
25¢
JULY
Adventure
MAGAZINE
A POPULAR PUBLICATION
THE FINEST IN FICTION FOR MEN
THE DEATH HUNTER
by STEVE FRAZEE
PARIS WITHOUT SPRINGS!
THE GREAT NEW YORK-TO-PARIS AUTO RACE
by WALT WOESTMAN
NO STEP
IF YOU DON'T KNOW IT ALL
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ON NEARLY 100 TOPICS!

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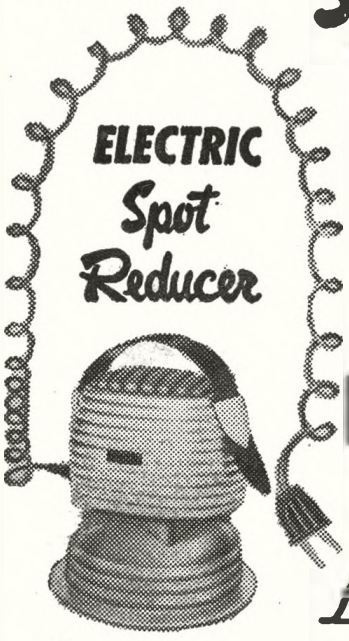

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FOR GREATEST BENEFIT IN REDUCING by massage use Spot REDUCER with or without electricity—Also used as an aid in the relief of pains for which massage is indicated.

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Take pounds off — keep slim and trim with Spot Reducer! Remarkable new invention which uses one of the most effective reducing methods employed by masseurs and Turkish baths—MASSAGE!

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With the SPOT REDUCER you can now enjoy the benefits of RELAXING, SOOTHING massage in the privacy of your own home! Simple to use—just plug in, grasp handle and apply over most any part of the body—stomach, hips, chest, neck, thighs, arms, buttocks, etc. The relaxing, soothing massage breaks down FATTY TISSUES, tones the muscles and flesh, and the increased awakened blood circulation carries away waste fat—helps you regain and keep a firmer and more GRACEFUL FIGURE!

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When you use the Spot Reducer, it's almost like having your own private masseur at home. It's fun reducing this way! It not only helps you reduce and keep slim—but also aids in the relief of those types of aches and pains—and tired nerves that can be helped by massage! The Spot Reducer is handsomely made of light weight aluminum and rubber and truly a beautiful invention you will be thankful you own. AC 110 volts. Underwriters laboratory approved.

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TRY THE SPOT REDUCER 10 DAYS FREE IN YOUR OWN HOME!

Mail this coupon with only $1 for your Spot Reducer on approval. Pay postman $8.95 plus delivery—or send $9.95 (full price) and we ship postage prepaid. Use it for ten days in your own home. Then if not delighted return Spot Reducer for full purchase price refund. Don't delay! You have nothing to lose—except ugly, embarrassing, undesirable pounds of FAT. MAIL COUPON now!

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Relax with electric Spot Reducer. See how soothing its gentle massage can be. Helps you sleep when massage can be of benefit.

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A handy helper for transient relief of discomforts that can be aided by gentle, relaxing massage.

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USED BY EXPERTS

Thousands have lost weight this way—in hips, abdomen, legs, arms, necks, buttocks, etc. The same method used by stage, screen and radio personalities and leading reducing salons. The Spot Reducer can be used in your spare time, in the privacy of your own room.

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- or
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$16.02 VALUE 18 TUNES!

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Undecided
Cold, Cold Heart
Because Of You
It's No Sin
Down Yonder
I Get Ideas
Slow Poke
Cry
Just One More Chance

Tell Me Why
Turn Back The Hands Of Time
The Little White Cloud That Cried
Charmaine
Anytime
Jealousy
Shrimp Boats
Be My Life's Companion

18 HILL BILLY HITS

It Is No Secret
May The Good Lord Bless and Keep You
Mr. Moon
Give Me More, More, More
Music Makin' Mama From Memphis
Baby We're Really In Love
I Wanna Play House With You
Hey, Good Lookin'

Alabama Jubilee
Let's Live a Little
Always Late
Cryin' Heart Blues
Cold, Cold Heart
Somebody's Been Beatin' My Time
Slow Poke
Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Way
Crazy Heart
Mom And Dad's Waltz

18 MOST LOVED HYMNS

The Lord's Prayer
Onward, Christian Soldiers
What a Friend We Have in Jesus
Church In The Wildwood
In The Garden
Faith Of Our Fathers
There Is Power In The Blood
Leaning On The Everlasting Arm
Since Jesus Came Into My Heart

Trust On Me
Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross
Softly And Tenderly
Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind
A Mighty Fortress
Sun Of My Soul
Just A Closer Walk With Thee
It Is No Secret What God Can Do
May The Good Lord Bless And Keep You

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Now, for the FIRST TIME—You can have the BRAND NEW ALL-TIME HITS and POPULAR RECORDINGS—18 NEWEST All-Time Hits, favorites in all—for the AMAZING, unbelievable LOW PRICE of only $2.98. That's right, 18 TOP SELECTIONS that if bought separately would cost up to $16.02 in stores, on separate records—YOURS by mail for only $2.98! Yes, you can now get 18 HIT PARADE songs—the LATEST, the NEWEST nation-wide POPULAR TUNES—or 18 of the most POPULAR HILL BILLY tunes—some of these tunes are not yet sold by stores—or you can get almost a whole complete album of your most wanted HYMNS. These are tunes you have always wanted. They will give you hours of pleasure. You can choose from THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS—on newest, most sensational BREAK-RESISTANT records! These amazing records are 6-IN-1 records— 6 songs to a record! They are brand new and play three times as many songs as regular records, and they play on regular 78 R.P.M. speed and fit all Type 78 R.P.M. standard phonograph and record players. These are all perfect, BREAK-RESISTANT, Vinylite records free from defects. RUSH YOUR ORDER for your favorite group NOW! ORDER ALL THREE GROUPS and SAVE even MORE MONEY, only $2.98 per group.

SUPPLY LIMITED. That's why we urge you to fill in and mail coupon now! Play these 18 selections ordered, use the NEW GIFT surface saving needle, for 10 days at home. If you are not delighted, if you don't feel these are the BEST SOUNDING records for the price, return within 10 days for FULL REFUND. Don't delay, send $2.98 in check or money order, or put three one dollar bills in the mail with this coupon and SAVE POSTAGE — DON'T DELAY, MAIL COUPON TODAY!

FREE!

If you RUSH YOUR ORDER NOW you get at NO EXTRA COST whatsoever a SURFACE SAVING NEEDLE! ORDER 18 Hit Parade Tunes or 18 Hill Billy Hits or 18 Most Loved Hymns or ORDER ALL THREE SETS FOR only $7.95. But, SUPPLY is LIMITED; so order at once. SEND COUPON TODAY. Order now on Money - Back Guarantee.

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THE CAMP-FIRE

WE MIGHT almost head off this *Camp-fire* with the observation that nothing burns brighter than an old flame.

It's hard to say just what we expected. A few brickbats, to be sure. Some kind words—perhaps. But we did have more than a suspicion when we wrote the March *Camp-fire*, asking for old time readers' comments, that the blaze was going to kick up pretty hot—and somewhere in the heart of it we hoped to catch a glimpse of the composite, elusive genius of the job itself, the job that is known as *Adventure*.

For it goes without saying that *Adventure* is more than its editors. Or even its publishers. It has outlasted several working generations of both, from its lusty, brawling beginning to the latter years that have a richness all their own that shows up in our constant mail—in the vigorous, demanding loyalties of a readership that has reached from a White House address to ships at sea, to wilderness cabin outposts, and foxholes around the world.

And that, in time, has spanned nearly one half of one hundred years.

No one, we felt—and now feel more than ever—had more to teach us than you. But judge for yourself—

Even before the first word is written I have the uneasy feeling that this letter is going to be too long. I am also morally

(Continued on page 8)

NOW, the pipe smoker's dream come true!

Every Pipeful Proves . . .

DR. PHILIP'S PIPE IS THE BEST!

The ideal pipe for the STEADY SMOKER, the NEW SMOKER and the man who doesn't like an ordinary pipe.

- NO BREAKING IN!
- READY-MADE CAKE!
- DOUBLE COOLING ACTION!
- CANNOT BURN THROUGH!
- FEATHER-WEIGHT!
- FLAT BASE, WILL NOT TIP!
- FINEST QUALITY IMPORTED BRIAR!
- INTERCHANGEABLE CERAMIC FILTER BOWLS!

This cross section shows the interchangeable inner ceramic bowl which burns tobacco dry, cool and clean. The bowl acts as a non-burning sponge that absorbs all of the tar and most of the nicotine. The metal radiator ring on top of the Dr. Philip's pipe is the only part that can get hot. It takes the heat from the ceramic and gives it off to the air FAST. The smoke circulates in the space between the inner bowl and the outer briar shell, becoming COOL before you draw it. Your tobacco cannot get wet because cotton or paper tissue packed in the space below the inner bowl absorbs all of the saliva and condensation. Rotate the ceramic bowls over and over again as you would a set of ordinary pipes. Dr. PHILIP'S pipe is EASY to CLEAN. There is no need to knock this pipe against any object to get out the ash. It does not form a cake. There is no need to rest the Dr. PHILIP'S pipe for cooling or drying. It has a constant capacity. The SHORT SMOKE MODEL will hold enough tobacco for a pleasure packed smoke of 15 to 25 minutes and the LONG SMOKE MODEL will last from 45 minutes to a full hour!

THE LONGER LASTING PIPE—YOU GET 4 EXTRA BOWLS!

SHORT SMOKE MODEL
Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS **only $4.50**

LONG SMOKE MODEL
Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS **only $5.50**

If not satisfied that this is the most amazing pipe you have ever owned, return within ten days and your money will be refunded!

QUALITY AGENCY
270 Park Avenue
New York 17, New York

Please send me postpaid.....DR. PHILIP'S pipe(s). I enclose $..... to cover the cost of the pipe(s) I have checked below.

☐ SHORT SMOKE MODEL including 4 EXTRA BOWLS @ $4.50
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(Sorry, no C.O.D.'s) 6-52

(Continued from page 6)

certain that it will be only one of many that you must wade through in the next few weeks. But the error was yours. Because when, in the March issue, you discussed reactivating the old Identification Cards and then asked for suggestions toward improving our magazine—brother, you left yourself wide open. Particularly when you specified that you wanted ideas from those of us who have watched our dreams flare and die in the embers of *Camp-fire* since the first chunk was laid.

Any suggestions for betterment must necessarily imply criticism and I want you to believe that it is offered in a friendly and constructive spirit. And as a beginning I think it is imperative to clarify the status of *Adventure* readers as differentiated from the followers of any other magazine. There is a difference. Those of us who have stuck for forty-one years—and I believe this applies equally to those with twenty or thirty hash marks on their sleeves—are definitely a breed to ourselves. I believe we are a fairly well-read crew. We catch the hard-cover novels, keep up with the news weeklies and, depending upon inclination, time and the state of our finances, we buy a dozen other magazines. But, regardless of our budget of the moment, *Adventure* is a *must*. It is one of our household *lares* and *penates*, a familiar and companionable spirit. Many of us can remember having foregone a meal in order to plunk down two-bits for the current issue. We did it without regret and we recall the act now without shame. Because the fare we received filled the void better than food, even back in those days when a quarter would buy a dinner. On the other hand, I doubt if any book has ever had a following as sharply critical and exacting as we who have toasted our feet at the Blaze. When it was good we gave it silent approval or a satisfied nod among ourselves. (Only too rarely did we say so to the editor). When it was below par we rose up on our hind legs and gave it undiluted hell. For us there was only one standard—perfection in entertainment and exactness in factual detail; and we demanded it as our right.

That loyalty can be attributed to two sources. Mainly it stemmed from one man and, through him, from the writers who made up his stable. The average reader of magazine fiction has little acquaintance with editors, or gives a hoot about them. Comparatively few can correctly place or remember George Horace Lorimer, the present day Ben Hibbs or the immortal Bob Davies. But to an old *Adventure* fan you don't even have to spell out the name. Just say A. S. H. and you will see a gleam of reminiscence flame in his eyes. The old hecoon of editors, the man who set the pace for *Adventure*, Arthur Sullivant Hoffman will always stand unique. With all due respect to the many men who have held the job since—and there have been some good ones—his place has never been filled.

I had no intention of making this an eulogy of ASH. I have never had the pleasure of meeting him; and that is my loss. But I wanted to point out the eminently successful *Adventure* of his time as a hint of what it needs today. Not Hoffman himself—no man is indispensable—but a revival of the kind of stories he chose. Stories with the heave and lift of the sea, the crackling cold of the Far North, the heart-tearing beauty of the South Seas and, above all, the brooding, hovering silence of the jungle gloom.

It is perfectly natural for *Adventure* readers to want stories with the feeling and mood of far places. Every man is a rover at heart. He dreams of "the long trail, the out trail, the trail that is always new." And he wants that trail to wind through a primitive setting. Even though his life is spent in the concrete canyons of Broadway, when he settles down to read and lose himself in his dream life his yearnings instinctively turn to the jungle that cradled his forebears. All of life and all of our literature are based on adventure; adventure and the jungle are one...and both are synonymous with *Adventure* at its best.

The reactivation of the Identification Cards seems to be an established fact now so that suggestion is useless. But I believe it would help if they were re-issued in metal. We of *Adventure* are not the type who relish membership in "Pen Pal" Clubs or similar promotional activities. We don't want a gaudy button for our lapels to show our allegiance, any more than we wanted or needed an outward symbol of our membership in the old T.T.T.'s or that first American Legion which bequeathed its name to the present Veteran's organization. But the Identification Cards served a real and often vital purpose and in addition there was an unobtrusive dignity that gave them a permanent place in our wallets. And if you want to foster that loyalty which exists among the old-timers, reserve the low numbers for us. I remember being distinctly envious one time when I discovered that a good friend of mine carried Card number either 13 or 15. I helped to bury him some ten or twelve years ago.

Comes now a subject which I should perhaps not touch, because I know nothing about it. But I have watched the reading habits of people for a lot of years and I do know what the regular crew of *Adventure* likes. It concerns the inside art work, both the title-page illustration and the various others strewn through the stories. I cannot make the comparisons I would like to because the oldest issue I have at hand is that of June 1, 1929 and it is sadly mulilated. But I suggest that you dig out that copy and look at the illustrations for Friel's story and those of Murray Leinster and T. S. Stribling. Now, jump to the Nov. '51 issue and note the pictures on pages 15, 23 and 27 of Wallace's yarn. Those are *Adventure* art work as we have known and liked it.

(Continued on page 103)

YOUR CHOICE OF TWO GREAT BOOKS

ALIEN LAND by Willard Savoy
(Published at $3.00)

Surging power, a tensely dramatic story that rises to a soaring climax, a theme which boldly attacks one of the greatest problems of today—these mark ALIEN LAND as a novel in every way out of the ordinary. It will make the name of Willard Savoy one to remember. Under Willard Savoy's sure hands, the story of Kern Roberts and his quest for wholeness moves forward with inexorable drive. Strong passions and scenes of violence mark its progress; it illuminates great wrongs and ancient hatreds. It is a book of anger and condemnation, as any work must be that deals honestly with the injustices of our world. It is also a book of compassion and hope; for Willard Savoy knows that for every man there can be some measure of fulfillment and happiness. You may regard ALIEN LAND as a fierce outcry against wrong; you may read it merely as a headlong story of shocking impact. Either way, you will find it a tremendous reading experience.

OR

THE BRIDE OF NEWGATE by John Dickson Carr
(Published at $3.00)

Dick Darwent, ex-fencing master, was waiting in a dark cell of Newgate Prison—waiting to be hanged. While Dick waited for the hangman, Lady Caroline Ross, rich, cold and beautiful, prepared a champagne breakfast to celebrate her marriage to him, a marriage which would cost her fifty pounds, and which would be ended an hour after it had begun.

But a shot through a bathroom window, where a lovely lady sat in a tub of milk—a riot in the opera, led by champion pugilists—a pistol duel at dawn—and a mysterious coachman, whose cloak was shiny with graveyard mold changed everything! As did Napoleon Bonaparte!

John Dickson Carr, a master of the detective novel, now proves himself to be a master of the historical novel in this thrilling story of London in 1815 and the gaudy characters that made up its world of fashion, and its underworld.

You can have either one of these books for only $1.00—over 60% less than the regular published price—by joining the MEN'S DOLLAR BOOK GUILD.

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Enclosed please find ($1.00 ☐) ($2.00 ☐). Please send me:

☐ ALIEN LAND (Published at $3.00)
☐ THE BRIDE OF NEWGATE (Published at $3.00)

This does not obligate me in any way to buy further books.

Name .....

Street and Number .....

City ..... Zone..... State.....

SOUL OF THE LEGION

By GEORGE C. APPELL

A Novelette of Crimson Sands

THE column was losing time getting away from the smoking Sahara trading village, and Major Dax stamped around in impatient circles while sunlight caught his spurs and sand sifted through the chains. He was an impatient man, Dax, and he liked things to go his way and not against him. He stopped his circling long enough to whip a glance at old Dr. Jouhaux, the contract surgeon, who in a sense was the reason for this irritating time-loss. He whipped his glance from the doctor, who was busy with the wounded colonel, to the stained and trampled sand around the village, then to the far smoke on the flickering horizon.

Lieutenant Catteau raised his glasses to his eyes and conned that far smoke, and the corners of his mouth came down until his thin moustaches described an inverted V.

"Our boast is that none of you shall reach Fort Flatters alive—it is a boast written in the blood of our slain. . . ."

"Bedouins, *mon Commandant*—the ones we chased off. They're cremating the prisoners alive."

He lowered his glasses, closed them and cased them.

"Too bad." The prisoners didn't bother Dax so much as the people who had been rescued from the besieged village and for whom he would be responsible until the column had fought its way back to Fort Flatters.

A small man, this Dax. A gray man whom no desert sun could redden for long. His restless eyes were ash-gray and his hair was agate-gray and there was a grayness within him that he discussed with no one because he alone recognized it for what it was—fear.

Lieutenant Catteau tucked his gauntlets under his left arm and took a cigarette from his leather case. "It looks like you'll be in command, if Dr. Jouhaux can't save the colonel."

"Yes." The knowing of that brought no elation to Dax, it only increased his fears. He was desk-soft and Paris-happy and he had only been down here in Algeria for a month. His tactics for the past two years had been executed in safety at St. Cyr, with a pointer and a blackboard. You always win, when you have a pointer and a blackboard and a classroom full of taut cadets. "May God damn the doctor's soul!"

Catteau smothered his surprise at the outburst by spouting smoke. "He may win, yet."

"We've lost too much time already."

The time had been lost because Dr. Jouhaux had had to open the colonel's abdomen to get the Bedouin lance tip out. He got it, but it wasn't going to be any good, and the doctor knew it and the colonel knew it and, now, Dax knew it. He had not expected to succeed to the command of this relief column, because it was beyond the realm of his thinking that a colonel of the legion could be killed in action. Lieutenants, yes. Captains, sometimes. But field grades!

A rat-gnaw of worry began within him, because without the rock-like presence of the colonel some of the confidence went out of Dax and left a miserable, piddling uncertainty in its place.

"Catteau, come with me. I've got to know."

They tramped past the head of the long column of standing camels and approached the waterproof operating sheet that the doctor had spread under a palm tree. There was a small fire for boiling the doctor's water, but it was guttering to white ash now, and the frail scarf of its smoke trailed low over the column.

The colonel was w r i t h i n g, but he wouldn't whimper. He had grown old in the service of France, but France had not been too generous with him. It had taken him forty-one years to get a regiment and now, in the snake-swift lick of a lance, he was about to lose it. The cropped mustache frosting the gunstock brown of his face seemed to droop, as if life were ebbing from the crisp hairs and leaving them faded, like withered grass.

He opened bloodshot eyes and regarded Major Dax, standing over him.

"No regrets, eh, *Commandant?*" He had to whisper, for there was little voice left in him. "Force the march all the way back to Flatters, Dax." The colonel was keeping his command function until the moment he died, despite his agony. "They—" he twitched his head in indication of the distant Bedouin smoke—"will make your life unpleasant, but I believe that you can get through. It's a good regiment." He closed his eyes. There wasn't much left for him to struggle against, after an hour on the operating sheet with white flame inside him. "A good regiment."

Dax knew that was a lie and Catteau knew it too, and so did the colonel. Catteau faced away from the operating sheet and looked at the regiment standing there—two hundred and eighty legionnaires, twenty of them double-mounted with twenty Europeans, male and female, who had lived in this village until the Bedouins surrounded it—two hundred and eighty men packing thirty rounds of ammunition each, and not another cartridge to be had for love or gold this side of the Wadi Draa.

One solid hour of riflery left in them—about nine thousand rounds. Put it that way and it's a lot, but say that recruit training is only half-completed and that the regiment is down to quarter-strength and that it averages but two expert marksmen per troop, and nothing lies between it and a messy death except knuckles and gun butts.

Dr. Jouhaux knelt, and the colonel

opened his eyes and smiled. It was not courage or a last fillip to the past that brought that smile, but the gnome-like image of the doctor with his beard in a bag. Jouhaux always said that he'd never take the field without his beard-bag, because it would require until retirement to comb the sand out of it if he wore it naked. Jouhaux started to place gentle hands to the colonel's wound, but death came in from the shadow of the palms in that instant. So the doctor rose and rolled down his sleeves and eyed the brass sun.

"You had best put a burial detail to work." He nodded sideways. "Bury him with the others over there, with those who died with him."

"Yes," Dax said. "Then we can move out."

He looked at the long column, frowning horribly. In its first fire-fight here at the village, the regiment had done well. It had first marched two hundred kilometers in twelve days, and when you consider that it had to follow winding ridge lines all the time, that is very good marching. Then it had relieved the besieged village and chased off four hundred Bedouins and lost only six men—seven now, with the colonel—in the doing of it. So far so good. But—and this was why Dax was frowning—it had attacked raggedly, with no held formations, and had conducted itself more in the manner of schoolboys than of disciplined soldiers.

And Bedouins always retreat when attacked anyway, and then reorganize to counter-attack. So chasing them off was not so much to the regiment's credit as it seemed.

The burial detail was finishing with the colonel's body, and the full weight of command hit Dax's shoulders and pressed them down. His fears rose. He was afraid, first, for himself, because he knew his own weaknesses; second, he was afraid of Legionnaire Prudhomme, who would kill him unless he killed Prudhomme first; and thirdly he was afraid of the Bedouins, who were now completing the cremation of the captured people. The horizon smoke was turning from oily brown to greasy gray.

Dax attempted a joke: "Very important roasts in that oven, eh?"

Catteau said nothing.

"That notary—the fat one they captured when he went to the well for more water, just before we arrived—he must have melted down to a fine pile of fat."

The precision of Catteau's schooling remained stubbornly untarnished, and he excused himself and walked to the column and took Judy's broad, rubbery nose and stroked it cautiously. Judy was a camel. She was Catteau's camel. He was highly respectful of her, though he did not love her, because no man in his right senses ever loves a camel. Camels are too much like mothers-in-law, or octopuses. They await their chance slumbrously; they will wait for weeks if need be, until the moment comes to strike—they strike swiftly, infected teeth blade-sharp.

Lt. Catteau rubbed his butt tenderly where Judy had nipped him the week before, at Fort Flatters. He told her, "My girl, you stink and you're evil, but by the good Lord, you can travel."

Judy peeled back her upper lip and squirted saliva, but Catteau ducked.

MAJOR DAX got the all-clear from the burial detail, and came with Dr. Jouhaux to the column. The doctor cut and lit a cigar, staring the length of the regiment, sensing some of Dax's fear and attempting to find it. He found it in Rene Prudhomme, who was perched loftily at the head of the Second Troop with one hand on hip and the other poising rifle on thigh. Handsome as sin, young Prudhomme, with flashing eyes and a graceful manner, which silently proved that his years at St. Cyr had not at public expense imposed a surface patina of manners upon a yokel. Prudhomme had been born a gentleman.

The doctor thought that it was too bad that he had been cashiered out of the Academy just before graduation, but those things happen. Cadets get kicked out, colonels get killed, lieutenants get bitten in the derriere. *C'est l'Legion d'Etrangeres.*

Then Dr. Jouhaux, taking his camel, Marie Antoinette, by the nose ring, saw Recamier, the American. Nobody knew Recamier's real name but himself and, of course, no one was asking. But everyone knew that he was an American, and came from some place with the impossible name of Shicageaux. The doctor liked Recamier because he once had finished a training

march without a whimper when his socks had long since melded with his broken blisters, and the doctor had had to cut the weave from the raw flesh, and pick the knots out with a hatpin dipped in brandy But there hadn't been a whimper.

The doctor could classify Recamier—and Prudhomme, too—far better than they could classify him

Men join the legion for a variety of reasons—hunger, coming winter, a woman, failure, theft, the bailiff's knock. Or from an instinct for suicide, a death wish latent in all men Whatever they join for, they get In Recamier's case it was security. Jouhaux could see a boy kicked around the slums of Shicageaux without the sustaining strength to hit back Malnutrition from birth, the doctor supposed So Recamier had joined a system and conformed to it gratefully

In Prudhomme's case it was revenge. He wasn't raw, there was no drink shadow in his eyes and his hands were not soft Nor had he come from prison, for his skin was healthy and his shoulders were high. The legionnaire now known as Prudhomme—the doctor had divined his real name, and Major Dax knew it anyway—had to be close to his quarry, Dax There might have been a chance to kill Dax during the chasing of the Bedouins from the village, but the regiment had attacked so loosely that several men would have seen the act And besides, Major Dax had been at the rear, to check on stragglers, he said.

The doctor started, suddenly aware that Dax was speaking to him "You ride near me, Jouhaux I'm posting a point and flankers, and a rear shielding screen. That will be the Second Troop"

The Second Troop was the one Prudhomme belonged to, and the rear guard, on the desert, is always the most vulnerable spot in any command Bedouins like to hit from behind, fraying the tail of a column snatching at its leavings.

The doctor asked. "Lieutenant Catteau commands the Second, doesn't he?"

"Yes" Dax smiled thinly "Perhaps it's a bit soon for his first command, he's only been out of St Cyr a year But with this officer shortage, what can you do?"

There were first lieutenants commanding squadrons in that regiment, and heavy handed sergeants commanding troops

The doctor pulled Marie Antoinette down to her knees by her nose ring and climbed aboard. She rose ungracefully, lifting him high above Dax.

"Let me see." Jouhaux didn't have to say this, but he did not particularly like Dax. "Lieutenant Catteau and that man Prudhomme—they were classmates at the Academy, no?"

Major Dax stiffened and his eyes seemed to shrink into his skull. He yanked his beast sharply down and swung a leg up. "I never discuss the personal affairs of my men, and I do not choose that my officers shall." He ordered his point, flankers and rear screen out.

You could smell the column as it stood there mounted and waiting The warm rancidity, the leather, the nitrogen of camels; the heavy sourness of men unbathed for twelve days now Had you been near the center you would have caught the faint scent of sandalwood and soap and verbena, for the women and their belongings rode in the center.

They were not, to a Frenchman's eyes, notably desirable women, because women who share their husbands' commercial existences on the Sahara do not hold such beauty as they might have possessed, nor do they acquire a beauty they were not born with But one there was who sat rigidly with old Sergeant Lejeune in his saddle, ignoring the greedy stares of the men.

She seemed disappointed to have been rescued, and the men were beginning to assume that she was *cafard*, sun-struck. She had been assigned to Lejeune's camel because the sergeant was the oldest man in the command, and presumably he would not molest her She was young—twenty, perhaps, and with taffy-colored hair tucked into a velvet toque Her divided riding skirt showed just enough silken leg to cause men to think fondly of the only profession that is older than the profession of arms Her name was Tania

Major Dax faced around and stared the length of his regiment The burial detail was securing its sand-bright spades in leather ring sockets; a breeze caught the cloth forks of the troop guidons and lifted them a moment, so that the major could see their insigne. He felt a pulsation of pride, but only for a moment. Then the fear returned and held him He was per-

spiring profusely, the knees of his soiled white breeches were yellow-damp and the armpits and front of his blue tunic were black. It wasn't the heat because the heat was dry; it was Dax himself, and the acid exhalation of his fears.

The point and flankers and rear screen were now in position.

Dax said to his aide, "We won't break trumpet silence until we reach the fort, and then we'll go in on the horn." It sounded gallant when spoken that way. Dax had heard the colonel say it, often.

Dr. Jouhaux was thinking, *This isn't a schoolroom out here, Dax, where you can fail, then erase the blackboard and start again.*

Major Dax was saying to his aide, "Here is the order of my march, and please circulate yourself and convey it to the commanders of the point and the rear screen. First and Second Squadrons leading, then the civilians riding with elements of the Third Squadron, then the Third and Fourth Squadrons." The regiment was down to two troops per squadron, and no troop numbered more than thirty-five men. Dax went on, "My rate of march will be eight kilometers today and twelve tomorrow. We will march ten hours a day on an azimuth of three fifty-four magnetic with a fifteen minute noon halt for cold rations and a ten minute housekeeping halt each hour." He was speaking with the memorized formality of an instructor. "This column is fifteen hundred meters long, which is very thin. In case of trouble"—he licked dry lips—"we will dismount and fight on foot, as infantry, with squad cameleers holding the beasts one-in-eight. This is Wednesday. I intend to raise Fort Flatters one week from Sunday."

Dr. Jouhaux was smiling to himself. *We will trot through the gates with trumpets blowing and guidons fluttering and the chapel bell will peal its praises to God, and everyone will get a medal except me. I don't like trinkets, and besides, I'm going to die soon anyway. . . .*

The doctor had known that for some time. He was listed on the rolls of the Legion as sixty-three, but he was seventy-nine. And he knew that he was going to die, which in a way was an advantage, because most men don't. He wondered, not when, but how? And an answer entered his head faintly and, surprisingly, frightened him.

Dax's aid, whom he did not yet merit in rank but perforce had inherited from the colonel, completed his conveyance of orders. The major lifted an arm and flung it forward and the column pulled itself into motion slowly, pulled itself together in one long slapping of hoof pads and creaking of leather; in one lengthy breath of sweat and flannel and gun oil and saddle soap.

The horizon was threateningly empty of smoke, which meant that the Bedouins were moving, too.

CHAPTER 2

LIEUTENANT CATTEAU had flung his thirty-two men in a wide arc across the drag of the column, deploying them in three echelons of ten men, ten men, and eleven men. Prudhomme he kept near him. The echelons were necessary in order to get depth in a country that seldom was flat but mostly hilly—slippery hummocks and ridges of sand that offered thousands of draws and wadis to any soft-stepping tribesmen who wished to set a concealed trap. The lieutenant, as he rode, maintained a pace that kept him stationed about five hundred meters from the tail of the column, but always in sight of it.

He glanced at Prudhomme and said, "He'll kill you if he can, Rene."

Prudhomme laughed softly. "Not if I kill him first."

"Will you?"

Rene Pruhomme shrugged. "He killed my girl, then killed my commission by getting me kicked out on a false charge of cheating." Fury swirled crimson in Prudhomme as he recalled it. "He killed her as surely as if he had thrown her from her window. He called at her pension in Paris, you remember, and he was drunk as a peasant. She was found at dawn on the cobblestones below, with a broken neck. It does not require an active imagination to see it—"

Something clicked through Lieutenant Catteau's head and he felt better all over. He thought, *Rene can do it and he will . . .*

Legionnaire Recamier called from his position on the right flank, *"En garde!"*

"What is it, Recamier?" Catteau swung his camel's neck around.

Recamier explained it in horrid French.

"A burnoose, I swear. They are closing in." Recamier smiled gaily, and his gun-blue jaws widened. He was squat and ugly, like a horned toad, but he had steady eyes and steady hands and he was very handy with weapons.

Catteau told him, "Keep moving." He could not risk a man to investigate, nor could he weaken an echelon by dividing it for a search. That's what the Bedouins wanted him to do.

The dying sun hammered the last of its heat onto the desert, and they plodded steadily in the wake of the column, keeping their heads moving and their eyes alert.

Occasionally they passed a sign of the column's existence—a crumpled kerchief, a cigar butt, a blackened match. Camel dung. They plodded on, grateful for the dusk that was settling like a purple veil over the lonely sand hills.

Recamier snaked a hand down to the ring-back release of his rifle, and pressed it. He did not like what he had seen, and he couldn't understand why the lieutenant hadn't done something about it. But Recamier's was not to question why, and if he lived through this hitch he'd go back to Chicago with some tales to spin, and the crowd at the poolroom had damned well better listen because the tales would be out of their dull lives. Recamier—once Jerry Leary of South Wabash Street—would go back to the Loop and spit full in the face of the town that had kicked him around. If he lived through this hitch. He wouldn't be rich—he only drew five francs every eight days—but by God he'd be famous.

Suddenly his knees tightened on the saddle skirting and he threw up his rifle instinctively, though he had no target. Then fear spattered over him like blown-out brains and he had to brace against it. He couldn't open his throat to shout, but he didn't have to.

Lieutenant Catteau was signaling the following echelons up closer and shaking his arm to the right—enemy sighted.

Recamier thought, *Here it comes. If my damned camel goes down, I'll never get back to Chicago unless I catch a free beast. If I'm hit, I'll be finished unless a pal ties me on. If I break, Catteau will shoot me like a dog. And if I'm a hero, nobody'll notice it anyway. Don't try too hard, Jerry....*

The enemy materialized as if from thin air. One moment the desert was empty, the next moment a file of them were sitting their mangy beasts on a ridgeline. Burnooses knotted to bearded chins. Lances held at the level. Muskets slung to backs. Bandoleers hanging from shoulder to knee.

It got the Second Troop in their stomachs, tightening their diaphragms, making them gasp, leaving them cold in the pores. And then the file of Bedouins heaved off the ridgeline and came in on fast and muted hoofs.

It is a nightmare at the time and there are few details, but later it comes back and stays with you forever. The screaming and the hoofbeats and the bell-muzzled muskets coming off shoulders. The lances lunging at you. The choking in your throat and the crash of a volley and a shot hitting into a man with the sound of a stick whipped into mud. And your rifle bucking hotly and slugging shots into flying burnooses, and toppling one of them so that it sinks like a bag of old laundry and bounces once. More burnooses rushing right at you, stinking of spice and camp-ash and bird chalk.

One of them thrashes over backward like a hoop, over and over, and screams out his life as his crushed lungs bubble up through the black craw of his mouth. You put one through his head. Then you come out of it, cold in shock and trembling in the joints, but the camels don't come out of it because they smell blood and they won't stop whirling. So you fight your nose rein and use your knees until you've got control, and you watch some burnooses peeling away into the dusk, graceful as eels, escaping. But it cost them; it cost them four down. And it cost you, too. One legionnaire has a lance through his stomach and out through his spine, and what's clinging to the lance tip, caught by it, reminds you of spareribs.

Lieutenant Catteau sent Prudhomme forward with a verbal report, then reformed his echelons and passed the empty camels up to Recamier on lead lines. The burial party worked fast. It was almost full dark now, about nine o'clock, and Prudhomme came loping back with an order to rejoin the column for the night.

Prudhomme whispered, "The major was sorry to see me still alive."

"You won't be for long if you continue to rise in your saddle to fire. The trick is to use the hump as a shield."

Major Dax was sitting in a camp chair with his boots crossed. He kept his aide busy, directing the layout of the bivouac, ordering cross-pickets to be rigged for the camels, so that the lines of jingling snaffles would be at right angles to each other; directing the night roster for heel-and-toe watches on perimeter guard. Dax permitted fires—there wasn't any sense in maintaining a dark camp because when the moon rose, even though it was nearly set in its last quarter, the night would be bright silver. Dax sent for Catteau.

"Lieutenant, I take it that you permitted yourself to be ambushed."

"No, *mon Commandant.* We were rushed, and we fended it."

"Rushed!" Dax jerked forward in the chair. His face was livid under its grayness. "You were ambushed!" Helpless rage broke his voice—rage at himself for his own inadequacies, self-shame in the knowledge that Catteau knew as much if not more about screening tactics than he did. The major tried to get up, but he couldn't. He had lost control of his muscles for a moment under the furious rush of blood through his veins. "Ambushed!" he repeated.

The breath coursed from Catteau's lungs in long gusts.

"Yes, *mon Commandant.*"

The orange wash of the fires threw back the first darkness, and there was humor in the men again. It is always that way after action has been joined. They stank of camels and of themselves, but they smelled good to one another and the picket lines smelled good and the night, for all its potential danger, was a shield that relieved their eyes at last from the deadly flare of the sun.

Prudhomme strolled over to where Recamier was squatting and said in English, "Nice shooting. You did well."

"Thanks pal, but there wasn't any choice."

"We're stuck with the tail until the end of the voyage, I guess."

Recamier, who loved a glass and a lass, shot spit at his feet and murmured, "Speakin' of—" His eyes wandered to the squarely-piled baggage of the civilians. The girl Tania was siting on a bedding roll, head high and held back, aloof and silent. "I can always hope, huh?"

PRUDHOMME was eyeing someone and was thinking and hoping, too. But his stare was for Dax, not Tania, and he was thinking how simple it would be to slip a knife into the major's kidneys, during the night, so that he would die horribly, in slow agony.

