarter of beef in a tarp and lays it in the wagon, then begins to throw the bedrolls on top of it. Should the cook consider this menial task beneath the dignity of his profession, it was performed by the horse wrangler or by the cowhands, themselves. The same is true of his hooking up the four-mule chuck wagon team. A particularly lordly master of the mulligan would demand, not only that his team

be caught and hitched, but that the lines be handed up to him on the wagon seat. When the bedrolls are securely roped to the wagonbox, the bull chip cart is coupled to the end of the wagon.

A story is told of a religious cook—yes, a cow camp cook could be religious—who, on a quiet Sunday afternoon, was gathering buffalo chips when he saw a herd of antelopes watching him curiously from a nearby rise of ground. The vision of antelope steak sizzling in his skillets finally outweighed the severe teachings of his parents that it was sinful to shoot a firearm on the Sabbath. He got his old Henry rifle from the wagon and moving boldly within range of the pronghorns, which had not yet learned fear of man, brought one down. As he shouldered the dressed-out carcass, the cook saw a strange rider coming toward him—a stranger, yet vaguely familiar in the way he sat in the leather. Hurrying to the chip wagon, he concealed the evidence of his crime under the prairie coal. But when the rider proved to be a cowhand looking for a job, the cook's mighty oath broke the Sabbath a second time.

"I taken you for a circuit rider," he complained bitterly. "You ride jest like a Arkansas gospel slinger."

From then on, that cowboy's name was Parson. And if the antelope steak had an unusual flavor, no one was less enthusiastic over it. The cowboy had no reason to be disrespectful of buffalo or cow manure. Often it baked his bread and boiled his java: it was his poultice to draw out the poison of a thorn or a rattlesnake's fang. Verily, this was the day of the he-man.

THE wagon boss has gone ahead, to get the lay of the land and to search for a camping spot with wood and water. The two point riders are working a short distance behind the lead steers, keeping them pointed in the proper direction. Farther back, on each side of the herd, is a swing rider, riding far out to push back stray cattle, and a flank rider. Bringing up the rear, eating

the dust of plodding hoofs, are two drag riders. No one envies them their job of keeping slow or foot-sore cattle, and mothers with calves, in the march. Their hats are pulled down over stinging eyes and handkerchiefs cover their mouths, and when they cough the black dirt comes boiling from their throats. The trail hands take turns at riding drag.

The trail herd is some three-quarters of a mile long and fifty to seventy-five feet wide. It resembles a tawny-hided, many-horned dragon crawling across the empty land.

The remuda of eighty Texas mustangs, ten in each rider's string, is in the care of the day wrangler. He is only a kid, going up the trail for the first time. His work is easy, and he has plenty of time to admire this big, new country and to practice with his mouth harp on that piece the boys are all time humming, something about, "Git along little dogies, Wyomin's goin' to be your new home. . ." Sometimes the remuda was driven ahead of the cattle; at other times, when the outfit carried only a night wrangler, the horses went along with the cattle.

There were, of course, no rules as to each rider's exact position. Had there been, they would have been cheerfully broken. Trail herd equipment also varied. Some outfits carried only a chuck wagon; others had, in addition, a wood and bed wagon. There might rarely be a third wagon, called a calf wagon, for the transportation of newborn and sick calves. Usually, though, new-born calves were knocked in the head and left for the coyotes or given to some nester along the way. The cowboy made no distinction between the two.

"The main body of the herd trailed along behind the leaders like an army in loose marching order," writes Andy Adams in *Log of a Cowboy*. "There was no driving to do; the cattle moved of their own free will as in ordinary travel." According to most trail drivers' accounts, longhorns traveled from ten to twelve miles a day. Some trail men have stated that, by keeping the herd strictly in the direction of its destination, it could cover fifteen or twenty miles a day. During a dry drive, when the cattle must be kept on the move all night, the distance of a day's drive was doubled.

The cook pulls out beside the herd and cuts in ahead of the point riders. He must reach the camp site as far in advance of the herd as possible. The sun is warm, the rolling wheels make a pleasant sound, the sturdy mules strain forward in the traces, and sprawled on top of the bedrolls, the nighthawk is already asleep. Occasionally lifting his gaze to the horizon in search of the foreman, the cook pushes his team at a trot. In and out of washes dips the chuck wagon, rumbling across buffalo wallows and prairie dog towns. It has conquered flood and quicksand, and will not be stopped.

From a rise in the blue distance a rider slowly circles his horse. It is the foreman signaling the location of camp. The cook grunts. He sees no trees, which means no water. At the foot of the rise he unhitches and hobbles the mules and unbolts the chuckbox door. It is time to start dinner. He is not worried about the menu; it will be the same as breakfast: fried beef with thick gravy, sourdough biscuits, lick and coffee. Reaching for the dough keg, a reflective gleam touches the cook's somber eye. Well, now, it was kinda hot this mornin'. Maybe the boys would admire to have some canned tomatters. The nighthawk is roused from his dreams to start the fire. This done, he spreads his blanket in the shade of the wagon and resumes his sleep.

Of the nighthawk it was truly said, he swapped his bed for a lantern.

BY THE time the sun is straight up and the herd spread out over the graze, the cook yells, "Grub pile! Come a-runnin'!" The noon pause is brief. The cavvy is again driven into the rope corral, fresh mounts saddled, and the herd moves on up the trail.

For tonight's bedground the foreman has chosen a grassy swale near a willow-bordered creek. After setting up his pot-racks and putting a kettle of beans to boil, the cook has a couple of hours to himself. This is the time of day he looks forward to. Sitting against a wagon wheel, pulling reflectively on his pipe, he

lets his gaze wander over the boundless green.

That same kind of grass, back in Arkansas, might have a wild turkey nest in it, then he could give the boys eggs for breakfast. A patch of sand hill plum trees held his professional attention. Little early up here for plums to be ripe, he reckoned, but he rememberd last year one of the boys had ridden in with a shirttail full of big red plums, and he had built them into a cobbler they were still talking about.

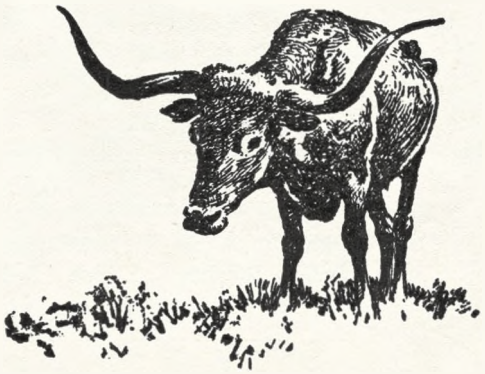
He had put the plums in water and cooked them until tender, then removed the seeds. Dough, rolled thin, was laid in the dutch oven. Two inches of plums in the oven, strips of dough crisscrossed over them, sprinkled with sugar and dusted with flour. He had repeated this until the oven was two-thirds full, then had rolled a thin top crust, slashing it with the outfit's brand and sprinkling with sugar. Then, pouring in enough water for it to make its own sauce, he had let the plum cobbler bake until the crust was a rich brown. That was plum cobbler with the hair left on!

His gaze drifted around to the wall of green overhanging the creek. He'd bet there were some big old cats in there. He had half a notion to get his fishline, cut a willow pole and catch a mud-cat for the boys' supper. But he spread his blanket in the shade of the wagon and went to sleep, rising once in a while to replenish the fire and keep the pot of beans simmering.

There would come times when this happy interlude would be denied the cook. He would climb down from the seat bone-weary from fighting the wagon across a swollen or quick-sandy creek. Rains would soak him to his tough hide and he would be forced to cook with wet wood or to build his fire under the fly stretched over the chuckbox and staked to the ground. High prairie winds blowing smoke in his eyes and sand in his grub would cause him to use language that was not parlor-broke. And before the last campfire was built on this drive he would shiver from the sting of wind-blasted snow and his fingers would become numb in the sourdough. Many a time he would be tempted to throw his flour-sack apron in the fire and get the hell away from here back to Texas. But he never would.

If the herd was to be sold at Abilene or some other railroad point, most of the men accompanied the cattle to Kansas City on the train. Returning to the shipping point, the outfit started on the long ride to home range. Often a northern rancher would buy a trail herd at Dodge or Ogallala, hire the riders, invite the cook to join his outfit, and continue the drive. When the destination was Wyoming or Montana, each man decided for himself whether he would remain in this bunch grass country or follow the boss, remuda, chuck wagon and perhaps a good lead steer, back to Texas.

Sometimes the cook elected to stay up north and go out with the roundup crew. He had enough wages coming to bed and feed him through the winter in town. Or he might condescend to accept the job of ranch cook until spring roundup.



Hell on the hoof! More than 10,000,000 Texas longhorns like this one went up the trails between 1866 and 1890.

With the first tinge of green upon the hills, the roundup cook and his flunky began to ready the chuck wagon. They hammered out the dents in pots, pans and dutch ovens, scrubbing them, the sourdough keg and chuckbox with sand and wood ashes. The blacksmith carefully checked the wagon, tightening loose bolts and tires, replacing cracked bows and spokes. Now the mouth-watering fragrance of roasting coffee hung on the spring air, as the cook stirred panfuls of Arbuckles in his oven. And he made up his sourdough.

Let Ramon Adams, in *Western Words*, describe this all-important operation. Into the wooden keg, holding about five gallons, the cook put three or four quarts of flour, adding salt and just enough water to make a medium-thick batter. The keg was then placed in the sun for several days to ferment the batter. Sometimes a little vinegar or molasses was added to hasten fermentation. The first batch of batter was merely to season the keg. After the fermentation was well started the batter was poured out and the keg filled with new batter. Each day it was put in the sun and each night wrapped in blankets, to keep the batter warm and working. Some cooks even slept with their kegs.