And Major Dax, too, was pondering his personal problems. He was considering the case of Rene Prudhomme, and the fact that that case must be closed forever, and soon. He had detested Prudhomme ever since they had first met at St. Cyr two years before, instructor and cadet, shrunken gray runt and cocky blond giant. Dax had nagged Prudhomme mercilessly, and when Prudhomme ignored it the major built up his hate to cold detestation. Then there had come a visit to Paris and a furtive tapping on the pension door where Prudhomme's girl lived; and through wine fumes a message that the major came from St. Cyr. But that damned girl—Dax shook his head now—hadn't wanted the major, even when he'd promised to make Prudhomme's graduation a certainty. She had sought the open window and tripped on the trellis.

Dax called his aide. "Put Prudhomme on the middle watch tonight." Bedouins worked best between midnight and four.

When he had slunk back from Paris, the major waited for his chance to falsify Prudhomme's final examination papers, accuse him of having copied the answers from a fellow cadet, and get him cashiered. Dax had never expected that Prudhomme would follow him into the legion, but he did—after tracing the identity of the visitor from the concierge of the pension.

Major Dax's aide, noting that Prudhomme would stand the middle watch, heard the major's sharp inshuck of breath and snapped around. Far to the south a pale yellow blossom of light lay along the horizon, drawn thinly across the dark miles in a flickering corona.

The aide said, "The village we just relieved, *mon Commandant.* They have put it to the torch."

Then Dax came right out of his chair in one frightened leap and stood staring at the silhouette of the Bedouin who was sitting a camel with stark and awesome dignity not fifty meters from the end of the picket, hard-angled and gaunt against that pale lumines-

cence from the south. There wasn't a sound except the smutting of fires and the chomping of roped beasts. Then the Bedouin spoke, using a combination of French and Berber, the patois of the Sahara: "This far have you come, but there is little distance left for you to go. Our boast is that none of you shall reach Fort Flatters alive. It is a boast written in the blood of our slain back at that village."

Dax had the school solution. "Get that man!" But no one moved.

The man swung a thin arm southward. "Behold that village now!" Then he shot his arm forward, fingers splayed, covering the entire bivouac. "Behold in your minds, then, what you will resemble before the moon sets!" And then he was gone. He melted from sight in the whip of his burnoose and the turn of his camel's neck, as mysteriously as he had come.

There was no pursuit—a groping chase through the night would have netted nothing but confusion and a divided camp strength.

As Lieutenant Catteau remembered it afterward, there was fear in the moments that followed. It wasn't the hot fire of gunfire and action, but the icy kind that crawls through your veins and benumbs your brain, so that momentarily you are helpless where you stand. No one in the bivouac moved for perhaps a full minute, until Major Dax sank into his chair and wiped off his damp forehead. Then everyone was moving and chattering and milling together, actuated by the herd instinct of self-protection en masse.

"The insolent son—" Dax whispered. The saying of it made him feel better. "Are not the outposts for the first watch posted? Get them posted!" His aide scurried away. He yelled at his orderly to fetch him a brandy on the double. His hands were shaking.

He switched his eyes across the firelight to where Lieutenant Catteau was talking to Prudhomme, and it was well for Catteau that Dax could not hear his words.

"You have been detailed to the middle watch. This is another of his ways."

"I'd like to have him in the middle of the watch with me."

And that was all, but it was enough. A pattern of understanding had been woven between those two and it would not unravel now.

Prudhomme didn't try to sleep that night, for there was no sleep in him. He watched the fires crumble to coals and he watched the ghostly shadows of the civilians turning into their tents for the night, and he shivered in his damp shirt.

He took the middle watch with Recamier as his partner, lying far aflank of the bivouac with the thin wafer of the quartering moon high and sharp above them. Desert birds chirped sleepily—or what sounded like desert birds—and Prudhomme snapped his fingers and drew Recamier's eye from thirty meters away. He could barely see Recamier, hunkered as he was in the sand.

He called behind his hand, "That is Bedouin talk, not birds. Alert!"

Recamier nodded. He was thinking of the girl, Tania. She was *cafard*, right enough. She had only sat and stared, speaking to no one, refusing food. She wanted to die, Sergeant Lejeune had muttered, and Recamier did not approve of that. Recamier thought, *If I could snap her out of it somehow, I might help her. Sure, she travels in officers' country, but there might be a chance—*" He whipped his head around toward a rustling in the sand, like the sound made by a snake's belly on grass.

Prudhomme was facing Recamier again, calling his name. The only answer he got was a faint whisper followed by a sandpaper noise, as if a fish's belly was being slit.

"Recamier!"

Screams shattered the night—Bedouins throwing their hate up from their diaphragms, tearing it through bearded lips. There were racing shadows and complete chaos and a clattering outburst of untrained firing. Camels plunged past where Recamier was and loped toward the bivouac with their riders yelling their lust to the night. The thin outpost line stared open-mouthed after them, as if the raid were part of a nightmare and had no connection with reality. The sentries had fired without sighting, and now they were wondering why they hadn't hit anything.

Prudhomme sprinted over to Recamier. The man's back had been laid open with a Bedouin blade from shoulders to buttocks, but he was still breathing. The sound of it was that of water gurgling through a sink drain.

Prudhomme lifted him and jogged with him back to the tangled fight at the bivouac.

A squadron commander—First Lieutenant Boury—was running toward the picket line, shouting for the elements to form on him and stand in a square. Suddenly the lieutenant found himself alone in the path of the Bedouin camel avalanche and he sprang for the head of the nearest beast as if he would throw it like a horse. A lance sank into his skull with the force of a steel pipe and his brains splashed stickily and blood jetted upward in flashing loops. The avalanche rumbled into the cross-picket and through it and around it, frightening the legion beasts into a lather of plunging and thrashing.

Half a dozen men were down with Boury, gray-skinned and filthy, their anger gone from them at last. The yelling seemed to stand still in the night air, leaving echoes that would be heard in dreams for years to come. The raiders were lashing themselves along the strung-out picket line like wind-driven dervishes from a shot-torn hell, hacking and slashing at snaffles. There was a livid moment of loud fury at one end where a platoon from the Third had formed to fire. And then the raiders were gone, taking a dozen camels with them and leaving as many broken legionnaires in their wake.

The wounded groveled with bloody fingers at the ruptured sands, dragging themselves in their agony, twitching and convulsing and vomiting. A civilian, an immense bearded man with staring eyes, fired at the retreating raiders and tore the lower jaw off a corporal from headquarters who was running to report. The corporal spun around awkwardly and sat down and tried to get his hands on his jaw, which was dangling and revolving like a pork chop on a string.

A man whose bowels were sagging into his breeches bellowed in deep animal agony, snagged a pistol to his head and fired. The pistol whipped from his hand in jerking recoil and he fell on it and lay still.

Major Dax came racing up with a revolver in one hand, shaking it as if he could conjure a target. He was holding his pants up with his other hand, and the braces were flapping behind his legs.

Everything seemed to stand still for a minute, as it had after the Bedouin had flung his boast at them. The moon-white night was full of faces and gabbling voices and rasping lungs; the smoke-laced air stank of burnt powder and camels and musty linen and the salt horror of fresh blood.

A woman was sobbing somewhere, and someone was pleading for a shot of laudanum.

Lieutenant Catteau put a securing party to work on the cut picket lines and ordered a quick nose count of both humans and animals.

He remarked to Dr. Jouhaux, "The Bedouins pay off fast."

But the doctor hardly heard him, for there was much work to be done in fulfillment of his contract with the legion. He bent to Recamier first.

Lieutenant Catteau was trying to tear a gun from the headquarters corporal's hands, tugging in a sort of dance step, his face furious. The corporal's lower jaw had fallen from its string and thick black blood was sopping out of his throat aperture and muffling the sickening pleas that were twanging from his partly shredded vocal cords.

Suddenly the corporal lashed up with a knee and caught Catteau in the crotch and, freed for an instant, blew the top of his head off.

Dax was clicking his revolver stupidly, unable to realize that it was unloaded. His aide handed him a clip of ammunition. Lieutenant Catteau continued taking his tally of the stricken.

The gabbling of frightened civilians provided an undertone for the crackling of roared-up fires, and half-trained legionnaires stood dumbly by, caught in an unspeakable shock that hung in the air like the echo of a beaten gong.

Lieutenant Catteau and Sergeant Lejeune and Prudhomme kicked them into motion and sent them to round up stray camels.

And then there was little left but Major Dax loading his revolver with unsteady fingers, and the girl Tania walking majestically past him to where Dr. Jouhaux was working over Recamier by the light of a sputtering reflector torch.

She asked, "Will he die?" It was the first time she had spoken since the relief of the village.

"*Ma petite,* in God's good time we all die. That is not spoken with sadness but with the knowledge that whoever we are,

whatever we do, we are merely nits sitting on a star."

CHAPTER 3

THE doctor was pondering what to do. The best he had in him was the jackknife-and-catgut ability to make Recamier's moments as comfortable as possible, whether they were his last on earth or not. He thought that if he could save the man's life, he might even contrive to save his own. Good soldiers don't die just because they're sick—a useful life is greater cause for pride than a useless death.

Tania knelt to Recamier. *"Comme' c'est va?"*

"Okay—sweetheart." For a dreary moment Recamier saw South Wabash Street with its disreputable buildings and odors of horse manure and stale beer and blown leaves. He saw the poolroom where he was planning to tell his tales, and he heard the gruff voice of Red Mike, the bartender: "Beat it, kid." But no one was waiting for Jerry Leary, no one would be there to greet him if he couldn't go home. He should have known enough not to follow the flag and the music of the band, but he had no regrets. If he went out, it would be like a legionnaire, paying for the security he had gained.

He was dying as a fighting man should die, with the blood creaming through his clenched teeth and his sticky hands on his wet bandoleer—not like a feeble old man in the back room of a boardinghouse with the rent overdue and the cops waiting with the city hearse for old Leary to die.

He opened his eyes and saw Tania bending to him, felt her lips on his sweaty cheek. Felt Dr. Jouhaux's firm fingers in the blade-split wound. Tania's lips felt better.

"Hi, sweetheart."

Tania whispered, " 'Allo, Shicageaux—"

Lieutenant Catteau came booting back from the re-rigged picket line and reported casualties to Major Dax.

Dax's nerves had been soothed by a double slug of issue brandy. "Splint the wounded to their saddles—they can still shoot. And Catteau—why was it that Prudhomme failed to give the alarm?"

Catteau's upper lip stiffened. "He was accomplishing the rescue of a wounded comrade."

"That is no excuse." Sly interest flew across the major's eyes. "This Prudhomme—he still lives?"

Catteau couldn't resist a small smile of triumph. "He still lives, and is unwounded."

The rough rasping of the doctor's bone-saw was harsh in the night. Catteau eyed the dying moon and judged that it would set within a week. He wondered where they all would be, then put wonderment from his mind because it wasn't healthy. *Moonlight isn't radiance, it's a state of mind, and beware of it. . . .* Lieutenant Catteau glanced toward Tania and Recamier, and was unable to understand why he knew jealousy.

The bone-saw ripped steadily on.

At four o'clock they moved out, glad to leave their soiled and desecrated camp behind. They rode through the heat of the day, lengthening the kilometers behind them, running them down ahead.

Lieutenant Catteau rode with Rene Prudhomme at the drag with the rear screening force, as before. They pointed in silence now and then to a dottle that had dropped from the column—a shaving cloth, a pepper mill, a scrap of bloody bandage. A whalebone corset stay, a well-chewed harness strap that Dr. Jouhaux had inserted into someone's mouth before cutting in. The label from a syrup bottle.

Prudhomme was saying, "I'll make the stinker fight if I have to—" when there came a shout from the left.

Catteau whipped up his glasses and screwed the lens for a look. What leapt into focus was a double rank of Bedouins sitting their scruffy camels on a high dune about two kilometers away. The lieutenant estimated that there were at least one hundred of them, or one-third of their remaining force. Where the others were he did not know, but he could guess. He guessed that they were preparing an elaborate trap somewhere ahead, while this group watched the quarry.

And that is all they did for three days—watch. It tore at the column's nerves.

Major Dax was glassy-eyed with temper, and kept sending his aide and his orderly on futile errands. He was clammy with fear, and he would not let Dr. Jouhaux leave him. Each night Prudhomme stood the middle watch on the center flank, and each dawning he came in alive. There

were no more night raids that week, because the Bedouins had enough camels for their dwindling numbers.

Dax had the sensation that both Prudhomme and the Bedouins were closing the distance more swiftly behind him, were conspiring to pile up against him and ride him down. He considered drawing up charges of treason against Prudhomme. He kept looking over his shoulder.

For three days the Bedouins watched, always keeping out of range. During that time the column slogged north in sullen apathy, all of the light talk and laughter beaten out of it. Faces were frozen in continual anger, and the non-coms were quick with the curse and the boot and the fist. There was nothing ahead but dread of the night and fear of the long tomorrow, and the legion went cold and silent under the treatment. There were quick fights, put down quickly with heavy fists. One such combatant approached Dr. Jouhaux with the sharply broken stump of a tooth in his gums where he'd been walloped with a half-empty bidon; and the doctor sat on the man's chest and drew out the stump with a Darmschere screw, which is meant for bullets.

North they trekked like a band of scarecrows, leaving their trail-stench behind. There was no jasmine in the center now, no sandalwood, no soap. Rene Prudhomme watched Major Dax and the major watched Prudhomme, and the tension between them tightened like a coiled spring. Their eyes followed each other eternally, and looked away when the eyes of the other turned. There was honed steel between them, held pointed for the thrust when the moment came.

The fourth day was two hours old when the trap smacked shut. It shut on the rear screen first—a tumbling of padded hoofs and a wild and coarse yelling and the clumping of bell-muzzled muskets. Prudhomme got off two shots and saw a burnoose streak past with crimson on it; and a mangy camel rocked free and lurched away, squealing.

A legion beast shrieked in bowel-torn agony and went down kicking; its rider tumbled off, dragging a green-white leg bone behind him, cursing soprano in the pain of a ripped-off calf muscle. The whiplashing of lances and the lashcracks of rifles met and swelled into one furious clatter of sound. The thundering rush of the Bedouins was so close that it was on them, against them, over them—a flashing brown sickle that was cutting everything clean before it. The echelons grouped up and fired for record and the sickle curled mightily, as if it had struck rocks, and splintered aside in a spume of sand.

It broke away and to the right and swung around again and came frantically back into the flaming wrath of the legion. The Bedouins, fifty of them, were raggedly bunched now, cut down in numbers. They were torn and bleeding and chopped apart, but they were screeching in anger and primitive hurt and they kept coming. They hurled themselves at the echelons and created a moment of red fury, of steel on flesh and bullets on bones and the wavering battle curses that have no accent, only a strange wolf-like ululation like the trumpeting of gutted camels.

Catteau took a lance cut through his leg and lost his breakfast in shock. Prudhomme felt a sharp tug at his sleeve and stared down at the burnt rip where a musket ball had gone through. He leaned off his saddle and jabbed with his rifle butt and felt it strike frontal bones and crush cartilage. He reversed, lowered and fired, and a flitting white shadow spun over onto a smashed face and shrank into the sand. Then Prudhomme was off his whirling beast and dodging through the fight to the legionnaire with the exposed leg bone, and was hauling him behind a dune. Then he was on his feet again with a reflex of thighs and a snap of muscles, and remounted. But the fight was over back here.

Something loud and confusing was happening ahead at the column—hoarse shouting and a woman's steam-high wail and the honking of a hit camel. A spatter of shots racketed flatly; then there was a sharp flurry of rifle fire punched through with answering musket shots. Then silence for the count of five. Then the whole thing over again—rifles and muskets barking at each other, this time louder.

CATTEAU, his teeth bared to the wind in pain, stabbed a finger northward. "Get up there—it's a double-envelopment! I'll follow in a moment!" He twirled the cylinder of his pistol with his thumb and it

whined loudly. Then he proceeded to plug shots into the Bedouin wounded. Their burnooses smoked when the slugs hit.

Prudhomme signaled the echelons to come up. "One man wounded behind that dune—leg scraped like a turkey bone!"

"I'll get him—you start!"

The column was in trouble, though Dax was being no help. He was pirouetting his camel and waving his saber, shouting unintelligibly and firing at the sky. In a painting for one of the classrooms at St. Cyr, he would have been a stirring figure.

But two of his three remaining squadron commanders were already dying—trying to unbutton their tunics, those belly wounds hurt—and the third was dead in his saddle, arms dangling limply. Two files of Bedouins were riding arrogantly down the flanks of the column, digging at them with musketry that whacked into animals and equipment with the sound of beaten rugs.

On someone's order—though not Dax's—the column lost headway and gradually commenced to turn, to curve back on itself and form a circle. And then Prudhomme came up with his echelons and they got in some stylish gunwork on the nearest Bedouin file and bled it, so that it buckled apart and fell away into mid-range. By the time Prudhomme had nursed his echelons into the circle, Lieutenant Catteau and the wounded legionnaire were there, and the leg-torn man was given to Dr. Jouhaux for some surgical roulette.

Far up the desert in the smoky heat lay the butchered remains of the point party, which had been jumped and rushed and blown out like the candles on a cake.

Quick as the strike of a match, Prudhomme sensed a chance to avoid being surrounded. "Why fight like infantry, Catteau? We're mounted troops! Our mission is to find them, fend them, and force them back! Infantry's mission is to fight where it stands!" He spoke his plan to Catteau, who passed it to Major Dax, who shook his head in the negative.

Catteau repeated the report to Prudhomme.

"He says no, it won't work, he can't risk it."

Dr. Jouhaux came over for a look at Catteau's wound. He pursed his lips and tugged thoughtfully at his beard-bag. If he could get at the leg now, he might save it, but if he had to wait, he would have to perform an amputation.

The doctor said, "Lie down here, Catteau, and put this strap between your teeth."

Prudhomme flung spit. "How does Dax know it won't work? He doesn't know an ambush from a rush!" He reloaded, and hitched his butt in his hot saddle.

Dax himself was trotting across the closed march circle, swishing his saber mightily and puffing heavily. The major's face was gaunt and drawn and he looked as if he would twang like a fiddlestring if he released his self-control.

"What the devil are you up to?"

Prudhomme was constrained—tight as a spring. He was taut in the muscles and there was a fanatical fire in his eyes as he measured Dax, and each of them was uncomfortably aware of the memory of the dead girl that lay between them.

Then Prudhomme licked sand-split lips and said quietly, "I'm going to free this column so that it can march again. If it stays here, it will wither and die."

The major's temper broke. "Lieutenant Catteau—this man is under arrest!"

Before anyone could move, Prudhomme raised his hand to his kepi and swept it off and in one continuous movement lashed it down across Dax's eyes and mouth and knocked him backward onto his elbows, momentarily stunned.

"You dirty little louse—if we both live, I'll rip off your insigne and take you apart with my hands, with no rank between us!" Prudhomme yanked himself around and blurted, "Doctor—assist Catteau to a sitting position. Lieutenant Catteau, please order the First and Second Squadrons to mount." And Prudhomme went forward and signaled the long, uneven line of the squadrons—mounted now—into the heavy-footed jolting advance that is known as The Charge.

The buckled file of the Bedouins who were milling at mid-range saw it coming, and they prepared to fall back. But the squadrons, without actually getting into them, kept them off-balance with a steady advance that pushed them back across a wadi, shoved them into the dunes, rolled up their resistance, and prevented them from reorganizing. There was some sharp firing and there was one short chase, and

the squadrons trotted over two score Bedouin dead.

Then Prudhomme remembered his timing, and that he must get back to the circle before it was struck by the other file of attackers. The Bedouins were getting cautious; they had been wasting ammunition and had no way of getting more for their muskets, and now they were saving their shots.

Prudhomme was tired suddenly, with the deep fatigue that follows all action. He brought his squadrons back and went to Catteau, who was splined and crutched; and breathed, "Name of God, get started."

"You forget that you're under arrest, Rene. And so am I."

"What's he going to do—pull our passes!" Prudhomme was refreshing himself with a cigarette. "Start, I tell you! They're off-balance now and it will take them three hours to get straightened out!"

Dr. Jouhaux finished packing his instruments. "I'll start 'em."

They thrust north again, and Dax never said a word of protest. The reins of command had slipped through his fingers and he apparently was content to leave them loose. The column plugged north in the shuffling stupor that is the inertia of near-exhaustion, when all will to resist anything is cut down to a whisper. They filed over the fenceless, flung-out meadows of the desert, and Catteau amused himself, in his agony, by recalling the colonel's parting words back at the village—*They will make your life unpleasant*. . . .

At nine o'clock the column circled into bivouac with eight people wounded—seven legionnaires and a civilian, and five more dead. Major Dax sat by himself with a brandy and a cigarette, withdrawn and aloof. Lieutenant Catteau passed the word to double the outguards, and to refrain from firing except at eyeball range, and to use no more water for washing. Catteau was one of the five remaining officers, there being only Dax, Dr. Jounaux, Dax's aide and two lieutenants from the Third Squadron, one of them wounded in the groin and mouthing licentiously about his lost trip to Oran.

Major Dax called the crutched Catteau to his chair—the major wouldn't move—and told him, "Since you seem to be assuming the command function of this column. I'll give you something else to worry about."

"Mon Commandant!"

Dax's smile was almost unctuous. "Send Prudhomme ahead alone to Fort Flatters for reinforcements. He can collect cooks, clerks, cantinieres. He leaves tonight. The moon is thin, and there shouldn't be much light."

First man off the pickle boat! Lieutenant Catteau looked as though the major had hit him. "But that is suicide!"

Dax leaned forward. "Damn your eyes! Must I spend my life arguing with lieutenants? Do as you're ordered."

Catteau sucked blood from the raw seams in his cracked lips, saluted and turned stiffly.

Prudhomme saw him coming and met him halfway. Prudhomme whispered, "Can you get the stinker's ear? I have a plan." Prudhomme drew Catteau farther away. "Did you notice the pattern of the attack today? They first hit the tail, then the front, then the flanks. *Bien.* Tomorrow—"

"Rene."

"A moment. Tomorrow, my plan takes effect. I foresee that they will hit with their greatest strength at the rear. Their military habits follow a pattern—what works once will work again. So before dawn tomorrow we will conceal ourselves in individual trenches and let the column start north. We can hide eight getaway camels in that wadi there, with three men to escape on each." The rear screen was down to twenty-four. "The enemy will hit the rear in force and—*wham!* We will be waiting for him! Surprise!" Prudhomme popped his fingers triumphantly. "When we have torn him apart, we can hustle north and rejoin the column."

"Rene, listen. Dax wants—" Catteau let the order drift off. He was warming up to Prudhomme's delaying tactic, and in it he saw a chance to save Prudhomme's life—or to extend it for a few hours. "Wait here, Rene."

Major Dax heard Catteau out. The major swigged off his brandy and nodded.

"Assuredly. This Prudhomme can command that delaying action—he's had some training in that sort of thing at St. Cyr, I believe—and you can attach yourself to the main column."

"But *mon Commandant*—"

"Enough! I have told you before that I will not argue. I cannot afford to risk los-

ing another officer, and besides, your wound unfits you for active command. And if Prudhomme is lucky enough to regain the column after his ambush, he can start for Fort Flatters, tomorrow night instead of tonight. And if he gets through to Flatters he'll be rewarded with a courtmartial for striking an officer. That is all, Catteau." And Dax rubbed his palms together.

Catteau thought, *All you need to be the perfect fighting man is a spear in your hand and a ring in your nose, you—*

THEY roared up the fires that night, but the warmth didn't seem to take. Everyone remained cold and silent and grumpy, held close by the bitterness that had settled into them. Mounted legionnaires are like camels in that they reflect the spirit of their rider, and if he is uneasy and uncertain of mind he transmits it through the reins. These reins had long since lain slack, and the rider had become a brandy-soaked lump of fear.

Rene Prudhomme was supervising a digging detail at the trenches that had been laid out fanwise around the rear of the column—or what would be the rear of it as it continued north in the morning. He kept talking to them, walking from man to man, familiarizing them with the sound of his voice, for he would command this position at dawn. And the men gave it back to him in hard work and small jokes.

He kept telling them, "We will become like the sand itself, and give them a shock their widows will hear." But even as he spoke he knew that the column had about one more fight left in it after this one, one more long chance to reach Fort Flatters. The core of the command was disciplined, but discipline isn't much good when you've dragged your men through a meat-chopper such as these had been through.

Prudhomme saw the exhaustion and anger and murder in those faces that were attempting jokes, and he realized that they were frayed to a point of herd-panic. Some of them giggled from time to time, insanely.

Dr. Jouhaux, sitting morosely by himself, faced squarely the spectre that had been haunting him for a long time—that his sands were running out, that it was almost time to go. He was now all that he ever would be in life, and from here on it was downhill to half-pay and lonely retirement and perhaps an occasional game of checkers with the local innkeeper. No woman waited for the doctor's footsteps, no child was his. A sudden twinge of conscience throbbed through him and made him remove his hand from his revolver butt, and a deep sense of guilt was in him.

Presently he strolled over to look at Recamier, who was face-down on a rubber sheet. The doctor wondered why a man like Recamier wanted to live, and the wondering of that gave him something of an answer for himself and what he imagined to be his own plaguings. He stuck a cigarette in Recamier's swollen lips, and lighted it for him.

And so the night went over to dawn, and in its ghostly paleness the column broke camp and writhed northward into a new day. It reminded Prudhomme, as he watched it go, of a wounded python wrenching its way into motion and leaving the clotted abomination of its nesting on the sands. The paleness wore itself down to daylight, and the stars went out and the desert became limned in gray lonesomeness.

The camel-holders in the wadi were holding shirts in their hands, preparing to smother warning grunts from the beasts. Then a Bedouin scout party rode toward the trenches where the lower end of the bivouoc had been; more appeared from the mists until they were spread across the width of the camp site and moving into it.

Presently they were close enough for the legionnaires to hear their nasal talk. Prudhomme fired in a signal to fire and the volley hit into them like a hay scythe and dismounted a round dozen. There were howls of rage and surprise. The next volley blasted them as they bunched up—the third volley swept like a hot saber and left thirty camels turning riderless and frenziedly. The fourth volley lashed into the backs of the retreating Bedouins, and the legionnaires scampered back to the wadi and caught up their camels and ran for it. The dawn air was frosty with gunsmoke and everybody felt fine. The Bedouins, low on ammunition and disorganized, hadn't fired a shot and they had lost sixty men.

Prudhomme's tiny command rejoined the marching column at seven o'clock and reported. Major Dax had no jubilance in him, though—it was incredible to the major, and

infuriating, that Prudhomme should still be alive.

He said, "Prepare to leave tonight for the fort, alone. You will organize a relief party and bring it back to us."

Prudhomme didn't bother to salute him, he merely walked away.

Twice before the midday halt, the reassembled Bedouins knifed into the tail of the column, leaving the legion camels with eyes rolling white, tugging at their reins and lashing hoofs at each other. Three more French graves scarred the desert, and Prudhomme had twenty-one men for duty. There were two more heavy raids in the afternoon that pumped the exposed flanks of the march and closed on the rear and battered it mercilessly, leaving Prudhomme with nine more dead and the remainder fighting their frantic beasts with blood-laced whips. Fort Flatters was still three more days away, but the column only had two more days left in it at best and one at worst, and everyone knew it except the camels, who didn't care. They trudged on, saddle girths steaming and whispering to the steady thrust of belly muscles and thighs.

The day thrashed in brilliant agony, then cooled to the death. The Bedouin boast could yet make itself good, if their bullets and determination held out.

The column camped that night with fourteen dead camels strewn for half a kilometer behind it, where the beasts had tumbled during the last raid of the day. The gagging hot stench of them came up on the south wind and caused one legionnaire to mutter that if you could bottle that stuff you could sell it to the Military Appropriations Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, for mouth wash.

Rene Prudhomme stood among the sleeping off-watch legionnaires, as if their presence there could rationalize the agony and turmoil in his mind and show him the way to reality. Dr. Jouhaux came slowly to him and stood a moment in silence.

Then the doctor shook his head and said, "Dax is insane. Sometimes he is lucid, but mostly not. Fear, and brandy, and this tension, have all combined to gnaw at his sanity like hungry rats." The doctor looked closely at Prudhomme. "Rene, do you believe in God?"

"I've never forced the question on myself. I suppose so."

"Well, a curious thing happened today. At the suggestion of old Iron Tail Lejeune, I put Tania on Lieutenant Catteau's camel so she could assist him with his splint. And do you know, the light is returning to her eyes, and she talks a bit more. After a week in hospital at Flatters, she'll be as good as new. By the way, Catteau will keep his leg, and Recanier will probably live. I rather imagine that one will need all his locomotive power in order to pursue her, and the other will require all of his backbone in order to stand up against his rival." The doctor smiled in his beard, warmed by the realization that the bond that is forged in the crucible of the legion is the last one that a man becomes aware of, and the last one he ever forgets.

Prudhomme said, "Dr. Jouhaux, you're a sly old rascal—but maybe I believe in God after all."

THERE was one more tactic left in Prudhomme, and if it didn't work, it wouldn't make any difference how many days were left in the column. It would rot apart and remain on the desert forever, a long, irregular stretch of bones and rags partially hidden by sifting sands.

First he asked Catteau to pass the word to Major Dax that he had already departed for Flatters to get reinforcements—as impossible a mission as it was mad. Then he rounded up the remnants of the first three squadrons, about one hundred men. He spoke quietly to the non-coms and told them what he wanted done, and how. The non-coms accepted his orders because they had no choice—this Prudhomme who had the lieutenant's ear was a devil, but a lucky devil. Luckier, at any rate, than either Catteau or Dax, the last two surviving officers. And he was taking up the slack on the reins of command and giving them direction and control.

Old Lejeune asked, "And you will command this action?"

"No, Major Dax will." Prudhomme winked.

With block and tackle and raw-rubbed hands they dragged the fourteen dead camels into a wide semi-circle around the tail of the camp, facing outward. Then they divided themselves into two sections and

hid them among the dunes, fifty of them under Lejeune flanking the left end of the semicircle of camels and fifty under Prudhomme flanking the right end. Hence they were poised like the blades of an open scissor with the bait in the middle. Prudhomme was still betting that the Bedouins' habits would follow a pattern, and that as before they would approach the rear of the camp at dawn, drawn to it by curiosity and greed.

When the black heights of the eastern sky were fading to a pearl hue and the slim fingernail of the setting moon was sinking in the west, Prudhomme went to Dax's blanket and pulled him out of it and slapped his mouth. He had been waiting for this moment for a year.

"Come on, you son—"

The image of a dead girl flickered between them for one instant, then was gone into eternity.

Dax started to sputter and kick, and Prudhomme got a grip on his windpipe and squeezed. As it was told afterward by the survivors of that march, the thing was comical though nobody understood it at the time—Dax twisting and thrashing and voiceless, being propelled across the camp like a helpless doll by Prudhomme. No one interfered, for one does not intrude upon the personal affairs of officers, and the column had come to think of Prudhomme as an officer and as a first-class fighting man. And the column despised Dax.

Rene sat on the major and held him face down in the grit until the column, with its single squadron escort, had moved out on Catteau's weak order; until it had drawn itself north again like a ragged band of imperishable shades. And then Prudhomme drew Dax up and propped him around and belted his jaws and rocked his head back.

"*Mon Commandant,* you have not lived like an officer, but by God you can die like one!" He was still gripping the major's throat, and the major was getting blue in the face. His eyes were completely empty as Rene looked into them, the light was gone forever.

Presently the Bedouins came padding up on their unkempt camels, closing cautiously to draw fire, to test the strength of this isolated position. But they drew no fire, and that was all the confirmation they needed that the dead camels were merely a decoy to delay them. So they came all the way in—the last hundred of them—and took aimed fire from both blades of the open scissor, and broke apart and fired wildly, then started back. About half of them made the break-through, with some going down on the way, catapulting off their hit camels and bracing themselves in the sand for a close fight with knives and lances.

Prudhomme blatted the order to mount, and pulled Dax up with him. He landed on a steel-cold saddle and started to boot the camel's ribs. The legion flowed from its dunes and started a long and noisy *chasse.* There were fights that exploded southward like strings of firecrackers—fights in the sand with clubbed rifles and lances and pistols, fights at the gallop with axes fending muskets and muskets swiping at sabers. A legionnaire was leaning far off his saddle to cut into a flapping burnoose, when he took a lance through the neck and cart-wheeled off and was kicked to pulp by following camels until his head hung loose like a knotted towel. The *chasse* broke into dozens of small actions that no one could hear clearly because of the overall detonations of weapons and voices and bleating beasts. There was no pattern or order to it, it was a crazy melee of racing shadows in the dawn. . . .

Dax, held cross-saddle of Prudhomme's plunging, rocking beast, was trying to get at his revolver when something hit his head with the sound of a kicked cigarbox and he was torn off the saddle and dumped onto the desert where he rolled over and over, like a hoop, until the lance shaft in his skull caught in the sand and held him there, grinning and dead.

The pursuit was stumbling over bodies, was trying to avoid them, was—finally—being slowed by them. And then there were no more bodies, only Bedouin camels loping free down the desert into the southern haze, and the *chasse* was over. Sergeant Lejeune rounded up the tatters of his command and ordered burial details for the legion dead only. The vultures that were already floating across the sky like scraps of charred paper could breakfast on the Bedouins.

Lejeune found Rene Prudhomme crumpled and broken in the torn sand, his blond

hair glued to his head by blood, the lower side of his face gone entirely and his chest a pulverized mess of rib ends and tunic buttons and bandoleer clasps.

He had been shot through and crushed, but he had got what he joined for. His revenge lay up the desert with the lance still piercing its skull, and Lejeune spat on it.

LIEUTENANT CATTEAU, splinted upright on Judy's saddle with Tania clinging to the back cinching, brought the column into Fort Flatters on the horn and turned the civilians over to the padre and reported the legion to the elderly major who had come down from Sidi-bel-Abbes to take temporary command. There were one hundred and twenty-three legionnaires left, twenty-eight of them wounded.

The chapel bell started tolling, and Dr. Jouhaux slipped into his quarters and shut the door. He drew his revolver with a numb hand and closed his mouth over the cold muzzle, just to see if he could resist it. He could and he did; and he unloaded the revolver and tore off his beard bag and scratched the tangled hairs in comfort. He wasn't going to die—not for a while, anyway—for he still had a contract with the legion. Greater, he had a contract with his soul, and that contract was the bond that would always exist between him and the souls of the men who lay under the sands.

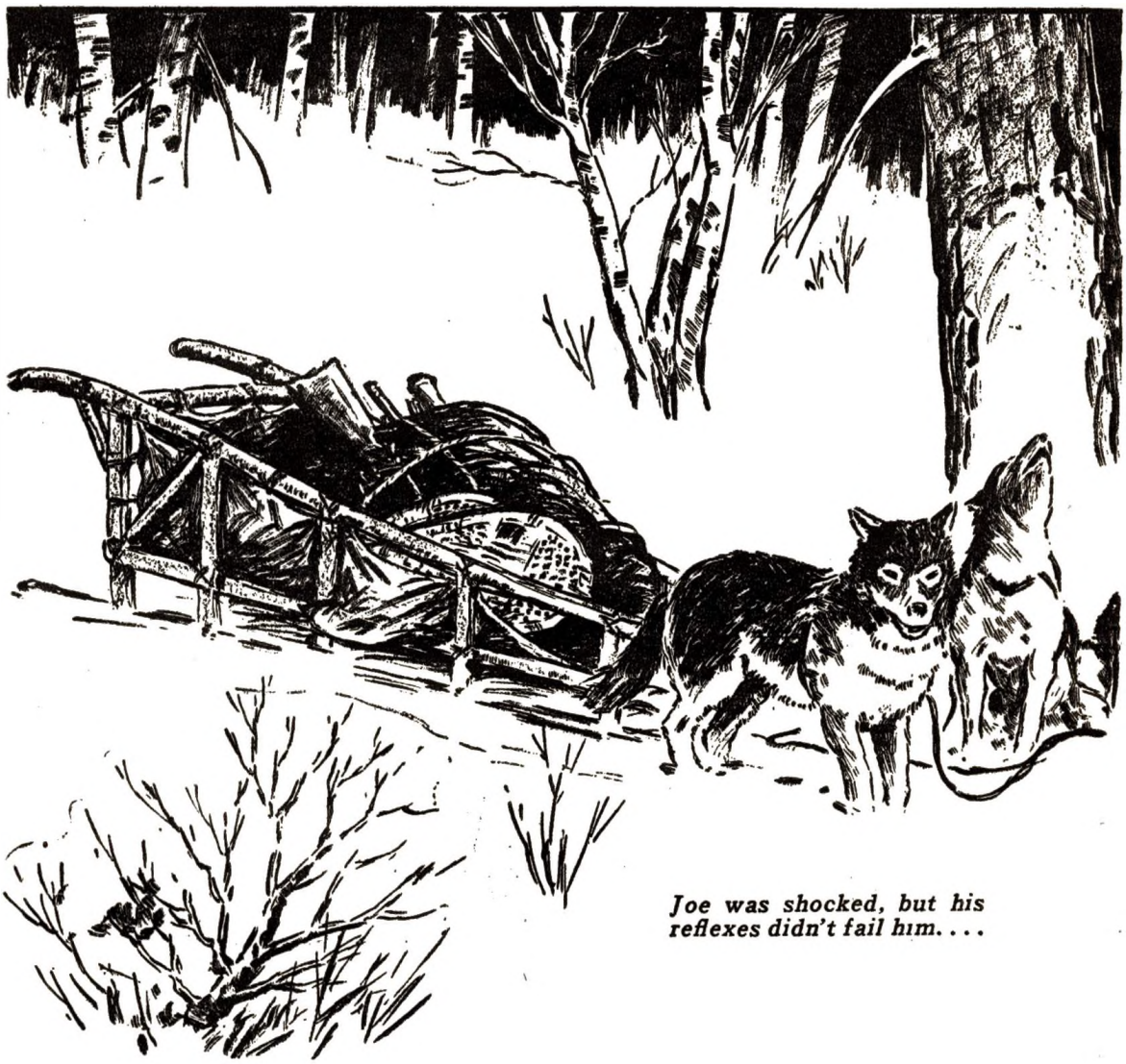
Lieutenant Catteau, leaning stiffly on his splint, using it as a crutch, completed his oral report to the elderly major.