After several days of this treatment, the dough was ready to use. From then to the end of the season the keg was never cleaned out. Every time the cook took out enough dough for a meal, he put back enough flour, salt and water to replace it. In this way, he always had plenty of dough working. When making up his bread, he simply added enough flour and water to this batter to make a medium-stiff dough.

WHEN Rattlesnake Smith, who used to cook for the Hashknife outfit, went on roundup one spring he made the terrible discovery that his bread pan had been left at the ranch. He refused to cook. The foreman ordered him to mix his dough in the water bucket or top of the flour sack. But when the foreman went to feed the work team in the feed box attached to the hind end of the wagon, he made a discovery. Rattlesnake had mixed the bread in the feed box. Next day a new bread pan came out from the ranch, and with it a new cook.

From distant ranges the saddle stock was rounded up and brought to the home ranch. Broncs were broken to the saddle, and other preparations made for the spring roundup. About the first of May the wagon was ready to roll. The pilot rode in the lead, the chuck wagon was next, the cook holding the ribbons over four spooky horses. Then came the bed, or hoodlum, wagon, driven by the nighthawk, and possibly a third wagon which carried wood and water, driven by the swamper. Behind the last wagon, the wrangler herded the remuda of some two hundred horses. Flanking the whole outfit were anywere from a dozen to twenty riders. Horses in each rider's string would vary from six to fifteen, probably half of them being kept in pasture for alternate weeks, to recuperate from cuts, bruises, sprains, etc. of roundup work.

The cook's duties on roundup were the same as on trail drive: to feed hungry cowpunchers three times a day. Reaching the campsite selected by the pilot, he and his flunky set up the potracks and began to prepare the noon meal. Before long, hearing a shrill and distant whoop, he would look up from his work table, to see a small bunch of cattle break from the mouth of a coulee, two fast-riding cowboys on their tails. The cattle were brought on to the bunch ground about half a mile from the wagon, which was the spot chosen by the boss for holding the herd to be gathered on today's roundup circle. Soon other herds or bunches of cattle, some small, some large, would come pouring in from every direction—all to be thrown into one bunch on the bunch ground.

Smiling to himself, the cook bent again to his labors. Not so long ago—well, not so very long ago—he was pounding leather like that. Could handle a rope, too. Being a cook hadn't changed him. Cows were in his blood.

After the noon meal, the calves and mavericks were dragged, bawling, to the fire, branded and ear-marked. There might be mountain oysters for supper. With a nostalgic gleam in his eye, the cook watched the cutting and rope horses at work. The cattle which the

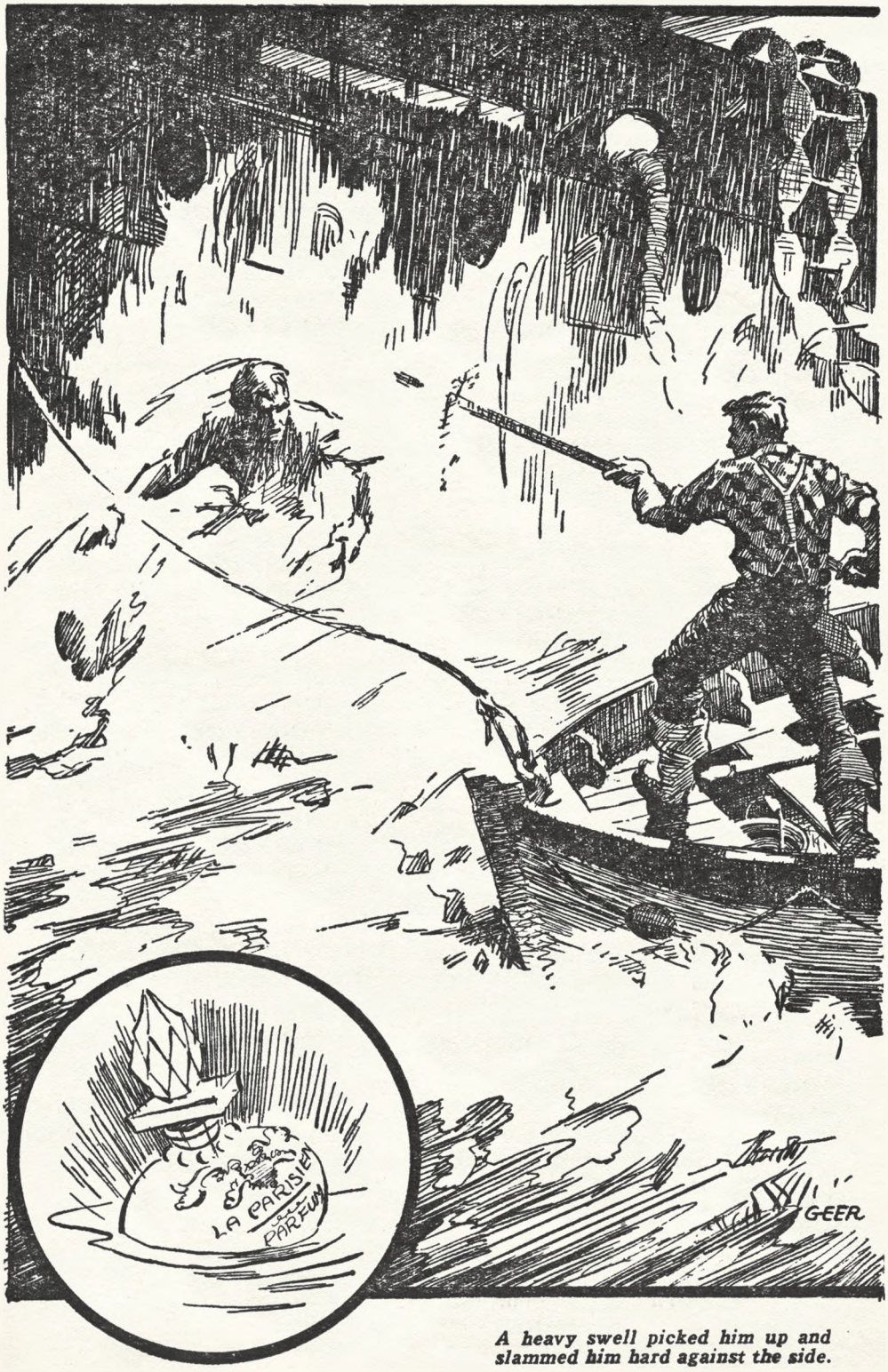
outfit wished to hold, either to ship to market or put in pastures or shift to another part of the range, were cut out from the main bunch and held in the day herd. This day herd was moved along from one bunch ground to the next and guarded in the same manner as trail herds. As the country grew up, the day herd was often held in a corral, or in an abandoned field under fence built by a nester who had learned too late that the grass was right-side-up in the first place. The cutting out and branding completed, and the main body of the herd allowed to drift back on their range, the weary, dusty riders headed for the wagon and an evening of fun.

In the old days, when several cow outfits joined operations, chuck wagon cooks vied with one another, each eager to uphold the honor of his brand. Intense rivalry would produce such delicacies as peach pies baked in a Dutch oven, sweetened tomatoes thickened with cold sourdough bread, rice and raisins, or son-of-a-gun-in-a-sack, which was dried apples or apricots rolled in dough, sewed in a sack, and hung in a kettle on a potrack to steam.

A cook called "Overslope" because the upper parts of his ears had become frozen and dropped off, thus reminding the boys of the earmark, "Over slope both ears," figured he would make a prune pie to end all prune pies. But racing to be first at the camping spot and being an even more reckless driver than most range cooks, he overturned both the team and the wagon in a creek. "Hell, you oughta see the mess down there," a rider reported to his range boss. "Beds wet, grub soaked, prunes floatin' round in the crick swelled up big as baseballs."

There was, of course, son-of-a-gun stew. This standby of the range cook was made of the liver, heart, sweet breads, marrow guts and brains of a fresh-killed beef. All, except the brains, were cut into fine pieces and put in a pot to stew. When the meat was done, the brains were stewed in a separate pan and thickened with flour, then added to the stew along with salt and plenty of pepper. Cowboys used to say that a son-of-a-gun-stew was made of everything a calf had but the horns, hoofs, hide and holler. The cook would stoutly defend his dish, explaining that it would taste even better if it didn't rhyme so naturally with hitch.

Chuck wagons have become relegated to rodeo parades and to lending an atmosphere of the Old West to outdoor dinners at dude ranches, Chamber of Commerce activities and other social functions. Needless to say, no cow camp cook would be able to recognize the grub served as being chuck wagon grub. But in isolated parts of the western cattle range, inaccessible to rubber tires, inviolate to change, the chuck wagon still rolls and the cook, undoubtedly as cranky as tradition has painted him, still builds his sourdough bread and son-of-a-gun stew.



A heavy swell picked him up and slammed him hard against the side.

By SI PODOLIN

FABULOUS CARGO

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

IT WAS three-pants weather in the North Atlantic with a cold freshening breeze blowing out of the nor'-west. It bore with it the sharp smell of Arctic seas and snow and sent wind dogs scudding across the restless, endlessly heaving waters.

As the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* lay hove to, she rolled smartly in a trough, seeming strangely devoid of life without her engines driving her nose through the seas. All hands had piled out on deck, thinking the vessel had developed engine trouble, that some two-gallon greaser down below in the "foundry" had passed up a hot bearing. The men stamped their feet on the steel deck and swung their arms vigorously to keep the blood circulating freely through their bodies, all the while beefing vociferously at the fatherless son-of-a-seawitch who had turned them to on a day when even the doleful seagulls looked melancholy.