Catteau's mind hopped to the hospital room where Tania was lying as the last of her shock receded, and he thought, *Maybe tomorrow I can visit her.* And then it occurred to him that Recamier was lying in the next bay, and that only a thin partition separated them, and that thin partitions do not necessarily impede a determined man, especially if he is from that place known as Schicageaux, and that—

The major reminded him that he was at Attention. Catteau stiffened and requested permission to visit hospital for treatment.

The major screwed his eyes upward in thought. Then he said, "You have endured much, and you deserve a nation's gratitude. Let's see, this is Sunday afternoon." He snapped his fingers in sudden decision. "You're excused from further duty until tomorrow evening at Retreat."

SOOSOO THE SLAYER



Joe was shocked, but his reflexes didn't fail him. . . .

TO JOE ALBERS, wanting a thing meant having it. Or grabbing it. He trapped in the Sled Lake country, up near the Height o' Land. His territory was good, and it should have satisfied him, but Charlie Kinnipik's looked better. It was east of Joe's, bordered on it, and it ran stronger to beaver and marten. So Joe Albers decided he'd take it over.

He didn't want a partnership with the Indian, even if a partnership could have been arranged; he got possession of the territory by the law of fang-and-claw. That meant upsetting the Indian's traps, kicking to pieces his snares and deadfalls, and, when the man howled about it, beating him half unconscious. The Indian could have complained to the police had there been a mountie within a couple hundred miles, but rather than take the long trip and risk later

By H. S. M. KEMP

If Joe Albers had a heart, Soosoo's fangs would find it. . . .

reprisals, Charlie Kinnipik decided to pull out of the territory altogether.

A couple of years later, Joe Albers figured he'd oughta get married. A man was a fool to cook his own bannock and patch his own moccasins. So, come Christmas, he hit south for the post at Black River.

He picked a good time. The mid-season festivities were on, and the highlight of the week was to be the wedding of Pella Neepeesee and old Chief Wolverine's son. Joe got one glimpse of the girl and told himself he need look no further. Dazzling Bella—and her family—with a spread of costly presents, he told young Wolverine to shove over because he was marrying the girl himself.

To give Joe his due, he made Bella a good husband. More, he came closer to loving her than he had to loving anything in

his life. But it didn't avail him much. Eighteen months after the marriage, the girl died up there on Sled Lake, leaving Joe with a day-old son and a heart full of bitterness. Joe turned the infant over to his mother-in-law, who'd come up to act as midwife, then hit out on the trapline, a lone wolf again.

After that, nothing much was heard of Joe Albers. He came down to Black River each Christmas, and hung around the settlement for the short summer months. With his fur sold, he drank a bit, gambled a bit, and got into a few drunken scrapes. Once, though, he had to make a trip into the post at the tail end of the winter, and it was there that Joe Albers first saw this dog.

One look, and Joe knew he had to have him. It didn't matter that it belonged to Jerry Garson, the dog'd have to be his.

Joe Albers knew dogs. He'd driven them for twenty years—on freight runs, traplines, and mail hauls. He'd raised them, bartered them; and Joe Albers knew dogs like a cowpuncher knows horses. And this feller was all dog.

He wasn't the pure husky. His tail didn't have the tight roll of the husky, nor did he have the husky's slant eyes, but he was enough a wolf-dog to do all a husky could do and maybe a whole lot more. Thirty inches high at the shoulder, wide across the chest, with a tapering barrel of a body and a broad, intelligent head. Yeah, Joe Albers sure had to have that dog.

The only thing was, the Indian wouldn't sell. The man had four more like him, a bit smaller, perhaps, but all of the same litter; five black-and-whites that made up a picture string.

"If I'm sell," argued the Indian, "I'm got no leader. Then what I do?"

Joe asked what the dog was worth. The Indian figured that if he had to sell, he'd want seventy-five dollars for him. Joe offered fifty, and his own leader to boot. The Indian smiled and said no.

Joe grinned back and gave a heavy-shouldered shrug. Well, okay, if he wouldn't sell, he wouldn't sell. But howzabout a drink?

Joe Albers knew Indians as well as he knew dogs. They went over to the house the Indian used during the summer months, and Joe produced a bottle.

"Got her in on the mail plane," he said. "Two more like her."

They had a drink, several drinks. The Indian threw on a fire. They talked of everything but dogs, then Joe said he'd sure appreciate a few hands of poker.

"Just a sociable game—with two-three more friends like you."

Joe sure knew his Indians. Ten minutes later, three of them and Joe sat around a blanket on the floor. The bottle went all the way round.

For chips they used matches, and played for an hour. It was a see-saw sort of game, and gradually Indian Jerry Garson went broke. He only had twenty dollars on him to start with and Joe Albers saw to it that the stakes were small. About that time, too, the bottle went dry, but Joe produced another one.

Two more drinks and three hands later, Jerry Garson began a drunken grumble. Somebody better lend him some money. There was no fun sitting there and watching other guys play. Joe said he'd lend him fifty, with security of some sort.

That was over the Indian's head. Joe explained the principle to him. "Put up—well, put up that big dog of yourn."

The Indian didn't know. He'd turned in his fur with the trader to pay his debt, but he figured he could get another fifty off him in the morning.

Joe said the heck with that. How did he know old McBeth would put up the money? But the dog—hell, it didn't nes'arily mean the Nitchie'd lose him!

The Indian eyed the bottle at Joe's side. Joe pocketed it. His voice roughened. "What's the matter with you? No guts?"

The Indian blinked, scowled, then spat in surrender. "Okay, den—gimme d' fifty." He added, "And gimme 'udder drink."

The game broke up two hours after that, and Joe Albers showed generosity, of a sort.

"You ain't out so much," he told Jerry Garson. "Just your original twenty. You gotta have a leader, so I'll give you that one of mine."

THE dog's name was Soosoo. When Joe Albers drove around to the shack the next morning, the five black-and-whites roared out at him. His own dogs roared back, and for a moment it looked as though trouble

THE HIGHER CHALLENGE

By
C. WILES HALLOCK

The Shootin' Star *of the Strato-Way*
Is a clipper craft that plies
The far, blue sweep o' the boundless deep
Beyond where the eagle flies . . .
She makes her run in the light o' day
From Boston to London Town;
And my boy Sid—just a towhead kid—
Is her skipper . . . Now, blow me down!

At seventeen, when I went to sea
(A passel of years ago!)
I bucked the tides o' them month-long rides
To Capetown from Scapa Flow.
I weren't no skipper at thirty-three . . .
I never surmised to view
Winged tonnage sped o'er a thunderhead
By a lad o' my blood and thew!

It shakes me dizzy—beholdin' him
So raptured of space and speed . . .
To rove the sea seemed enough for me
Of venturin' life to lead . . .
The wrath of ocean is thrallin' grim;
But this is my roarin' pride:
My kid has scoffed at the wrath aloft
Of earth—where the star gales bide!

Then a certain day found them on Joe's north-east trapline, up where Burntwood River runs into Caribou Lake.

It had been a bad day for Joe. His mink traps, from which he had expected a lot, yielded him nothing. Ravens had ripped a big, black timber-wolf to pieces. And a wolverine had been at work. It was probably the same animal that had committed the depredations at the cabin, and Joe found the first evidence of it at one of his lynx snares. There were the tracks of the brute, the torn-down snare, and the chewed-up remains of the lynx.

Joe broke into elegant cursing. With this thing on his trapline, he might as well quit. He looked up the trail, down the trail, broke off cursing to grind his stubbled jaws. He thought of his other traps, his other snares along the trail, and in the inch or two of snow that lay on it, he saw the tracks of the wolverine following it up.

He wheeled to his dogs, blared at them. When they didn't start smartly enough to suit him, he grabbed his whip, ran slashing alongside.

One blow caught the leader. The caribou-hide cracker seared the dog's cheek. He yelped, wheeled, launched himself full at Joe Albers' throat.

Joe was shocked, but his reflexes didn't fail him. He ducked, parried the rush with upflung arm. Then he cleared the sleigh, grabbed his carbine and pumped a shell into the chamber.

The dog was handicapped. His traces, hitched to the next dog, pulled him up short. He went over, scrambled up again, then was held there, glaring at Joe. And while Joe stood, finger on trigger, the dog's sudden rage seemed to burn itself out. He dropped his tail, pawed at his face where the lash had stung him.

Joe was trembling. He hadn't expected anything like that. And his anger, kindled by the wolverine, began to burn afresh.

He cursed the dog, said he ought to blast him there and then. No dog had ever wheeled on him, and no dog was going to start doing it now. His eyes crinkled with sudden, dreadful malevolence.

"But you figure you'll try it, eh? Tough baby, man-killer, mebbe. But you'll learn—and mebbe the time to learn you is right now."

With careful, deadly purpose he put the carbine back in the sleigh, and beginning with the wheel-dog he turned the five of them loose. By that method, when he got up to Soosoo, the big black-and-white was unsuspecting. Only instead of turning the dog loose, Joe put a chain around his neck and led him over to a tree. Then he tethered him there and went back for his whip.

What followed wasn't pretty. Perhaps the doubled-up lash didn't have the sting of the caribou cracker, but the shot-loaded weight of it bit through the dog's mat of hair. As Joe Albers swung, panted, and swung again, he dribbled a string of curses.

"I'll show you! When I get done, you won't try that ag'in—"

Yanked back at his first lunge on the chain, the dog groveled, screamed, tried to bury its face in its paws; then, maddened beyond endurance, it gave a second lunge—and the chain let go.

Joe was too late. A hundred pounds of red-eyed fury smashed him full in the chest. He went over, had a glimpse of slavering jaws, and felt the side of his face go to rags. He struck out, yelled in fear, and something like a beartrap closed over his arm. There was sudden agony as teeth grated on bone, a slashing tear that ripped the sleeve away—then he managed to grab the dog's throat in his fingers.

Frightened as he had never been frightened before, Joe hung on grimly. The dog was above him, gargling, straining to get at his face. Its hind claws ripped at his stomach. Joe was trying to strangle it, but the fright left him weak and the one arm was numb and becoming useless. Then, when he felt the strength seeping out of him, the avalanche struck.

It was the drive of the other dogs, the combined weight of them, and the attack wasn't launched against Joe. It was vengeance, the settling of a score, Joe's original five ganging up on a hated rival.

They were all atop of Joe, slashing, ripping. He scrabbled away, weak, winded, but he knew something had to be done. He'd seen these blood-crazy gang-fights before. He grabbed a club and waded in.

A dog made an arc in the air. It went down with its throat torn out. Another backed away, yelping, holding up a bloody paw. The black-and-white wolf-dog was still on its feet, shaking one dog by the

neck while another slashed at the wolf-dog's withers. Joe swung and clubbed, lashed out blindly, and at last the melee dissolved.

But it had proven costly. The dog with its throat out was dead. Two were crippled. All were cut and bleeding. The wolf-dog had a gash in his foreleg and blood streamed from a torn ear.

Joe Albers took stock of himself. When he put a hand to his cheek he shuddered at the feel of it. His left arm, sleeveless and numb, was gashed and punctured. Swollen, it looked bad. Joe knew there'd be no going around the trapline. He was less than half a day from the cabin. He'd best get back. There was doctoring to be done, and soon.

THAT meant shaking the dead dog loose from its harness, shortening the string and loading the two cripples. For Joe, it meant slogging along on foot. Past his scare now, he told himself that things could have been worse—he still had five dogs and he was lucky to be alive. But there was scant comfort in that. The fact was Joe Albers had come through a new experience. He'd run into something he couldn't handle, started something he couldn't finish. And the knowledge filled him with hatred, hatred that was as blind as it was unreasoning—hatred not for himself but for the black-and-white Soosoo dog.

He'd cheerfully have shot the brute, or pounded the life out of it with a tethering chain. His rage demanded it—but he wasn't fool enough for that. Today, tomorrow, every day, the dog was a necessity to him. The dog could get along without Joe Albers, but Joe Albers couldn't live without the dog. Perhaps it was this knowledge that made him hate the dog the more.

It didn't help that it was long past dark when he reached home. His arm throbbed and he was weak from failure to stop, boil up and take on a lunch. And when he did reach home and had lighted the lamp, a look in the mirror told him he'd carry the marks of the affair forever.

His face was torn, shredded. It was by the merest fluke he hadn't lost an eye. A doctor could have worked on him for an hour with needles and sutures. Joe had to patch himself together as best he could with adhesive tape. The arm, too, looked ugly, but he poured stinging iodine over it, clapped on a slab of pork-rind and bound it up with lengths ripped from a flour-sack. The dogs he loosened but didn't bother with. They could look after themselves.

But he didn't sleep so well that night. The peeled-pole bunk was no harder than usual, but after a couple of hours he got up and brewed tea. He was living again those few minutes up at the lynx-snare—fighting a brute gone mad, seeing wolf-teeth clash a few inches from his face. Even the stench of the thing's breath was strong in his nostrils, fetid, sickening, a stench that would remain with him to the day he died.

"Close," he muttered. "If them other dogs hadn't dug in—" Then his voice hardened. "But I'll take care of him. He don't get away like that with me—"

IT WAS a week before Joe Albers took to the road again. His face was healing into ugly welts and ridges, and he could use his arms. The dogs still limped but they could travel, and Joe was anxious about his traps.

He was lucky, right from the start. Half a day out he caught the wolverine crossing a small lake. He got it with his first shot. The mink that had escaped him before were waiting for him now. The next day he got a lynx and a couple of marten. His spirits rose, and he could have forgotten some of his hatred for the Soosoo dog—except for the dog itself.

Something had happened to it. It worked as well as ever, but it wasn't the dog Joe had got from Jerry Garson. Joe had first noticed the change in it around the camp. The dog no longer curled up against the slight warmth of the house. He slept off alone, near the edge of the bush. He didn't seem fussy about his fish, though they'd always disappeared when Joe went looking for them. And until Joe had shaken out the harness for the journey, the dog had shown no interest in him at all.

Now, on the trail, its attitude was emphasized. That first night out, the dog failed to crowd up against Joe's blankets. The next day, at noon, when Joe chucked them a half-fish each, the dog didn't even sniff at it till Joe was out of range.

Joe's temper rose. "What's the matter with you?" he blared. "Sore? Sulky? By hell, yuh don't want to start that stuff with me!"

The dog didn't bother to look at him.

Joe's fingers itched to grab a club, but memory was keen. The dog was scorning him—Joe didn't count. The man's bitter hatred flared anew.

He didn't know he could hate anything so intensely. He'd been used to men stepping around him, dogs groveling when he yelled. This feller, this black-and-white mongrel, ignored him; worse, treated him as though he didn't exist. Once, in an effort to get some response from him, he tried a wheedling tone. It was at a noonday boiling-place. The dog was chewing the ice-balls from its paws. It turned when Joe spoke, as though surprised—then, with a gesture of contempt that was almost human, it turned again to stare calmly off into the distance.

Joe almost choked. Joe Albers, who always got what he wanted, could get neither affection nor respect from a cross-bred husky dog.

Joe swore then he'd reached his limit. He had to keep the dog till the season was over, but once that day dawned, he was through with him. He wouldn't shoot him, wouldn't kill him outright. That'd be too easy, and he still had at least seventy-five bucks tied up in him. What he would do, he'd peddle him off to some Indian, to a Nitchie who was known to be hell on his dogs. He, Joe, had tried to treat him like he oughta be treated, but from now on, well, the dog was on his own.

Meanwhile, he worked his spite out on the dog in every way that was petty and cruel. He had to feed him, but if there were a couple of bony suckers in a stick of whitefish, the black-and-white got the suckers. Where the trail was heavy and should have been broken out with snowshoes, the dog was made to break his own. And later, when the snow went and lake-travel was over the sandpaper-rough spring ice, Joe wouldn't moccasin the dog till its feet were raw and bleeding.

Joe'd fix things. He'd show the dog he couldn't go snotty on him.

THEN THE day came when the ice all went, when Joe picked up the last of his muskrat and beaver traps and started the long trip south. He was glad of the new three-horse engine. Only, he found, there was some minor thing wrong with it. It started at the first pull when it was cold, but when it was warm and he had to stop for a tankful of gas, it was mean to start again. Well, Joe was in no hurry. He could always have a smoke till the thing cooled off and was once more over its stubborn streak.

So he worked his way south to the Churchill. With but a couple more days to the post at the mouth of the Black River, another season would be over. To Joe Albers, the idea conjured up pleasant thoughts. He'd sell his catch to old McBeth at the Hudson's Bay and take it easy for a couple of months. That meant a drunk on the half-dozen bottles of liquor he'd ordered in, a chance to cut a swathe with the Indian girls in the settlement, an opportunity to tell tall tales of the winter he'd put in.

And then he remembered—his face. It wasn't nice to look at. Right now, he was wearing a beard. He'd worn it since the nightmare happening up at the lynx-snare. He'd have to go on wearing it, always, or scare little children away. Bitterly he glanced down at the wolf-dog riding with him in the canoe.

Most of the way he'd let all five of them peg along ashore. That was where the Churchill River looked like a river. But now and then it widened out to lake-like proportions, where bays turned north and south miles deep. Places like that, he'd had to load the dogs; like on the big stretch he'd just finished crossing now.

All things equal—and never mind about the other dogs—the big black-and-white wouldn't have been in the canoe at all. He could have hoofed it every inch of the way. If the going had been tough, if the rocks had been sharp, well, good enough for him. Only, with the dog ashore, following the deep bays, they'd never have reached the settlement. It was either that or keep on going and leave him. And to lose the dog wasn't Joe's idea. He had that other idea in store.

Joe spat as his eyes rested on him. He hated him worse than ever, for the dog hadn't changed. It still ignored Joe, did merely what he was ordered to do and nothing else. And neither by wheedling nor threats could Joe batter down that al-

most human wall of contempt. Joe spat again, and then glanced up.

They were nearing the Kettle Falls. Clear across the broad expanse of the river was a ledge of granite over which it took a twelve-foot drop. There was white water above it; below, spray and breakers thrashed high in the air. Joe edged in towards shore, where the portage showed plainly.

He'd done this dozens of times, and he knew just what was required—cut the throttle, work in at reduced speed, then, when he neared the portage and the water began to quicken, give her the gun and slide up on shore.

He did it now, but perhaps not with the margin of safety that he should have done. A hundred feet from the portage head, he was a mite too far out. But the powerful new engine would take care of that. So he turned, eased back a bit on the throttle.

Perhaps the motor was stiff, not yet properly broken in. Joe never knew. For instead of reducing its speed, the thing suddenly quit.

Joe spun around. He yanked on the starter—yanked and yanked, and the motor wouldn't kick in. Then he remembered—hot motor, no dice. He grabbed up his paddle instead.

He felt a moment of panic. He was now sixty feet out from shore and the current was quickening. He gave two or three heavy, thick-armed strokes—and the paddle snapped in his fingers.

He almost went overboard, but he caught himself. On his knees, he looked about him, and knew he was lost. He was less than sixty feet out now, but he could as well have been sixty miles. The falls were coming towards him, and Joe couldn't swim.

Men think fast in times of crisis. His rifle, which he might have used as a paddle, was wrapped up for dry-keeping in his blankets; but he knew he had one slim chance. He grabbed the loose end of the fifty-foot tracking line, lashed it around the wolf-dog's neck and heaved the dog overboard.

There was a splash as the water closed over him, then, coughing and spluttering, his head came up and he hit for shore.

Joe yelled in frenzy, "*Marche*, Soosoo! *Mar-r-che!*"

He let the line slide through his fingers, checked it now and then to see, if by a miracle, the dog could tow the heavy canoe ashore. With his free hand he managed to grab first one dog and then the other and heaved them out to follow the first. Lightened, he thought the quickened motion of the canoe might be arrested, but when he held to the line he saw the wolf-dog fighting the water and gasping for breath.

All he could do was to wait . . . wait and yell and babble an involuntary prayer.

"God in heaven—it's up to you! You and the dog. God—"

Wide-eyed, dry-lipped, he waited for what would happen. A bit of driftwood went by, farther out into the current. Fascinated he watched it gathering speed as it approached the lip of the falls. Then it upended, and disappeared into that curtain of spray. The roar of the falls sounded savage and exultant.

"God!" he gulped. "God—" He couldn't manage anything else.

But towards shore, the black-and-white seemed to be winning. The canoe had drifted dangerously, but the dog was holding his own. Then Joe Albers saw something closer to hand. The dog might be winning, but the trackline was coming to an end. When that happened, dog and Joe Albers both would go to their doom. The next second his eyes fell on his tumpline.

It might do it. By a miracle it *could* be enough. . . . He snatched at it, fumbled with shaking, thick fingers, but managed to splice it to the tracking line. And with the latter half paid-out, the dog clambered ashore.

HE STOPPED to shake himself. Joe Albers screamed. Buried in the scream was the repeated command. . . . "*Mar-rche*, Soosoo! *Mar-r-rche!*"

The dog could have understood. It struck straight for the bush. But that wasn't good enough—it was too late for that now. The canoe had already drifted halfway to the falls and the pull of the current was terrific. If Joe Albers were to be saved, the dog had to work upstream, against the current's pull.

A FAR NORTH CANOE VACATION?

For a discussion of itinerary and equipment please turn to H. S. M. Kemp's reply to Reader Don Lee on page 98 in ASK ADVENTURE.

For free advice on nearly 100 other topics, write Ask Adventure Experts, page 101.

So it was, "*Cha*, Soosoo! *Cha, cha, cha!*"

Obediently, the dog wheeled, broadside to the river while Joe hung on. Sweat poured down the man's face while the canoe hung motionless. The dog reared, pawed the air, fought for that first bit of motion.

Straining himself in sympathy, Joe didn't believe the dog could do it. In calm water the weight of the canoe would have been enough. To fight the current as well was too much to ask. Then the cord, the trackline was cutting into the dog's throat, shutting off its wind. Joe began another jumbled prayer, when he saw something he could scarcely believe. The dog was twisting, lunging, turning, till he got above the line, till it was pulling downwards on his neck, between his legs. Then he hung there, solidly as a rock.

Seconds that were eternities went by. The dog was leaning forward, head down, tongue out, straining every muscle of his magnificent body. Then the miracle happened. A paw went forward. The dog had gained a foot.

Joe tried to help him. On his knees he dug at the water with his cupped hand. When he looked up again, through the sweat that was running into his eyes, he saw the dog was working slowly but surely ahead.

Closer in, the current weakened. Against the dog's steady pull, Joe worked in the tumpline, and then the trackline. Finally, freed from the river's clutching embrace, the nose of the canoe eased up on the hard-packed sand.

(Continued on page 111)

THE HIGHER CHALLENGE

By
C. WILES HALLOCK

The Shootin' Star *of the Strato-Way*
Is a clipper craft that plies
The far, blue sweep o' the boundless deep
Beyond where the eagle flies . . .
She makes her run in the light o' day
From Boston to London Town;
And my boy Sid—just a towhead kid—
Is her skipper . . . Now, blow me down!

At seventeen, when I went to sea
(A passel of years ago!)
I bucked the tides o' them month-long rides
To Capetown from Scapa Flow.
I weren't no skipper at thirty-three . . .
I never surmised to view
Winged tonnage sped o'er a thunderhead
By a lad o' my blood and thew!

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So raptured of space and speed . . .
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The wrath of ocean is thrallin' grim;
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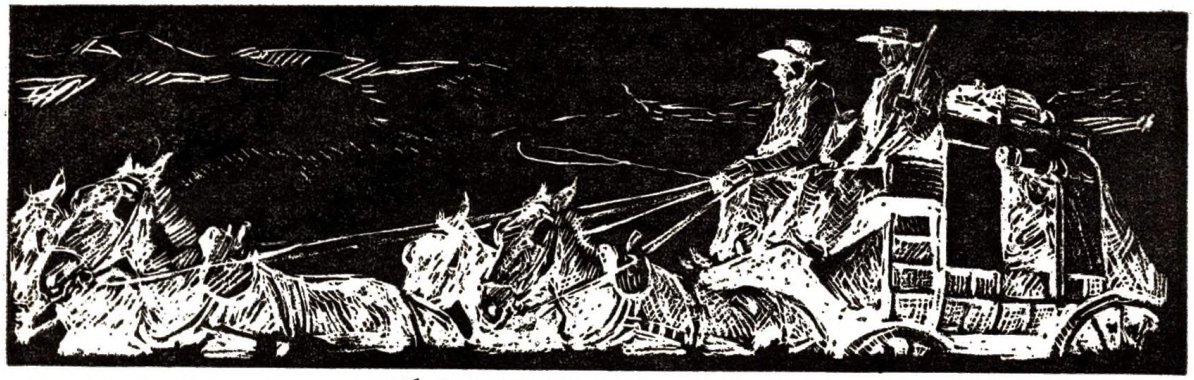


AMBUSH

Two things Sergeant Rizza could not deny: death—and a favor for a lady.

By CHARLES BLAKEMAN

THE HEAT was murderous—Dakota heat in August. Sweat leaking down your chest into your trouser tops, tickling like sand fleas. Sweat stinging your eyes and sliming your hair, soaking your neck. Sweat gluing Lieutenant Cullinan's slanted hatband to his blond head, so that the hat itself had become a small stove that seemed to bake juices from his brain. Cullman, commanding the guard that afternoon, wondered for the hundredth time in four years why the Army permitted its women to come this far from the States, and to a three-troop post at that. The post lay dumb and white in a trance of sunlight, ominously quiet.

He stepped from the hot shade of his quarters as the stage from Fort Savard circled into the gates with a one platoon escort and swept past the flag pole and braked to a stop by headquarters in the choking back-wash of its own dust. Mail from Savard, relayed out from the East. Orders and reports from Colonel Henry at Savard for Major Pennington, commanding here. Musty printed forms, the signatures already blurred by climate. Dee Cullinan stepped past the quarters next to his, quarters stripped clean to the boards and empty with the accusing void that a dead man leaves. He stepped faster past the quarters of Captain Robb, East on leave, and legged across the parade to the settling dust of the stage.

●

Dee gave it to both troops: "Dismount and prepare to fight on foot. . . ."

It was anxiety that took him there, not duty. He had to see her leave, and when she had ridden through the gates on the long road to Omaha he would raise his saber and dip it to her and that would be that. He could hear the scraping rasp of her voice scolding a halfbreed servant in the major's quarters. Her luggage was on the veranda.

The shotgun guard hurried into headquarters with a leather pouch under his arm, and Cullinan was alone with the driver. The driver spat, and the sound of it was the sound of dropped playing cards, for his jaws were lined with snuff and there was a twist the size of a hen's egg in his cheek.

"Luh-tennant, we didn't scare up one bedamned featherhead alluh way. They—" he jerked his head toward the gates—"must be gettin' tired out."

"Nonsense." For one thing there were too many of them—hunt parties that at sight of a white skin dropped their buffalo rattles and put on the paint and reached for

scalping knives. They'd been wandering west of Punished Man's Creek and as far east as Crazy Squaw Valley and as far north as Cedarbox Canyon for some time now, nomadic pagans who struck with stolen weapons.

The driver made a cloud of smoke. "How're the girls, luh-tennant?"

A petticoat post, they called this one.

"Healthy. You're taking one East with you today." Cullinan heard her quacking more loudly to the halfbreed, and faint disgust crawled through him. She was bait for any bachelor who chose to take her, but none would near the hook. Not even on a long frontier hitch.

The girls. Two laundresses who muttered eternally between themselves. And Helga Pennington, the major's daughter by his first marriage, reluctantly crowding into her thirties now and seamy-skinned from much travel in search of a husband.

And the major's second wife, Lucy. Cullinan was fond of Lucy Pennington, everybody was. It was her son who had left the void in the quarters next to his.

The shotgun guard walked quickly from headquarters to the major's veranda and bent to Helga's luggage. The driver collected his ribbons in two grimy fists, and Dee Cullinan ambled over to the veranda.

The deep pores of Helga's skin seemed to twitch in unison, left to right. She tugged at the knot of her traveling veil, and offered a hand to Dee.

Even through the thin fabric of her gloves, Cullinan could feel the cold hardness of big knuckles. She said, "Good-by, Lieutenant Cullinan." She had never called him by his first name. "It's been a pleasure, this visit."

"I'm sorry you have to leave."

Each had lied nicely, and there was nothing else to say. Lucy came out then, carrying a hat box that must be stowed on top so it wouldn't be crushed. Lucy offered it to Cullinan, not to her step-daughter. "Dee, would you mind packing this? I can't stand going into that heat."

Cullinan understood why Lucy had done that—because by remaining at the door she wouldn't have to bestow a final kiss on features that repelled kisses—and Lucy was aware of his understanding.

Helga, seated on the rear bench of the stage, nodded curtly. "I understand that my father is much too occupied with a message pouch to say good-by again."

The guard climbed up and poised his shotgun on his thigh, the driver kicked off the brake and the stage lurched forward. It jounced through the gates, trailed by its escort, and Helga Pennington was gone in the wig-wag of a large hand that was trying to hold a hat box atop a valise. It occurred to Dee Cullinan that he had not flashed his naked saber at her, and it further occurred to him that had he done so she might have misinterpreted the up-and-down fling of the steel edge as an opinion, not a farewell gesture.

He faced Lucy and smiled.

Her mouth was smiling and her throat was laughing. He could barely hear it bubbling in her. "Dee, the stage'll be back in a few days." Breeding held the laughter down but no blood line in the world could have prevented the smile.

"Thanks."

HERE she stood in mourner's black, somehow looking the better for it. It was a perfect match for the white pile of her hair, it was a proper background for the cross of silver holding a web of Brussels lace to her neckline.

"Dee, it'll have a load when it comes back."

Cullinan curled a hand around his hilt. It would have a load, right enough. The mail and a revised number of the Army List and six bottles of Perrier for Lieutenant Mann. Lucy Pennington's doeskin walking boots from that little shop on Fifth Avenue and her issue of *Leslie's Illustrated*, which her husband would preemptorily read first. And the major's stomach pills.

"Dee—" she raised her brows—"perhaps it will bring the inspector general and his niece. She's very attractive." Then the laughter was gone from Lucy's throat and only the dim echo of the smile remained on her lips. Arranging a possible marriage for others does not lessen, in a woman's mind, the hurt from the wreckage of her own.

She faced sharply around and entered quarters and let the door crack shut.

Cullinan walked toward the mess, spurs catching the sunlight. He knew a monstrous distaste for the major, that shrewish man who demanded that his guard officers wear

dress blues and polished accoutrements and—

Sergeant Rizza hove into sight from the cook shack, stopped with a trapped look and half turned under the impact of a wish to escape. Then he came about, drew his knee-caps taut and swung a clean salute.

Rizza said, "As sergeant of the guard, I was inspecting the mess, sir."

"Where'd you get that bruise on your eye?"

"If it makes no difference to the lieutenant, I fell up the flag pole."

"Thank you, Sergeant." Cullinan had been taken, and he knew it. *Never ask enlisted men personal questions, mister, you should have remembered that. You can discuss other people, but never the man you are addressing.* . . . "Guard mount at four as usual."

Rizza cracked his heels together with the sound of a pistol shot and saluted smartly to remind Cullinan that he respected him and had not meant to embarrass him. Small and dark, Rizza, with gun-blue jaws and steady eyes and a tight mouth.

Cullinan passed through the mess and surprised the mess sergeant sweeping up the fragments of a broken plate. The sergeant held his broom at order arms, keeping his torn hand behind his butt.

Cullinan said, "The next time the sergeant of the guard tries to get a handout between meals, lamp his eye again."

"Yes, sir." And the sergeant lifted his torn knuckles and sucked them.

Dee Cullinan's way now took him past the post cemetery and he risked a glance at the newly-painted headboards ranked like rectangles of ectoplasm at the heads of the eleven new graves. He didn't want to see the one on the left end, thrusting from the shaven brown grass like an eternal flank-stiffener; but he passed his eyes over it anyway. Its stenciling merely told the living that here rested: GUY GRAINGER, 2ND LT., 6TH CAV.—DUTY TO DEATH. The dates at the bottom spanned twenty-three years, one month, fourteen days.

Plus a week, Cullinan thought, for those graves were but a week old. Dee was twenty-eight, and feeling ancient already.

"Mr. Cullinan, please!" Lieutenant Mann beckoned from the adjutant's office and Cullinan hurried that way, holding his scabbard out from his slim legs.

"The C.O.," was all Mann said.

Cullinan knocked on the major's door, and the invitation to enter was a two-syllable whine, high, low and lopsided.

Major Alfred Pennington was a negative man who seemed to be shrinking from the specter of the cowardice that leered over him. The brown spots on his hairless hands matched the brown spots on his damp forehead. They were fleshless hands, yellow talons. His face was tightly drawn across the frontal bones of his skull, and the cropped moustache frosting his upper lip was tipped with wax.

He drummed on the edge of his desk, licking pasty blue lips from which the blood had long since ebbed forever. "There is a mission." He blinked dampish eyes, staring through the fly-specked window at a smoke tendril from the cook shack that curled over his quarters like the shadow of a claw. Then his drumming fingers struck the unfolded contents of the message pouch and he recoiled.

He told Cullinan, "Colonel Henry at Fort Savard reports hunting parties southwest of Cedarbox Canyon, and there are no buffalo in that vicinity." He spoke uncertainly, for he was an uncertain man. He rarely made a decision, but when he did he never changed it. However, Colonel Henry had spoken this time.

"Do we move out, sir?"

"Yes, we do." The major tongue-swiped his blue lips again. "I'll give you your part of the mission." He liked to talk that way, yanking open a verbal curtain at rehearsed intervals to disclose tiny tableaux of carefully-staged knowledge. He got it back in the way men talked about him, which is what ultimately determines an officer's worth. It is the way men mention him, and what they choose to infer. In Pennington's case—through side teeth, with nostrils stiff.

"Incidentally—" speaking now with elaborate carelessness—"did my daughter get off all right?"

"I saw her off myself, major."

Pennington gazed up at Cullinan with poorly-veiled hatred spearing from his eyes. "It was so good of you."

"It was a pleasure, sir." Cullinan remained impassive even as it came to him that this man was groping in the borderland of insanity.

Pennington's devilment crowded into his eyes and made them waver, hesitate, drop. He could not face the world any more squarely than he could face his wife, for when he did the memory of her dead son rose between them and remained there, an accusative thing.

"There are about a hundred and fifty of them," the major went on, referring to the hunt parties that Colonel Henry had scouted. He was speaking in a monotone, for this was Henry's thinking, not his own. "They're approaching in this direction, and Henry moves down tonight, while we move up. He'll push into them from the north while we push into them from the south, and we'll squeeze the life out of them." Major Pennington drew a black cheroot from his tooled leather case, bit off the end and lighted it. He did not offer the case. "This tactic is not standard practice."

The breath of leaf laced with the sulphurous burst of the match swept into Cullinan's nostrils. He said, "I realize that, sir." And to himself he added, *Henry had to remind you of that—it's all there in his writing because neither he nor anyone else trusts you much any more.*

Pennington was saying, "This country will never be safe until we have forts strung across it like beads." He shook his head. "It's most unusual to make an offensive move away from a protected post against superior numbers. In this case, two protected posts."

. . . Defending yourself already, should you fail again in the field!

"Will my troop lead out, sir?"

"No, I will lead out." Pennington took a tug at his cheroot. "You will follow with A Troop. I'll take Lieutenant Corwith's troop, B Troop, and Mann can remain here with C Troop, doubling as adjutant, vice Captain Robb on leave."

One of those unaccountable flashes that cross the outer silences of a man's being flickered over Pennington's face and Cullinan knew him for what he had become—a frightened old man. He was stalling now, hedging, giving Henry plenty of time to get there first—all covered from this end by the grand gesture.

I will lead out. . . .

Fear made the brown spots on the man's face stand out, and fear moistened his pores. It was an acid exhalation that stained the air in the room. Fear of the ghost of General Grainger, more than anything else. The general had taken a flight of shrapnel full in the chest one June dawn in '63 and left his widow, Lucy, with their twelve-year-old son Guy, who would live for only eleven years after that.

SERGEANT RIZZA had told Cullinan of how Guy Grainger had died. Rizza had been there and he had seen it and heard it. There'd been the whip-lash crackle of sudden ambush, and what had supposedly been a milk patrol on a training march was now fighting for its life. There'd been Major Pennington spraddled in the bushes with his tongue hanging out, shaking a yellow finger at a narrow ravine and ordering his stepson into it with one section.