Captain Hosaiah Jones appeared on the after end of the boatdeck and raising a pair of high-powered binoculars, gazed out over the vessel's starboard quarter.

"Know what that is out there?" he bellowed, pointing a fat finger at a gray spot lying low in the water. All hands followed the finger with their eyes, but no one said anything.

"Answer, damn your black souls!" The Old Man had a foghorn voice and when he spoke it sounded as though he were shouting into the teeth of a gale. "Isn't there a sailorman among the lot of you?" he added, contemptuously. Making his way over to the boatdeck rail he propped one foot up on the second rung, his paunch making a straight line with his double chin.

"It's nothing but the blasted, godforsaken North Atantic," shouted the deck delegate, bitterly. "I ought to know. Didn't I inherit it from my old man to make a living in?" The deck delegate was also ship's chairman of the union on board the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski,* and there had been so many word battles between him and the skipper concerning overtime that it was a matter of routine for them to blast away angrily at one another when they spoke.

"That," continued Captain Hosaiah Jones, pausing to lend dramatic effect to his words, "is ambergris."

"He's got the whiskey horrors again," whispered Chips.

"There's enough there," added the captain, his sheer-lined paunch trembling like the forepeak of an unballasted ship, "to put us all on demurrage for the rest of our days."

"What's ambergris?" asked Chips, turning to the deck delegate.

"Whale vomit."

"Don't pull my leg."

"Yah, sure, from a sick whale."

"How come a whale yaws in his throat and makes stuff that's worth so much more than say a dog's?" Chips was a tall, powerfully built seaman with a bashed-in nose that gave him the formidable appearance of a brawler.

"Shh, I'm trying to listen to the Old Man." Shivering from the cold, the deck delegate buttoned up his collar.

"Millions of dollars," said the Old Man, turning his whiskey-reddened face up to the monochromatic sky like a prophet out of the Old Testament.

"What're your plans, Captain?" asked the deck delegate, suspiciously.

"Plans?" roared the Old Man. "Need I elucidate on that? Top number two booms and let's get the stuff into the hold."

"I mean, sir, where do we stand in this get-rich-quick proposition? Topping booms in a running sea ain't no picnic. And you don't think we'd ever collect overtime from the company for heaving that stuff aboard, do you?" A stringy-muscled horse-faced Down-Easter, the deck delegate took great pride in his native Yankee shrewdness.

"Bilge, man. I'm talking in seven figures and you give me an overtime beef. It's too big for that infinitesimal imagination of yours to grasp. It's monumental; it's colossal." The old man took his foot off the rail and began to swing his fat arms around like a jibsail come adrift.

"What I want to know," insisted Chips, pulling at the deck delegate's arm, "is whether it's really whale vomit."

"Sh," whispered the deck delegate, impatiently, "can't you see the old Shylock's trying to pull a fast one on us?"

"Millions," repeated the Old Man, rolling the word around in his mouth like good whiskey. "I'll divide the whole lot into whacks; two thirds for the officers and one third for the crew."

"That's very kind and Christian of you, sir," replied the deck delegate, sarcastically.

"You know what one third'd come to, you black-souled pirate?"

"Come off it, sir."

"I discovered the stuff."

"Then go ahead and take it aboard."

"You haggle over a fortune just as you would over overtime. You're penny wise and dollar foolish."

"Nevertheless, sir, if you want the stuff on board, you've got to talk terms. And what's more," continued the deck delegate, "now that you mentioned it, we want straight time for the watch on deck and time and a half for the watches below decks."

"You'll turn to when I command you to," bellowed the Old Man, his heavy, flaccid jowels quivering with rage.

"What'll you call the work, Captain?" asked the deck delegate, cunningly. "You going to get the mate to log it as safety of the ship? You had to heave to and

take the stuff on board on account of you couldn't navigate around it? There was only two thousand miles of ocean on each side."

"I'm master of this ship," spluttered the Old Man, his small pig-eyes all but popping from his head. "At sea there's no law but me, blast you. When a seagoing slob signs ship's articles, his rights as an American citizen go by the board. It was that way a hundred years ago and it's damn well the same now."

By this time all the ship's officers had come out on the boatdeck and Captain Hosaiah Jones called them together. After a short caucus he went back to the boatdeck rail and asked the deck delegate to name his terms.

"Equal whack for all hands, sir."

"Half for the officers and half for the crew," countered the old man.

"You're only ten officers," said the deck delegate, stubbornly, "and we're over twenty in the crew."

"No," bellowed the Old Man, losing his temper once more. Then addressing the rest of the sailors he shouted, "Why don't somebody else sing out?"

"We go down the line," yelled Chips, "a hundred percent with the deck delegate."

Clenching his fists the Old Man roared, "The stuff's drifting away, blast you. A fortune in dollars, you understand, drifting away."

For a moment the skipper's hysteria became contagious and several hands on the maindeck grew so excited it appeared as though they would go over the side and start swimming for the stuff.

"Stick to the overtime angle," whispered Chips, nudging the deck delegate. "That'll break him down."

"Turn to on those booms," shouted the Old Man.

"First, sir, we want it in writing," persisted the deck delegate. "It's got to say equal portions to all hands."

"Don't you trust your old shipmate?" asked the skipper, his voice suddenly taking on a plaintive, simpering note.

"No," yelled Chips.

"Batten down that hatch of yours," whispered the deck delegate. Turning back to the captain he said, "In writing, sir."

"I'm like a father to you," argued the Old Man, meekly. "Has anyone among you ever heard tell of Honest Captain Hosaiah Jones doing a shipmate out of a red cent?"

"Stow it, Captain, stow it," yelled Chips.

"In writing, sir," repeated the deck delegate, stubbornly.

Letting his shoulders slump dejectedly, the Old Man nodded his head in affirmation. Then, puffing like an exhausted bull moose, he dragged his obese body up the companionway ladder. But once on the bridge deck and out of sight of the crew his attitude of weariness and defeat suddenly fell way. Rushing into the office he made the purser sit down at the typewriter.

"Draw it up in very legalistic terms," he told him, "so nobody'll understand it." A cunning smile played across the Old Man's moonface and with his stumpy fingers he twirled his overhanging, bushy eyebrows until they made him appear like a corpulent, comic-opera version of Mephistopheles.

WHILE Captain Hosaiah Jones and the purser were drawing up the agreement, the deck department turned to, stretched the guys and got the topping lift chains out of the masthouse locker. But once they made the runners fast aloft and started heaving the booms up their troubles began. Each time the vessel rolled the booms strained sharply against the guys, bringing them as tight as banjo strings, threatening to carry everything over the side. However, when the bosun finally got them high enough to make the chains fast, he hastily switched the runners to the deck cleats and held the booms fast against the vessel's motion.

With number two booms topped, Captain Hosaiah Jones hauled the vessel about and lay her smartly alongside the ambergris, offering a fair lee to the men who would take the stuff on board. Now the problem was to get someone over the side so that they might make a sling fast to the ambergris. The *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* was light and high in the water, which added to the tremendous difficulty confronting the men. Finally the skipper gave the order to lower number one life-

boat. The deck delegate and Chips were in the boat and by means of several boat ropes, they made themselves secure between the ambergris and the ship's side. Leaning over, the deck delegate tried to make a sling fast to the stuff, but it was so slippery it slid out of his hands.

"Must be a couple hundred tons of it," he yelled up to the bridge.

"At twenty-one dollars an ounce," bellowed the Old Man, ecstatically. Rushing into his office, he sat down at the desk to figure out how much it would amount to. Being of a conservative turn of mind, the skipper used an even twenty dollars an ounce to work out the problem. As he rose from the desk to go back to the bridge, he glanced at the figures and gasped, reached over to his whiskey locker and poured himself a stiff shot.

Out on the wing of the bridge once more he wanted to express his exuberation, but all he could squeeze out of his parched throat was, "Millions."

Meanwhile down in the lifeboat Chips and the deck delegate, cursing roundly, struggled to get a sling around some of the ambergris.

"How come," asked Chips, dubiously, "if they make perfume out of this stuff, it stinks so bad?"

"That's just it," answered the deck delegate, "they make perfume from garbage, too, don't they?"

"Once I read somewhere that it takes tons of rose petals to make a little bit of real genuine French perfume."

"This stuff," said the deck delegate, shortening the sling he had made fast, "is the McCoy. I ought to know on account of I've been smuggling French perfume into the States for the past ten years. I've made a very deep study of the stuff, even its history. It was invented back in the Middle Ages when they had no plumbing. The Royal Chamberlain used to follow the king around day and night, pouring 'Insatiable' and 'Toujours L'Amour' over him."

After repeated unsuccessful efforts to get the rope sling to hold, the deck delegate yelled up to the bosun to throw down one of the rubber life suits that were still left on board the ship from the war. Donning this he waddled over the side of the lifeboat looking like a playful gorilla.

Putting a rolling hitch on a portion of the stuff, the sailor yelled to the fingerman to heave away. Up on deck the winches began to grind and as the ambergris rose from the sea all hands watched eagerly. But it got no further than the plimsoll mark when it came adrift again and hit the water with a disheartening whack. At the same time a heavy swell picked the deck delegate up on its crest, whirled him about and slammed him hard against the side. With the instinct of a good sailor, Chips grabbed the boathook and jammed it against the ship, lest the lifeboat crush his shipmate.

"It ain't no use," yelled the deck delegate, his teeth chattering from the cold, "we've got to take it up in chunks. Send down a couple of the cook's galley knives."

After the knives were lowered to the lifeboat, Chips got into another rubber suit and joined his shipmate in the water. Together they hacked off huge pieces of ambergris, putting them into a cargo net and sending them aloft to be stowed in number two lower hold. All day this went on, with another two seamen spelling the men in the water at intervals of fifteen minutes. Each time a man was relieved he was hauled to the deck more dead than alive, fed a cup of whiskey and hurried into the fiddley where the heat of the engines thawed him out.

AS THE day ended the temperature fell, but the sailors turned on the floodlights and continued despite the cold, getting the last of the stuff on board as day was breaking. Exhausted and shivering the sailors secured the booms once more and went into the messroom where Captain Hosaiah Jones was awaiting them with a half dozen bottles of whiskey.

"Well done, lads," he said, grinning ingratiatingly. "A better trick of sailorizing I've never seen."

The deck delegate's hands were so numb and swollen he could not hold a cup, and the purser poured the liquor directly from the bottle down his throat.

"It's the same old rub," complained the deck delegate, "we mule ourselves

to death and somebody else gets the lion's portion of the take."

"It's share and share alike now, isn't it?" said the Old Man. "You wouldn't want your old skipper to go into that water, would you? Be the death of me.". Shoving a bottle across the table, he added, "Go on and have another pull, lad, good for the morale."

"Probably end up with pneumonia," persisted the deck delegate.

"Here we go again," said the Old Man, literally spitting the words out of his mouth. "You're on easy street now. Amidst your new luxuries you'll soon forget what you've suffered; you'll forget your entire past, even if it was as black as a miner's."

"Luxuries be damned. All I see is a stinking ship's messroom, and that's all I'll even see in my life."

"Even with a quart of whiskey in your hand you don't have any imagination."

"Had one once," said the deck delegate, sadly. "Had a brand new, shiny one. That was before I was fourteen and had it sweated out of me working four on and four off, bell to bell for twenty-four bucks a month aboard steam schooners on the West Coast."

"Drink up, drink up," bellowed the Old Man, making an effort to change the subject of conversation. "You've not lived until you've had plenty of money. It's like being in another world." Quickly the Old Man took another drink; then he rose nervously from the table and glanced about the messroom at the tired, dirty, half-frozen seamen sitting about in a state of total exhaustion. Jerkily he took another swallow of whiskey, as though he found it necessary to keep reinforcing with alcohol the visions he was conjuring up. Suddenly he broke into a little jig step, holding his paunch in both hands as he danced.

"Life will be cozy and sweet, lads. Imagine Captain Hosaiah Jones making his fortune in his old age. Horse-cock-Mary-Ann! I'll get me a big house and a young housekeeper. Maybe I'll forget about the big house, eh? " He grinned lecherously.

"A car with a chauffeur. Then a sea voyage, first class on the *Queen Mary*. Lord love me, but I'll make those Limey gyppos hop." Again the Old Man broke into his little jig step, hummed a salty sea chanty as he disappeared into the passageway.

"Twenty-one dollars an ounce," muttered a Puerto Rican oiler. "We'll need a certified accountant to figure it out for us."

"I'm taking my dough," said the deck delegate, "and with an oar over my shoulder I'm going inland. When someone stops me and asks what I've got over my shoulder I'm going to swallow the anchor right then and there. I don't want no part of the sea, never."

"Me," said the Puerto Rican, "I'm going to retire and devote the rest of my life to organizing the peasants back home."

"All I want to know," interjected Chips, "is how come if they make perfume outa this junk it's got the whole ship smelling like a whale cemetery."

"I'd feel a lot better," continued the deck delegate, remorsefully, "if we'd collect our overtime. We're violating our union agreement, see? We're doing some light finking; that's what we're doing."

"Blow it outa your nose," yelled the bosun, drunkenly. "At twenty-one bucks an ounce we can contribute a cool ten grand to the union and never miss it."

"That's it," shouted Chips, jumping to his feet. "Let's make it another ten thousand."

"First," said the deck delegate, an expression of injured pride coming over his long horseface, "we've got to call a meeting and conduct everything in a democratic way, according to Robert's Rules of Order, see? I officially call the meeting to order, brothers."

After the deck delegate had been elected chairman and an AB recording secretary, the meeting got under way.

"Brothers," said a young messman, his face aglow with enthusiasm, "I make a motion we contribute twenty thousand dollars to the union."

Someone in the for'rd end of the messroom let go a loud gasp. Then the Puerto Rican oiler, rolling up his sleeves in a business-like fashion, took the deck.

"I want to amend that motion," he said, "with another ten thousand."

"Attaboy," called Chips, "pour it on."

Turning the chair over to the recording secretary, the deck delegate rose.

"I think," he said, "considering all the dough we're going to come by, we ought to make it a flat fifty grand."

"Sixty thousand," yelled the Puerto Rican.

"Ask for the deck," shouted the chairman. "They'll be no crossfire in this meeting."

"When we get sober," yelled the cook, who was standing out in the pantry by the hissing coffee urns, "we'll be sorry we gave away all this jack."

"Throw the belly-robber out," called Chips.

"Order," shouted the deck delegate. "Do I have to begin lowering the boom on a few of you guys?"

"The motion on the floor," said the oiler, after raising his hand, "is sixty thousand."

"I second the motion," yelled several AB's.

"All in favor?" asked the chairman.

"Aye," sang out all hands, the cook making his voice heard above the others.

"Contrary?"

Not a sound could be heard in the messroom. Only the engines below decks broke the silence as the huge reciprocating engines pounded out seventy revolutions per minute, methodically and rhythmically driving the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* through the seas.

WITH a ten degree southerly change in latitude there came a remarkable alteration in the weather; the seas moderated and a warm breeze swept from fore to aft along the vessel's decks. Down in number two hold there was likewise a change in the inherent vice of the odoriferous cargo, the effluvium growing so powerful that all hands were compelled to batten down their foc'sle and cabin ports. But despite all these precautions the insidious odor persisted in penetrating below decks to the galley, where the Sunday roast chicken took on characteristics remarkably like fertilizer.

The night of the fifth day from the estimated time of arrival found the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* riding in a calm sea; not even a creaking beam disturbed the blanket of peacefulness that lay over her. Suddenly out on the foredeck, a terrifying scream split the silence. It was so loud it made its way through the dogged-down doors and portholes. As the crew piled out on deck another scream pierced the night. Seeming to rise directly from the bowels of the vessel, it rolled out of number two ventilator and was amplified as though by an electric loudspeaker. Hurriedly the deck delegate, wearing nothing but his skivies, climbed to the mast-table and flashed a light into the ventilator. There, jammed fast, was Captain Hosaiah Jones.

"For the love of God," he groaned, "cut me loose."

"The lousy so-and-so," yelled Chips, joining his shipmate on the mast-table, "is stealing ambergris."

"I'm suffocating," bellowed the Old Man.

"Leave him rot there," growled Chips.

Finally, with a handybilly rigged to the crosstree, the sailors hauled the skipper out of the ventilator.

"Been inspecting cargo," said the Old Man, meekly. Then glancing sheepishly about the glowering crew members, he turned on his heel and hurried back midships.

"We've got to watch that old guy," said Chips.

"Don't trust no gold braid," muttered the oiler.

By now eight bells had struck and the men on the next watch went topside and below to the engine room, while the rest of the crew retired to their bunks. Once more the vessel grew dead silent; only the sibilant hissing of the sea could be heard riding along the ship's skin. Then, out of the infinity of stillness, there came a cautious creaking in the portside passageway and Chips tiptoed out of his foc'sle. Walking along the shadowed side of the deck, he made his way for'rd to number two hatch. Casting a hurried glance about him, he slipped into the escape hatch and climbed down the ladder into the hold. Once 'tween decks he waited breathlessly to make certain he had not been seen. Groping his way to the lower hold ladder his hand touched something warm and soft. Startled he jumped back.

"Whozzit?" he gasped, and flashed on his electric torch. There, beside the ladder, stood the Puerto Rican oiler. He had a huge chunk of ambergris over

his shoulder and he blinked like a frog in the brilliant beam of light.

"Shh," he cautioned.

"Shh, hell. What're you doing down here?"

"Same thing you're doing."

"I'm looking for gold braid."

"Nuts."

"Let's stop chewing the rag," said Chips, "and get some of this stuff stached away. Man, at twenty-one dollars an ounce that chunk you got there'd buy the *Queen Mary*."

As the two seamen stood in the darkness whispering there was a muffled scurry in the after part of the hatch. Chips threw the beam of his light into the far corner, where he caught a glimpse of the chief cook. The cook was a Calypso singing, West Indian Negro, and he had so great a load balanced on his head that his legs looked like parenthesis marks.

"It's the belly-robber," yelled the oiler, his voice echoing through the empty 'tween deck hold.

"Let's haul outa here before we smother," gasped Chips.

Up above they heard someone removing a corner of the tarpaulin. Chips flashed off his light and they stood by silently as a square of star-studded sky appeared above them. Several shadows glided silently into the hatch. Again Chips switched on his light, revealing the startled faces of the messman and a wiper.

"Everybody's down here," roared Chips, "but Admiral Land."

"All hands on deck," shouted the oiler. "We're going to have a tarpaulin muster."

There was a terrific rush from below and Chips and the oiler were swept forward to the escape hatch. Climbing up on deck they discovered that over half the crew had been down in the hold.

"Wouldn't mind," said Chips, dispiritedly, "if it was legitimate cargo that was being pilfered."

"We've got to post a guard," said the oiler.

"Who? There's not a Christian on board this stinkpot."

"What about the deck delegate? He's got nothing on his mind but union business."

"Tell you the truth," said Chips, awkwardly, "after pulling a trick like this I'm ashamed to face a guy like that."

Hopefully all hands went aft and piled into the deck delegate's foc'sle.