"Get in there and clean 'em out!"

And the major pressed himself against the dirt, not daring to move.

Young Guy, with the newness of West Point still on him and still too young to know how many forms suicide can take—Guy Grainger, handsome as sin and with his mother's quick smile and fine eyes—had obeyed rank and relationship, not reason.

Rizza, the best scout in Dakota, had asked: *"Why'd she marry a man like that?"* For the sergeant had led a counter-attack into the ravine with full strength and had come on Guy's body and the bodies of his section, roped in arched protest over the simmering fires that had been built under them, ant-picked faces chewed to the bone. *"Don't ever get ambushed by Blackfeet, Mr. Cullinan. Save one slug for yourself."* And: *"Why did she, now?"*

"A widow's pension is not sufficient to raise a son. The major has a private income—which may account for his stomach trouble—and please in the future exclude the major's wife from your spoken musings."

Major Pennington, now, tamped out the stub of his black cheroot and smiled sickly at Cullinan. "Turn the belt over to Lieutenant Mann and be prepared to move out at six o'clock. We should form our squeeze trap with Colonel Henry by tomorrow noon. And another thing—I do not want Sergeant Rizza along." The major took a deep, lung-cracking breath. "His nerves appear to be shaken from that affair last week. He's touchy. He starts fist fights on duty."

"Yes, sir."

Cullinan sensed that Pennington, if he timed it right, could leave the ball in Henry's hands and let Henry hit the Blackfeet first. Then Pennington could plunge into the finish of the fight and wave his sword and yell loudly. He would yell so loudly that he would be heard all the way back in Chicago where the inspector general must by now be hearing rumors of Pennington's week-old defection under fire. So by means of this safely staged recoup south of Cedarbox Canyon, the major could prevent having to drag his feet through years of disgrace, staring with empty eyes at the last of life's parade. It was his reputation that he sought to recover, nothing else. His marriage had been crumbling for years, and last week it had collapsed forever.

"Mr. Cullinan." Pennington was standing up. "That is all."

IT WAS four oclock.

Lieutenant Mann, behung with the guard belting, saber-saluted the crimson whip of the colors and posted his first relief.

Dee Cullinan was in quarters preparing for the field—slouch-brimmed campaign hat, faded shirt, antelope-faced trousers. Twin revolving pistols, canteen and compass case. Glasses and map clip.

He saw Sergeant Rizza swing a leg onto the veranda and raise a fist to knock.

Cullinan told him, "Come in."

The sergeant came in and uncovered. "He won't take me."

"Did you ask him?"

"No, I didn't have to ask him."

Cullinan didn't know what to say. Here was a man who knew the country like your tongue knows your teeth—and Pennington didn't want him.

"I'd take you, if I had the choice."

"Not if he knew it." Eagerly then, greedily: "She'd take me!"

Both were confronted that here in quarters each could take advantage of the freemasonry of the service. You can discuss the personal affairs of other people, mister, but never of the man you are addressing.

"She hasn't the choice."

Rizza's upper lip stiffened. "Does the lieutenant know why he's going on this ride? Instead of Mr. Corwith or Mr. Mann, say?" The sweet brownness of Rizza's eating tobacco washed ahead of his words. "Because maybe someone wants to—" thumb in mouth, the sergeant popped his cheek with the sound of a drawn cork—"remove him."

Cullinan looked the man over carefully. "He has other means than that at his disposal."

"But none as safe. He got rid of his step-son, who would've come into the money someday. He never did like Mr. Grainger, and sir, he don't like you." Rizza shook his head. "Mrs. Pennington swung her son's transfer here—the major didn't know anything about it."

Sometimes, freemasonry can go too far. "Sergeant Rizza, I've warned you once before to keep her from your thoughts as spoken. Sergeant Rizza, have A Troop formed on the parade at six o'clock. Full field equipment, three hundred pounds per man, rations and forage for three days."

Rizza covered, saluted, wheeled on one heel and marched out.

At ten minutes to six, Cullinan turned into headquarters to report. Lieutenant Mann, thoughtfully stacking papers, advised him that the major was in quarters.

Cullinan jogged that way, took the steps

two at a time, and knocked. Behind him on the parade, A Troop and B Troop were standing to bridles. It was B Troop that had been on that milk patrol, commanded by Guy Grainger and overseen by Pennington.

Lucy opened the door and inclined her chin. "Good evening, Dee."

Cullinan touched his hat brim quickly. "May I come in?" He noted the fresh light in her eyes, a light like the reflection of new blades.

In the withdrawing room she said, "Alfred's almost ready." Her eyes lingered on Dee Cullinan a moment. Then she said, "I have a favor to ask."

"Name it."

From the bedroom across the front hall came the clump of a boot hitting the floor, and a muffled curse.

Cullinan saw the holstered revolver on the wall then, hanging between a wet-plate of Guy Grainger in cadet uniform and a clutch of cat-o'-nine tails; and he wondered how Lucy Pennington could live with it. It had been Guy's personal property—a .31-caliber Pony Express Colt with an outsized butt ring. Rizza had recovered it from that smoking ravine, and had presented it to Lucy.

She named it. "Take Seregant Rizza with you."

Cullinan dragged his eyes from the weapon on the wall and focussed upon Lucy Pennington. "I'm afraid that's impossible."

"I know. He—" tilting her head toward the bedroom—"told me his decision."

"I'm only a first lieutenant." Dee smiled.

She tilted her head the other way and folded her arms. "We Army wives are a peculiar breed, Dee, and devious are our ways. Once we form a desire, we're hard to balk." She released a stored-up breath. "If Sergeant Rizza happened to catch up with your troop on the march, you couldn't very well send him back, could you?"

"I could order him back."

"Would you?"

The clump of another boot was loud in the bedroom, and Major Pennington's damp muttering was like wind in a chimney. Cullinan sniffed, and caught the scent of whiskey. The major was working up his courage.

There was an icy challenge in Lucy's eyes now, like the splinter of moonglow on a saber. And suddenly it faded and a curtain went down over her soul and her face remained absolutely expressionless. Years later when her old age had run out and she was dying, the gods would kiss her gently in the shadows and for a moment she would be as beautiful as she ever had been, for the gods loved her and they always would.

She flung down her arms. "Thank you for not answering, Dee. Now I think Alfred is ready. I'll tell him you reported."

CULLINAN marched fast onto the parade and whipped a thigh over his claybank and spurred toward the troop. Rizza's command cracked like a carbine shot in a defile and A Troop swung up and settled into stirrups. Cullinan relieved Rizza and faced the guidon.

Then Major Pennington was riding across the greening twilight, attempting to sit straight in his saddle. He passed A Troop and reached the compact mass of B and without stopping ordered it up. He bawled it into a column of twos, gave open order and led it through the gates. Cullinan allowed the tail of B twenty-five paces, then took A into the deepening dusk and guided on Pennington's file closers.

Riding through the misty moonlight at a walk now, striving to keep tactical unity with ranks ragged at open order, they filed along the shoulders of bush-bearded draws and over naked slopes and down again into the draws. There was no talking during the hourly breaks, only the suck of lips on canteens and the occasional whimper of damp leather; the sound of a bit against a horse's teeth, the click of a spur on a cinch ring, then the jingle of the spur chain itself. And so they rode, following the shapes ahead of them, eyes alert, carbines loose in leather ring sockets. Toward dawn there was a flurry of whispering from the tail of A Troop and Cullinan swung around and saw faces that were white and wet in the moonlight. He growled at them to be quiet.

Then dawn was breathing through the trees and the moon was paling to ghost-silver and word came back—dismount, pin graze, break out the airtights. Cullinan was cutting into a tin of salted beef when he heard his name and—"Rear of the column, sir."

It came as no surprise to him that Rizza

was squatting trailside, hat slanted over one eye, carbine glimmering. The sergeant stood up and grasped his horse's dripping bit. The sudden white sickle of his smile was both a greeting and a challenge.

He said, "I caught up about an hour ago, Lieutenant."

Cullinan's fingernails were biting into his palms. "I haven't seen you, Sergeant. If you get hit, you won't be recovered. If you die, you'll be left for the buzzards. The Army cannot bury an AWOL in a post cemetery, and you are AWOL from the post." And Cullinan left Rizza standing there in the dawn shadows, still smiling.

The wind was out of the East that morning, and there can be a great restlessness of soul in the east wind—a noisome outbreathing of twisted destiny and unfulfilled promise. The column plugged slowly toward Cedarbox Canyon, taking advantage of the eroded folds of terrain to keep off the skyline, keeping closer intervals than it had during the night.

Cullinan snaked down a hand and pressed the ring-back release of his repeater. He was fretting furiously to himself, wondering if Pennington had a point ahead to prevent ambush, that favorite tactic of Blackfeet. They do not make a stand, they prefer sudden surprise. And failing that they fire and scatter, fire and scatter, until they either escape and reorganize or are trapped and forced to fight.

And Cullinan was worried about this slow pace they were maintaining, it was woesomely inadequate for the purpose of forming a squeeze trap with Colonel Henry at noon. It came to Cullinan again that the major was mad, that no sane commander would deliberately drag it this way.

The mid-morning heat flickered and flared, flickered and flared, and they creaked along the long horse miles to Cedarbox, covering three miles to the hour. Dee wondered if Pennington was sober yet, and decided that he must be. Perspiration alone would take care of that.

In that instant Cullinan knew fear. It sprang from the dusty masks of the faces behind him—an inner, visceral contraction of fear that pulsed through the platoons like the throb of a cut artery. He tried to calm himself by thinking of the situation in terms of a diagram—here was a column of horse thrusting through the ridges toward Cedarbox Canyon, and a party of Blackfeet was filtering this way from the direction of the Canyon and—this was bone-deep in Dee Cullinan—they were neatly side-stepping the advancing column and taking position on each side of it, like shears around a root.

Something snapped from the green silences of the next ridge to the left, snapped even as Pennington's distant voice howled to A Troop to catch up. A bullet slocked into a tree behind Cullinan and left a white split in the trunk.

Pennington was screaming something unintelligible. B Troop was beginning to mill, to buckle together and get mixed up. Some men threw off and flopped into the dried grasses and searched for targets. Others huddled together in reaction to herd instinct.

Dee gave it to both troops: "Dismount and prepare to fight on foot! One-in-four to the flank as horseholders!"

The fusillade came with the sound of grommets being torn from tarpaulin. It whipped into the tumbling column and knocked three men flat and sent two more to their knees, gasping and hurt. Then everyone was going down, sinking through the smoke-laced air and fumbling for bandoleers.

Cullinan cupped hands to mouth: "Form a circle on the trail! They'll tag us in the back if we don't face 'em all around!"

Pennington came plunging down the trail on foot, bending low, fingers scraping dust. He was glassy-eyed with terror. He bumped to his knees and blurted, "Where the hell is Colonel Henry?"

The crick-crack of carbines splintered unevenly and the trees went frosty with smoke. Rizza was yelling something and crisscrossing his arms, and men crawled off the trail and wriggled into the bushes to form an immense, wavering circle. Cullinan was holding his hand gun to his hip. He cocked his arm, aimed ahead of a copper-muscled figure that was hopping through the far brush, and fired. There came a falsetto shriek and the figure leapt upward and dropped and lay still.

Six troopers dead now. Seven, as a man took a buffalo bullet through the ears. They lay blue-faced and quiet in the grass, the anger gone from them at last. The survivors slammed out shot for shot, trading off their lives for whatever odds they could hit.

Pennington gulped down a sob. "Cullinan, make a diversion. Take ten men and creep down to the left and draw fire from that ridge, so they'll expose their flank to us."

"You wish to divide this command now?"

"Are you defying me?" Pennington screamed it. His eyes were luminous with madness, he was drooling. "You—" There was the *slat!* of a near shot and Pennington's head jerked up and sank down and his hat fell off. He folded forward and slid into the brittle grasses and lay that way, the back hairs of his head disturbed by a dark hole about the size of a five-cent piece.

Sergeant Rizza was over there on one knee, hand flicking to his tunic. For an instant only, Cullinan saw the metallic wink of a butt ring. It was out-sized, like the type attached to the .31-caliber Pony Express Colt. Then Rizza had his carbine up again. He spat sideways, and the brown ribbon of it looped over twice and slapped into the dust.

It was incredible to Dee Cullinan that he could have seen that. It was all dream fabric now—the sudden silence, the smoke sifting away, the sunlight coming back. They were on their feet, faces blank as they stared at the convulsing wounded. Cullinan barked for bandages. He knelt, uncased his glasses and put them on the opposite ridge. There was movement there, much movement, and it was going the other way. Figures on patch-colored ponies were slipping south, melting into the purple shadows of noon, spectral in the drifting dust. They were being moved by the sudden shooting from up the trail leading to Cedarbox, and presently a troop of Blue horsemen appeared and executed right-front-into-line and flew into the vale separating the ridges. And then Colonel Henry himself came at the gallop and braked his bits and demanded to know why in hell Pennington couldn't catch a thrown ball.

Skull-faced, this Henry, and with little veins coiled under the taut skin of his temples. Eyes smarting with temper. "All night and all morning I've been shoving Blackfeet into your advance! Why in the cold fires of hell weren't you at Cedarbox!" He stabbed his eyes at Cullinan, at Rizza.

Cullinan lowered his glasses, closed them, cased them, and slung the case behind his left hip. "Colonel—"

Henry popped his fingers in rage. "Why weren't you in position with a base of fire established so we could crush 'em between us? You let 'em ambush you like scissors snip off a button! Where's Pennington? By God he'll—" Henry bit it off, and brought his lips together. He threw a leg off his animal and dismounted. He stood staring down at Major Pennington's body for forty seconds. "It's odd he took that bullet in the back of his head when he wasn't encircled." The colonel swallowed sandily. "But perhaps he was facing the other way to inspect positions—eh, mister?"

The distant sounds of pursuit were his only answer—of horse running down pony, of steel on bone in red fury.

Cullinan waited.

Colonel Henry lowered an eyelid to Cullinan that drew a veil down over that silence for all time.

"Now then." He became brisk. "Put a detail on your wounded and fall in your survivors and we'll run those people against a hill or into a canyon and cut them to pieces." He slapped his hands sharply. "If Pennington hadn't been so damned late, this chase wouldn't be ahead of us." He swung up and spurred into the vale.

Dee Cullinan drew a deep breath, flipped his hand gun, caught it and held it. He galloped after Henry in further fulfillment of the dangerous terms of his faith with the Republic, vowing—*I won't be killed! I won't be killed!*

LUCY PENNINGTON had invited Lieutenant Cullinan to pay his respects to the inspector general, who had arrived from Chicago and Omaha on the westbound stage. There was the inspector general and his niece; and there was Captain Robb, fussing with his pince-nez and simpering about the pleasures of leave. And there was the mail and a revised number of the Army List and Lieutenant Mann's Perrier—five bottles only, one had broken on the way—and Lucy Pennington's doeskin walking boots.

Dee Cullinan was presented to the general's niece and he bent over her hand, asking himself how it is that a girl can step from a stage, dusty and travel-wracked and sleepless, and you see her for the first time

in your life and know instinctively that she is for you.

They were gathered in Lucy's withdrawing room, kept cool by drapes that had been brought all the way out from Baltimore, and Dee never left this girl's side. There was a taunt in her eyes—deep blue, they were, flecked with softer blue lights—and Dee hung onto her hand until Lucy approached them.

She was smiling.

She said, "I want you to have these, my dear." They were the walking boots from that little shop on Fifth Avenue. "It's a command, because I'm ranking lady of the post until I leave on the next stage." She thrust them at the girl and made her take them. "You'll find some of our paths very pretty." That for Dee Cullinan, who hadn't moved.

The general coughed into a fist. He was a man in that period of life when appearance can be the most distinguished because, althought mature, it is not decrepit. He was clean-shaven except for his mustache—a dash of white on a background of healthy tan.

He said, "I'll stay until the new commander arrives. A week, I guess." He nodded expectantly.

"You are invited, James."

The general was a bachelor. "Lucy, if I'd known that you were—" He cut it away and shut his teeth, for that kind of talk could come later, when they were alone. It was talk that should have been theirs before Pennington had paid hasty court. "Your husband will be mentioned in dispatches for his—uh—holding action near Cedarbox Canyon. There will be no mention of anything else. I wanted you to know that, Lucy. And—" fixing a frosty eye on Cullinan—"I wanted you to know it, too."

"Thank you, sir."

The glint of the butt ring dangling brightly from the .31-caliber holstered to the wall caught Dee's attention. He reflected that Sergeant Rizza had done a fine job of cleaning it before returning it to Lucy.

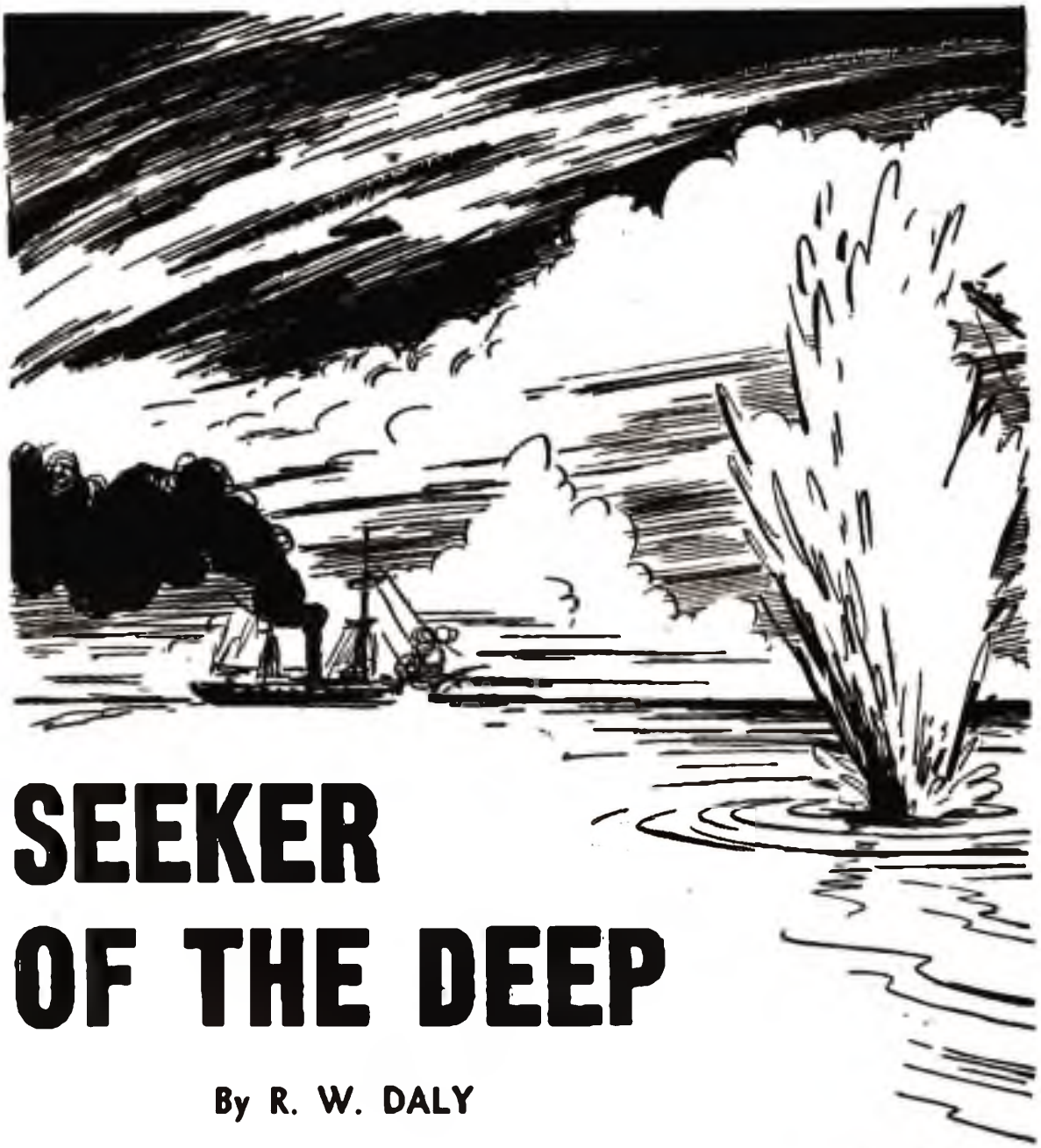
The inspector general coughed into a fist again, and Cullinan offered his arm to the girl at his side and escorted her out to the veranda. Sergeant Rizza was passing, headed for the enlisted mess and a possible handout between meals. He pegged a salute at Cullinan and marched faster, lips shut tight, mind utterly secure in the crucible of the service that had made him.

The girl said, "He seems like a very hard man, that one."

Cullinan raised a palm and spoke behind it, in a conspiratorial whisper.

"But once he did a favor for a lady!"

He took her elbow and guided her down the steps, and they crossed the parade together, thighs swinging and thrusting in unison, headed for Officers' Row and a fine split of Lieutenant Mann's Perrier.



SEEKER OF THE DEEP

By R. W. DALY

A man must be captain of his own deathless soul—or not skipper a Nantucket ship. . . .

THE Yankee whaler *John K. Marston* rocked against the camels of a filthy dock in the Whangpoo River, her captain dead from an attack of angina and her first mate losing a battle with the poisons of a ruptured appendix.

Walking instead of riding down Nanking Road, Henry Mallory neither had nor desired any connections with such a ship.

As the spray from the solid shot fountained and fell, Mallory at last knew the feelings of the Yankees who had been stunned by the Shenandoah....

Since he could not afford a rickshaw, he was ignored both by the patrons of Shanghai's exotic shops and by the Chinese who profited from business with the foreign devils. In the midst of the teeming British concession, Mallory felt alone, but stubbornly would not ease his isolation. History itself had gone against him—three short years before, General Lee had surrendered at Appomattox—Henry Mallory, formerly a lieutenant in the Confederate States Navy, had never hauled down his flag.

His chin was high and his back was straight when he said to the clerk in his cousin's office. "Mr. Bentham, please."

"Busy," the clerk replied with the indifference of a rising young man for another without any future. "Please be seated."

Mallory wistfully considered inculcating some manners in the clerk by honoring him with an exchange of pistol shots in a quiet glen beyond the city. This he could not do. Together with his past, he had jettisoned the code duello, because he had a compelling reason to be peaceful. The British government wished British subjects to command British ships, and Mallory was in the process of acquiring British citizenship. He could, however, train the weight of cold blue eyes upon the clerk, so that the man was relieved when a visitor left the inner office and Mallory went in.

"Morning, Henry," Claude Bentham said pleasantly, glancing up from his desk. "Be with you as soon as I finish a note."

Bentham was one of the Englishmen building an empire for Queen Victoria by common sense, consideration and hard work. Loyal to his task, well established in his forties, he had been happy to extend a sympathetic hand to a young and useful American cousin uprooted by the inexplicable disturbance known as the Civil War. He often had an emergency use for officers qualified in sail.

"There is a ship in port, Henry, which could use you for a year. I will guarantee you a fee of five thousand."

Mallory leaned forward eagerly. "Then my papers have come through?" he asked. "I'm a British citizen?"

Bentham did not answer at once, pretending to study a ship's log. He did not understand his cousin's renunciation of America; his own code ran deeper than political loyalties.

"Not quite," he said at last. "But my firm has a sixty per cent insurance interest in a whaler which had lost her captain and first mate. She proposes to hunt the Sea of Okhotsk. You, of course, know the waters."

Mallory grinned. Indeed, he did. He had served on the *Shenandoah* whose guns had nearly wiped out the Yankee whalers in the north Pacific. "I don't know anything about whaling."

"My firm isn't interested in that. The mates will tend to the work. You will be responsible for navigation only."

"Sign me on," Mallory smiled. He could live comfortably in Shanghai for much less than a thousand a year. In a year he would be a British subject. Every road had its turning.

Bentham soberly looked him in the eye. "The ship is the *John K. Marston,* registered out of Nantucket."

The bottom dropped out of Mallory's hopes. "A Yankee?"

"An American," Bentham said carefully. "About three hundred tons, four boats and a crew of thirty."

Mallory waved good-by to his salvation with stiff dignity. "Thanks very much, Claude. I can't do it."

Bentham glanced down. "If not too inconvenient, Henry—as a favor to me—I'd like to ask you to reconsider."

Mallory looked as though he had been struck by a grapeshot. Pride was one thing but *noblesse oblige* was another. As a Rebel, he could spurn Yankee gold. As a gentleman, he could not refuse a favor asked by a man to whom he was greatly indebted. Bentham knew how Mallory felt and only genuine distress could inspire such a demand.

"Delighted to be of help to you, Claude," Mallory said, with the gallantry of Pickett's Brigade fixing bayonets. "I'll show those rascals how things should be done."

"Good lad," Bentham murmured and his conscience shrieked.

IF MALLORY thought that hanging up his cap in the cabin of a Yankee whaler was worse than walking into a plague-infested dungeon, the crew of the *Marston* reciprocated his sentiments. The mates

were naturally embittered at losing their prospects of command, and the crew knew from waterfront gossip that he had been an officer of the *Shenandoah*.

The senior mate, a burly, sea-gaited, two-fisted Nantucket man named Clark wasted little time in defining their respective positions of authority.

"You pilot," he said bluntly, while Mallory was unpacking. "I'll fish."

Mallory was too startled to reply.

"You're cap'n in the eyes of the law only," Clark went on. "Don't press it. Anything you got to say to the crew, say to me first."

Mallory pulled a holstered Navy Colts from his bag. Opening the empty cylinder, he squinted obliquely into the heavy barrel.

"I'd like some sperm oil," he said quietly.

Clark looked at him for long moments before deciding that the Colts was an answer, but a mere revolver couldn't intimidate a Nantucket man.

"I'll speak plain. We didn't sign on with you. Sea lawyers put you aboard."

"Anything else?" Mallory asked, unpacking a bullet mold.

The *Marston's* spokesman shrugged.

A wise man would have taken the hint. Mallory uncorked his temper.

"We may as well understand each other. If I'm captain in the eyes of the law, I'll be captain in fact until we return. So long as you speak on the business of whaling, I'll bow to your professional knowledge. In anything else, I'll hold you and the crew accountable according to the laws and customs of the sea."

A smile flickered on Clark's strong face. "We understand each other," he said.

Watching the mate turn and stolidly leave the cabin, Mallory at best foresaw a year of miserable loneliness, and regretted the honor of a gentleman.

When the whaler cast off her lines and dropped down to the open sea, he was prepared for a semblance of mutiny. Nothing happened. His orders were obeyed unenthusiastically but without question. The crew scarcely looked at him, automatically performing ship's routine in a way that gave him the uncomfortable realization that his presence was almost entirely unnecessary.

To all appearances, the *Marston* was a happy ship.

They were off Sakhalin before he figured that Clark didn't intend to jeopardize his prospects of permanent command when the whaler filled her casks, as long as her unreconstructed Reb didn't beg for trouble. As for the crew, each member had a proportionate part of the ship's earnings. To reduce the navigational hazards of the Sea of Okhotsk was a sound procedure that affected them all, and disposed them to follow Clark's lead.

After losing the tension which had induced him to carry the Colts tucked out of sight in his waistband, Mallory faced the problem of living for a year under the *Stars and Stripes*. The whaler was Yankee from keel to truck, and the drawling voices of her crew were a constant reminder of the carpetbaggers rampant in the devastated South.

If cousin Claude had given him a second choice, Mallory would have been back at his down-at-heels hotel.

He was a lion marooned on a deserted island. A leader has to be accepted by his men, and apart from his acquaintance with northern waters, Mallory had no means for arousing such acceptance. To men born on the New England coast, good seamanship was no more remarkable than the ability to walk, and Mallory's experience had been largely in men-of-war, where huge crews had to be kept busy, and finicky changing or trimming sail kept idle hands out of mischief. Whalers didn't carry even a boy who didn't more than earn his keep. Sail was changed when necessary, and often not for a day at a time.

Mallory learned a lot one morning. He had been studying the deck. All hands were occupied without being supervised. Boatsteerers were drying out their long, tough manila lines or whetstoning lances. Seamen swarmed in the boats cradled on the cranes. The boatswain had a gang greasing running tackle or rigging the huge cutting blocks. The cooper was shaping barrels and the blacksmith was hammering out new irons. Mallory had to be impressed by Yankees at work and they aimed to make the lesson stick.

"A bloooow!" suddenly wailed a masthead lookout.

The electric cry fizzled out against stolid resistance. No one on the *Marston's* deck even glanced up. Mallory stared at the tac-

iturn crew until the sustained, unearthly shrieks from the masthead rasped on his judgment and drove him forward to Clark.

"Are you deaf?"

Clark squinted at the plume of mist inside the horizon, then tentatively felt the edge of his spade with a strong, calloused finger.

"Looks like a big 'un," he said soberly. "Maybe a bowhead with three hundred barrels. Too bad we aren't ready."

The stout-bladed spade in Clark's hands was a substitute for the Colts that had once been in Mallory's, and the gestures were identical. Mallory looked around. The mates engrossed in their irons tacitly backed up their senior. Mallory seethed at this evidence that when the chips were down, he wasn't captain after all, but only a supernumerary put aboard by some legal hocuspocus.

Glaring at Clark until he felt foolish, Mallory whirled and clumped aft. Shooting a look at the stony-faced helmsman studying the sails through an overhead hatch, he went on down the port companion ladder to the cabin. Fingers quivering in anger, he strapped on his pistol belt, determined to have a showdown.

HE SAT down to steady his hands, for he couldn't afford to miss when he began shooting. Unlike the crew of a merchantman, the *Marston's* men were well armed with weapons that killed and cut up the hugest mammals in the world. The Colts' six slugs had to match a score of sharp-bladed missiles. He tried to plan his moves, visualizing the eruption of violence. So, by the time he was calm enough to use a gun, he had also bitterly recognized the futility of pitting himself against thirty men.

Like Lee at Appomattox, the Yankees hopelessly outnumbered him.

Reluctantly, he unbuckled the pistol belt and stretched out on his bunk. He was entirely helpless, as much a prisoner as though he had been captured by a Yankee cruiser during the war. Locking the revolver in his stout mahogany desk, he threw the key out a stern window. As it vanished in the swirling foam of the whaler's wake, he was damned if the Yankees would drive him at last to suicide.

Analyzing his situation, he concluded that idleness was his chief danger, and had his answer in a flash of inspiration. Every Reb or Yank officer and enlisted man was writing about his war experiences. Mallory would write about the cruise of the *Shenandoah*. And so, to ride out the stormy present, he plunged into the stormier past.

This actually kept him tolerably content for upwards of a month before recollection became a burden. Besides, by then, the *Marston* was killing bowheads in the Sea of Okhotsk, endlessly boiling out their oil in huge water-insulated trypots. Competing with other whalers, working ever closer towards shoal water, the *Marston* needed her quasi-captain, and Mallory's hands were busy with charts and instruments.

The fishing was excellent. The cooper was scarcely able to keep ahead of the oil pouring into the cooling tank. With each blanket of blubber stripped like an apple peel from a whale, Mallory saw weeks clipped off the year he had dreaded. Once as many as four whales floated fin up, waiting to be brought under the cutting stage, where Clark and the mates operated accurately and swiftly with their long-handled spades.

With the stench of bubbling trypots and burning scraps of rendered blubber burning as fuel and reeking in his nostrils, Mallory fought nausea and kept constant fixes from landmarks as the *Marston* moved under shortened sail to keep her kills manageably alongside. His orders to the helm were promptly executed. No one interfered with his navigation. When he had to sleep, Clark took over and always woke him long before he had blinked the oily smoke from his reddened eyes.

Each night lighted by the fat-fed flames roaring about the tryworks, a haggard Mallory found himself numbed to peace within, and too tired to worry about himself. Imperceptibly, he became an essential part of a hard-working team. While the crew watched another whaler carelessly rip out her bottom, he kept the *Marston* safe, and when the survivors that the *Marston* shared with the other ships in the vicinity morosely thanked him, no one disabused them of the illusion that he was the skipper.

At least, not immediately.

Abruptly, as whaling luck ran, the bowheads vanished. One day, they swarmed

like porpoise. The next, they were gone.

Low in the water, her casks tantalisingly nearly full, the *Marston* lazed under the summer sun, lookouts bleary-eyed, and her decks scrubbed almond white, as days became weeks.

Tensing with exasperation, the crew whiled away the time as Mallory cautiously took the whaler on a slow swing westward along the coast. Some gambled, some sprawled on the forecastle around the six-pounder smoothbore cannon the *Marston* carried as on-the-spot insurance against the pirates of the China Sea. Away from the lingering smell of whale oil, cool and comfortable in the winds sweeping from the Siberian wastes, these idlers swapped yarns or sang.

Engrossed in the intricacies of getting a fix in high latitudes from sun sights, Mallory did not immediately react to a tune floating back from the forecastle above the crash and fall of choppy waves slapping the whaler's sturdy side. Then, suddenly, the refrain stabbed him. He snapped his pencil point, looked up, trapped the helmsman in an unguarded grin, and stalked forward without thinking.

The virile rhythms of *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* trailed away. Seamen sat up, exchanged sheepish, guilty glances at their unthinking insult, but, as Nantucket men, wouldn't say the song had slipped out, the way songs do when men are bored.

Staring at each in turn, Mallory in two short words ripped the grudging toleration that the bygone weeks had woven. "You damn yankees!" he said, with the concentrated venom of broken hopes. Then, turning a proud, straight back on the suddenly rigid faces, he went to his cabin, to whirl with doubled fists as Clark followed him down the ladder.

CLARK didn't give him a chance to explode. "I've been lookin' at the chart," he said in his usual voice. "Seems to me there might be good fishing around the point in Shantar Bay."

"There isn't any channel."

"I know," Clark said quietly, "but the boats could get in." He hesitated for a moment that could have been significant. "Seems to me the men need some exercise."

Staring at the round-faced, husky first mate, Mallory decided he was mistaken in thinking the gesture was friendly. Clark lived and dreamed about nothing except whales.

"Well?"

"You anchor as close to the point as you think safe. I'm going in for two days."

Mallory nodded, the anger cooling within him in the face of a new thought. Only a handful of men would be left aboard the whaler. He'd have comparative peace in which to get a fresh grip on the five thousand dollars that made his future.

"Very well," he said. "I'll see to your boat charts."

The following dawn, Mallory was on deck to observe the launching of the whaleboats and the oddly subdued men who scrambled into them. The crew had seen just enough of the Sea of Okhotsk to respect the squalls and fogs that rolled out of a clear sky, and their lightly constructed craft were too packed with gear to be comfortable for a long period. As the mates rigged spreads of canvas to carry them over to the forbidding headlands whose devious underwater shelfs were unknown, Mallory wished them the best possible luck.

The sooner the *Marston's* bottomless casks were topped off, the sooner he could live like a gentleman. Standing in the shrouds until the boats turned the point, he put the leadsmen in the chains and carefully felt for good holding ground safely close to the rocky shoals.

By noon, with two anchors down, he had nothing to do except sit and watch the empty, glinting water and the bleak, distant shore, while his crew of survivors doubtfully obeyed his orders to clean ship. Having only a few familiar faces left aboard, Mallory nearly forgot the insult of the previous day.

This insult proved to be minor.

Shortly after dinner, a lookout reported smoke on the seaward horizon. Assuming the newcomer was a whaler trying out blubber, Mallory indifferently squinted at the smoke and settled back to resume a well-earned nap. He dreamed he was again in the *Shenandoah*, Jeff Davis in Richmond and the tattered divisions of Lee still at their game of mauling the well-equipped Yankees who pressed them too close. It was a good dream, punctured by an all too

familiar thunderclap that brought him up in the deck chair.

A mile or so away, a wisping ball of black faded over the newcomer's bow. She was a small war-steamer, flying the flag of Imperial Russia. As the spray from a solid shot fountained and fell, Mallory at last knew the feelings of the Yankees who had been stunned by the *Shenandoah*.

"Could we be at war, sir?" the blacksmith asked uncertainly.

"We're in Russian waters," Mallory replied. "I'll see what they want."

The steamer dropped a boat to carry over a stocky, middle-aged officer who identified himself as Mitchman Menchikov. Mallory was requested to bring his ship's papers to His Imperial Majesty's seven-gun steamer *Nunivak*. Baffled but composed, well aware of the respect to be paid to such a summons, Mallory complied.

Boarding the *Nunivak*, his automatic salute to the quarterdeck brought a flicker to the sharp eyes of a young, slight officer waiting at the gangway. This was Lieutenant Estomin, captain of the *Nunivak*, who returned Mallory's salute with a question asked in English tinged by a French accent.

"You have seen service?"

Mallory nodded, but did not elaborate.

"Excellent. Then we will have no difficulties. Come with me, Captain."

In the cabin, Estomin opened his collar and wearily examined the *Marston's* papers, from time to time dictating to a ramrod-backed yeoman. In the clean, taut atmosphere of a man-of-war, Mallory relaxed, somewhat ashamed of the oil clinging to his clothes, and disposed to find Estomin a decent fellow.

The Russian finally scrawled something in the *Marston's* log and passed the book across the table. Mallory negligently glanced at the entry and Estomin ceased to be a decent fellow.

"What is the meaning of a warning to leave within twenty-four hours?" he demanded. "What have we done?"

"You are in forbidden waters."

"What?" Mallory blurted, like a man informed by his doctor he has but a month to live. Then his volatile temper reacted to Estomin's contemptuous curtness. "American whalers have used this sea for twenty years!"