ADDRESSING the sleepy-eyed sailor the oiler said, "Everybody agrees that on account of you being the best union man aboard this ship, you're elected by acclamation to be official guard of the ambergris, see?"

As Chips stood by the deck delegate's bunk he noticed that the dead fish odor was particularly powerful in the foc'sle. Bending over he sniffed at the mattress.

"Maybe," he said, "I've got an oversensitive nose, but—"

"I accept the nomination," blurted out the deck delegate. Quickly he climbed out of his bunk.

Again Chips sniffed at the mattress, then with a wary finger he poked it. "It seems to me . . ."

"It's a good idea to have a guard," said the deck delegate, nervously glancing at Chips.

Once more Chips poked the mattress. It was soggy. Cautiously he took hold of its two ends and with a quick movement of his wrists dumped it on deck. Out rolled a huge chunk of ambergris. Then he emptied a chunk from the pillow case.

"Even you," said the oiler, dejectedly. *"Que mal sangre!"*

As all hands left the foc'sle, the deck delegate remained behind staring blankly at his bare feet. Abruptly he came to himself and hurried after his shipmates.

"Brothers," he pleaded, "I feel like a heel. You can put me on watch. I swear I'll guard the stuff like it was my own blood. You've got to trust me, brothers. It's the idea of all this dough that's turned my head."

No one answered the sailor and when all hands were seated in the messroom the air of suspicion augmented itself until the room literally became alive with it.

By the time the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* raised Ambrose Light all hands were so exhausted from the lack of sleep they barely had energy enough to come out on deck. When the pilot climbed on

board, he wrinkled his nose and said, "You have a death on board, Captain?"

"Sir," exclaimed the Old Man, pompously and alcoholically, "we've got the most valuable cargo in the history of American Flag vessels." Captain Hosaiah Jones swung his fat arms about expansively.

"It's difficult for me to see through the fumes," replied the pilot, peering out over the flying bridge dodger. "The wind's blowing from dead ahead. Where've you got the stuff?"

"Number two, sir. Tons of it."

"Perhaps," continued the pilot, "we ought to haul her about and go in sternwise."

"Nonsense, sir, you smell nothing but ambergris."

"What?" asked the pilot, glancing at the Old Man with a dubious expression on his windburnt, wrinkled face.

"Ambergris. We've struck it rich."

"Never heard tell of it in such great quantities."

"Sir," insisted the Old Man, "it is ambergris." But for the first time a note of doubt crept into his voice. Furtively he glanced over to the wing of the bridge, where the chief officer was standing. "Have you ever seen ambergris?" he whispered to the pilot.

"I have, sir." The pilot strolled out on the port wing to glance around the foremast at an oil barge that had hove into sight. "And I have also handled it," he added.

"Would you," ventured the Old Man, following hard on the pilot's heels, "climb down into number two hold and have a look-see?"

"That," answered the pilot, authoritatively, "is quite unnecessary. Ambergris is a sweet-smelling substance." Reaching into his pocket, he removed a handkerchief and wiped his smarting eyes.

"Oh, my God!" gasped the Old Man, and for several minutes he stood there rooted to the deck. When he was able to speak once more his voice had become meek and subdued. "May I ask you, sir," he whispered, "not to mention this to anyone on board? That little service would be worth a case of Scotch to me."

"Why should I mention it to anyone?" The pilot went up on the monkey island and let go a long blast on the ship's whistle. Up ahead the oil barge answered and at the same instant altered her course to the starboard.

It was already dark when the *S.S. Ignace Paderewski* made her last line fast to the Hoboken dock, and because of the late hour of arrival the usual crowd of port authorities and company officials was not there to greet her. In his office Captain Hosaiah Jones had already turned to on a second quart of whiskey; but, because the Old Man was a victory drinker, the alcohol did not affect him in his moments of defeat; nor did it in any way dispel his deep dejection.

How in the name of common sense could he explain the situation to the port captain? All holds were to be ready to load cargo by eight that morning. The company would never consent to pay for the unloading of number two hold. Where could he ever raise the money to hire barges and longshoremen for the job?

Still lost in thought, the Old Man went out to the bridge and paced nervously back and forth. It was a hard and fast law among shipping people that under no circumstances was a master to haul any cargo except that of the charter party.

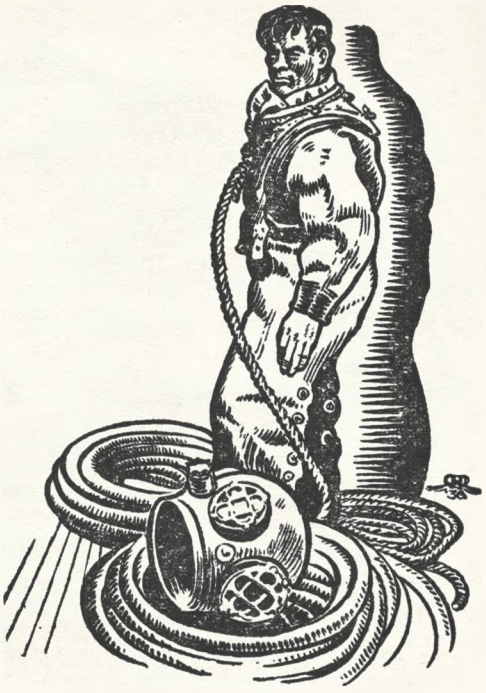
He'd get the sack as sure as day followed night. They'd blacklist him up and down both coasts.

Pausing for a moment the old man's attention was attracted by a movement down on the foredeck. Reaching over to the signal box he picked up his binoculars and trained them on number two escape hatch. In the semi-darkness he saw the deck delegate slip noiselessly out of the masthouse, glance about stealthily, then carry a heavy burden over to the offshore bulwark. Dropping his load on deck, he hurried back to the escape hatch. Meanwhile another sailor standing by the bulwark quickly rolled the stuff into a cargo net and lowered it over the side of a waiting boat. He had hardly gotten rid of the one load when another man came out of the masthouse.

Rubbing his fat hands together, the Old Man hastened delightedly back to his quarters.

"Thieving, black-souled dogs," he muttered. "They ought to have the hold empty by dawn."

THE TRAIL AHEAD



The motor cruiser *Arcturus* had put astern the deep and purple Gulf Stream. Now, steering her through the shallows of the treacherous Great Bahama Bank, Guy Wilcox began to wonder about the voyage—and the taciturn man to whom he'd chartered his craft. There was something wrong about this Señor Lorca and his friends. Cutthroats all, if Wilcox knew the breed, and he rather thought he did. "Just some extra hands I picked up in Port Matanzas to help in the diving operations," Lorca explained softly, but Wilcox wasn't satisfied. And he knew there was no reason he should have been the minute *Arcturus* hove alongside *Bernelle* off Little Arido Key. Marine biologists or friendly fishing parties never spray each other with machine-gun fire as soon as their craft nudge topsides unless there's more than specimens for an aquarium or trophies to be weighed and mounted above a mantel piece in the offing. A smashing new novelette next month of Caribbean adventure—

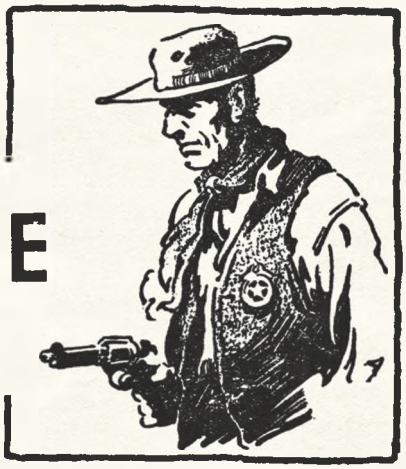
"MAROONED"

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

And F. R. Buckley brings back Caradosso to solve a little problem "Of Vice and Virtue" with his usual finesse—and the sharp point of his Toledo blade. . . . James Norman returns with Quinto of "He Who Rides the Tiger" in an exciting tale of turbulent China today—"The Honorable Missing Pyramid". . . . Hal G. Evarts gives us "Jackass"—an amusing Western story of a desert prospector who resisted the encroachments of civilization come hell, no water, the blandishments of a movie starlet and a literal windfall-fortune in king-size greenbacks. . . . A fine tale of the South Pacific submariners in the recent war by Alec Hudson. . . . "The Long Roll" by C. Hall Thompson, a stirring story of our Indian-fighting army in the days when U. S. Cavalry troopers charged across the plains against the kill-crazy Cheyenne to the thunder of drum-music. . . . An off-the-trail crime story—"Four Blind Men"—by Fredric Brown, who has just won the Society of Mystery Writers "Edgar" for the finest detective novel of the year. . . . An unusual article on the pistols and revolvers used by American fighting forces from Colonial days to the present, "Handguns of Glory" by Lieutenant Charles Edward Chapel, nationally known firearms expert and authority. . . . Plus a bulging overload of fact features, departments and outdoor information such as can be found each month only in—

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere



MARSHAL law in Texas.

Query:—I am seeking information on the subject of law enforcement in the old West—in particular as regards United States Marshals during the period 1850 to 1900.

Did a marshal's authority extend only to the territory to which he was assigned, or could he pursue a law-breaker anywhere, including crossing state or territory lines?

Could he bring that law-breaker back to the scene of his crime without permission from state officials?

Where did the authority of a county sheriff or state officer (such as Texas Ranger) leave off, and that of a federal officer begin?

Would a marshal concern himself with any sort of law-breaking, or only that pertaining to the federal government, such as Indian affairs and tampering with the mails?

Could a county sheriff or Texas Ranger arrest a federal marshal should the latter commit a crime in their territory?

Could a county or state officer call in a federal officer to assist him in a county or state affair?

Could a marshal appoint his own deputies, or must they have been appointed from Washington, D.C.?

In the territories, was a marshal's authority used more extensively than in states?

In Arizona and New Mexico Territories, how long were marshals the only law?

Did a marshal have a free hand in his territory, or was he restricted by higher authority?

Did he transport his prisoners to federal jails, or could he lodge them in county or city jails? Could he take them across county lines or state lines for this purpose?

—A. E. Conkling
Rt. 2, Box 135
Hemet, Calif.

Reply by J. W. Whiteaker:—In the early days a U. S. Marshal was the law in his territory and if help was needed, he could get the cooperation of other officers, soldiers, etc., in bringing the guilty person or persons to justice.

The authority of the U. S. Marshal was greater in federal affairs than that of local officers.

Today U. S. Marshals are appointed for a four-year period by the president and Senate for each U. S. Judicial District. The U. S. Marshal with his deputies enforces the statutes of the federal government in his district.

There are eighty-four District Courts in the U. S. proper.

In Texas (5th Circuit), there are four U. S. District Courts: North Texas District at Ft. Worth, U. S. Marshal, James R. Wright; Eastern Texas District, U. S. Marshal Stanford C. Stiles, Texarkana; Southern Texas District, U. S. Marshal, M. Frank Hammond, Houston; Western Texas District U.S. Marshal, Guy McNamara, San Antonio.

The Texas Rangers were divided into four companies and assigned to four different sections of the state. There were less than a hundred rangers to patrol the whole state. In recent years the rangers have been merged with the State Safety Patrol.

A U. S. Marshal is an officer of the U. S. District Court and can arrest any kind of law breaker in his district.

A sheriff or Texas Ranger could place a U. S. Marshal under arrest if he committed a crime in their territory.

If the county or state affair concerned the U. S. Courts the marshal could assist. A marshal's deputies are selected by the marshal after the district judge passes on their qualifications.

In the territories the marshal's authority was used more extensively than in the states for often he was the only one qualified for the work.

Marshals were usually the only law enforcers in the territories until the territories became states and the U. S. Courts were established. A marshal had a free hand in getting his man to prison where he was held until called for by the court. A prisoner of a U. S. Marshal could be placed in a county

or city jail until tried by a U. S. Court and then taken to a federal prison.

Boundary lines meant nothing to the old time marshals when they went after their man. They usually got him wherever he was.

BLOCKADERS of the Border.

Query:—What information can you give me on the United States Government Border Patrol?

—Claude E. Bartley
1st Lt. CMP
278th Military Police Company
Post of Corozal, C.Z.

Reply by Francis H. Bent:—The Border Patrol of the Immigration Service was organized in 1924. Before then a few "mounted watchmen," as they were called, were stationed along the Mexican Border to stop the entry of aliens. Formerly a part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Department of Labor, they are now under the Department of Justice. There is a high "esprit de corps," and they rank pretty well with the Royal Mounted Police of Canada and other élite forces. I would suggest that you write to the Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., for a list of their publications regarding the Border Patrol. You might also write to the Chief Librarian, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., for a bibliography on the subject.

Appointments are made from an eligible roster resulting from competitive examinations held under the supervision of the U. S. Civil Service Commission. If you are interested in an appointment, you might write the Secretary, U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington 25, D.C., and ask to have your name placed on the mailing list to be notified of any forthcoming examinations. To the best of my knowledge, there has been no such examination for quite some time.

An applicant for the position of Patrol Inspector (Border Patrol) must be a citizen of the U. S.; between 21 and 34 years old, inclusive; at least 5 feet 8 inches tall, without shoes; weigh at least 145 pounds; well proportioned as to height and weight; of active type; good muscular development; in good health and sound physical condition; pass a very rigid physical examination; show that, within 5 years immediately preceding closing date for receipt of application he was, for at least 1 year, actively and regularly engaged in outdoor activities requiring endurance, agility, vitality, alertness, and practical judgment; have at least 1 year of experience in driving a motor vehicle.

Acceptable outdoor experience is such as that of active member and director of athletic organizations sponsoring a systematic program of physical training; park ranger, forest ranger, city and state police; fireman having training programs; member of military or naval organizations who show they have actually engaged in a systematic program of outdoor activity.

The duties, as taken from an examination announcement, are: "The United States Immigration Border Patrol is a uniformed police organization, and its primary function is to detect and prevent the smuggling and the illegal entry of aliens into the United States. The work involves patroling along and in the vicinity of the international land boundaries by automobile, on horseback* or afoot, in search of aliens who have entered or who are attempting to enter the United States unlawfully. Patrol activities include the stopping for inspection purposes of various kinds of vehicles in which there is reason to believe aliens are being brought into the United States; boarding and searching freight and passenger trains, regularly at night, and frequently while the trains are in motion; watching from concealment at crossing places on the international boundaries suspected of being used by persons engaged in illegal activities; making extended camping details in desert or woods, during which the officers must rely entirely upon their own ability and resourcefulness for sustenance and shelter; observing the border from 85- or 100-foot observation towers; and in general investigating violations of the immigration laws. Border patrolmen must make numerous arrests, sometimes of dangerous criminals. Shooting affrays are not infrequent.

"The duties of the position are arduous, the hours irregular and long, and exposure to all kinds of climatic conditions is necessitated. There is much night work. The officers are subject to call 24 hours a day; they are occasionally detailed away from their official stations for days or weeks at a time; and transfers may be frequent. Numerous Border Patrol stations are located, of necessity, in small isolated communities, many of which are regarded as undesirable places in which to live."

In the first ten years of the Immigration Border Patrol, 18 Patrolmen were killed in the line of duty—so, you can see that it is far from a peaceful occupation.

One of the district directors has given the following description of the work of a Patrol Inspector: "The assignments of a Patrol Inspector are many and varied. One shift may find him watching the international boundary. Another will send him through the country away from the boundary line checking roads and trails for contraband aliens who may have evaded the watch on the border. Another will put him in the railroad yards searching freight trains. Another will keep him on the move between railroad and bus stations examining arriving and departing passengers. His assignment may then shift to checking highways for a suspected car; or to watching a landing field for a suspicious airplane; or perhaps he will be found with ragged clothes, hobnobbing with the habitués of a hobo camp or hangouts of the underworld. Or he may be making an official call upon peace officers or ranchmen or farmers or garage men or bus drivers or railroad men or

tourist camp operators; for every citizen is a potential immigration officer, but only after he has been properly coached; and even then this citizen 'immigration officer' must be constantly reminded of his status as such or he will grow lax in his part of the law enforcement."

(*Hapsburg Liebe sent us the other day a clipping from a Texas newspaper telling of the sale at auction of the last two horses in the stables of the Border Patrol. The corps is now completely mechanized! *Sic transit*—)

TO START a boys' camp.

Query:—This phase of camping may be slightly out of your line but perhaps you can give me some helpful information.

I am thinking of starting a summer camp for young boys between the ages of nine and twelve years. It will be necessary to start on a rather small scale at first, with accommodations for only twenty to twenty-five boys at one time. I plan to furnish various recreational facilities such as ponies to ride, classes in handcrafts, movies, hikes, etc. There are no facilities for swimming on the site at present but I can take them on swimming parties to a State Park not far away. The place I have is only about one-half mile from town where there are five physicians and a clinic.

What I want to know is this: What special requirements or regulations, if any, would have to be met in running such a camp?

Waddy F. McFall

Reply by Paul M. Fink:—Organized camping is just a little out of my line, but I may be able to give you a few hints, as well as where to find out what you want.

If you are starting with a few boys, and the idea of enlarging in the future, see that your site and other facilities are so located, particularly if anything of permanent nature is erected, recreation grounds prepared, etc., that you can expand.

Enough facilities will have to be provided, so that the smaller boys will still have some feeling of security and home, but not so many of these as to take away all sense of roughing it in the open.

Your water supply will have to be uncontaminated, and frequently tested. Check with the Health Department of the state in which the camp is located. Some states require almost daily sampling.

Have ample space in sleeping quarters, with only one boy to a bed.

For the number of boys mentioned, there should be a minimum staff of four, one of which should be qualified as Red Cross Senior Life Saver, and another certified in First Aid. There should be a dietician, or at least some one experienced in preparing balanced meals. One person could double in one or more of these requirements.

To determine the very best procedure, I'd suggest that you get in touch with the American Camping Association, which knows all the answers. Their address is 111 Broadway, New York City, N. Y. They have a Tennessee Valley Section, whose head is Henry Hart, 310 State Office Building, Nashville, Tenn. Harold Katz, 712 Union Ave., Nashville, is chairman of the Camping Standards Committee, so he might help a great deal. If these gentlemen do not have a list of special requirements for the particular area you have in mind, such as state regulations (if any), they can put you in touch with just the right source.

Good luck with your camp!

BETTER line flotation when fishing bass bugs.

Query:—What can I do to my line to make it float better when I am using bass bugs? Would a graphite dressing help? Is there any line dressing which is absolutely surefire?

If one wished to study stream insects with a view to tying more lifelike fly patterns, what book would you recommend for a guide? I am thinking of a field manual rather than a book of trout flies.

—Harold H. Bayliss
41 Orchard St.,
Pleasantville, N. Y.

Reply by John Alden Knight:—The question of how to keep a line on top of the water while fishing a bass bug is indeed a problem. We have solved it partially by using nylon lines. These have a specific gravity slightly lighter than water. But after a while they will take on a little water and no longer stay on the surface. They sink very slowly, however, even when wet, and for that reason they make the most satisfactory lines that can be found for the purpose.