"As thieves," Estomin said briskly. "There will be no discussion. You have had your notification. Leave."

Unaware of the anger undermining his judgment, Mallory snapped, "I'll remain long enough to pick up my boats!"

"We only traded away Alaska," Estomin exclaimed, smashing the wardroom table with his fist. "Okhotsk is still ours. Do you dare to question the Czar's jurisdiction?"

Mallory hesitated, struggling to control himself, because he had to. "I'm only telling you our boats will be gone at least forty hours."

"They should not be there," Estomin said carelessly. His paperwork was done and the tall, taut American had become tiresome. "I'll return tomorrow. If you are here, I'll sink you or take you to Nikolaievsk, whichever suits my convenience."

"I must warn you that you will fire at my ship at your risk!"

Staring until he could no longer restrain a laugh, Estomin said, "You threaten me?"

"I'll leave when I've recovered my boats, not before!"

Secure in the power of his modern, well-manned broadside, Estomin considered himself most generous in merely gesturing to Mitchman Menchikov to return the American to his whaler. A challenge hurled down by a captain armed with a six-pounder would make a good joke to tell when the winter iced the *Nunivak* to her dock at Nikolaievsk.

OUT under the bright sun, Mallory sobered abruptly, having ample time to look about the *Nunivak's* deck while her boat was being manned. The steamer was small but she was unquestionably a man-of-war. The *Shenandoah* would have gobbled her up, and gazing at the fat-bellied *Marston*, Mallory wished with all his heart for the past.

To Mallory, the men in his boats might sing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, yet they were men cruising on a barren, uninhabited coast halfway around the world from home, with a few days rations to sustain them. No gentleman could leave them to drown in a line squall while struggling towards Japan, and above everything else, Mallory was a gentleman.

Worried, frightened, he was still able to

smile mirthlessly at the *Stars and Stripes* curling lazily above the whaler, as he wondered what Marse Robert would say about a Reb who thumbed his nose at a warship in order to save Yankee hides.

. On the *Marston's* deck, he watched the *Nunivak* get under way and arrogantly steam off with a blast of her whistle echoing dismally from the distant headland. The squat, black hull had the hideous fascination of a fat, deadly water moccasin, ready to bare its fangs.

The blacksmith came up and indicated that Mallory had even more troubles by asking what the Russians wanted.

"We're to shift our anchorage," Mallory said.

"Better not shift too far," the blacksmith remarked calmly, the big, supple muscles under his shirt coiling as he put his hands on his hips.

Mallory met the Yankee's frank, warning face and realized that he was caught between the devil and the deep. Through loyalty, the blacksmith would choose to stay, and, if necessary, would pit the *Marston's* six-pounder against the Russian's shells.

Mallory cringed at the thought of such stupidity. Estomin could cruise leisurely well out of range and until the *Marston* blew up or burned, the six-pounder would be as valuable as a saluting piece.

Mallory chewed on the idea of a hopeful signal to Clark and then gave it up as too uncertain. He needed a definite way of both remaining to pick up the boats and escaping destruction. If only the *Marston* had the draft of a whaleboat, he could take her into the bay and hide her behind the headland, but the *Marston* was deep with the weight of oil.

Besides, there wasn't any channel.

Suddenly, in the midst of his bitter misery, Mallory rubbed his chin in the impact of a mortifying but happy thought. He didn't know there wasn't a channel! The chart merely indicated that one didn't exist. He wouldn't know until he looked. If he found the route used by the whales, there might be enough water for a whaler. Almost carefree, he broke open with a harpoon blade the desk drawer containing his gun, strapped it on, picked up his sextant and boat compass, and astonished the blacksmith by an order to sling one of the spare whaleboats into the water.

He didn't tell the men who rowed him what he was seeking or why, because he couldn't waste any precious daylight time in discussion or argument. Calmly, efficiently, he used the afternoon hours to find the whales' channel, refused to be discouraged by the fact that it was several feet too shallow for the *Marston*—and continued to make a painstaking hydrographic survey of the approaches to the headland.

He halted only when failing light robbed his triangulating sights of accuracy. In his cabin, he reviewed his results, carefully constructing his own chart, and exulted like a slave struck free of his shackles to see a wriggling, hazardous possibility spring out of the lifeless paper. He threw down his pencil. With Yankee luck, a ship could possibly be eased in. Since a Reb was worth ten Yankees, Mallory was confident he could manage it.

Besides, if he failed and smashed in the whaler's hull, he still wouldn't have lost anything. Trying the shoal was the only chance of safety for all.

At dawn, he went on deck, assembled the crew and told them his intention. As soon as he explained about Estomin, he didn't have any use for the Colts on his hip. The Nantucket men simply turned silently to the windlass and anchors.

WITH the early sun slanting obliquely into the water and showing the masthead lookout the darker masses of submerged rocks, Mallory groped into the winding fairway he had discovered. Under bare steerageway, so that damage should not be fatal if the hull touched, he backed and filled with a delicate hand, constantly shifting helm as he plotted his advance. He led out anchors to kedge the ship gently ahead or sideways when sail was impossible.

Again and again, the *Marston* gouged long, grinding furrows into her side or bottom, and each time Mallory slacked off the pressure before her timbers snapped. The whaler moved with the flexibility of a canoe, steadily negotiating the underwater hazards in response to a masterful display of shiphandling.

Noon came, and with it an ominous dot on the seaward horizon, just as the *Marston* started to turn the headland. Coolly, refusing to be terrified into losing the game

in the last few minutes, Mallory ignored the dot which grew into the *Nunivak* plowing ahead at full speed. Gradually, with the leaden slowness of escapes in nightmares, the whaler interposed the bulk of the headland between her vulnerable hull and the onrushing guns of Estomin.

Then the *Nunivak* was blocked from view, and the whaler was across the shelf and into the Bay. Mallory took a full breath, his knees unhinged by relief.

"Steer for that cove," he said to the helmsman.

Tasting the sweetness of triumph, Mallory glanced at the blacksmith, who had been manning the mizzen braces. Provisioned for a year, they could outwait the *Nunivak* if Estomin elected to wait for her to reappear. But they wouldn't be held that long. Nikolaievsk froze up in the fall before the ice formed in Shanter Bay and Estomin would have to leave.

Mallory's glow of self-esteem lasted only as long as it took the blacksmith to remark laconically, "He's still coming at full speed."

The realization shook Mallory. He hadn't considered that Estomin could easily have a reliable chart of the shelf and the anger to risk the *Nunivak*, with her light draft. Cursing, he looked at the sheet of water stretching for thirty miles, fringed by cruel shores or crueler reefs. If it weren't for the boats, he could have taken his chances in a lethal game of hide and seek. As it was, he was chained to the area where Clark would reappear.

The blacksmith looked at him calmly, the spokesman for the Nantucket men, and asked with the confidence of a respectful friend, "What will we do now, sir?"

The blacksmith's confidence was a reflection of an attitude that Mallory newly found on all the faces of the crew. He had proved himself. They trusted his judgment. They would accept his decision. His uncertainty broke with the sharpness of fever.

"Can you men serve a gun?"

The blacksmith's white teeth grinned in a bearded background. Sailormen learned the rudiments of gun drill as other men learned how to shave.

"All right," Mallory smiled. "Let's give that Russian a fight if he wants it." He looked the blacksmith in the eye. "I told him we would, anyway."

The blacksmith laughed, patting him on the shoulder and, strangely, Mallory didn't resent the Yankee's familiarity in the least.

STANDING on the crest of the headland, looking out at the *Nunivak* lazing at the entrance to the shelf, he was surprised to find himself as lighthearted as he had been in the glorious days on the *Shenandoah*. He actually itched for battle, generously wishing Estomin success in finding a way into the bay. The *Marston* had been warped into a fiord which sheltered her from view or fire except from directly astern, and before Estomin found her, he would first meet the crew.

A slight smile on his lips, Mallory glanced down on his starboard hand to a knoll where the men sprawled in readiness about the *Marston's* gun. The six-pounder was no longer despicable. Expertly placed to take advantage of natural curtains, the gun's muzzle bore on a point less than a hundred yards distant where the *Nunivak* would have to pass. On the *Nunivak*, the gun would be perceived only short seconds before it fired, giving the blacksmith gunner one unhampered shot at the steamer's boilers. That one shot could easily end the career of Lieutenant Estomin. If the shot missed, the Yankees still had the relatively huge target to try again, while the Russian gun crews, alarmed and hurried, would only have a small, well-protected party of men to aim at.

Mallory had redressed the disparity in arms and, more than this, he would have the shock advantage of surprise. The blacksmith waved cheerfully at him and Mallory spontaneously waved back, in a gesture of comradeship that would once have shriveled his arm.

Below him, Estomin's binoculars sparkled on the steamer's bridge as she lost way to put over a heavily manned boat. The steamer prudently remained at the edge of the shelf, rocking in the groundswell, her crew at battle stations. When the boat pulled away, Mallory was amazed that Estomin was angry enough to pursue the whaler with a cutting out party. Estomin was merely throwing men away, for the Russians huddled in the boat would be helpless against even a small number of de-

termined men armed with a hidden cannon.

Tensed, ready to signal the news to his gun, somewhat sickened at the slaughter that would necessarily ensue, Mallory watched the boat sweep onto the shelf. With grim accuracy, the boat began to twist through the channel that the *Marston* had managed. Mallory reluctantly signaled down to the guncrew to draw their solid shot and reload with canister, and the order electrified the Yankees. In a position with sheer rock below them, the Yankees were unassailable and the Russians exploring the channel were doomed if they came within range.

As though sensing the destruction awaiting them, the Russians rested on their oars a half mile distant from the headland, and then leisurely put about and returned to the *Nunivak*. Mallory wondered what Estomin would do next. Hearing a scramble on the rocks below, he turned to see the blacksmith climbing up to him, carrying a small United States flag.

"I saw 'em turn back," the blacksmith said, planting the flag beside him. "Thought they might wonder where we are." He slyly studied Mallory before looking off towards the steamer.

Mallory hesitated to be identified with Mr. Lincoln's banner, and yet, whipped out straight by the chill wind sweeping the cliff, the flag brazenly challenged the Russians, and this was Mallory's intention. Estomin would see that impudent rag and know that the *Marston* was standing her ground in justice, though not in law. His bluff had been called, and he would have to do something about Mallory's stubborn insistence that the *Marston* would stay long enough to retrieve her men.

Estomin's reaction was violent. The *Nunivak* abruptly billowed with smoke. The sun sparkled on soaring iron that to Mallory seemed to float straight at him. He stiffened, smiling at the possibility of being killed under the *Stars and Stripes*, and then shells slammed into the rise below. The heavy rock reverberated with concussions that flung great gouts of splinters into spraying dust that harmlessly pattered away.

"Not even close," the blacksmith said.

"We're too high. They can't elevate their guns enough," Mallory said as a hopeful explanation that proved true. The *Nunivak* purposefully steamed out to sea, swung and fired a trial shell that still fell short of the object of obliterating the Yankee flag. Estomin grimly went to maximum range, tried again, and his shell exploded at the foot of the headland. In futile rage, Estomin then anchored, giving up the effort to punish the bold Americans, and prepared to wait the entire summer for them to emerge.

Mallory sighed, feeling almost cheated,

for there would be no action. From the vantage point of the headland, any attempt of the Russians to row in and attack could be detected and stopped. Since Estomin had the sense to perceive this, the crew of the well-stocked whaler could simply outwait him, snug in their ship and secure in their position.

The strain and fatigue of months struck Mallory simultaneously, and he was exhausted. "Set up a watch," he said. "Wake me if they do anything."

"Aye, aye, sir," the blacksmith said, Navy-style, and saluted.

Mallory grinned soberly and went to bed.

HE WAS roused, looked about, and saw Clark sitting patiently on a cabin chair.

"Had a good trip," Clark said. "We've just cut in the second bowhead. We can leave any time."

Rubbing his chin, Mallory guessed that he had slept around the clock. He was refreshed, ready for anything, even the friendly twinkle in Clark's eyes, when the mate remarked that the *Nunivak* had left that morning in a huff of smoke.

"Soon as you're up to it, you'd better get us out of this pocket," Clark said, and thereby delicately implied that Henry Mallory was a very valuable person indeed, able to do something better than a Nantucket man.

"This afternoon, with the sun behind us."

"You're the skipper," Clark said and got up.

Mallory was warmed by the simple words, and decided that he had been mistaken in thinking all Yankees were uncouth. There were a few exceptions like Clark and the blacksmith. Later, going on deck with his sextant and hand-made chart to take the *Marston* through the channel that Estomin had not dared to try, Mallory changed his mind further.

In fact, he had to turn away and shield his eyes looking at the sun, because the men happily mincing the blubber that would enable them to go home spontaneously proved they knew the words of *Dixie* almost as well as *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*. And there, over the fantail of the *Marston*, fluttered a flag hastily made by the sailmaker in an inexact but well meant imitation of the *Stars and Bars*.

Mallory only hesitated for the moments needed to blink his eyes clear before he strode to the halliards and hauled down his flag.

RIDING instead of walking down Nanking Road, immaculate in fresh white linens, Mallory acknowledged the polite bows of shopkeepers and the nods of his white equals.

Entering his cousin's place of business, he squared his big shoulders. The clerk, having just drawn up papers for Mr. Henry Mallory to sign in exchange for a heavy sack of gold, was quite obsequious in saying, "Go right in, sir! Mr. Bentham is expecting you."

"Hullo, Henry," Bentham said. "I heard you had a quick cruise."

"The *Marston* has the best crew in the Pacific," Mallory said, his eyes on the respectable pile of heavy coins in front of his cousin.

Bentham quickly executed their business and sat back. "That should set you up, Henry. One last thing—what are you going to do?"

Speculatively weighing the smooth leather sack which had once been his only reason for staying aboard the whaler, Mallory told him, "I'm going home with the *Marston*."

"No!" Bentham exclaimed.

Mallory smiled and bent over to shake hands hard. "Thanks for everything. You'll never know what you've done for me."

"Sorry to lose you," Claude Bentham murmured, and watched his cousin walk out, shoulders square and head high, and decided that a lesson in loyalty was worth a private investment of five thousand dollars.

However, Bentham did have just the slightest pang of conscience when he opened his desk and thoughfully ripped up Her Britannic Majesty's most gracious consent to accept Henry Mallory as her subject once he had completed and notarized his approved application for citizenship. This had been in his desk since the day he sent Mallory on a cruise with the Nantucket men.

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Save in the infinite wisdom of the wild a killer must always be—his own victim. . . .

THE DEATH HUNTER

By STEVE FRAZEE

Buchannan went back one more step. His right foot dropped into a stump-rotted hole. . . .

DURING the final moments before the train gathered its slack to start north Arnold Davidson held fear out of his voice, if not his eyes. He asked, "And if you find that he's going to jump the country—what then?"

Little ridges of flesh pinched over the fine white lines at the corners of Stuart Buchannan's gray eyes and he didn't meet Davidson's look. "I don't know for sure."

Davidson raised one hand as if to drag his friend off the coach steps, and then he withdrew the hand and let it fall at his side. "The police have cleared Roy Sargent, remember that."

Couplings banged, metal jarred, and the train began to move.

Davidson walked in the cinders beside

the steps. "There's no real evidence that he shot McKee. The police are still—"

"Sometimes the law wants too much evidence." Buchannan's brown face was harsh. One big, work-hardened hand gripped the guard rail firmly; his eyes looked past the tiny station toward wheat fields glowing in the sun. The hard cast of his deadly bitterness lay around him like four walls.

Davidson was running. "Don't lose your head, Stu. Let the police do their work."

"Shep McKee carried me down to the beach and out to the boat at Dieppe," Buchannan said tonelessly.

Davidson was sprinting hard. "I know, but—" He stopped running. The coach went past and Buchannan did not look back. Part of Davidson's last shout came to him: "I'll get you word if they—"

Wind and the rattle of steel killed the rest. Stuart Buchannan took his pack and cased rifle and went into the coach where Roy Sargent, given a clean slate by the police in the death of Shepard McKee, was riding north on a hunting trip.

Sargent was the tall, deep-chested man alone in a seat near the front of the coach. His skull seemed too small for the rest of him, an impression heightened by the way short, dark ringlets of hair lay close to his head, as if damp with perspiration. From flat, black machine-gunner eyes he gave Buchannan a curious glance as the latter passed.

The coach wasn't crowded. Buchannan took a seat near the rear of the car and tried to keep his eyes off the back of Sargent's head.

SO SARGENT was going hunting. Davidson had accepted that, even though he said it was the first time Sargent had been known to go after big game. Sargent was a great one for birds, though. It had been pheasants that day two weeks ago when Shep McKee had asked him politely not to hunt the field where the sheep were.

Sargent made several insulting remarks about farmers who thought they owned everything that happened to light on their land. He admitted at the hearing that McKee had been patient—up to a point, until McKee's slow grin so infuriated Sargent that he started a fight. Although handicapped by the stiffness of a broken elbow McKee had given Sargent a thumping and forbidden him to hunt on the farm anywhere.

There had been a great deal of shooting on McKee's land that afternoon, particularly where a six-acre pea field butted against high willows along a ditch bank. Approximately two hours after the fight two hunters had seen Sargent come from the willows and run through the pea vines toward his automobile on the road. They said that they heard one shot just before Sargent burst from cover.

They weren't sure just how close he had been to the place in the willows where a few minutes later another hunter, whose gun showed that he hadn't taken a shot that afternoon, found Shep McKee dying from a shotgun charge fired at close range.

Sargent had quit running by then and was kicking at tangled weeds and long grass along a fence row, still moving toward his automobile. The man who found McKee began to shout for help. Sargent kept moving away, claiming afterward that wind and distance had muted the yelling until he thought it no more than the plea of a hunter calling to his partner for aid in finding a downed bird.

He said he had run from the willows in pursuit of a wounded pheasant he had almost stepped on.

Just two days before the police had given Sargent a clean bill. Now he was running out, taking the least obvious route under the pretense of going hunting. What if the police had cleared him? After two weeks of thinking, a sneak's own feeling of guilt would lead him to take a sneak's way out, even when he didn't have to. That would be the final, damning bit of evidence, the mere additional speck that Buchannan needed.

He forced himself to take his eyes from Sargent's back. He kept telling himself that he didn't know for sure what he planned to do—and he knew that he lied. He knew what he intended to do. All that was left to decide was how. And it wouldn't be a sneak's way—he'd face Sargent man to man, let him know what the score was, and give him an honest chance.

He'd do it for Shep McKee, whose blackened face had been blank with pain, whose shattered arm dripped blood into

the sea while Stuart Buchannan lay helpless on his shoulder, and the little boat drifted farther away on the dark water. . .

And then he was looking at Sargent again, and Sargent was twisted around in his seat studying Buchannan curiously. The dark-haired man smiled tentatively, then rose and came down the aisle, swaying with the train, gripping the backs of seats.

Somewhere behind him Buchannan heard the conductor talking to a woman with children. A little child cried, "Pretty!" The conductor laughed and said, "She likes these brass buttons."

Sargent stopped at Buchannan's seat and smiled. It was a twisted grimace, Buchannan thought; twisted and crafty, but he received it dispassionately. His anger was gone now and the heat of it had tempered a sharp edge inside him.

Sargent said, "I see you're going up for some of the big stuff."

Buchannan nodded. This Sargent looked like a man with a high, quick temper, an unsteady sort of fellow when the pressure was on. That would be worth remembering.

"You've been around town two or three days, haven't you" Sargent asked. "With Davidson."

Caution rose in Buchannan. He nodded again.

"Thought I'd seen you, and I noticed him at the train a minute ago." Sargent glanced at the rifle case in the rack above Buchannan. "Isn't that Davidson's."

"Uh-huh. I borrowed it for this trip."

"Great fellow, Davidson," Sargent said. "We used to hunt birds together every—" A shadow crossed his face and his thoughts switched abruptly.

No, Buchannan thought, *Davidson will never hunt with you again.*

"This is my first big game try," Sargent said. He looked at Buchannan's big hands, at the steady gray eyes with the white lines at the corners. "How much do you depend on a guide, or are they all racketeers?"

"That depends on the guide, I suppose."

Sargent smiled. "You got a good one lined up?"

Buchannan shook his head. "I decided to make this trip on the spur of the moment."

Sargent ducked his head and raised his brows as he looked out of the window. "I've got one hired at Little Bear." For several moments he watched fields sweep past, and then he looked at Buchannan. "I was thinking we could throw in together—you're a friend of Davidson's and all—" He left the proposal dangling.

He's smarter than he looks, Buchannan thought. But even if Sargent had read the truth in Buchannan's face a few moments before, or had guessed it from the relationship with Davidson—nothing was going to help him if he tried to skip the country.

". . . such a shame," the woman was telling the conductor, "to go through that terrible fighting—and then be killed in a hunting accident on his own farm!"

Sargent's face went bleak and hard. He looked warily at Buchannan and seemed on the verge of withdrawing quickly.

"Sit down," Buchannan said. "Let's talk your idea over."

THREE miles above the settlement of Little Bear, which sat at the upper end of Mirror Lake, Buchannan lay on a hillside lush with clover and watched a mother black bear providing fish for her two cubs in a little boggy flat below. Wading up a narrow stream overhung with long brown grass, the old she bear hurled shining geysers and gleaming trout onto the banks.

Snuffling at the water, her coat agleam with wet in the late afternoon sun, she explored under the banks, drove the fish ahead into clear water and blasted them out with incredibly quick sweeps of her paws. The cubs snarled and pounced and feasted.

For three days now Buchannan had spent his days less than a half mile from the camp in a clearing at the junction of two small streams. Each day he had seen the bears, once stripping berry bushes, one afternoon ripping rotten logs apart on a hill where new growth was rising above an old burn, and today fishing.

He had no interest in killing a harmless black bear, even if there had been no other thoughts than hunting on his mind. So far he hadn't targeted the rifle that lay beside him.

From where he lay he could watch the trail in a narrow valley that opened on his right to timber-spotted hills beyond. Behind him, higher up, the pines were dense;

on the opposite slope a rocky spine rose almost sheer and bare.

Diedre, the guide from Little Bear, and Sargent always went up-valley. It was unlikely, Buchannan thought, that Sargent would make a wide detour around this vantage point to reach Little Bear and Mirror Lake, where there was an amphibian for hire.

It was very unlikely, since Buchannan had given Diedre fifty dollars to prevent that sort of move, telling the quiet, sharp-eyed little guide that Sargent must not be allowed to stray because he was a rank novice out on his first woods trip. Not that Diedre hadn't known that from the moment he'd met the two men at the station fifteen miles from Little Bear.

Diedre had taken the money and nodded, his quick black eyes shooting questions that he didn't ask. The guide was no fool. He'd brought in two men and he'd go out with two men or know the reason why. Not that Buchannan intended to conceal his actions when the time came, but he wanted no interference.

He watched the black bear explode another fish from the water. She went ashore to eat it, beating the cubs away. Buchannan's thoughts came back to Sargent.

So far Sargent had given no indication that he knew what lay in Buchannan's mind, but he must have wondered why he had a hunting partner who always went alone and after the others had left. Suppose Sargent hadn't intended to leave the country at all?

Buchannan considered that thought. It had crept up on him several times in the last three days, and each time he beat it back with the fact that he had seen a glimpse of an unusually large number of big notes in Sargent's wallet when they were buying supplies with Diedre.

No man out hunting would be likely to carry a huge sum of money with him. Oh, Sargent intended to run away, sure enough. He was playing a crafty, waiting game. It might require a little pressure to flush him out, a slight forcing of the issue—but he'd break sooner or later.

The old bear stopped fishing. She sat up in the water, sniffing the air, looking up-valley. Then she scrambled from the stream and began to move quickly toward the forest. One cub followed. The others loitered, snuffling in the dead grass where fish had been.

He was still there five minutes later when Diedre and Sargent passed on the trail a hundred yards from him. They saw him and Sargent started to raise his gun. Diedre said no, no with his head and one hand. Sargent lowered the rifle and the two men went on.

When they were out of sight in the trees Buchannan followed. He scared the cub from the stream and it ran to the edge of the timber, where it climbed five or six feet to the crotch of a small tree, clinging there as if in complete safety while it watched Buchannan go.

Sargent was sullen in camp. That evening after supper he complained, "There's no game here! Three days of tramping and we see one cub bear." He looked at Diedre. "What did you do, pick an easy place to get to?"

"There's game here," Diedre said quietly. "It takes patience. It is not like the old days."

"Game here! Patience!" Sargent turned away in disgust. "For the time and money this has cost so far we should have been overrun by game."

Diedre shrugged. "If you wish, we can try another place."

"I like it here myself," Buchannan said. "I don't want to move right now." He looked at Sargent. "But you two could go back to the lake and try the country west of there for a few days—if you want to, that is."

He watched Sargent narrowly.

Some of the temper went from Sargent's face. After a while he said, "No use to split up, even if you don't take much interest in hunting. We can all move or stay together. Maybe Diedre's right. Maybe we've just had a bad run of luck here."

He knows, Buchannan thought. The decision will have to be pushed on him.

WHEN SARGENT was at the stream getting a drink Buchannan said to Diedre, "You heard on the radio about the man killed two weeks ago south of here?"

Diedre took his pipe from his mouth. "I heard."

"Ask about it after while."

Diedre nodded slowly, his eyes unreadable.

Watching through the drift of smoke and curling flame tips Buchannan saw Sargent's expression turn from quick defiance to bleakness when the guide asked, "Did they ever find out who killed the farmer down where you fellows live?"

His eyes dark hollows in the firelight, his lips twisted, his teeth gleaming whitely, Sargent raised his head to look squarely at Buchannan.

"The police haven't found out—yet," he said. "One day they will, or the men who caused that accident will confess." His voice was low and toneless, as one speaking either from bitter resignation or desperate hope.

The silent trees behind them, the play of firelight on their faces, the night and wilderness about them—all that made dissembling almost impossible, Buchannan thought; then, too, the flat, dull tone of Sargent's voice gave strength to the thought that he had spoken from hope instead of fear.

Diedre's black eyes watched Buchannan quietly. Sargent dropped his gaze to stare into the fire.

Some time later Sargent said, "Maybe, after all, if we have no luck tomorrow I'll go with Diedre west of the lake."

Buchannan's gray eyes were cold and unwavering as he looked across the flames at the dark ringlets on Sargent's lowered head.

He was half smiling when he said, "Try it, Sargent—if you think the move is worthwhile."

In the furry hours of darkness while he lay awake in his sleeping bag doubt came once more to Stuart Buchannan. Over and over he fought to keep alive the picture of Sargent running through the sere and fallen pea vines; but the vision of McKee dying in the willows by the ditch did not come. He always saw McKee staggering in the surf with a wounded man on one great, broad shoulder. Sometimes the little boat rose and fell and drifted farther and farther away on the dark water, but McKee kept struggling toward it.

Sargent was not sleeping well either. Buchannan saw the blossoming of matches and the glow of cigarettes one after another; and once he roused from a doze to see Sargent standing by a rebuilt fire, looking toward the blackness of the forest.

They were quite late in starting up-valley the next morning. Buchannan gave the other two their customary lead and then headed for his observation point. He heard a lone shot from somewhere ahead. When he came from timber to a clearing he saw Diedre and Sargent several hundred yards above him on the clover hillside.

They yelled and waved their arms but their words did not come distinctly.

Moments later, against a rotting log, he found a dead cub still warm and bleeding. It was probably the independent little fellow that had stayed by the creek the day before when its brother and its mother fled into the trees, he thought bitterly.

He picked it up and stared savagely at the two upon the green hill. Diedre would not have allowed this if he could have prevented it. That miserable, murderous Sargent!

For a breath of time his anger blinded him to his danger; and then he realized why the pair had been shouting. He was still holding the cub when he turned to look at the timber ahead.

The old she-bear came from it. She saw him and stopped. She reared and sniffed. Then she dropped on all four feet and faced him with her head lowered between the bulge of shoulders. In the instant left to him for decision his brain churned with the thought: *"I didn't do this!"* He wanted to shout it at the bear, to make her understand—and the same reason that prompted the wish told him brutally that he had to run or kill.

He dropped the cub and raised his rifle. Pinched at the corners his eyes looked down the cold steel tube. The black bear did not move. He lowered the rifle, stepped backward over the log and began

(Continued on page 105)

By ARTHUR H. CARHART

&

C. C. STAPLES

SUNSHINER

WEST of Jolo harbor, beyond Balabac Strait, the brassy sun poised to plunge into the jade green waters of the China Sea. The rollers ran lazily, as though their energies had been sapped by the hurricane earlier in the week. Kim Ransom had been guiding a crude raft toward Jolo when the blow began. He'd sheltered on a little island while the storm howled past, and had thought he was in luck when the raft held together until he reached Jolo.

As twilight ended his first day on the island he knew his luck. All bad. The hurricane had put him in a sweet jam.

Before sunrise Kim Ransom had to be clear of Jolo. When daylight came he should be far enough on his way to hide his trail in the maze of channels among atolls and islands to the southward. If he got away he must have a seaworthy boat. He'd found only one that had not been disabled by the hurricane. That sound craft was a *prahu* hauled up beside the nipa hut of No Soap Strader, the sunshiner.

If he took it and Strader with him, Kim risked his life. If he merely took it, there was another kind of risk. If he didn't leave tonight on the out-tide, he might never leave the islands—just stay, caught in the net of the tropics, slowly going to pot.

Shadows spread in velvet bands across the narrow side street in the native quarter as Kim hurried toward Chino Charlie's. If he left Jolo tonight, he'd have to have the help of the big moonfaced trader. He could trust Chino Charlie.

A Story of the South Seas

Strader, half choking, whirled and saw the gun. . . .

Kim halted halfway along the shack-bordered lane and looked back with eyes squinted. He'd told Strader to go to hell. That wouldn't stop the sunshiner. Strader knew what was going on. He'd follow.

Friends back in the States would not have recognized this man in the street as Kim Ransom. His hair was uncut, bushy and sunburned. His shirt was torn, his trousers frayed at the bottoms. He had lived for weeks in naked freedom, like any other pearler. He looked like any American going to pieces in the tropics.

"Thought so," he breathed as Strader rounded a far corner. "Trailing me to get a share of the kill."

Strader knew his man was in a corner and he was in no hurry. If Kim left Jolo before sunrise, Strader was going to be cut in on the deal.

Nobody knew Strader's past; nobody cared much. He was beefy, unshaven, and hid his meanness behind a show of jovial laziness. He lived with a Moro woman in a shack near the Chinese pier, just outside of the walled town. Strader might be forty, or sixty; his type—black-haired men with small lively eyes and abundant animal vitality—rarely show their true age. He wasn't downright filthy, but by ordinary standards he was unwashed.

There, Kim thought, *is yourself, Ransom, in a couple of years from now, if the islands beat you. And you're on your way if you don't leave. You're on your way!"*

Strader thrust blunt hands into pockets of pants more ragged than Kim's. The joints on the sunshiner's fingers were tufted with black hair. He let out a puff of breath fumed with low grade gin.

"Don't play the fool, kid," said Strader thinly. "You've got to have that *prahu.* Let's talk business."

"I told you to go to hell." Kim's voice was level. Strader blinked. Then he smiled until his strong teeth showed, black with betel nut stain.

"Pearls," said Strader. "A slew of pearls. In four fathoms, beside a coral reef near an atoll south of here where your *prahu* was cut in two. You'll have to take that *prahu* beside my shack if you hope to get 'em before someone beats you to it."

"A pipe dream," jeered Kim.

Strader wiped his full lips with the furry back of his hand.

"Yeah," he drawled. "Pipe dream, eh? Now, listen. You thought your crew went to the sharks when the reef tore the belly out of your prahu. One didn't. He rode a piece of wreckage until some fishermen picked him up. He'd lost one leg to the sharks. Almost done for when some Moros found him."

"Which one—" began Kim. That was almost an admission that all Strader had said was true. The sunshiner tightened his eyelids a little. "Show me the man you say was picked up," Kim challenged.

"He's dead." Strader chuckled. "He told what happened, but he didn't say where." Strader shrugged. "Think I'd be here if I knew the location of that reef? Use your brains. You're the only one alive who can go directly back to that wrecked *prahu.* Others would have to put in days hunting for the spot, and that's no part of the islands to linger in."

That was true enough. The pearls were in a little strongbox beside shark-infested fangs of coral. Kim and his crew had been running from a threat of death haunting those islands to the south when they piled into that reef.

"Now, look," said Strader. "There's only a couple of Moros who know anything about this. I've told 'em to keep their mouths shut. Sooner or later they'll say something that'll spill the whole business. Maybe tonight, when they're full of nipa gin. Then every cutthroat on Jolo will be on your tail. Some gang might grab you and twist the information out of you. We're a couple of Americans, Ransom. Let's be partners in this."

If Strader hadn't inferred equality between them, Kim might have talked toward some deal. It was the realization that Strader, dirty, full of gin, living with Moros, considered there was no difference between them that broke out Kim's anger.

"You lousy island tramp," he said, "keep away from me."

"Don't pull that stuff," said Strader, and his eyes became wicked. "I'm just as good as you are. You're a tramp yourself, if you don't know it."

Kim left him, standing in the nipa hut shadows. He walked toward the thoroughfare leading to Chino Charlie's and felt with a cold fear that he already was partly like Strader. God help him, he'd go like Strader if he didn't find a way of escape.

WHERE the side street met the road, Kim glanced back. Strader was picking his teeth. He saw Kim look his way, shrugged and started to follow. As though he saw a soggy nemesis creeping after him, Kim started tramping almost heedlessly along the middle of the street, through the multi-colored, many-scented traffic.

A polyglot current of humanity shuffled, shouldered, shouted and laughed along the street. Young girls giggled and cast provocative glances. A half naked gook squatted on a heavy, solid wooden wheeled cart. His knees were high as his ears. A short-legged, long-horned carabao dragged the clumsy vehicle. A single line attached to a ring in the nose guided the animal; the other end of the line was held between the gook's toes. His hands were busy with a huge, home made cigar tied together with sewing thread.

Kim jumped with those around him, scrambling to the narrow stone sidewalk, to avoid being run down by a two-wheeled calesa drawn by fierce little native stallions. Two Spanish women with sharp features sat in the calesa. The younger one glanced at Kim, and stared as though he were a zoo speciment. Kim laughed harshly. He was getting in a devil of a state. The thought of being human driftwood, like Strader, was bearing too heavily on his mind.

An official, a dour man in spotless white, passed in a carriage and Kim jumped again. A breech-clouted coolie stopped beside him. The burden bearer eased his shoulder under a long pinga pole with huge bundles hung on each end, tilted his solid, conical hat, swiped sweat with a finger, then hunched the load to a balance and plodded on. Two turbaned and bearded Sikhs walked through the hurly-burly with a great show of dignity. They almost tramped over Kim, and he suddenly cursed again as he hurried toward the trader's.

Something like curdled violence was loose within the big, half-shadowed store as Kim reached the porch under the board awning. The racket inside was only Charlie and another Cantonese haggling over a peseta's worth of guianmos.

The customer, a weazened Chinaman with small, bright eyes, trotted out of the hazy interior and down the street. Charlie waddled through the dusted sunlight of the big room, bulged into the extra wide doorway, stopped ponderously and rolled a cigarette.

"Whassa matta?" demanded Charlie. His voice was reedy in ridiculous contrast to his bulk.

"What isn't?" Kim threw himself into a chair. "I told you this morning I had to find a *prahu* and go south tonight. There's only one boat on the island that could put out. It's on the beach at No Soap Strader's."

Charlie gave Kim a benign glance, trundled to a great chair especially built for him. There was no way of estimating the bony framework inside of Chino Charlie. His meat cased tightly inside of smooth yellow hide. He was not merely big-bodied—Charlie was big in heart and the quality politely called intestinal fortitude.

Their friendship had begun one sticky night when Kim, wearing sneakers, walked into the store as two tong men closed in on Charlie. It was a merry battle—a tangle of knives, fists, hatchets and the canned goods Charlie threw with fine accuracy. Charlie's courtly expression of thanks was the beginning of understanding between them, and now the half-caste Cantonese almost regarded Kim as an adopted son.

"Strader no good." Charlie said. He held the thin cigarette between fingers as round and hard as sledge handles.

"Well, he's got the only boat," Kim said restlessly.

"Mebbyso," Charlie nodded. "Mayhe takee *prahu*, come dark."

"That," said Kim, tightly, "is an idea. Turn thief. So I might go back to 'Frisco and that girl waiting."

"Missy Janelake," nodded Charlie.

"Yes, Jane Lake," said Kim. "You ought to know. I've shown you her picture and read parts of her letters."

"Lotta girl, everywhere," said Charlie, delicately flicking ash from his cigarette. "You don't get pearl now, you get later. No get Janelake, plenty other women. Whassa matta—lotta pearl, lotta girl. No get now, you get after while. Allesame."

"Like hell," said Kim. "Those are my pearls and Jane's my woman. I've been here a year and I've made a haul, and I'd be buying passage to the States now if that confounded Malay pirate hadn't made us"

"Lotta women, allesame." It wasn't certain whether Charlie meant it or was jabbing Kim to hear him protest.

Kim said "I'd give a leg if I could get a *prahu* tonight!"

A singsong chant started beyond the store corner.

"A leg, a leg—I'm bid one leg. Make it a pair. Make it two. I'm bid one—anyone make it two?"

"Strader," said Kim, in disgust.

The sunshiner slouched around the corner, grinning. Somewhere in the past he had been an auctioneer. His chant was a way of suggesting, without saying so, that at some time he had been something besides a squaw man.

Strader helped himself to a chair. Charlie got up, brought a bottle of liquor from the store, and placed it on a low table between Kim and Strader. Charlie left while they eyed each other. Strader reached swiftly for the bottle, poured drinks into the two glasses, picked up the one nearer to him, sniffed appreciatively and gulped the liquor.

"I've got a *prahu*, and a native crew that'll sail it over Niagara and back up again, if they took the notion," stated Strader.

"And cut a man's throat as easily."

"If you're squeamish about how many wives they've got, or their record with the constabulary, or how many murders they've really done, or if you're plain afraid—" Strader left the sentence hanging.

A pair of amorous curs always stop traffic in an island street. A crowd gathered about two luckless mongrels that struggled to abandon each other amid snarling and yelping. Women joined the men in making pungent remarks. There was giggling and laughter. Strader tossed a water-front remark into the general talk, and stood at the edge of the porch laughing with his loose mouth open.

Kim got up slowly, leaving Strader there with a half empty glass in his hand. Charlie was just inside of the doorway.

Kim spoke softly: "If I get that *prahu*, you stake me to grub?"

"Sure," said Charlie.

"You're making me a thief," said Kim, with a twist of his lips.

"Honest man first, then thief," said Charlie. "You do?"

"I'll get that *prahu*," said Kim, and turned back to the porch.

CHAPTER 2

STRADER hadn't turned around when Kim slipped back to the porch. The sunshiner picked up the liquor bottle after he turned, and held it up so the light passed through it. He rubbed his hand across his lips.

"Hah," said Strader, with thick satisfaction. "That's real stuff. I remember a bar man in Des Moines who never used any other brand when he mixed—never mind." He broke off suddenly and poured a drink. He downed it as a thirsty man would drink water. "The brand doesn't make much difference. If you get drunk enough you don't care whether or not a woman has teeth black from betel nut. Get drunker and you don't care a damn about anything, including women."

He sat down and fondled the half empty bottle. Kim thought he had made his decision to get away with the *prahu* when Charlie said he'd stake Kim to supplies. But the clinching of his plan to steal the *prahu* really came as he sat looking at Strader. Theft was really trifling. He might even consider murder if it meant escape. Anyway, if he got back to Jolo with the *prahu*, Strader could have it again, and with some bounty for its use.

He felt cold and certain in his mind as he began crafty moves to get the *prahu* in the water. One man couldn't haul it off the beach. Even if several could, it would bring Strader and the Moros swarming from the huts. But if the *prahu* were afloat, hard paddling could get it around to the loading point and from there on he'd have a chance to use tide and breeze to get clear of the harbor.

"I thought you wanted to talk business," Kim said. "You put a few more of those slugs of liquor inside of you and you'll not know whether we're talking about a *prahu* or a pinga pole."

"You can't get where you want to go on a pinga pole," said Strader. He chuckled, his belly pumping with low laughter. "What about the *prahu?*"

"What about it?" Kim threw back the question.

Strader licked his lips. "It really belongs to Datu Lakat, cousin of my Moro girl." The sunshiner began scratching his ribs. "Lakat's got two divers in his crew. Good ones. We'll deal for the whole business."

"What basis?" Kim watched the flicker in the man's eyes.

"Half," Strader reached for the bottle, halted his hand, and for several seconds stared at Kim.

"You wouldn't be thinking of taking all?" questioned Kim. "For instance, if I didn't come back."

"Sure." Strader laughed again. "I'd thought of that and knew you would. Moros might figure it that way. But you must remember, we're two whites, Ransom. I said half of what's in that box by the reef. Take it or leave it."

A gong orchestra started its infernal boom-bonging as they sat, almost without moving. Dust hung in humid air. The smell of copra, the putrid perfume of the durian, a deliciously flavored, rotten-scented fruit, the aroma of dried fish eddied with the breeze. Odors, heavy air, everything it touched, seemed to pulse with the gongs. The new night was coming alive, throbbing with a heartbeat of the East. If a man sat here, not caring, he would surrender to the spell.

Kim got up with a fierce shake of his shoulders.

"Get the *prahu* in the water," he said shortly. "I'll have supplies lined up and come by your place about midnight."

"Better come before that," said Strader.

"Midnight," said Kim, flatly. "Out-tide will still be strong enough to carry us to sailing water."

HE TURNED into the store. If this worked out, by midnight, he'd be under sail with Jolo fading behind him. Then let Strader, let anyone on Jolo try to follow

Chino Charlie was packaging supplies as Kim entered the big room. Charlie knew what not to take, which was important. Kim checked over the stuff swiftly, and saw it was adequate.

"All there," said Charlie, beaming.

"One thing lacking," said Kim. "Dynamite."

"Whassa matta?" Charlie lifted thin brows.

"Dynamite for sharks." Kim grinned a little. "A few doses of forty per cent powder down by that reef may clear the water long enough to get a man down and up without having him chewed in two. One case of forty per cent powder, Charlie, fuse and caps."

"All light." Charlie frowned, then beckoned Kim into quarters.

The trader was digging into a chest when Kim entered the rooms where Charlie lived. The chest yielded a long, cylindrical object swathed in oiled cloth. Charlie chuckled as he unwrapped it.

"Lord," said Kim. "A Browning. Where the devil did you get that machine-gun?"

"My cousin Ah Quong velly good pearler." Charlie wiped the smooth metal of the gun. "Ah Quong go home, Canton. Don't come back. Leave this for me. Dynamite good medicine for sharks. Browning gun good medicine for pirate fellah. You catchum pirate, he catchum hell, maybe. Big joke for pirate fellah, I guess, maybe."

"Bless your old Confucian soul," said Kim. "If I ever get back here again I'll pay you—"

"Whassa matta?" protested Charlie. "All jawbone. Too muchee talk. Get chow stuff on Chinese pier. I wait. You get *prahu*. You don't wait."

"You might," said Kim grimly, "burn a few strips of prayer paper to a joss or two while I'm getting that boat. Maybe joss fellah think white thief some good and help."

Before Kim started toward Strader's, the supplies were stacked on the dock. Charlie sat in a shadow, smoking a cigarette. The Browning had been hidden in the bedroll. Charlie had included all the ammunition he had, and it was enough for pirate trouble. That blunt weapon gave Kim a feeling of security he had not felt before.

The gong orchestra had beaten up to a higher rhythm. A waterfront woman sang a native song in a dive on a side street. Mists coming in from the bay made hazy nebulae of lamps supposed to illuminate the wharves. A *dama de noch* bush, which blooms only once a month, and only at night, added its cloying perfume to the languorous drift of air.

Kim paused at a twist in the street that was black as a bend in a sewer and almost

as noxious. He looked back. The night was blind, the air as soft as flesh. There were shadows, where columns of mist moved along the street in stately processions. A bat flickered by, stirring up air against his bare cheek.

He blew out his nostrils as he started down the side lane. But the next breath was humid and heavy. The islands—beautiful, lazy, seductive and lousy, like a wench with bright eyes and a dirty neck. You beat off an approach that sapped your will, but the next moment, the allure returned. And —to hell with it.

A Moro woman crooned in Strader's hut. At the beach, there was a little sighing sound where slow ripples ran over the shingle. Kim waited a long time beside a palm tree. If he were discovered, there would be knives in the dark.

He finally stepped softly into the water and waded out against the ghostly shimmer of night waters. The *prahu* should be directly in front of Strader's. Kim was breast deep when he saw it. He had to swim the last few feet. His heart pounded as he hung for a long moment with a hand hooked over the gunwale.

There was a lift to this business of robbery and he felt it. He waited a few moments after he boarded the *prahu*, hearing the water drip from his wet clothes. There was no sound before he cast off and headed the *prahu* along the waterfront.

The tide was at full flood as he poled to the Chinese pier. He caught the plank edge and pulled along to where Charlie waited. They worked without a word until the goods were piled into the *prahu*.

The heavy bedroll came last and Charlie chuckled in the dark as he handed it down.

"Good medicine," said Charlie. "Go plenty quick, now. Tide run out. Pretty soon somebody find boat gone."

The shove from the pier sent the *prahu* gliding into the slow sweep of the tide. Palm leaves began to rustle like the dusty clapping of hands, and a sudden touch of breeze riffled along the waterfront.

KIM sat at the steering oar after he had eased up a bit of sail. The pile of plunder could be stowed under the suali deck after he was away from the harbor. Plenty of time, once he was clear. Time to put in at some of the islands south and find a good Moro crew to go on with him. If he had a boat he could get a crew.

Little waves slapped the bow. The smell of the sea came salty and sharp. Fog was thinning; he saw lights in the harbor. That helped—he wouldn't be ramming into shipping anchored in port. The water-paved way to escape lay open. He felt like standing up with a yell, and smiled the impulse down.

The faint echo of the gong orchestra came in fitful cadence. Kim threw his head back in a quick gesture. He thought of Jane Lake waiting. He was a thief, but he was glad of it, if at end he would find Jane waiting.

Then there was a sound—not offshore, but on the *prahu*. Kim suddenly felt his eyes staring, trying to pierce shadows. It might have been a rat, or it could have been some of the supplies shifting in the pile. The slap of water against the side of the boat seemed loud and heavy. His own breathing, the sound of the light breeze in the rigging, were magnified. He began to feel the nearness of someone, a strange presentiment that other beings were on the craft.

But no other sound came and the shadows were those of night under stars. The nerve tension passed a little; his muscles loosened.

The sound came again. The scrape of a bare foot on a bit of deck matting brought him to a half crouching position.

For one instant Kim glimpsed shadows charging from the suali deck house. Then they crashed into him.

He felt the touch of brown bodies as he struck wildly. The fire of a knife did not rip at his ribs as Kim expected. He felt their panting breath on his neck as they sprawled. Kim knew how he had been outwitted before No-Soap Strader spoke.

"Neat business, Lakat," said the sunshiner out of the darkness. "Tie him and throw him in the deckhouse. He knows where to go and we're on our way."

Moros twisted him and jerked thongs tight over his wrists. He was carried and dumped into deeper darkness. For long moments, stacked into a corner, Kim Ransom beat his thoughts against the thing he faced. He summed it up in one answer.

The islands had him as in a net. Even

though he came out of this with his life, he might never get away from the islands.

MORNING steeped up out of the eastward oceans. The Southern Cross glowed, then dimmed in a sky shot through with gold. Kim Ransom lay on the *prahu's* deck, listening to the whisper of the water as the sharp bow cut southward. After they were well away from Jolo, Strader had ordered the ropes off Kim's wrists and ankles.

"If you have funny ideas, Ransom, about slipping over the side," Strader said, "think again. Think of sharks."

Lalon Bagusun, one of the Moros, had guided the *prahu* through the night. Kim had given the course and Bagusun steered by the stars. Datu Lakat was squatting beside the deckhouse. He was a wrinkled, evil-visaged scoundrel. He wore a wooden-sheathed barong strapped to him as though he had been born with it. Moros ask odds of no one when it comes to cold steel. But even that murderous knife would be useless against a stream of death jetting from a machine-gun. And the Browning was an ace in the hole. Kim had decided his course as the night waned. If he could keep the Browning hidden until the critical moment, he would get the whip hand.

Let Strader believe he had everything his way, wait until they had reached the reef, until the box of pearls was in the *prahu*, then meet the next move with the Browning—that was Kim's plan.

Strader would make no move until they had the box. After that it would be one man with a Browning against Moro knives and the automatic Strader carried. Everything hung on the play down there by the shark reef.

Strader came out of the deckhouse, grinned at Kim, then stood for a long moment looking toward those palm-cloaked islets where marching regiments of sprightly little waves tumbled over guardian reefs. The sunshiner was ragged, dirty, his hair matted and tangled. But there was light in his eyes as he turned to Kim.

"Realm of beauty and magic," he said slowly "That's what gets hold of you, Ransom. You don't see the ugly things—the dirt, disease, heartbreak and degeneration—at first. Just see something like paradise scattered over the sea." Strader shook himself and dug at his teeth with his little finger. He stared at Kim moodily. "What in hell are you thinking about?"

"Something you said yesterday," Kim told him. "About white men fighting the islands to a finish—and if he doesn't win, he's an island tramp. He never gets away."

"Tripe," said Strader. He spat red betel juice and a little dripped on his beard. "Who wants to get away?"

"You do." Kim saw the flicker in the man's small eyes.

Strader cursed, slowly, then said, "Give me the price of good, imported liquor, meat roasted by a Moro woman, a brown-skinned wench that's young and—"

"And you lie, Strader," Kim said levelly. "You're thinking right now of crowds hurrying to the Ferry Building in San Francisco, of white women with teeth white instead of black with betel—you're remembering people hurrying along Michigan Avenue at dusk, or Locust Street in Des Moines, or—"

"You're full of foolish talk," cut in Strader, irritably. "Stop your blabbering."

He began stowing the supplies still stacked in the waist of the *prahu*. Kim made no move to assist. The way he rested against his bedroll, he could feel the hard metal of the Browning against his back. It was strategy to keep close to that gun—to keep between it and anyone who might discover it if they touched the bedroll. Strader uncovered the case of dynamite.

"Shark medicine," he said straightening. "They're thick near that reef?"

"Twenty-footers," Kim said. "Scampering around the coral like mice in a grain warehouse."

"You didn't say much about that last night," remarked Strader. "Didn't tell about the sharks there."

"Nor how it happened we were caught in the open sea when a blow came and rammed us into that reef. That, Strader, was because a fellow named Sultan Jahonda was chasing us. You've heard of Jahonda, Strader?"

The sunshiner's eyes were round.

"So there's where you were pearling," he breathed. "In waters that old Malay claims as his own private pearling grounds. That's where we've got to go!"

"You don't relish that," Kim said.

"Who would?" Strader tugged at his

beard stubble. "I've taken chances in my life, but we better get in there and get out fast."

THE miles fell behind the *prahu*. Strader was moody. He smoked his evil-smelling herb cigarettes, watched shark fins that cut the water until they disappeared, then resorted to gazing at the line where sea and sky met, as though searching for a sail he feared might be there, like the wing of a bird of omen.

During the day, Kim bundled his bedroll and kept as near to it as he dared. When evening came he stretched out with the hard case of the Browning gun as his pillow. Night drew curtains of darkness over the sea.

They were lolling under the stars when Strader flipped his cigarette into the water and said, "Johanda and sharks. It's a fine flock of risks you're taking us into."

"You invited yourself." Kim's dry answer was sharp as acid. "You don't like to think of those sharks, do you, Strader? Did you ever fish for catfish with chicken entrails? These sharks go after a man like channel cats gobble—"

"Oh, shut up." Strader shook his shoulders. "What you trying to do—get my nerve?"

"Could be." Kim felt the urge to rawhide the sunshiner. "But the sharks aren't the worst. Johanda is the big hazard. Anyone ever tell you how that Malay mutilates a white man if he lets him live?' They have? Well, maybe it would be good sense to make up your mind what you'd do, Strader, if it was a choice between the Malay and the sharks. Think it out beforehand, and you'll not have to decide in an instant when the time comes."

Strader cursed and got up.

"It's part of the islands," Kim jeered. "The beautiful, lazy, lousy—"

The sunshiner cursed, lurched to the bow of the *prahu*, where he sat looking ahead, as though trying to see what waited at the reef to the south.

The moon rose, lopsided and blood-colored. The twin outriggers skimmed the waves and the soft sibilant music lulled Kim to slumber. One hot, angry word in Moro brought him awake with a start. At the stern there was a tense, significant grouping, the three Moros facing Strader. The squaw man came forward in quick strides.

"Ransom, you awake?" he asked, guardedly.

Kim raised on his elbow.

"What's up?" he demanded.

Strader knelt and said, "Those boneheaded Moros heard our talk about sharks and Jahonda. They're wanting to turn back."

"Maybe you ought to offer them more of a split, Strader."

"What are you talking about?"

"Let's understand each other, Strader," said Kim. "You plan to pitch me overboard when you get that box. You could offer them half the booty. You shouldn't be too grasping about this."

"What gave you the idea I'd toss you—"

"Put myself in your place, Strader, and reason it out. You've got nerve coming to me when you get in trouble with your natives. Play your hand through. I'll play mine."

"If that's the way you feel."

"That's the way."

"You'll find out, kid," said Strader dourly, "if you live long enough, that when the islands start to gang on white men, it's time for 'em to stick together."

He walked back toward the Moros. There was a splash of short talk in native tongue. Kim understood enough to realize that Strader was offering half the pearls. That was Strader's play.

Strader kept with the natives after that. Kim waited. Nothing would happen until the pearls were aboard—then the outcome would balance on a needle point of time. A moment when they would come at him, thinking he was unarmed, and he would meet them with the threat of the machine-gun.

The sun slanted down toward Borneo when Kim saw the atoll where his wrecked pearling *prahu* lay, as the islet rose out of the waters. More than seven thousand islands dot the map of the Philippines, and of these, only four hundred sixty-six contain more than a square mile of land. It would be easy to make a mistake. There was a question in his mind as he pointed out the spot to Bagusun, the helmsman. Strader stood with stout legs wide braced.

"You sure?" he asked.

"It's the sharkiest place in the world,"

said Kim. "Look, Strader, there they are."

The triangular fins of two tigers sheared waves in the wake of the *prahu*. Strader stared at them with strange fascination.

"It seems curious," mused Kim, "that those devils can smell blood before it's spilled."

The sunshiner's face twitched. His eyes were uneasy.

The breeze died as they came to the wreck beside the reef. The little island, the graceful, slim-trunked palms, the lagoons, seemed caught in a hypnotic trance. The seas were glassy. Strader was leaning over the side, staring into the grottos of the reef, where troops of jewel-colored fish lanced away from the shadow of the *prahu*. They came over the broken hull of Kim's wrecked *prahu*.

"There's the box," said Strader, suddenly. "There."

"Where I left it," said Kim.

The Moros peered into the water. Lakat said something to Andug, the big diver. The box was in plain vision, but Lakat said no man could get down there with sharks hovering near.

Strader took an impetuous step toward Andug, the diver. "Why, you scum of hell, you're going down and bring it up. Over the side, you son of a pig!"

The big pearler straightened, his eyes mad with anger. Strader had thrown the highest insult a Moro may receive.

"They're your Moros, Strader," said Kim thinly. "Until you called Andug that name, you might have kept a grip on 'em. You've blown your hold on 'em now."

"I'll show you," Strader began.

He lunged at Andug. They floundered into the side of the *prahu* as it tipped. Andug held on, hanging over the water. Screaming, then, he fell. Something gray rushed below him as he clawed to get back aboard. His head went under and blood spread in the lashing water, where long forms swept and turned. It happened with stunning speed. A shark raced with a leg in its jaws. Strader stood staring.

"Look out!" Kim's warning was instinctive. Lakat and Bagusun had pulled barongs and were closing on the sunshiner.

After Strader turned, automatic in hand, there were several seconds in which no one moved. Then the Moros slid barongs back into wooden sheaths and moved back.

"Is this mutiny?" Kim flung at Strader.

"One of them is going down there," said the sunshiner. "Bagusun! Lakat! One of you is going after that box."

"You no use big powder," said Lakat soberly. "Andug feed shark. You crazy!"

The sunshiner's shoulders hitched.

"God. I forgot that dynamite," he said thickly. "Rig up a shot, Ransom. Then we'll see which of these two Moros will go down."

"No good, powder now." Lakat looked across the darkening, silent water. "See—Malay."

A *prahu*, with blood-red sails marked with a big white crescent, was slipping from behind the point of an islet. No breeze touched the water; the palms on the atoll stood with fronds drooping. The boat moved like a phantom. The hull was hidden by the lazy roll of the sea, but the red sails stood up boldly.

"Jahonda," breathed Strader, huskily. "We've got to run for it."

"Don't stampede," Kim said steadily.

Strader turned to stare.

"You don't know, maybe," he said heavily. "They tie you out on the deck, spread-eagled, naked in the sun, with wet bejuco. The sun dries it and it shrinks, pulling you apart. Get up that sail."

Kim caught him as he moved toward the mast, and they were close together when Kim said, "Act like a white man, Strader. If you've got nerve, you better show it. Our sail's down. We can't see their hull and they can't see ours. They'll miss the mast, seeing it against the palms on the atoll. The minute they see our sail up, we're spotted. In ten minutes it'll be dark. We can hang right here until first light tomorrow morning and then get going."

"Sit on this reef all night with that Malay around?"

"Sit tight." Kim grinned a little.

"Not on your life," said Strader. "We're here just long enough to get those pearls, and we're sailing out of here the minute we get 'em." He turned to the Moros. "One of you," he whispered "is going down there, without the dynamite, shark or no sharks." He raised his automatic.

"You don't shoot," Lakat said. "Jahonda hear."

"There's a breeze," said Strader, his voice rasping. "It'll blow the sound away."

"If you'll notice, my American friend," Kim suggested grimly, "the breeze blows toward the sultan's *prahu*. The report from a pistol would be carried right over to him. You've slipped, Strader—the islands have softened your mind along with the rest of you."

Strader seemed to shake panic out of him as he straightened. He licked his lips and grinned.

"If I had you around, kid," he said ironically, "I might make something of myself. I can wait as well as anyone, Ransom. I'll just prove it."

NIGHT closed suddenly. Strader leaned against the side of the deckhouse. There was a sense of relaxed waiting about him; every fiber alert but held loose, ready, if anything happened.

"Ransom, you're a nervy whelp," said Strader, and his voice was not unkind. "But you've not been soaked in this life as long as I have. I sort of went nuts when I saw that box." He drew a long, hard breath and his cigarette glowed like a red firefly. "Wonder if they still have those band concerts at the park in Denver?"

He was silent a moment. The Moros talked in low tones at the rear of the *prahu*.

Strader flipped his cigarette over the side and drew a deep breath.

"I used to go out to that Denver park with a girl." Strader was letting memories get into words. "I had great plans. Seems a long time ago, but it wasn't so many years. Oh, damn this—"

He got up, went into the deckhouse and locked himself inside. Kim stretched out on his bedroll. A march of thoughts kept him from slumber. Maybe Strader's girl had agreed to wait, as Jane had. But no girl waits for years. Just over the side of the *prahu* was the means for going home before too late.

Just over the side. . .

Tiny riffles of the sea against the *prahu's* side were like distant island gongs, repeating monotonous rhythms. The soft whisper of tropical winds in rigging, the breeze touching his eyelids, the boat rocking gently like a cradle lulled him to deep drowsiness.

The Cross blazed in the infinite depths of the skies; the fronds of the palms on the atoll began swinging like arms and hands of slim, brown maidens in a langorous dance, and he slept.

CHAPTER 3

KIM RANSOM'S awakening was blurred with bewilderment. He had been dreaming of the old Cherry Hills crowd and Jane. The hard touch of the Browning brought realities back. The first gray of dawn was stealing over the eastern rim of the world. He saw the two Moros huddled in the stern. Strader snored within the shelter of the cabin.

Kim rolled over, looked over the side, and saw the gray shadows of sharks sliding lazily through the water. He was watching them when a leader suddenly veered away, the entire troop whipped in formation and shot out toward the sea.

Sighting along the line of ripples cut by their triangular fins, he saw the reason for their going. A whale, probably sick or wounded was being attacked by a mob of killers out in an open stretch of water. With their uncanny scent for blood, the sharks had raced toward the meat.

Kim turned back to look again at the water below the *prahu*. No shadows lurked there, but he could not see clearly. It was a risk, but he had to take it.

He was naked as he slid over the side. He got under without a splash. He kicked down, touched the box, but the throb in his body, the ache in his lungs, were driving him to return to the surface.

He fought the feeling of black suffocation, groped for the box, caught it.

He came to the surface under the side of the *prahu*, hung there until he breathed more quietly. He pushed the box in front of him, easing to the deck. His hands trembled as he opened the small chest.

He shook all over as he lifted water-soaked bags out of the box. Under trembling fingers, he felt the tiny spheres of the pearls. He shoved the small sacks under the bedroll.

It had worked out so easily he couldn't quite believe it. When the others awakened, he would have the situation under full control. He heard a sound behind him.

No-Soap Strader had opened the door of the cabin. There wasn't a chance of pulling the machinegun out now. Strader was

in a position to leap the moment the weapon was revealed. In the moment he would have to spend setting it up, Strader would block him. The big sunshiner was rubbing his eyes. Under cover of his crouched body, Kim eased the empty treasure box over the side. Then he squirmed into the bedroll, as though trying to settle in for another wink of sleep. He hoped Strader was too drowsy to notice his head was wet.

He pulled a corner of the covering over his ears.

"Hey," said Strader, finishing his blinking and yawning. He was peering with squinting eyes against the growing light. "All hands out. Shake it up."

As though he remembered the treasure below the keel, he strode to the side of the *prahu*, glanced over, hurried back to the cabin, reached just inside the door and came back with a bundle of dynamite sticks.

The fuse dangled from one of the pieces of dynamite. The two Moros had come forward while Kim wrestled with his pants, getting them on under cover of the bedding.

"There's the box," said Strader huskily, as he looked over the rail. "See it, Bagusun? I'll pitch this powder to the sharks and over you go."

Strader touched the fuse with his lighted cigarette. The powder core began to hiss. A fin cut through the water near the outrigger.

"Take a dose of this," said Strader savagely as he tossed the dynamite.

The other three were looking at the sharks. Kim slipped an ammunition clip into the Browning and grasped the tripod. The powder let loose, water spouted up and a shark rolled, belly up.

"Over you go," said Strader, giving Bagusun a shove.

Kim was easing the Browning out of hiding. Strader was intent on what was happening in waters above the reef. The sharks were busy on the attack of the belly-up member of their tribe and the water swirled red. Bagusun shot up, one hand grabbing at the rail, the pearl box clutched in the other hand. Strader grabbed.

"Pretty nice." Strader was saying. "That's pretty nice."

Kim rose smoothly. He had the heavy gun under his arm and a couple of belts of ammunition in his other hand. He walked quietly aft. Strader was fumbling with the lid of the strong box. Kim squatted, set the gun on its tripod and waited. The box lid flew open.

"What lousy trick is—" Strader, half choking, whirled, looked at Kim, and saw the gun. He tried to swallow something in his throat. The Moros' features were as impassive as masks on native idols.

"It's empty, Strader," Kim said. "And this Browning isn't. The pearls are here." He patted the wet bulge in his shirt, where bags were cold against his belly. He felt a slow, hard grin pulling the corners of his lips.

That grin froze as it formed. He looked beyond the men in the waist of the *prahu*.

Majestically with a bone of white in her teeth, the big *prahu* with blood red sails came from behind the atoll.

"RUSH him," ordered Strader. His back was to the pirate craft. He was reaching for his automatic.

"Look back of you first," Kim said hoarsely.

"It's an old trick." Strader's teeth showed in his taunting smile. "Try something else, Ransom."

"Jahonda!" Bagusun had shifted position so he could glance over his shoulder.

Strader whipped around. For an instant he was braced in taut surprise. Then he came alive with a jump.

"Cast off that anchor!" he rasped, jumping ahead of the Moros.

The empty treasure box was kicked aside. Bagusun and Lakat were throwing the anchor chain. The *prahu* began to move along the reef. A bullet hit the waves and whined into the sky.

"Faster," Strader gasped. He tugged at the sail.

Kim moved the tiller to head the *prahu* away from the reef. There was little headway. The boat drifted dangerously. Lakat crouched in the bow, barong bared. Bagusun huddled back of the deckhouse, peered around the corner and watched the pirate ship. Strader knelt behind the low gunwale. Yells and gunfire broke on the pirate *prahu* as it skipped and danced down on them.

"Start shooting, Ransom!" Strader shouted. He fired the automatic, but was short.

A Malay in the rigging spotted Datu Lakat. He fired. The old Moro spun to his feet, ran, staggered, tripped and pitched over the side. A shark circled him and rushed. Another sped to the scene.

Kim had to drive with all his will to turn the Browning until sweat-glistening bodies of the pirate crew were lined with his sights. The Malays milled along the rail, ready to leap as the two *prahus* touched. With every nerve crying out for him to press the trigger, he forced himself to wait until the first blast would sweep that mass back. . . .

A wind suddenly bulged into the sails. The oar jerked and Kim felt the boat under him slide toward the coral knives of the reef. With a calm that was almost mad, he speculated on what would happen first—the meeting of the *prahus* or that sickening, raking jar that would cut their own craft on the reef. Unless something was done, it would be the smash of coral under the keel.

"Get on that outrigger, Strader." Kim heard the crackling coolness of his command and wondered if he had given it.

It was a fling at death for anyone to attempt to ride the outrigger to pull the *prahu* back toward an even keel so it could be steered away from the coral. Strader hesitated, then jumped. Something had pulled together in No-Soap Strader in that instant he took to make up his mind.

As Strader's weight pulled the *prahu* over, it sheered away from the reef. The sunshiner shot at a shark and laughed defiantly. That glimpse of Strader would stay with him always, if he lived, Kim knew—all of this would be memory pictures, like a series of wire sharp etchings.

He lashed the helm. He must have some shelter. At the moment, it didn't seem as important that he might escape a bullet from the pirate craft as it was that he should stay on his feet and match the Browning against, the boarders as they bore down. A mad game, matching his play against theirs.

One pirate leaped. He had crawled out on the bowspirit, to be first aboard. Bagusun swung his singing barong. Kim heard the steel smack dully into flesh. Bagusun was straightening as fire broke on the pirate ship. The Moro caved, falling over the Malay he had met.

Kim kneeled back of the deckhouse. It was scant shelter. Strader still hung out there on the outrigger, between the sea, the sky and the yawning instant of the future which might begin eternity. Everything was moving like the rush of a hurricane wind and yet there was a trancelike deadliness that made every move seem slow and deliberate. Curious, Kim thought, that in this moment he should make such an appraisal. It had simmered down to a pair of white men, facing the fates of the island seas.

That was the thought racing through him as he squeezed the trigger on the Browning.

Men flung back from the rail of the pirates' boat. He saw that with a feeling of surprise and wonder. It was stunning to realize that one man with a modern weapon could play such havoc with the massed humanity on that other vessel. A bullet slammed close to Kim.

"Give 'em hell, kid!" Strader clung to the outrigger, shouting encouragement. "Remember the Maine!"

Two whites left. Kim grinned. Strader had forgotten his scratchy hide and native ways. Something within him was rising with the yell of battle.

Jets of death squirted from the machine-gun. Men spun, flung their arms and cursed. The gun clicked empty. The big Malay *prahu* hung over the smaller craft. Strader was leaping back to the deck. Kim heard his automatic blast. A Malay, who had jumped from Jahonda's ship, stacked up near where Bagusun lay still. Kim knew they were past the reef or Strader would not have left the outrigger.

"Shoot, kid," Strader was saying. "My gun's dry."

Kim fumbled with new ammunition. It didn't catch in and he forced it. It jammed. Malays surged back to the rail of the pirate boat as they realized what must have happened.

"Cut loose," Strader commanded.

"Jammed." Kim struggled with the clip. "Jammed, tight."

Strader jumped into the deckhouse. Kim caught some ragged remark about dynamite. Maybe Strader had lost his head. The sunshiner should know that fresh dynamite will not explode as it is thrown. Old powder is touchy and may let loose when thrown, but not new dynamite. Kim felt sweat running down his neck. His hands were clumsy.

"Here's medicine for you," Strader was shouting as he leaped out on deck again.

Kim saw the sunshiner's arm whip back. He saw the glint of the little metal box. Strader had thought fast. Dynamite may not explode when tossed. But the touchy primer in the caps, powerful beyond any equal amount of powder, may blow even with a jolt. Fulminate of mercury will stand no rough handling, and Strader was throwing a whole fistful of the stuff into the pirate *prahu*.

The blast boomed into destruction. Kim sprawled. The middle of Jahonda's *prahu* seemed to be disintegrating. Their own little craft heeled over. Kim had one glimpse of Malay warriors tossed about as though slapped by a fabulous hand. Jahonda's ship was swung into the reef, grinding into snags of coral.

Kim clutched the edge of the deckhouse as he began to slip across the tilted planking. He heard the scrape of metal along the deck. The Browning slid toward the water. He reached, missed, saw it go over the side, even as he was sliding after it.

"Get a hold. Hang on, Ransom!"

Strader's voice suddenly seemed an infinite distance away, for something struck Kim's skull, deadening his feeling, loosening the grip of his fingers as he tore at the side of the *prahu*. He had a hazy flash of the sunshiner diving his way. He wondered, oddly, if Strader had hit him over the head to get the pearls.

If that was it, there was a grim comedy in the moment.

Strader was calling for him to hang on. Of course he had to hang on, until the sunshiner could get the pearls.

He thought he was laughing. He felt himself sliding toward the water.

If he went overboard he would take those pearls with him.

What a joke that would be on No-Soap Strader!

KIM RANSOM resumed a life that was fantasy, in a world distorted, filled with strange and weird experience. When the filmy curtains of the fever drew aside and he saw the immediate surroundings with some clarity, he looked at the palm thatch of a rude hut. Tropical winds whispered by. No-Soap Strader came to his side with cooling drinks that were nectar to a parched throat. Sometimes Strader sat cross-legged, smoking, looking through the doorway to where little waves lapped at sands that were white as drifted snow.

Then the fever would come again, and Kim struggled through strange scenes, raving. He hung to a tilting *prahu*. Just over the edge of the deck, sharks fought for a place in the front line of gray killers. He dug his fingers into the planking, but could not stop sliding.

Or sometimes he stood on a liner, looking at a crowded dock where people clustered so thickly that a girl, Jane Lake, could not get to where Kim fought other people in an effort to reach her side.

Sometimes it was people who hedged him in.

But then a magic of some threatening power would change them to islands—thousands of them, beautiful with windwhipped palms. They blotted out the wharf, the people and Jane until there was only the isle-dotted sea stretching to a blue infinity.

When Jane was lost, when he could no longer see the white flutter of her dinky handkerchief, he struggled to escape the islands. His throat would dry with cursing.

Strader would come, anxiously, with quiet words and give him something to drink. That would seem to wash away a little of the nightmare moment, and he could focus his eyes on the narrow view of the beach outside the thatched shelter.

His head ached whenever he tried to apply logic to the situation. The unreasonable element was Strader—the way the sunshiner was caring for him. That could not be matched and balanced with what had happened back at the shark-haunted reef.

Morning coolness was in the hut when Kim lost the fever. He watched the dancing lights reflected from water ripples. Mirrored flashes came through the hut door and made constantly changing patterns on the roof thatch. It was very early. Shore birds piped at the beach. In stillness, he heard the *lap-lap* of little waves. The animal sound of Strader snoring made him turn weakly, to look at the other man in the hut. More hairy than ever, his face up, Strader rattled and bubbled in deep sleep.

Kim spoke weakly and the sunshiner came awake with a rush. He peered anx-

iously at Kim. His eyes were intent and bright under heavy brows and his features were half hidden in the bush of a beard. He rose to his knees, his ragged clothes hanging from his heavy body.

"How do you feel, kid?" he asked solicitously.

"I've been out of my head?"

"You sure have. You're over it, you think?"

"Guess so." Kim lay back. "What happened? Last I remember, you or someone hit me a whacking blow on the head as I was sliding toward the sharks."

"Bullet hit you," Strader said. "I just got you before you went overboard. Couldn't let those pearls go to the belly of some shark." Strader grinned.

"Sure." Kim saw that. Strader had pulled him out because the pearls were under his shirt. "Jahonda—what happened to that outfit?" Kim asked, after a moment.

"Last I saw," said Strader, reaching for a herb cigarette, "the Malays were bailing and trying to beach their *prahu*. The dynamite caps I tossed must have opened seams all over that boat. Way I saw it, I had troubles of my own, so I left Jahonda to his and came here." Strader blew a gray plume of smoke at the doorway and it billowed into new sunshine.

"Whereabouts are we?" Kim didn't care much, but it was worth asking.

"About a full day of sailing north of the reef." Strader looked out at the restless edge of the sea. "I started for Jolo. Saw you wouldn't make it if I kept going. Put in here after dark of the first night. Figured Jahonda might get his *prahu* patched up and come after us. This looked like a good spot to hide and I did."

"How long ago?"

"Over a week."

Kim lay quietly. Strader shook himself, got up, scratched, went to the doorway and stood there, facing against the morning sunshine. He looped his heavy fingers in his belt and gazed over the little bay.

"It's this morning mood of the islands that steals a man's heart and drugs him," he said softly. "It's pure beauty. The tops of rollers, like little white manes, out at the barrier reef. The palms swaying—the palm fronds hitting together like clapping hands. And the drum beat of the waves when they run on the beach."

The cigarette hung from Strader's hairy lips. His nostrils widened with each deep breath. His eyes were narrowed with a touch of odd rapture.

"It's lovely," he said. "And it's hell."

"Paradise and purgatory; I know what you mean." Kim sighed. "When the islands are this way, a man can give his soul to them, and he never quite gets it back."

"Judas," Strader said raspily, "we're getting sentimental. The hell with it. Dry up and rest. We've got to get away in another week. Supplies will run short. You've got to be strong enough to take a turn at the tiller. And you're the one who knows the way up through these devilish island channels. Get some rest, damn it."