I don't think that the variety of line dressing is particularly important so long as it has a mineral base. Don't use deer fat or any of the vegetable oils, as these induce oxidation and are apt to ruin the finish of your line. A satisfactory method for rendering a line water proof is to Simoniz it. Clean it thoroughly with kerosene and then apply regular Simon wax—the sort you use on your automobile. This should be polished on and allowed to set. Then the line dressing can be put on over the wax and your line will stay fairly waterproof. Because of the constant flexing of the line when in use, I don't think that there is any 100 per cent waterproofing.

There is no advantage in graphite except to make the line shoot through the guides more readily.

A very good book on aquatic insects is one of the Putnam's "Fieldbook" series called, "Field Book of Ponds and Streams." I believe that it retails at about $3.50.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure.*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask, Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, c/o *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure.*

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, Timberlane Farm, R 2—Box 364, Racine, Wis.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure.*

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign, wing shooting and field trials*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York, Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure.*

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure.*

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SURDEZ, c/o *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

★**Madagascar**—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o *Adventure.* **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Alto Tapajos, Rua Gaspar Viana 18, Belem, Para, Brazil.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Club Americano, Bolivar 31, Mexico, D.F.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F.R.G.S., General Delivery, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o *Adventure.*

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o *Adventure.* **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1321 E. Tijeras Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 297, Elko, Nev. **4** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **5** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, c/o *Arizona Stockman*, Arizona Title Bldg., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2093 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S.—*Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG, LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.* **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

(Continued from page 8)

kid named Hailou Gebrou, whose father was a gentlemanly graybeard known as the Kentiba Gebrou, president of the Imperial Ethiopian Senate. One afternoon the Kentiba asked me out to his home, with a son-in-law by a German girl he had wedded once, and handed me a thick sheaf of photostats and a letter in French, written by the son-in-law for Gebrou. The photostats were signed with the seal and thumbprint of Emperor Menelik, and covered a complete mineral concession to the area. The letter was authorization to deal for Gebrou with any company wanting to develop his territory.

Then Mussolini moved in. I got word that Hailou had been stood up against a stone wall and machine-gunned by the Italians because he worked for me. I lost touch with the Kentiba, who had been almost eighty when I met him last, and I tucked the sheaf of documents away.

Besides, the concession from old Menelik expired in 1945—and there didn't seem to be much time to work it up after Haile Selassie rode back into Addis.

So one afternoon I sold the original photostats to John Grierson, the documentary film expert, for $6 cash, on my assurance that it included the Mountains of the Moon, Ethiopian edition, and the Place Where the Elephants Go to Die.

The more I thought of it, the more I became interested in a story, hung on such an option. Finally I wrote it for *Adventure*.

After I had sweated through the yarn, hanging a major part of the plot development on the fact that the Ethiopian calendar is seven and a half years behind the one we use, I sat back to check over the story.

It was only when I had checked it, and was sure that my basis was sound, that the sudden dismaying thought stalked up on me. Suppose my wad of documents, that I thought expired in 1945, was based on the Ethiopian calendar? Then they'd be good until some time in the summer of 1952? And maybe Grierson, who is a canny Scot, would be able to make millions out of my mountains with years to work it out and sell it to a syndicate.

A little later I felt less concerned, because I had remembered two things: In the first place Grierson would have to locate an Amharic-speaking lawyer, to be sure his option was still good; and in the second place I have a large amount of Scottish blood myself. While I gave him the documents transferring the concession from the Emperor Menelik to the Kentiba Gebrou, and the plein-pouvoir transmitting the rights to handle it to me, I'd never given Grierson a further plein-pouvoir to pass my authority on to him.

So, in the meantime, until John Grierson can dig up an Amhara to find whether the option is still good, and can come to terms with me on a joint operation of the Kentiba Concession, I feel it is safe to assume that the story of Gera Kond Zeytan is fiction, and that none of the papers, nor of the characters, bear any resemblance to real documents or living people.

Besides, the concession described in the story was not given to the Kentiba Gebrou but to an entirely imaginary person known as the Likemakwas Chiffara Salodi. A Likemakwas, by Ethiopian custom, wears the same uniform into battle as the Negus. This confuses the enemy. There is no real Likemakwas Chiffara Salodi. The only real Likemakwas I ever knew was the Likemakwas Mangesha Oubi, with whom I got drunk one night, with a Japanese spy. This should confuse everybody.

FOUR new names to add this month to the muster roll of our Writers' Brigade. John Godey, whose "Warrior of Kirghiz" appears on page 40, is a native New Yorker and attended local schools and colleges. He has played semi-pro basketball, covered sports for metropolitan dailies, done book reviews and publicity for various motion picture companies. Did a twenty-six-month tour of duty with the Army, most of it in Texas. His fiction has appeared in *Good Housekeeping, American Mercury, Story, MacLean's* and elsewhere and two mystery novels, "The Gun and Mr. Smith" and "The Blue Hour" have been published by Doubleday.

Of "Warrior of Kirghiz" Mr. Godey says: "It is essentially a story of manners in terms of action; even the efforts and the regimentation of their Soviet masters have not been able to jolt the primitive tribesmen of the steppes out of strict adherence to their centuries-old customs and traditions."

WILMON MENARD, whose "Escape to Takura" is on page 54, introduces himself succintly thuswise on stepping up to the fire for the first time—

I have been around the world twice, by tramp steamer (before the war), and have been all through the isles where my "Takura" yarn is set. Lived in Tahiti for five years, making my voyages by copra schooner into Dangerous Isles, Marquesas and Gambier group. Am an expert goggle-fisherman, having learned the hard way in the shark-infested lagoons of Tahiti and Tuamotu (Dangerous Islands) group. Have spent considerable time in Malaya, Java, Bali, India, Central America, Europe and China.

Hollywood put me under contract in 1932, over at Universal Pictures, but I ran out on them to go back to Tahiti; MGM bought two of my yarns (prison stories),

one of which they produced in 1939, starring Walter Pidgeon. The other has not been produced as yet. Am about to adapt Herman Melville's "Typee" for an independent producer here in Hollywood. This has a Marquesas Islands setting, north of Tahiti, which I visited in 1937.

I was a correspondent during the war, in the Pacific, assigned to advance combat naval units. Saw much action, and participated in three invasions on D-day with Marines.

AND Dabney Otis Collins whose article about the Old West, "Pothooks Over the Plain," appears on page 114, writes as follows—

Like so many Westerners, I come from another part of the country—in my case, Alabama. I was born and raised on a cotton plantation in southern Alabama, about a hundred miles north of Mobile—really the Deep South. After taking a Master's in architecture at Alabama Polytechnic Institute (Auburn), I decided to see a little of the world. Had no money, so hoboed to Arizona. I spent a year in the West and in Old Mexico, working at whatever job turned up. When I left to enter the practice of architecture, I somehow had the feeling that I would be back. This happened sooner than I had planned. Just two years later, in Washington, D.C., I suffered a breakdown in health and the doctor shipped me to Denver. I've been out here ever since.

After I'd got back on my feet I worked as a ranch hand on a cattle ranch near Julesburg, Colorado, where I learned about cold weather and hard work. Then I set out to be a dry farmer on my own, an entirely different kind of farming than I'd been used to. The wind blew me out of business, and about this time I decided to become an advertising man. It proved to be a good hunch. I was soon able to get married and to enter an advertising agency, of which I am now vice-president. It's a busy life, but I've found spare time to write stories of the West I have seen and lived and read about, some 225 shorts and novelettes. I make a special point of never missing a rodeo that's anywhere near, and spend my vacations in old mining camps and ghost towns. There's plenty of the Old West still around, all a fellow has to do is look for it.

I have a modest collection of Old West guns, and through an advertisement I ran in Western Farm Life for old guns I bought a .36 caliber Navy Colt from an old-timer in Montana, who invited me to come up and have a visit. This I did, on my next vacation. He was batching it on his two-bit spread, and turned out to be quite a trout fisherman. I got the thrill of my life when he made sourdough biscuits, cowboy style, to go with those delicious broiled trout. Well, he was an old chuck wagon cook, had cooked for several big outfits, from Texas to Montana. It was from him I got my inspiration and much of the material for my chuck wagon article.

Along with the same mail that brought Mr. Collins' article to our desk came the following communication—

Dear Mr. White:

Someone told me that *Adventure* sometimes answers questions for writers who find themselves stalled, and I will certainly appreciate it if you will answer this one for me.

I am writing a story laid back in the Eighties, in the Southwest. My heroine is in a carriage being driven from the train to a farm. The carriage gets bogged to the hubs in the mud. The hero comes along in a wagon driving a team of oxen. It is necessary for me to tell how he gets her out.

Oxen are notoriously better in mud than horses, seldom bog. But can you hitch an ox to a carriage? The driver is already at work with a fence paling trying to pry the wheels loose. It's Texas mud, very sticky. Would the hero just help him pry, and leave it to the horse which is frail and old? I realize it isn't a bit like pulling a car out of the mud.

Please don't laugh at me. I really do need to know the answers.

—Joan Brevoort
16 West 74th Street
New York 23, N. Y.

We were, frankly, out on a limb. Sure we try to answer queries—for stalled writers or anyone else in a quandary. In fact we have a whole corps of experts on the staff of the magazine whose sole job is to do just that. But in this particular case we didn't quite know to which of our Western authorities to forward the letter. Then the happy thought! This man Collins seemed to know his stuff on the Old West. Just possibly—

And here's his gracious reply to the stalled writing lady—

Dear Miss Brevoort:

You problem of the bogged carriage has been passed along to me by the editor of *Adventure*. I hope I can help you out.