He went toward the beach. The smoke of a little fire came to Kim before Strader returned with fruit and black coffee. Kim's thanks brought a scowl.

"Oh, shut up," he ordered. "You've been an awful trial, Ransom. I wonder why I didn't let you jump into the water that first day when you went crazy, before we hit this island."

"After you took the pearls off me, why didn't you?" Kim met the sunshiner's eyes a moment.

"Damned if I know," said Strader. "Maybe because I wasn't sure I could navigate the *prahu* alone. And maybe it's something else. I couldn't say."

He was surly and short in his talk after that. As he reasoned, Kim came to the conclusion that Strader had stated the bald fact. He had to have someone who knew the way back through the islands to make sure of reaching Jolo. False reckoning, a storm, the thousands of channels between atolls could get Strader off the right course, and he was saving Kim Ransom to avoid being lost.

A storm hit at the end of a day when the air was thin, liquid brass. Strader tramped along the beach, with wind and water beating over him. In the streaming blackness that arrived with the storm, Kim waited for the sunshiner to return—he had gone to make sure that the *prahu* was safely moored. It was a strange feeling that worked through Kim. If the sunshiner did not come back and the *prahu* held together, Kim could make Jolo alone. But he wanted Strader with him. When the sunshiner did

come, there was a quick resumption of gruffness between them.

There was storm outside and storm in the hut. But any fury of tempest between the two of them would break later. It would be easy to raise an issue, provoke battle and Strader had the big edge of not being weakened by fever. He could put Kim Ransom over the side, then say that he had been lost in the battle at the reef.

Kim could feel the shadow of this crisis ahead as the hurricane swept the islet. With each passing hour, he became more convinced that only one of them would reach Jolo with the *prahu* and the pearls and that Strader would make his play to be that one.

"You look fit," Strader remarked a week later.

"I'm ready to travel." Kim was standing outside of the hut looking at the far seas.

"Sundown," said Strader. "Tonight. We'll pull out."

STARS blazed out as they passed the barrier reef. Dark palms waved against the indigo sky. The *prahu* slid along through dancing waves like a ghost running from its own fears. Little islands shouldered up out of the plane of the sea. Palms on beaches stood high, as though craning necks to see what passed, and the wake of the *prahu* trailed like a comet fallen on the waters.

That first night, Kim had confirmation of his hunch that Strader must have him to navigate.

"Which stars?" Strader demanded, with more than usual surliness, as he took the helm.

Kim pointed out the course and drowsed. It was past midnight when Strader's question roused him.

"I don't think we're headed right," said the sunshiner. "Which stars did you say?"

"I'll take over," said Kim, moving toward the helm. Strader was at least twenty degrees off the course.

"I sure don't know what I'd done without you, kid," remarked Strader.

"I know," said Kim, shortly. "Plain enough that you pulled me through so you'd not get lost in these southern islands."

"That's one good reason for being concerned with your health, all right," said Strader, looking out into the night. "As definite as I could have given myself."

"And once you see Bud Dao, the mountain, you'll call a showdown. We'll fight it out to see which one of us makes harbor." Kim kept his words steady.

"That," said Strader, quietly, "is one way of figuring it."

As leagues of the sea fell behind the *prahu*, Kim Ransom accepted the prospect of a man-and-man fight from which only one would emerge alive.

The moon silvered the sea as Kim took the helm. Atolls became black pools of mystery. Breakers spouted over coral reefs, broke and ran frothily to die on white sands. The flush of dawn was lost and the storm charged out of the muffled daybreak.

Strader lurched through the gloom.

"Better find an island and shelter," he shouted.

"Can't risk it," Kim called back. "Hang up on a reef."

A seam started in the hull. Strader worked at it, caulking it with rags of his shirt. He came back, naked to the waist.

"I'll have to take your shirt," he yelled against the storm's roar. "Mine wasn't enough."

Kim watched him stagger back to kneel in the waist of the boat and plug the leak. After that, Strader bailed. Kim's arms grew weary, holding the bucking helm. Blurring moments passed into several hours. The blow had eased when Strader came to his side.

"You know, kid," he said, half savagely, "if the right kind of men stick together they can lick this part of the world. I guess we've proved that. Give me the helm. You're tuckered."

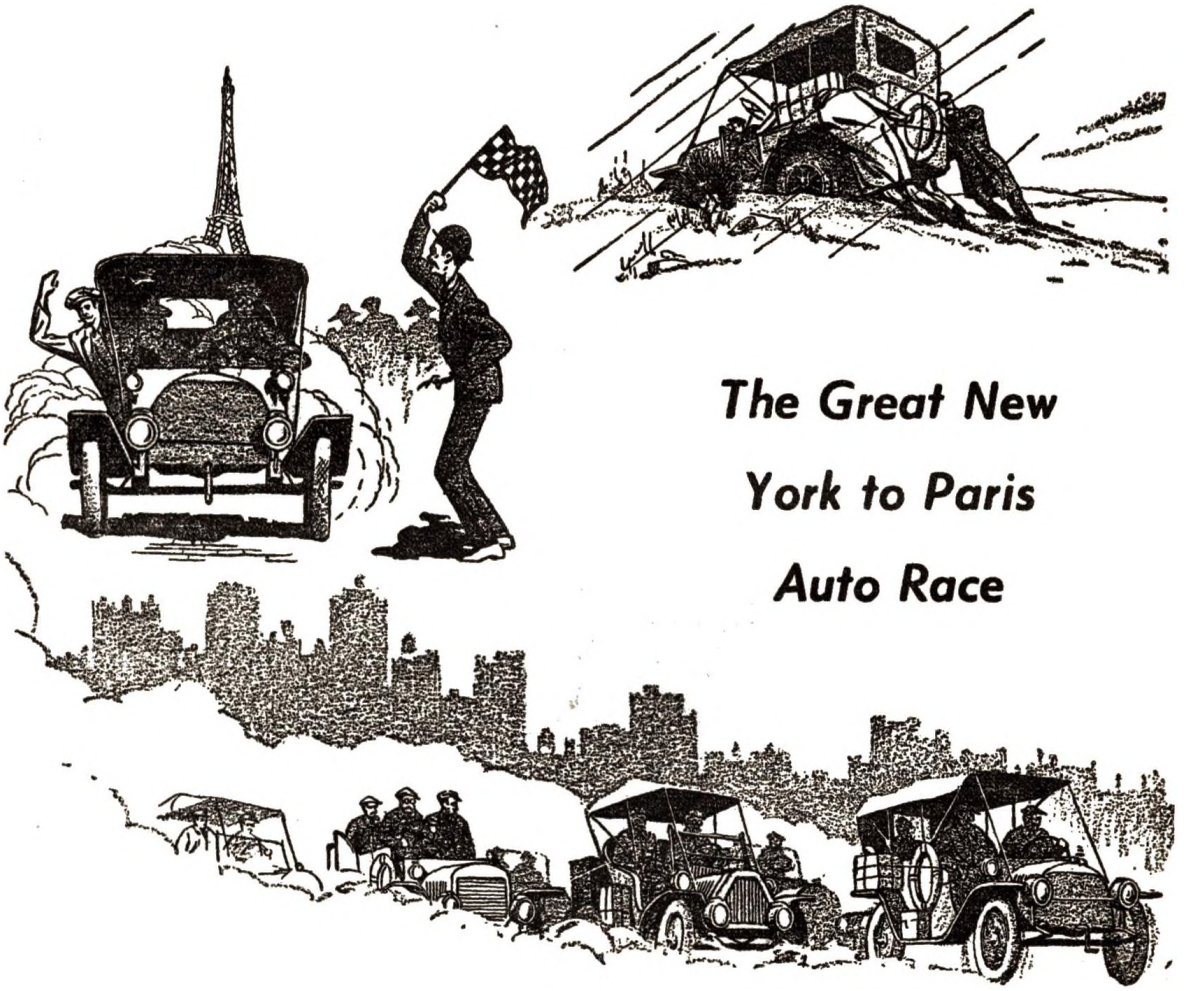
Night followed day, interminably. The

(Continued on page 107)

THE SPORT AND ADVENTURE OF THE SOUTH SEAS —RIGHT AT YOUR DOORSTEP?

For the pros and cons of South Seas outrigger canoes in your home sporting waters, see Col. Roland Birnn's reply to Reader Jack Helling, on page 96.

PARIS WITHOUT



The Great New York to Paris Auto Race

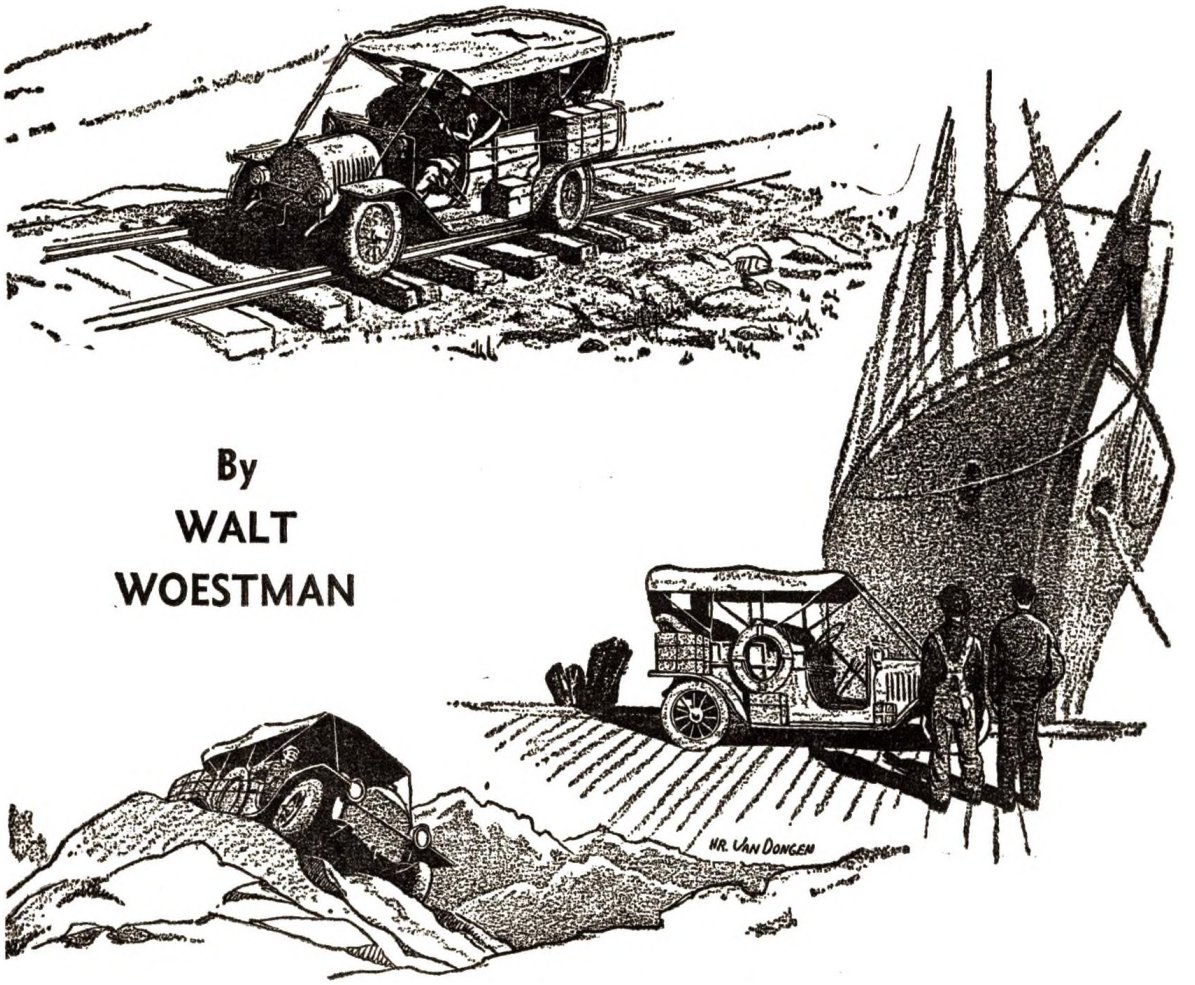
SINCE man invented the wheel the trend appears to have been to roll 'em west Horace Greeley's now famous advice to young men possibly helped, but long before that wheels were rolling over the Mormon Trail, to be followed shortly after by the wheels of *"The Days of Old, the Days of Gold, the Days of Forty Nine,"* famed in song and story

Yet far more spectacular were the rolling wheels of a later era—later by a half century How many people now remember or have even heard of an automobile race which covered a distance of over 22,000 miles--The fabulous New York to Paris course?

A quarter of a million people assembled in New York City's famous Times Square to see the start of the longest automobile race ever run. Automobiles not such as the sleek and dependable vehicles which are seen on the highways of the world today, but cars which were little better than horseless carriages. Automobiles the names of which have long ago been forgotten by many of the older generation and never heard by the younger drivers of today.

The year of this epochal event was 1908 and the day of the start was February 12th, Lincoln's birthday Exactly why this date was chosen is not clear and those who knew the West and the winter conditions of its deeply rutted wagon trails were loud in their declaration that none of the cars could possibly reach San Francisco, much less Paris

SPRINGS!



By
WALT
WOESTMAN

Yes Paris! This was to be a race around the world. 13,000 miles on land, which the cars must cover under their own power, and 8,000 miles over water, where the cars were to be shipped by steamer. A total distance of 21,000 miles, which proved to be much greater due to detours and misdirection.

Promptly at 11 A.M. the contestants were under way, in the following order: the Thomas Flyer, an American car, with a crew consisting of George Schuster, Monte Roberts, John Miller and a *New York Times* correspondent named Williams; DeDion, French, with Georges Bourcier de Saint Chaffray, Captain Hans Hansen and M. Autron aboard; Moto Bloc, also a French entry, with M. Godard, H. Hue and M. Livier as crew; still another French entry, the Sixarie et Naudin, carrying M. Deschamps, August Pons and M. Berthe; the Zust, an Italian car, with Antoni Scarfoglio and Henri Haaga in the seat—the sixth and last car to start was the German Protos, under the command of Lieutenant Koeppen, with Ernest Maas and Hans Knape to carry out the orders.

Shortly after the start a heavy snowstorm made the New York roads a hazardous journey. The Sixaire-Naudin found it's little one cylinder engine unable to cope with conditions and dropped out of the race before reaching Buffalo. But the roads and weather were to get worse. Much worse.

The Thomas Flyer, still in the lead, cov-

ered the 200 miles from Erie, Pennsylvania, to Toledo, Ohio, in one day—yet took almost sixteen hours to cover the scant eight miles from Corunna to Kendallville, a night run due to the fact that there was no hotel in the former village.

The Thomas Flyer made it to Chicago a full day ahead of the De Dion and Zust cars with the German Protos and the French Moto Bloc still another two days behind.

Road conditions through all of Iowa and most of Nebraska were a series of frozen ruts in the morning and deep gumbo after the sun had gotten it's rays into the ice. At Omaha, which the Thomas Flyer, under the guidance of Roberts, reached three days in the lead, the foreign crews declared that the United States roads were impossible and demanded that all cars should be shipped by rail to San Francisco. Montague Roberts refused even to consider this demand and said that his car would continue the trip according to the rules, even if he had to make the trip alone.

However Roberts failed to live up to his boast. A part of Wyoming was crossed by using the ties and roadbed of the Union Pacific Railroad. While the roads of that state were almost nonexistent the country was sand and sage brush and not too much trouble was had with mud holes. Lynn Mathewson went in as relief driver and took the car from Cheyenne to Ogden, Utah, a noteworthy effort as this stretch covered the steep grades of the Rocky Mountains.

Leaving Ogden, Mathewson relinquished the wheel to Harold Brinker, with a nice lead of five days over the nearest competitor, the Zust, with the other cars still a longer time behind. After high adventure with sand storms, Indians—by this time friendly, and not such as those encountered during "The Days of Forty Nine"—more rain and snow, muddy roads, or no roads at all, the American Thomas Flyer arrived in San Francisco, by way of Reno, Carson City, Goldfield, Daggett, Mojave, Saugus, Santa Barbara and San Jose, just forty two days from New York, with a distance of 3,800 miles covered.

But the Thomas Flyer was not the first car to reach the Golden Gate. Godard, Hue and Livier in the French Moto Bloc were already in San Francisco. But the car had been shipped by rail from Iowa, thus calling for disqualification. So by this time two of the French entries were out, leaving four cars to continue. The sole American entry now had a lead of twelve days over the De Dion, Zust and Protos.

Therefore the *New York Times* trophy was awarded to the Thomas Flyer for the first car to reach San Francisco. And a well deserved trophy it was. While this was not the first time that an automobile had crossed the United States it was the first time in competition, and every foot of the way under its own power.

AT THIS point the route was changed. The original plans were to ship the cars to Valdez, Alaska and then to continue across Siberia. The Thomas was actually shipped to Valdez—where its crew discovered there were no roads of any kind. At least no roads suitable for a motor car. So the American car was shipped back to Seattle. By then the French De Dion and the Italian Zust had been hurriedly loaded on the steamer for Japan.

When the Thomas and its crew arrived in Seattle it was found that German Protos had been shipped by rail from Idaho to California, being at that time twenty-three days behind the leading car. While this infraction of the rules would appear to have disqualified Lieutenant Koeppen and the German car, some obscure technical interpretation caused only a penalty of seven days for the thousand miles of rail shipment. This would mean that the Germans would have to reach Paris a full month before the Americans in order to win the race.

As the Italian and French cars had shipped out of Seattle while the Thomas was trail blazing into Alaska, they were ordered to wait for the Protos and Thomas in Japan, and this was done. But the German Lieutenant had still another trick up his sleeve.

While the Zust, Thomas and De Dion crossed Japan, a distance of 215 miles, by road, the wily Germans shipped directly to Vladivostok from Seattle.

On May twelfth the Americans arrived at Kobe, where the Thomas was sent ashore in a sampan, there being no unloading pier in that port at that time.

The French and Italian crews had long since cleared through the Japanese and Russian customs—the Americans had not. While George Schuster was attending to these details the De Dion and Zust took off for Vladivostok, and it was here that the Frenchmen also reached up their sleeves for a trick.

In the early hours of May thirteenth the Thomas Flyer left the hotel in Kobe, carrying, besides its regular load of the four crew members, two extra passengers who were to act as guides. But Japan had roads and the guides were hardly needed. These roads could not be called highways, however, being as narrow as eight feet, in some of the villages.

It was often necessary to reverse the car several times in order to get around the sharp turns, and the inhabitants, hearing the car coming and probably having heard of the two cars which already passed through the day before, clogged the streets and roads. Horses, having never seen a gasoline-driven monster, kicked their carts to splinters and headed for the hills.

A detour of 200 miles was necessitated by the incessant rains. The American crew lived on a diet of rice and eggs and slept on floors in hotels with paper walls. They passed through Nishinomiya, Kioto, Hikone, Maibara, Tsuruga and many other villages not to be found on any map, to arrive at last at Tsuruga, where ship was taken to Vladivostok.

Arriving in Vladivostok on May seventeenth the Americans found that the Italian, German and French cars had been ordered to await their arrival, due to the fact that the others had taken an unfair advantage while the Americans had been on the Alaskan trip.

And it was here that the French trick came to light—Bourcier de Saint Chaffray had cornered the entire commercial supply of gasoline in Vladivostok and Harbin, and was prepared to share it only with the Protos and Zust.

But the crew of the Thomas was not yet defeated. The American residents pooled their small supplies of gasoline for the American crew. They drained the tanks of their motor boats and even emptied the gasoline lamps. In this way enough fuel was obtained to carry the Thomas along until a further supply could be obtained.

Meantime the rains continued to pour down and the race resumed on May 22nd with the Protos in the lead. However Lieutenant Koeppen picked the wrong method to enter a mud hole, and was deeply mired. The Thomas managed to get around the Protos and hitched on a tow rope. With the usual display of American sportsmanship Schuster and Roberts pulled the German car out of the hole. After two days of more rain and mud all of the cars managed to reach Nikolskoe.

Leaving Nikolskoe the Thomas became mired and the Protos crew, showing fine opportunism, took to the roadbed of the Trans-Siberian Railway, leaving the crew of the Thomas to dig itself out of the hole. This digging out took four hours and would possibly have taken four days had it not been for the help of natives.

Returning to Nikolskoe the Americans decided that the unballasted ties of the railroad were to be prefered to the mud of the neglected Siberian roads. Since the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway vehicular traffic was used only for very short distances and not between the far spaced towns.

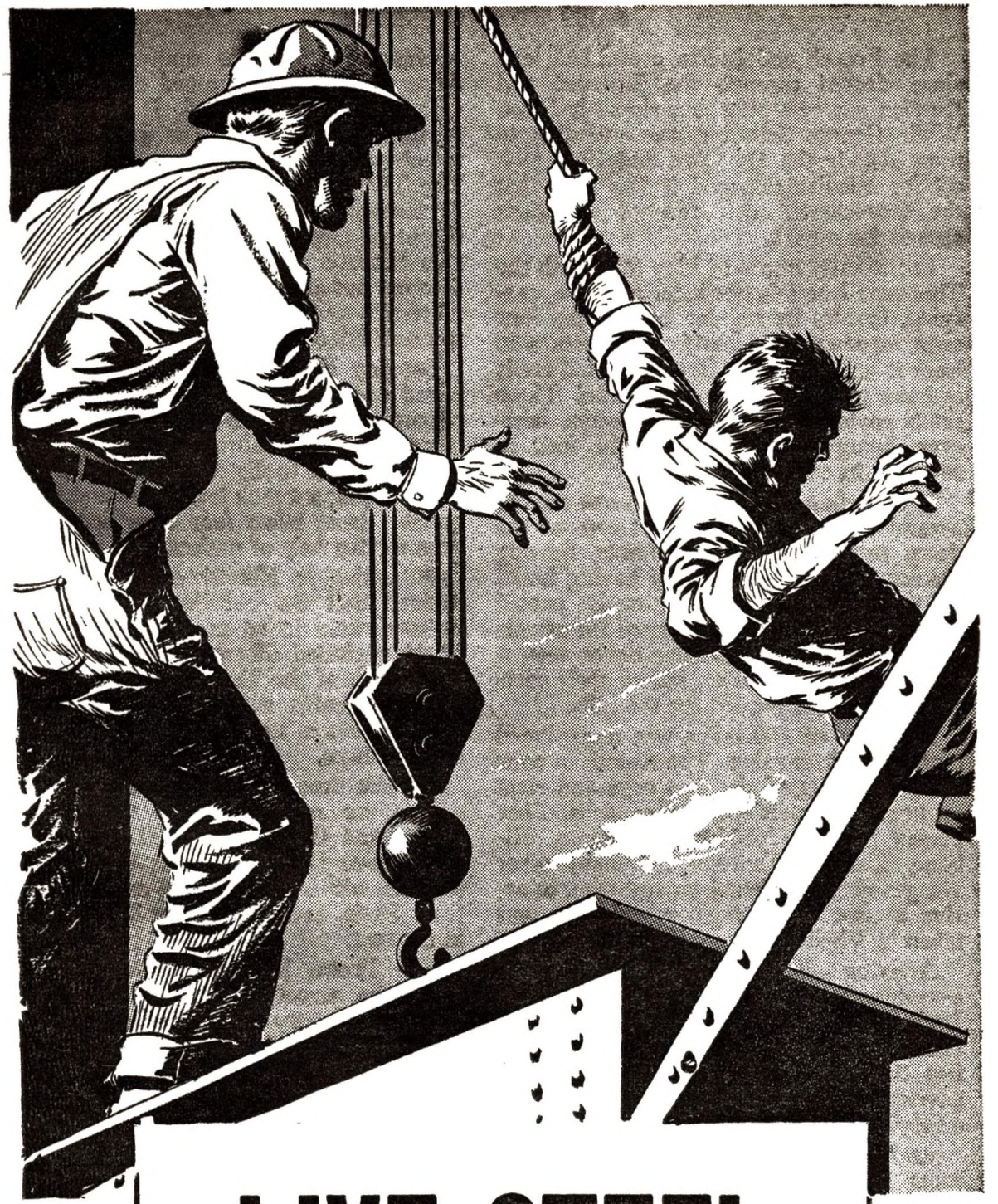
By this time the race had developed to a two car match between the German Protos and the American Thomas Flyer. The French De Dion was reported as having been withdrawn from the race on orders from Paris, and the Italian Zust was far in the rear.

The Protos led the Thomas by over 100 miles across the railroad, with both cars making very slow time over the ties. After two days the Germans reached the Manchurian frontier and continued on the roadbed toward Harbin. But not so lucky was the Thomas.

At Pogravitchniya a serious accident held the American car for almost a week, while repairs were being made. Reaching Harbin the Thomas crew found that a supply of gasoline had been arranged for to replace that which Saint Chaffray had cornered by telegraph from Vladivostok, so no delay was occasioned on that score—but the Protos had left five days ago.

Taking the roads on the Manchurian plains the Protos was leading the Thomas by five days, though still actually twenty-five days behind, due to the earlier penalty

(Continued on page 112)



LIVE STEEL

By

T. C. McCLARY

He swung across the girder, his legs whipping out in a scissors movement. . . .

●

A deadly duel over nothing —twelve hundred feet of it. . . .

AT TWELVE minutes to eight A.M., Timson's tall, gaunt figure formed out of the canyon's swirling fog. Young Banning was with him. They crossed the raw-smelling, uptorn earth to our warmup fire, and the morning talk went dead.

Timson was structural superintendent on this bridge and he introduced Banning to

Dutch Flugenheimer personally and the rest of us as "the lead gang." Banning gave that an impersonal nod and dismissed anything it might have meant. He stood there like a fashion plate for what the well-dressed structural engineer will wear. He had the build for it, I'll say that.

Timson said, "Mr. Banning is going to ride up to the job with you, Dutch."

Dutch stiffened through all of his square-chunked five feet four. He bristled and then coughed. If he counted to ten, it was a fast count. He told Timson, "We're riding a thin form up. You'd better shoot him up by tower cable and we'll run a catwalk across."

Banning gave a thin laugh and raised his eyebrows. "You wouldn't say that to my old man—or he'd haul you up on dancing dolly in a high wind!"

He was kind of pleased with his ready language. Dancing dolly is our supply platform, a small flat deck supported by a cable from each corner to the lift ring. Loaded properly, she is as steady as a church. Empty, she dances like a pinball.

Dutch looked at him gravely and contained his sentiments. "Your old man," he pointed out, "was a top bridgeworker to begin with."

"A fair girder snake, I've heard," Banning agreed.

He was the kind of a fellow who might have been all right if he'd ever had his big arrogant Irish head kicked down to size. He'd been a big, grandstand, college backfield man, damned good on the gridiron, and hated otherwise. He was the kind who never saw the rabble. The rabble was beneath his notice.

"So," he went on after a moment, "being my old man's son. I'll ride with you, Dutch." He put a flat look on Dutch that said, *I'm Banning. Don't forget it.*

Dutch couldn't. He had been falling behind schedule ever since Finn Rastau got whipped into space, and every other iron gang man on the bridge was howling for our pay envelope, and Banning's old man owned this job.

The Polack blasted a sudden, sullen snort of breath. The Polack had been Finn's closest friend and grief was still a corroding acid in him, and he had grown a savage hate for the engineers and management he blamed for Finn's death. If the engineers ever had the guts to come out on the bridge front and take a look at things, Finn would still be alive, he contended.

There was some truth in it, too. The bridge front is empty skeleton, without nets, catwalks, deck mattrix, or even stretchers. What you had under you out there was right what you were standing on, and it might be ten tons reaching over twelve hundred feet of space, with nothing holding it but bolt. Out there, the engineers gave us space. That was fine with us, but it didn't raise our impression of the color of white collar livers.

Dutch shot the Polack an icy look, but it didn't do much good. The Polack was a good friend but a wicked enemy, with muscles like cables wound over a heart of molten iron and hatred was burning in his eyes. I remembered then the Polack's first grudge when he came on the job—the picture in the paper of a rich young playboy who'd left for Europe suddenly about the time the Polack's sister died with her head stuck into a gas oven. Roughly, the same background, same looks, same arrogance as young Banning.

I prayed for a cloudburst but it didn't come.

Banning was telling Dutch, "Thought I'd take a look at what's holding your gang back."

Dutch's jaws clamped under a face that looked like a wad of bread dough. He had a thick nose that stuck straight out of these folds of flesh like a light over a fire exit. He wore a hat which he never creased. You could have laughed at him, except for his eyes. There was nothing funny about his eyes.

Dutch said, "We've been short a man since Finn Rastau's accident."

"Bad luck," Banning said. But that was mere lip and his tone showed his indifference. "What's wrong with getting another man?"

"You don't take just any man for high steel," Dutch told him.

"In the air corps," Banning said loftily, "we can replace a second pilot out of a ground crew. This Finn was only an apprentice, wasn't he?"

The Polack's head was hanging forward and his face was nearly black. "There is one damn big difference between high steel

and your damn airplanes!" he busted in.

"We go up prety high too," Banning told him carelessly. He was reserve, by way of college. "We even have occasional accidents."

THE Polack's teeth were set on edge and he was sucking breath like a gritty wind. The swell of his chest tightened his jacket enough to pop. You couldn't blame his anger. Twelve hundred feet is a long way to watch a friend falling and clawing and calling, when you can't do one damned thing to save him.

Pat Coy grabbed the Polack's arm. He was the only man who could. He pivoted him by sheer weight and swung him away. The Polack stumbled off, breathing like a rasp and muttering imprecations about rich yellow bastards.

Banning's eyes grew arrogant and hard. He had brass, if nothing else. He said, "One of these sullen brutes, eh? He could stand a little blood on his filthy mouth."

Dutch closed his eyes a moment. Maybe he was thinking of our job, or maybe of the massacre a fight would be. Banning was athletic, in shape, and big. But the Polack was hard and tough and solid as the steel he worked with.

He opened his eyes and leaned back from the knees in order to slant a glance above. The gaunt skeleton of the bridge stuck out from the canyon wall into nowhere, an unsupported web strung up against the breaking mists. It was two hundred and sixty feet from this work shelf to the bridge deck level, but the unsupported bridge front hung twelve hundred feet above the slithering black rapids of the gorge. I think, silently, Dutch crossed himself.

The five-minute whistle blew and all over the job the make-ready crews turned over donkeys and engines that barked and coughed and growled and mixed into that conglomerate voice of the power and surge of a big construction job. We moved over to where the ground gang was rigging a prebolted form onto the cable. It was upright and pretty narrow, but there was plenty of flange on which to stand, and the gang draped itself around the struts like the girls do in a Follies curtain.

Dutch jerked his head at Coy to stand by Banning, but Banning purposely picked his own spot on the end, and then looked at Dutch with a smile that was half mocking and half defiant. Coy didn't like the affront but let it pass and took his place. Dutch wigwagged the engineer a signal and after a bounce to straighten any cable links, we lifted away.

"Watch your footing, Mr. Banning," Dutch grunted worriedly.

Banning gave his self assured, Joe College laugh. "Steady as an elevator," he scoffed. "I think you boys sell yourself a bill of goods every time you want more pay."

I looked up the line and didn't like the savage humor that ran through the Polack's dark face like a hot, angry sunset. He had something in mind and, feeling the way he did, it could well be murder. We had lifted up quite a space now and the boom was swinging us out over the gorge, and Banning was leaning his weight out from the steel, which is all right and makes sounder footing, if you don't forget you're leaning. He was looking up at the bridgefront with its gaunt frame jutting out and he had the smug look of a young punk wearing his father's boots.

A scud of wind touched us and swayed the steel a bit—Banning looked down, and his grip tightened and jerked him in, and I guess everybody knew at the same instant, this was his first ride to heaven without a cockpit to hold him in.

"Watch him!" Dutch growled sharply to Coy, but Coy had already moved so he could grab him if it came to that.

We were out over the middle of the canyon now, with its torrent a slithering black gleam through the shining, swirling mists a thousand feet below us, but there is no accurate way to explain the feel of distance on your first ride on free steel. It isn't the same as standing on a deck or cliff and looking down. It isn't the same as a plane, with that feel of power in front of you, and something solid under your feet. You feel you're just hanging in endless space on that wisp of gleaming cable, that looks smaller overhead than the thinnest thread you've ever seen. And down below you a space deep as all eternity is drawing you like a magnet; something so strong you can feel the physical pull of it. You haven't worked up a sweat yet and you haven't caught the feel of being yourself in space,

and even old hands occasionally jump for no apparent reason, riding steel up on the early whistle. Maybe if you've had the feel of falling into endless space in a bad dream, that's nearest to what it's like—all the wild crazed voices in hell are calling up to you to jump before you get up any higher.

Banning had brass, but now he was stiff and gray, and the sign was as good as speech. I heard a blast of breath that might have been a laugh, and the Polack's voice came on his soft, growling note.

"Coy, watch shift, the sling she is shifting."

Maybe it was or maybe it wasn't, but the Polack was giving us all due warning. He was balanced on a strut with the awkward-looking ease of a gorilla and he reached one arm out suddenly, and his was a long reach—grabbing another hold, he swung over into a different section.

His movement was smooth as a trapeze artist's and as precise of judgment. The balance of the steel form shifted, it gave a little lurch and tilted up the other way. Not much, not enough even so that men sitting with legs dangling had to claw. But enough so Banning felt it in his stomach, and his face looked like putty, and he sealed himself onto the steel like paint.

Pat Coy already had a lock on Banning, but he didn't need it. You couldn't have shaken him off that frame if you'd set it pinwheeling.

Dutch looked ready to bark and bite as he whipped his glance up to the Polack, but the Polack looked back at him with a vindictively contented grin and growled amiably, "Them damn riggers, Dutch, they damn near kill us!" and a twinkle showed in Dutch's eyes for all his scowl.

We reached level and moved in parallel with the triangular work deck slung in an angle of the girders, and the anchor men stepped off to hold the steel while we unloaded. We were all on the deck when Dutch looked back at Coy and Banning who were still in the frame, and Dutch called to Coy, "Well, what in hell you doing? Help Mr. Banning off."

"I can't," Coy said on a funny note, and then I saw the laugh he was holding. "He's got *me* locked, Dutch "

Dutch cussed to cover his own guffaw and moved out to help while the rest of us joined the Polack's savagely contemptuous grin. Dutch got the scion of the Bannings free and gave him a few nerve digs that bucked him up, but not much. He stayed stiff and shaky and his face looked pasty even after java off the forge. When he got up the nerve to go after an hour or so, he was damned glad for the excuse Dutch supplied to cross to the bridge deck matrix and hike back to the tower cable lifts.

WE FIGURED that was the end of Banning and maybe the job too, but it was worth it, and something that would have given a kick to Finn Rastau had he been there. But if it wasn't the end of the job, Banning's visit hadn't done us much good. We were still short a man and falling further behind in schedule and sooner or later, our goose was cooked.

Of course there were bridge workers used to high steel whom Dutch could hire. But Dutch hadn't quite told the whole story. For one thing, he wouldn't hire a man trained on another gang. And a green man steady and careful enough and still with nerve was hard to get. But for another, just as the lead gang sets the work pace for all the gangs behind it, a lead gang's top team sets its own pace. The Polack, Pat Coy and Finn Rastau had been our top team, and now that the team was broken up something more than just a man was missing—the drive and spirit had left us.

So when we saw the cable spinning its silver shine against the noon sunlight a few days later, and looked down and saw Timsen riding the sky hook up, the silent thought was, *This is it.*

For all that Dutch and the super were old workmates, a super doesn't pay social calls on a lead gang. He sends for the boss to report to him. But here was Timson riding the hook up to see Dutch, and Timson was in his late fifties with fifteen years in the super's shack, and there was a scudding wind. It was no day for a joyride over that canyon, and you could see Dutch torn between rising anger and worry as he himself signaled the hook in.

The strain of the ride showed on Timson and a man strained that way can get blown clean out of a hook. Your legs get cramped, your foot slips, your hand grows numb or the strain can leach the strength right out of you. Dutch let out a bellowing

breath of relief when he got Timson aboard the work deck, and cursed the super for the risk he'd taken.

Timson gave a somber grin, but his humor wasn't with him. We drifted aside a decent distance. But not out of earshot, we hoped. The wind was against us and we didn't get what was said until Dutch let out a blasting roar, smashed down his hat and tromped on it with serious risk to the work deck on which they stood.

"I've had enough of that old baboon Banning!" He was half choking with anger. "He's gone crazy with his money! Now he's trying to pick my apprentices for me on some phoney story that his boy gave him!"

Timson let him sputter himself breathless and then said quietly, "Dutch, it's young Banning he sent down for the job."

Dutch just stood there gaping like a fish. The rest of us moved in without thinking. Pat Coy snapped a look at the Polack, and the Polack's dark face was streaked with gray.

"No damn guts and not even shame!" the Polack grated. It was hard to tell if contempt or hatred were deepest in him.

Dutch got his surprise in hand, started to answer Timson, then closed off like a clam. He went over and stood on the precise edge of the deck and spat and watched it soar down into that merciless twelve hundred feet of space. We had a fair idea of what he was thinking.

Banning as son of the boss and as part of a work gang were two different things. We didn't like Banning, didn't trust him, didn't want him, and if he didn't kill us all first by some mistake growing out of his yellow guts, the Polack might easily kill him, or break him into a half crazy drooling heap by sheer worry, which is not hard to do even to a better man on high steel.