In the first place, you have one horse hitched to the carriage, whereas a carriage is a double-team vehicle. It has a tongue, on each side of which a horse is hitched to a singletree, which is connected with the doubletree, called whiffle tree in the West. Now, unless the carriage were very heavily loaded I don't believe it would sink hub-deep even in Texas mud. And if the carriage was in up to the hubs, the horses would be in to their bellies, utterly helpless. Best way probably is to have the carriage stuck

in a mud hole through which the horses have fought their way. I'm afraid that prying at the wheels with a fence rail would not do much good; neither would trying to turn the wheels. That carriage is stuck!

The hero comes along in a wagon driving an ox team, you say. Of course, he'll have to be off the road, in order to pass. But he wants to help. The first thing he does is unhitch the horses and half-lift them out of the mud, because they, too, are bogged. He may have two, or four oxen, depending on his load. Let's say, two. Although the ox is a much better mud-puller than a horse, he must have firm footing. So the hero leads his yoke of oxen into the road backing them up about even with the end of the carriage tongue. One end of the heavy chain by which the oxen pull the wagon is already fastened in the ring in the bottom-center of the ox bow. The other end is fastened around the whiffle tree and the hero drives the oxen which pull the wagon out of the mud hole. It would not be advisable to fasten the chain to the end of the tongue, since it might become broken. Also, fastening to the axles might send the carriage into the ditch. If the horses were hopelessly bogged, the hero could pull them and the carriage out at the same time by hooking the wagon chain around the tongue, if not long enough to reach the whiffle tree, and use four oxen. You'd get a lot of action here.

I trust that the above clears up the point that was worrying you. If not, please write me and I shall be happy to try again.

Yours very truly,
Dabney Otis Collins.

The only stipulation we made, when we passed Mr. Collins' reply along to Miss Brevoort was that she give us an opportunity to read her story when it was finished. We haven't heard from her yet and can't help wondering if that "carriage" may still be stuck in the Texas mud!

AND now, after the digression, the final addition who rounds out the quartet of newcomers to our contents page this month. Si Podolin, whose "Fabulous Cargo" appears on page 126, writes to say—

I am at present chief mate on the *Alcoa Pennant*. We are lying alongside *Dirty Dick*, a feeder ship anchored off Trinidad. There are two conveyor shoots pouring bauxite (aluminum ore) into one and three holds, raising a reddish, opaque cloud of dust that all but obscures the vessel. When you walk for'rd along the deck you've got to let go a fog blast or you'll run afoul of some sailor making his way through the bauxite cloud and coming aft on the fore-

deck. All portholes and doors are battened down tight and the temperature below decks is over one hundred and ten degrees. The bauxite cakes over your body—all hands walking about stripped to the waist—causing rivulets of perspiration to run down through the bauxite on your skin like streams of water eroding soil during a tropical storm.

We have just returned from Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, where we took on a partial load of bauxite. We put her down to twenty feet mean draft, and skidded down the Surinam River on our bottom, expecting to run aground at any moment.

. . . The ship's chow bell just rang and I'm going below for dinner, which consists of roast beef with a bauxite gravy; green beans with a bauxite sauce; spuds fried in deep bauxite; tomato salad with a bauxite dressing and ice cream à la bauxite.

But for me it's not so bad. Just the other day our chief engineer began to act a little strange. He did not appear for breakfast, lunch or dinner. We went into his quarters to see what had happened, and there we found him leaning over his washbasin panning away at a heap of bauxite.

"By God," he says, "I got three ounces of gold out of it yesterday and I expect to work up to four today!" There was a weird glow in the poor old fellow's eyes, one of those looks that remind one of the Bellevue psychopathic ward. I pitied him, for at the rate he was going he ought to qualify for a chief mate's ticket in short order.

With seagoing men, finding ambergris is of course tantamount to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. It is a stroke of luck that is finally going to lead to their quitting the sea. But it never happens and they end up at Snug Harbor, where they are all captains, even though they never sailed higher than an ordinary seaman.

WE THOUGHT Coleman Meyer's speedboat-racing yarn "Don't Live Too Long" on page 84 was a hell of an exciting story but after we read it we began to wonder about a technical point. The business of switching the drivers of a boat in the middle of a race bothered us so we wrote the author to make sure that he wasn't violating any racing rules or regulations for the sake of his story. Here's what he answered—

I based "Don't Live Too Long" on Indianapolis racing procedure since there is not, to my knowledge, any set of rules covering long distance *open* course events in the West for boats.

The last real scramble we had from "Channel City" which, in reality, could be either Sacramento or Stockton, Calif., was back about 1928 and nobody seems to remember what the rules were—if there were any.

Therefore I used the Indianapolis "500" for a precedent in the assumption that racing is racing wherever you find it, cars or boats. That like conditions would call for like rulings.

Indianapolis is a gruelling scrap, one that could conceivably exceed the physical resources of some given driver or—to set up a problem: you have a car running in first place for 400 miles and within grasping distance of $50,000. It is hot and the driver is taken ill. Therefore the car, mechanically perfect and a winner, would have to sit on the sidelines while a lesser car took the victory. But, at the "500" you simply pull in a good driver in another car, a slower car, or get one from the pits, switch and let your winning car go on to a win.

Indianapolis allows a driver to switch AT ANY TIME provided the driver is familiar with that same general type of car, even though he has not qualified that *particular* car.

The 1947 "500" furnished an example of that: Cliff Bergere and Herb (Ahdinger, I think his name was) were driving matching cars, Bergere driving splendidly and piling up lap money. Ahdinger running well back. Finally, somewhere around 200 miles Bergere threw a con rod and was towed in. They immediately flagged the other lad in, put Bergere in his seat and he eventually worked the car up to a good money place.

Source for the above is Fred Agabashian. Freddie is a long-time friend who lives just up the hill from me. He finished 9th at the "500" for 1947, ran in fifth place for a while and still took some money even though he was outed for 27 minutes for spindle trouble.

I can conceive of a boat race being run under like conditions, of a length and character that would call for similar rulings. As it happens, the majority of boat events are closed course or heat affairs of shorter duration and thus automatically preclude any value in the changing of pilots.

The 1940 edition of American Power Boat Association rule book which is, I believe, still current, disposes of it on Page #3 which states, in effect: ". . . These rulings shall apply except where special rulings covering some specific event shall supersede. . . ."

And superseding is a job that is up to the particular Race Committee charged with staging the event. If the event was of a type or nature that could perhaps exceed the physical ability of one driver to absorb the punishment of the distance such a ruling would be well in order.

We'll be mighty interested to hear any comments or divergence of opinion from anyone who has had racing experience and run into a similar situation. Mr. Meyer's point seems well taken and we're inclined to accept it but are open to argument on the con side.—K.S.W.

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 concerning 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 that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Edward C. Hobaugh, Jr., age 32, height 5'8", 145 lbs., dark hair, brown eyes, medium complexion with MUTT tattooed on one arm, please communicate with M. Ball, Mall Road, Ardentown, Delaware. Last heard that he was working for Fruehauf Trailer Co., Los Angeles, Calif.

I would like to locate Orin Thompson, last heard of working in Wyoming. His parents were Grace and Frank Thompson who, in 1944, lived at 1105 Stout St., Denver, Colorado. Also, I would like to find Nicholas Dusic who lived somewhere in New Jersey and who made paper flowers, lamp shades and gifts. Contact Byron Myrick, Rt. No. 4, Box 540, Visalia, Calif.

Anyone knowing W. C. Allen, age 23, weight around 240 lbs., ruddy complexion, works mostly as a truck driver, get in touch with E. V. Allen, Box 314, Hull, Liberty Co., Texas.

Please notify Roscoe J. Frye, 723 W. Mansfield, Spokane, Washington, for information concerning Albert Scott of Tulsa, Oklahoma, or Paul D. Fristo, of Spokane, Washington, both of whom I served with in the Marine Corps in the last war.

I would appreciate contacting any of the following men: Edward Henry Boudreau who used to work in the U.S. Forestry Office in Portland, Oregon, before the war. When last heard from, he was serving in the 29th Engineers stationed in Portland, Ore., in 1942. Clarence Blanchard was in the Merchant Marine and his last known home address was Seattle, Wash. He was on an oil tanker going overseas in 1943. Paul de Jerld was a soldier in Co. H of the 114th Infantry and last heard of at Fort Lewis, Washington, in 1942. Contact E. G. Sumner, 410 Montana Ave., Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

I would like to find my father, Ferdinand Elijah Wood, about 86 years old, of Scottish descent, and 5'6" tall. The last I heard, he was living in the neighborhood of Bellflower, California, or Maywood. Write Joseph Herschel Wood, 2048 Capitol Drive, San Pedro, Calif.

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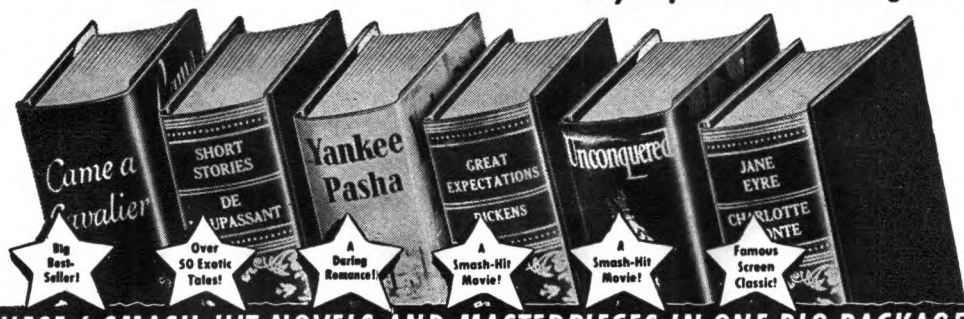

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