But Timson and Dutch were long standing friends and Timson was getting old for an active super, and was slated for advancement up into the company's big brass. Banning could be a heller when he chose, and if his son was turned down for a job, he'd probably take it out on Timson.

Dutch turned back, so damned mad he could hardly talk but he jerked a nod and growled, "All right. But if that yellow louse goes soft again, down he goes, lashed to the first hook!"

The super gave him a hard, thankful smile, and I guess he was glad of the excuse Dutch cooked up to lead him back over the bridgework to the roaddeck so he could go down some other way than the hook.

While Dutch was gone the Polack rasped through set teeth to Pat Coy, "So help me God, I'll fix him!" and all of the hate he felt out of grief for Finn Rastau plus his sister was in his looks.

"Don't be a damn fool. You can't kill a man like Banning's son and get away with it!" Pat Coy told him.

That was said seriously, unthinking, and shows just about what life is worth to men who live with death every day. High steel is a very easy place to commit murder. But there are telltales, even up there.

To my surprise, anyway, the Polack breathed a scoffing breath at the idea. "You don't need to murder his kind," he said thickly. He made a gesture with his fists. "Just squeeze the brass out of them and watch them jibber. I will make him choke up his own yellow liver and crawl through it slobbering! I will make him wish I had killed him!"

He was standing by the forge and he began to turn the blow crank without thinking. He picked up tongs and poked at a couple of redhot rivets and his mouth pulled out into a smile, but it was not a smile you'd want coming at you.

Just hazing, just testing a good man without rancor, I'd seen the Polack damn near singe off his whiskers. I'd seen him drive a bucket man back with red hot rivets, straight in the cone, but so fast, so hard, so well placed, they came at the fellow like machine gun bullets, and once almost drove a man back over a girder. I didn't like thinking what Polack could do when he hated.

YOUNG BANNING didn't wait for the next morning's whistle. He came up on the first steel right after lunch. He was tight on the steel, he had to lick his mouth to clamber off, and he damned near pushed the steel out from him as a landlubber will a boat in the half wild jump he made to grab an upright. But he had his brass back up and he knew where to look for trouble.

He looked square over at the Polack and

managed somehow to get contempt into his voice and he said, "I hear you got a belly-ache the first time you hit high steel."

The Polack turned gray and then crimson, for that was a story he'd lived down and nobody even kidded him about it any more. But the nerve to say it would have stood to the credit of any man except young Banning. In his case, it stood against him, for he couldn't have learned that story without goig to papa, who knew his bridgeworkers inside out.

If Banning had come in easy and taken his rawhiding and kept his arrogant mouth shut, we might have ganged up some to fence off the Polack. But the gang was set solidly against him. Maybe Banning thought he was showing brass, but that wasn't the way we took it. We figured he'd made a slip and the shrewd old man had figured the right story and made him come back and sign up. It didn't mean anything that he'd ridden that steel up to the job. He probably had his eyes locked shut. He sure hadn't looked down since he came where we could see him.

Dutch shoved him off to the side of the deck. He said, "Just stand around and get the feel a while." Dutch was really stumped for once. He didn't know what to do with Banning.

Most iron gangs have fairly regular duties and jobs such as rigger, bucket man, rivet gunner, smith, etc., but a man on a lead gang may do half a dozen jobs around the clock. So without making a point of it, Dutch couldn't keep the Polack working out on the loose steel if something the Polack had to do brought him to the work deck. The best he could do was put young Banning at just moving bolts and rivets and keeping the forge supplied with coke and cold iron.

It didn't seem like he'd be open to much trouble that way, but the Polack meant to bring the trouble in to him and waste no time about it. He kept shifting his work until he had the excuse he needed, and then he came in over the bare bridgework to do his own forging on a bolt for an angle iron that didn't match up holes, he said. He didn't make any comment to Banning or about him, and after a moment, Dutch went off forward on the job to help bring in some tricky steel that had shifted its position slightly and, lopsided, wouldn't fit.

Banning brought over a bucket of coke and set it down with the stiff, surly movements of a man who knows that he's been challenged. Matter of fact, I don't think he was scared of the Polack's fists. I think he was just damn fool and arrogant enough to think he could stand up to that iron mountain of a man.

But that wasn't the beating the Polack had figured out for this special pet. He could have chewed up a dozen of these college kids. There was no satisfaction in that. What he wanted was to make Banning spill open his own yellow liver and crawl through the stink of it with the whole job watching.

The Polack tonged his rivet out of the fire and examined it and stuck it back to put more glow on it. He grunted at Banning, "Find a bucket."

He spoke gruff and impersonal as he would to any other apprentice, but Banning bristled and barked, "What's that?"

The Polack looked at him then, and flames burned slowly down deep in his eyes, like the low flames in the forge bed.

"Get a bucket and take this hothead out to Coy," he grunted.

Banning flushed but the Polack had given him no excuse to make an issue of things, and he had to bite his pride down with the recognition that he was not Banning any more; he was just a gang apprentice. He found a bucket and the Polack dropped the hot iron in and jerked his head. Banning was a little gray now, but he snorted and gave the Polack a contemptuous, mocking look. He had to run the rivet out to the end of a girder and he thought the Polack figured he'd be too scared to do it.

Matter of fact, the Polack had picked a broad girder, wide as Fifth Avenue on Sunday. Its top surface was nearly as wide as a catwalk. A baby could have crawled out there safely, and that was what the Polack wanted.

Banning showed a moment's tenseness swinging around the upright. I know he closed his eyes. That must have rung a bell on something his father had told him, but he didn't hold his vision glued on the girder as he walked across it. He walked with his head up, relying on his feet to guide him, like he'd been carrying a tray of glasses.

He got out almost to Pat McCoy who was standing with the bucket, the big-mouthed cone you catch hot rivets in. You

could see Banning straightening, loosening with self assurance, and contemptuous pride was a clear expression on his face and pulling blood back into it.

Then the Polack's voice boomed from the work deck, "A low one, Pat. Reach down." His last words welled out like an organ note.

A rivet sizzled through the air in a short fast arc that whipped its heat across Banning's cheek, and ahead of him, Pat Coy crouched and caught the rivet below the top surface of the girder. The closeness of the rivet's passing tightened Banning with a jerk, and the Polack's word and Coy's action snapped his line of vision down.

He just stood there staring, then, unable to tear his eyes from the terror of twelve hundred feet of clean air under him. His knees were knocking, but otherwise he couldn't move.

Coy came down the girder and tried to take the bucket from him, but Banning's grasp on it was glued. Dutch sensed the trouble and turned to size things up and bellow, "Coy, get that damn fool moving!"

Coy lifted his shoulders and let them fall for answer. Banning was rooted. Coy was grinning but there was Gaelic sympathy in him too. The Polack could be pretty rough at rawhiding, and Coy knew the Polack had plotted this whole business, even down to the word that would put its hold on Banning. So Coy was easier on Banning than he might have been.

He tugged on Banning's bucket and he kept saying real easy, "Lift your head up, Banning. Close your eyes and snap it up. I'm holding you."

After a bit this penetrated and unlocked Banning. He let Coy take the bucket. He did what Coy told him. But he was as stiff as a statue, and brother, was he shaking. He stared up at the clouds, and his teeth were damned near welding, and the bright dampness of a man's utter shame and writhing pride was on his eyes. He knew he'd been taken, and knew it wasn't the Polack, but some yellow streak inside of him, himself, that had wrecked him.

Coy gave him a minute, shaking his arm a little while Banning got his wind.

"Hell," Coy said and tried to laugh it off, "everybody's that way first few days, Banning. Doesn't mean a damn thing."

But it didn't take. It meant something to Banning, and he knew that he was licked. He'd never been licked in all his life, but if it had been another man who licked him, he might still have been all right. You could rest up and come back at another man. He couldn't come back at this. This was an enemy he couldn't fight, his own yellowness, and the mere recognition of it would whip him into eternity.

COY turned him finally and pushed him back along the girder. He moved like a mechanical doll, but be was safe. It was the terrible thing that had happened to his manhood that made most of us turn our faces from him. No man likes to see that in another man unless he hates him.

The Polack hated. He never took his fiery eyes off Banning, and there was plain wicked satisfaction in the grim smile on his mouth.

Dutch came bustling back, half mad at the Polack, half glad the thing was over with and nobody splashing down into space as a result. The old man could have nothing to say to this except to face the fact his son was gutless. He shouldn't have been out on the skeleton work at all, but as long as he was, he shouldn't have frozen with nothing really to scare him on a girder that wide.

Coy steered Banning over to the supply pile in a corner and sat him down. He made some decent comment to him and Banning gave him a tight lipped nod of thanks.

Then Coy turned across the deck to the Polack growling, "You're a first rate seebee when you get a hate on!"

The Polack chuckled and threw his huge arm around Pat Coy's shoulders and shook him and they headed back for their job. The Polack was grunting in good humor. "Finn Rastau would have got one big damn laugh out of that, now!"

Coy grinned, for there is a limit to sympathy among men who live and work with death breathing right under them all day long, and the two hit the raw steel and finished their job in half time. Everybody was working better with this thing over. It was something finished and settled and had taken the edge off a general grudge in memory of Finn, and we could forget Banning now.

The last steel up that day was an upright side section all filled with different length cross struts and shaped like the swell of a misbegotten egg. It was a hell of a shape to rig, for there was wind below us—even some up here—and the ground crew couldn't just hang it on the hook the way you would a picture. They had to balance it in its cable sling. The balance was tricky.

The sun had heated the steel up against the ground and it had expanded and it didn't slip into place. None of these damned prefabricated or bolted sections do anyway. Pat Coy was anchor man and he cussed the damned stuff and gave a heave. It's foolish, but sometimes you have to do it.

The hook was centered, but it wasn't tight against a joint, and Coy's heave slipped it over in the hook and changed its balance. It gave an ugly clang against the unsupported bridgework and wrenched bolts were popping. Then the section on the hook began to dance and swing.

Dutch gave a hoarse bark and took over signals to the boom engineer himself, trying to get that ten-ton devil off from us before it began to shimmy or lurch or do a pivot that would send unbraced, unriveted leading ironwork crashing. Coy still had hold of the section. He had to hold it to keep his balance. He was by a upright and Dutch couldn't see quite how things stood, and so when the boom swung the big piece off, Coy was jerked and dragged across the girder he was braced on.

He was still hanging to the form flanges. His weight threw this cockeyed section out of balance, and straining as he was, he couldn't find a leg hold. His hands slipped and he took a tight, grim look at the curving shape of the steel he held to, and took the only chance he could. He tried to drop into the inside corner.

It would have been all right if the steel hadn't been moving in its hook and tilting. He missed his saddle and clawed a fresh hold by sheer luck, and now he was hanging by his hands to the bottom-most horizontal flange. Nothing was under him but twelve hundred feet of space, and that swinging form was beginning to twist and lurch and buck. It was going wide, and free steel can go as wild as any bronco.

The Polack had crossed an open space, God knows how because he couldn't jump it. He had a knee-lock on the girder and was reaching out futilely for some piece of the free steel, bellowing to swing in the boom so he could grab it. It was a tough choice for Dutch, but he couldn't signal the boom in. One man dead was better than all of us, or half a bridge tearing itself loose.

In a minute or two the form would swing enough so we could safely throw a few lines around it and lash it to an upright where the form bulged. But that had to wait the steel's own good time and swing, and Coy's face didn't look as if he could hold out. He was wearing his gloves and his hands were slipping. The drop he'd tried had strained his muscles when he caught, and he did not have a full handed grasp to begin with. Almost, he was hanging by his fingers.

The whole gang had snaked and monkeyed across the girder or onto uprights where one of us could grab the form if it swung in, but nobody was within an arm's length of it and it was swinging the wrong way. The Polack saw something happen I didn't catch. But I knew it meant bells for Coy from the sudden wild animal cry that broke out of the Polack's chest.

Then I saw a line snake up past the corner of my vision and the end drop back before I could switch my eyes to fully catch the action. I looked down and this yellow high falooting kid, this Joe College greenhorn, was standing on the precise point of the work deck pulling the two ends of a line taut. He'd cast the line over a horizontal up above us.

He jerked it twice to be sure of kinks, and reached way down the trailing line to take a wrap around his hand. Then he reached above him with his free hand and holding his weight that way, threw himself back. He swung across the girder with his body held in the trained rigidity of an acrobat, cast loose his free hold as he soared, and dropped to the end of his anchor hold as he swung above Coy's back. His legs whipped out in a faster scissors movement than I've ever seen in any wrestling ring, and wrapped Coy under the arm pits and his feet locked across Coy's chest.

Almost faster than you could see it, the two were swinging back.

This left them still in jeopardy. The rope broke and bent against the girder the Polack was on. It swung there, twisting down below it. Strength is a limited thing

in men without the right holds and with rope binding them, and with weight and movement jerking them in a spinning circle. Worse, it would take two or three men to drag the weight up and grab the men bodily so they did not get ripped off the rope crossing the sharp flanges. There were no two or three men there to do it at that instant.

But the Polack was swarming down the girder like it was a speedway. He planted his enormous body solid and, balancing against the lift and strain, he brought Banning's head up even with his chest. He was still holding the line out at arm's length. For bar-bell boys, that was a straight arm lift that must have been over the three hundred thirty weight.

Dutch was piling onto the girder himself by then, for all that he is fifty if he'll admit it, and even at that last instant, it was Dutch who had the cold sense that saved Coy. The boys were following natural instinct to grab Banning, the nearest at hand. Dutch yelled hoarsely not to touch him but to grab Coy. If they had jerked Banning in first, the slam probably would have knocked his leg-lock loose of Coy.

The Polack got Coy onto the work deck and the rest of us snaked after. Somebody had thrown water in Coy's face and somebody else was putting a bottle to his gray pulled mouth before anyone thought of Banning. He wasn't on the work deck, and we looked out and he was half doubled and gray green, standing bug-eyed on the girder where we'd left him.

Dutch straightened from over Coy and called out to him, cool and gruff, but not scaring, "You ain't used to this. Come on the platform."

Banning's mouth worked and you could see he was trying to answer, but it was just a wheeze. It was only two full steps, at the most three. We just stared at him looking for the joke. After what he'd done, this was easy.

Then the Polack snorted, "Why damn, the college engineer is waiting for his *yaaachet* to come and get him!"

But the Polack was laughing, a deep, full-chested, booming laugh. He swung out onto the girder and loosed Banning's frozen hand and picked him up and carried him back in like a baby. He took the bottle somebody was just tilting down from Coy's mouth and stuck it into Banning's lips and let the raw liquor choke him until he gulped down a decent drink.

"Prentice, hunh?" the Polack grinned. "Ja-a-a-a, we teach him what he didn't learn in college. Dutch, I say we got one damn good prentice boy. I say tomorrow me and Coy will show him some things about forging and maybe by next week this damn gang gets back on schedule. Ja?"

"Ya-a-a-a-!" Dutch mimicked him best he could. But Dutch's cold blue eyes were twinkling. Man who could do what Banning had done in emergency, could learn to do as well when he was thinking. And it wasn't going to hurt the gang at all to have Banning with us—as long as he'd proved up a real Banning.

WHEN STEEL WAS STEEL

THE paddle-wheel steamer *Chatagay*, for 55 years in the service of the Champlain Transportation Co. on Lake Champlain, was recently dismantled and transported to Lake Winnepesaukee to replace the steamer *Washington* which had been burned to the waterline. A test of her plating, made by the Bureau of Standards, Washington, D. C., showed it to test at 66,000 pounds per square inch—almost 50% stronger than the best steel of today!

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A favorite trick of the New England fishing skippers was to bury a keg of rum at the very bottom of the salt bin. Thus the men were eager to catch fish gut and salt them quickly so that the rum would appear and be passed about.

—*Carl Lane*

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

AN OUTRIGGER for home use.

Where can I get some information on outrigger canoes and how the south sea islanders sail them? Are they any good in a high surf? How would they perform in a storm?

I'm planning on leaving this desert in a few months and going back to Los Angeles where I will get a place to live on one of the small beaches, or as near to one as I can get.

I would like to buy or build a small boat, that my wife, 12-year-old daughter and myself could carry to the beach, and launch through the surf. One that is easily paddled and that sails fairly fast. We would like to go for week-end trips up and down the coast and over to Catalina Island and camp on the beach overnight. It would have to be a craft that would be able to weather a blow if we got caught out in one.

From what I've read and heard the outrigger canoe pretty well fulfills the above qualifications.

If I could get the correct information on them as regards their abilities and a set of plans to build one, I thought maybe I could get one of the small boat builders on the coast to build one for me out of aluminum or plywood.

Does the idea sound practical to you?

Thanks for whatever information you may be able to give me.

Jack Helling
Mojave, Calif.

Reply by Colonel Birnn: There are many different types of outrigger canoes used in the south seas. Perhaps the most unique one in its method of operation is that in which the mast is set amidships. The boat is a double-ender and instead of coming about in a tack, merely swaps ends. The sheet in use is let run and another sheet from boom to the other end of the boat is hauled in. The boat changes direction and is off on another tack.

Most outrigger canoes have a long pole parallel to the canoe and some distance away. The outrigger is held in place by two or more curved struts fastened to the gunwales of the canoe and across them. Some outriggers are straight, some are curved upward at the ends so they won't dig in so readily when the canoe is running before the wind. However, the curved ones reduce speed when they're in the water. Outriggers, as I have seen them used, seem to be used more as hiking boards, to the windward side of the boat, than as buoyant floats. Most of the native canoes are dugouts, although where good sized logs are scarce as on the low coral islands, they may be made of one to three logs, joined together, and then hollowed out, with the sides built up of planking. Booklets on canoe construction may be obtained from the Bernice P. Bishop Museum of Honolulu, Hawaii. Write and ask them for the material you're interested in. One of the booklets is Bulletin No. 90, written in 1932 by E. S. C. Handy. And if you want to read more about canoe voyaging try to get *Vikings of the Sunrise* by Peter H. Buck, published by Stokes. No doubt a L.A. bookshop could get you a copy.

In my opinion the outrigger canoe isn't so wonderful. It's mostly a fishing boat and cargo carrier, though it might be used for

pleasure. It is to the regular dugout what the tricycle is to the two-wheeled bike. In catching a large fish the natives could battle it all over the sea without worrying over a capsize. In diving for shell they could grab the struts as they broke surface and haul themselves aboard easily. But many Polynesians sail and paddle without them. And the truly epic voyages of five to eight thousand years ago when the South Seas were populated were made in huge platformed catamarans. Again—they were cargo and personnel carriers.

In the Caribbean, on the lower Panama coast, the San Blas Indians travel in sailing dugouts (cayucas, or "ulu's") without outriggers, and in cycloidal, cresting seas. The outrigger is O.K. in trochoidal seas or swells but it sure can crumple up in breaking seas, and capsize, too. Back in 1923 I sailed with two San Blas Indians in a cayuca for 160 *nautical* miles in 17½ hours during the dry season, with a strong trade wind blowing and in high seas along the coast. We took turns standing on the weather gunwale, with a line looped around our back and running to the masthead.

The outrigger boat is more difficult to launch in a surf than one without an outrigger. I think you'd be better satisfied with a sponson canoe. Dollar for dollar you'd have the best buy with a used sponson canoe in good condition. It would also have a good resale value if you found it wasn't what you wanted. The sponsons are airtight "rolls" outside the gunwales, running the length of the boat. If the boat swamps it will still float high enough to permit it to be bailed out. I'm not a highly experienced surf man but I have taken one out through a high breaking surf without any trouble at all. Write to the Old Town Co., Old Town, Me., for a catalog.

Having a boat built is a costly proposition these days. All in all, I'd advise you to read up and explore all the canoe possibilities, before committing yourself to any type. Maybe an outrigger canoe is what you do need. But get talking to the local boatbuilders. A 17 foot double end, flat bottomed sharpie, or one with a slight V bottom might fill the bill. Maybe one with a narrow sponson outside and some flotation material or airtight boxes or tanks inside, bow and stern.

Good luck.

A TRANSFER to Java.

I have been ordered to Batavia, Java, and would like some specific information about that part of the world since all of my service has been in cold or temperate climates. Please give the answers, as far as possible, to the following questions:

1. What items, personal or otherwise, that are in daily use by people living stateside will be necessary to take along due to non-availability in Java?

2. What civilian clothing is it advisable to procure in the States for use in Java? What do you recommend be purchased in Java?

3. Is it advisable to take electrical appliances? If so, is a transformer or adapter necessary?

4. Is it advisable to ship an automobile? If so, what are road conditions and maintenance facilities? Are there any unusual precautions that should be taken before shipping the car, such as protection for the finish, etc.?

5. Do people "dress" each evening for dinner? If so, is it advisable to purchase tropical evening dress here in the States or purchase them in Java?

6. I have heard that the climate, specifically the moist salt air, makes it inadvisable to take metal containers due to quick deterioration; is this so?

7. What is recommended in the way of luggage? Leather, plywood, or metal?

8. What are the living quarters, particularly regarding accommodations and food?

9. What is the rate of exchange?

10. What precautions should be observed pertaining to health?

11. What attitude does the government and the population at large assume toward Americans?

12. Are any restrictions placed upon foreigners after entrance?

13. How are prices in general?

14. Is it advisable to ship household goods from the States or purchase locally?

15. Are insects and tropical diseases rife?

16. What exportable and desirable items are subject to duty by customs in Java?

Any other information would be appreciated if, in your opinion, unusual conditions warrant.

Thank you very much.

Philip M. Marsh
Lt. Col., Inf.

Reply by V. B. Windle:

1. All personal items, especially socks, shoes, shaving equipment, stockings (if you are married), underwear etc.

2. Shirts, ties, and as noted in number one. Suits can generally be made out there and it is best to do so. They will match anything you want. If you are going to wear civilian clothes then take along at least one homeside suit of light weight.

3. Voltage is 220 to 240 in the Orient. Take the small appliances if you can get them in this voltage. Otherwise you can buy them in Singapore if not available in Java.

4. Yes, if you want a homeside car. It's right hand drive out there and you might have to get it converted. Roads are not roads as we know them but they are not too bad. Otherwise you can buy something out there. Ford, made in Canada, can help you out for they also make a right hand drive.

5. Not every night. Get them out there except for shoes, shirts and ties.

6. They will mildew like everything else.

7. I use leather. Take it out once a week and rub it down and give it an airing. This you do with most everything anyway.

8. Not bad—not good. You have to be lucky.

9. This changes all the time.

10. The usual ones but NEVER neglect even the slightest scratch.

11. Don't resent them and they probably won't resent you.

12. There will be now.

13. Since the recent adjustment in exchange I don't know.

14. Get it out there.

15. Insects are as plentiful as the sands on a beach. There is a danger from tropical diseases. If you had the proper shots before you leave not too much to worry about.

16. All has been changed, so I understand. You should find many desirable items.

All in all I think you will enjoy the Orient and hope you have a good tour of duty.

WOOD versus aluminum canoes.

We are leaving on an extensive canoe trip from Chicago to Alaska, a distance of approximately 4500 miles. This distance will be made entirely by canoe. For the most part it will be in Canada, and Canadian territories.

In the last few months we have been in the midst of a terrific argument, the one which always starts whenever canoes are mentioned—which is better, aluminum or wood. Both have proven their merits, but which will be better for our purposes? Three of us have had much experience with canoes and we have all used both kinds. Two years ago Paul Celmer (one of the men going) and I went up to the Fond Du Lac canoe regatta (held at Fond Du Lac, Wis.) and took first place with a 16-foot Old Town, last year we won it again, only this time with a aluminum canoe (Gruman, I think), so we have no definite proof there.

We plan to put small storage bins on the sides, a battery compartment in the bow, racks for extra paddles on the outside gunwales and a few other minor changes. Our problem is which kind of canoe would most readily take these changes without a severe cut in its seaworthiness. Susceptibility to damage, ruggedness, and repairing must be considered. I don't know the full story on repairs on an aluminum canoe, but I take they are much more difficult than on wooden ones.

Don Lee
Des Plaines, Ill.

Reply by H. S. M. Kemp: I used canoes for many years in the north, both as a trader and a trapper and in that country the canoe is indispensable and one gets to know them like he does his automobile today. But all that was in the era before the aluminum canoe came along. However, I have a friend in the city who heads a prospecting syndicate in this new uranium country and who does use aluminum canoes, and I got in touch with him. This is what he says:

He can't understand anyone using the old-type wood-and-canvas canoes if he can afford aluminum ones. Not only do they meet every requirement of the wood-and-canvas type but they are far more rugged. Insofar as repairs go, that shouldn't worry you; it takes an awful wallop on a very sharp rock to hole them at all. And then, if you do hole them, repairs are easy. Aluminum is malleable; so with a prospector's hammer, or an axe, or even a stone, you can pound the broken edges into position again. You may not need anything further, but if you do, the cut may be sealed with aluminum solder and a couple of matches, with canoe-gum and a piece of material torn from your shirt-tail, or by the ubiquitous spruce-gum. In all, anything that will patch a canvas canoe will fix an aluminum one.

He says a lot depends on the make of the canoe. He uses an American product, made by Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation, of Bethpage, Long Island, and in the 17 ft. model. He prefers these because, except for a hidden weld embodied in the keel, they are seamless. That means if you hit a rock head-on, there are no seams to split.

Now one other point. I don't want to butt into your affairs, but unless you know a whole lot more about your intended trip than I, it might be worthwhile to reconsider it. My northern experiences didn't carry me up into the Alaska-Yukon-Northern British Columbia country, but I've always heard it was pretty well unexplored. The Nahanni country occurs to me, and Dead Man's Valley; and while your itinerary may not take you just there, you'll be going into a land where you'll have only yourselves to depend upon. I believe that another ASK ADVENTURE expert, Philip H. Godsell knows something about this region; and if such is the case, you have time to get his slant on things before you start. Some years ago I plotted a route for a couple of your countrymen from McMurray in Northern Alberta to Lake Winnipeg. I suggested they start at McMurray and travel downstream. But if you prefer the longer and more hair-raising trip, don't let me deter you.

THE lure of Death Valley.

I would like to know something about best places to prospect for gem stones in Death Valley and also where I can get maps

of that area. What are the principal gem stones found there. Am tied down to a steady job now but hope it will not be too long before I can take out for the wide open spaces.

From all I have heard of Death Valley, it's no place to spend the summer but I should imagine it would be okay in the winter. Would a jeep be the best type of transportation there? Will appreciate all the information you can give me.

Craig Wills
Thomaston, Ga.

Reply by Victor Shaw: You are right about not entering Death Valley in the summer months. That's when even salamanders hunt cool holes. And in all of our desert areas the jeep is the *only* feasible transportation method, and that goes too for any and all mountain regions. As for maps, there are a few local agencies, but I'd advise sending to U. S. Geological Survey, Denver Federal Center, Denver 14, Colo. And you'll need the three topographic Quadrangle maps following: (price 20c each by M. O.)

INYO COUNTY—
"New York Butte Quadrangle":
Lat. 36°-30' & Long. 117°-45'
"Ubehebe Pk. Quadrangle":
Lat. 36°-30' & Long. 117°-30'
"Tecopa Quadrangle":
Lat. 35°-45' & Long. 116°-00'

These cover about all Death Valley, which extends down into northern San Bernardino desert, where many types of gemstones also may be found from Trona clear east to the Nevada state boundary line. Most of the D.V. gemmy stones and/or semi-precious stones belong chiefly to the saline and borate types of minerals, but a lot of other kinds occur in the dry lakes scattered all over the desert and desert hills lying southwest toward Mohave and Barstow, the Baker and Ivanpah region, as well as to the west to the Coso, Argus, and Slate ranges, also around Ballerat and other parts of the Panamint Range.

The Searles Lake deposits are the biggest, including Indian Wells and Salt Wells valleys, and others. Overflow from ancient Searles Lake drained into Death Valley, so minerals are much the same outside D.V. and climate is better. Parts of D.V. are 280-ft below sea level. Searles Lake at Trona is a great white dry plain, white "halite" occurs in thick masses of crystals and also the mineral "trona" in clear glassy acicular crystals.

The central evaporating sump of Searles Lake is called a "playa" and the upper saline basins are called "bolsons." A chemical company—American Potash & Chemical Co.—operates a plant at Trona, with an annual yield of thousands of tons of borax and muriate of potash. The chief saline deposits of Inyo and numerous surrounding counties include Halite, Trona, Borax, and clear crystals of Gaylussite, Northupite, Pirssonite and the rare mineral colemanite, ulexite, meyerhofferite, priceite, probertite, and myoite. All these in crystals in dry beds that have warped to some height above present valley floor.

There are similar deposits at Owens Lake near US-395 west of D.V. And note that a desert road runs southwest from Panamint to Trona.

In the northern part of D.V. at Mt. Blanco, there are fine large specimens of colemanite, as well as borate myerhofferite. Mt. Blanco is 11,280 ft. high and lies about 20 miles west of Oasis Ranch near Nevada line near the road to Goldfield, Nev., from Big Pine, which is south of Bishop on US-395.

You'll find many scores of rare and interesting minerals on old mine dumps scattered through the desert north of Mohave and Barstow and eastward to Baker, the soda lakes (dry), and on to Ivanpah and both the New York and Providence Mts. All near the Nevada boundary.

Colemanite occurs in Russell shaft, east side of Death Valley. Meyerhofferite occurs in only one working in D.V. in S.E. portion. And priceite occurs only in D.V. and in Curry Co., Oregon, in the USA.

ISLE of Pines.

I seek information on the Isle of Pines, south of western end of Cuba. A bachelor, aged 41, white, I am considering the Isle as a permanent residence. My bankroll is about $7,000.

To help you help me, here is some data. I have traveled through Mexico, all Central America, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil, and have lived four years on Tahiti in South Pacific.

I found Tahiti unsatisfactory as residence for the following reasons:

The French Administration limits and/or prevents new foreigners in business enterprises or land purchases.

For such a small uneventful place Tahiti is too isolated from rest of world. Distance prevents handy getting away and result is monotony.

There is wide open marriage and racial mixing but underneath there is daily undercurrent of antagonism between French, Tahitians, Chinese and foreigners.

While the total population is large enough the various racial and national barriers of culture and background prevent much unity of activity. The result is no activity and nothing to do.

Out of town and at a distance from the daily market it is difficult to maintain a variety in the daily menu.

The mosquitoes are a damned nuisance to say the least; no malaria but plenty of filariasis (dephantiasis).

Tahiti is too isolated from mail service and newspapers.

How many of these Tahiti problems would one run into on the Isle of Pines?

How much English is spoken.

What racial and national types live there? How do they get along? What about the differences in culture, economic levels?

As a place to reside what are its good points and bad, from standpoint of a new settler?

Is it a good place to raise beef cattle?

To what extent has running water and electricity reached into the country?

What about cost of living, food, rent in city?

What diseases and sicknesses are prevalent?

Can you suggest books and data on Isle of Pines and where same may be secured?

Can you suggest any other West Indian Islands better suited for me?

Roland Purdy
Detroit, Mich.

Reply by Jack B. Leffingwell: I have just returned from a visit to the Isle of Pines—I lived there for twenty years—and am able to give you an accurate report on conditions there.

The Isle of Pines comprises some 1000 square miles. About 600 square miles of this area is a high plateau bordered by four mountain ranges. The southern part is a low coral formation, tropical jungle, and is not inhabited, except for a small fishing settlement at Caleta Grande. The soil is, as a whole, fertile and the highlands produce some of the finest citrus fruit in the world. The adjacent coastal areas produce vegetables for American and Cuban markets. The citrus crop is some 250,000 boxes a year, the grapefruit going to the U.S. and the oranges to Cuba. There is a large cattle industry which produces beef for local consumption and export. Good beef in the local market averages 40 cents a pound. Poultry does well on the Island but I have no accurate information on that industry at present.

The Isle of Pines, since 1925, has been part of the Republic of Cuba. The Cuban people are a kindly, friendly lot and the government is considerate and benevolent to Americans. They encourage new settlers and investors. There are about 200 Americans, all gainfully employed and apparently prosperous. Some 100 Japanese and Chinese—the latter all merchants. About 100 West Indians and some 2500 Cubans and Spaniards. There is absolutely no racial discrimination and all the people work together in perfect harmony.

The Island is rich in minerals and a gold mine, an iron mine are in production. A tungsten mine is closed down at present for reorganization. The pine timber has all been cut off and lumber must be imported.

I honestly believe that the Island is the healthiest place on earth. The climate is nearly perfect. There are many health giving mineral springs some of which have been commercialized. There is no malaria or other tropical diseases. The winters are warm and the summers cool due to the N.E. trade winds.

FOUR months for fishing.

Your name is listed in Adventure magazine under advice in fresh water fishing outfits.

First I want to give you a little of my past history as I think it will help you get a better picture of what I want. I am forty-three years old and fished from a kid until about thirteen years ago. Stopped having vacations about then. This year I am taking a four month vacation, two months in Mexico (where I hope to fish), two in the American West.

I want to buy an inexpensive outfit to add to my old tackle. Stuff on hand includes:

1—So Bend #550 Reel almost new

2—3 or 4 spools

3—Various plugs including: Heddon Spools, Creek Chub Crab, All Foss Spinner, Red and White Babe Oxens, Silver and Red Babe Oxens, 3 or 4 miscellaneous plugs.

I believe I will need line (what test?) rod, and few new plugs. I have no underwater plugs, leaders or hooks for live bait fishing for bass. My favorite casting and trolling is for bass, small and big mouth, and wall-eye pike.

Donald E. Wolcott
Lakeside, Calif.

Reply by John Alden Knight: It seems to me that about all you will be needing for the time being will be a casting rod and a tackle box in which to carry your assembled gear.

I always find it a pretty good rule to postpone purchasing new lures until you arrive at a fishing location. Once there, it is not difficult to find out what the taking lures are in that particular area.

I think that you will find the 12-pound nylon casting line about the right weight and strong enough for all practical purposes. These nylon lines do not lose their tensile strength as the old silk lines used to do and I think you will find a 12-pound line strong enough to take care of your needs. In addition, a line of narrow diameter casts much more easily than a heavier line.

There is a great variety of casting rods on the market at present and they come in steel, copper, glass, and bamboo. I am quite sure that your local sporting goods dealer can fix you up in good shape with a satisfactory casting rod.

For your coming trip I certainly would take in Lake Texarkana. Reports indicate a sustained succession of good catches throughout the entire season. For an exact location, try Bat's One-O-One Boat Dock at Gamaliel, Arkansas. The boys down there will take very good care of you.

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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—WALT WOESTMAN, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Calif.

Baseball—FINDERICE LEE, c/o *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—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.

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Fishing, Fresh Water—*Fly and bait casting; bait casting 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.

Globetrotting and Vagabonding—NORMAN D. FORD, c/o *Adventure*.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure*.

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Songs of Campfire, Foc'sle and Bunkhouse—HARRY KIRBY MCCLINTOCK, 3911 So. Pacific Ave., San Pedro, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MUREL E. THESEN, 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; poisonous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 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 Bld., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure*.

Horology: *The science of time and timekeepers*—JOHN W. McGRATH, 306 Riverside Drive, Apt. 7C, New York 25, N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, Star Route 2, Lake Hughes, California.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *History, operation, broadcast, short wave; Television*—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*.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—Col. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure*.

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. R. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221 Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

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—GEORGE C. APPELL, 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, 41 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia**—ALAN FOLEY, 234 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM McCREADIE, Taylor Memorial Home, 79 Lagoon St., North Narrabeen, 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 MACGREGOR, 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*.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Yale University, Institute of Human Relations, 333 Cedar Street, New Haven 11, Connecticut.

Asia, Part 1 ★*China, Japan, Hong Kong*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England. **2** ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **3** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **4** *Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **5** *Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

★**The British Isles: Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus**—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** *Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o *Adventure*.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Bradenton Beach, Florida.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

Finland and Scandinavian Countries—ALEKO LILIUS, c/o *Adventure*.

★**Newfoundland**—CAPT. LEO C. MURPHY, J. P., Great War Veterans' Office, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEWATER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco, Oaxaca, Campeche, Quintana, Roo and Yucatan*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, c/o *Adventure*.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MacMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Southern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **4** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F. R. G. S., 1239 12th Ave. W. Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F. R. G. S., 1239 12th Avenue W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

Western U. S. Part 1—*Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o *Adventure*. **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1117 North Vassar, Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGGLESTON, 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, 2940 East Brill St., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2003 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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** *Chesapeake Bay and tributaries; inland waterways, New York to Florida*—COL. ROLAND BIRNN, c/o *Adventure*. **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)

Contrast them with the pictures on pages 87, 61 and 77 of that same November issue and page 37 of the March '52 number. Do you see what I mean? *Adventure* readers are perfectly satisfied for it to remain a pulp, but they want it to be the top of the heap where it has always been.

On reading this over, I realize that it smacks more of criticism than of constructive suggestion. But believe me it is a sincere attempt at cooperation from one who owns to a great affection for *Adventure* and would not trade the past forty years of its pages for a like amount of the world's great literature.

My best wishes for your success.

Rex R. Benson
Fresno, California

Mr. Benson, we think, has answered us. Though he makes his point in the past tense, he has ably described a goal we can see—eyes front—a most difficult task since he undertook to make tangible what might best be described as a legacy of sweat and soul. Our gratitude, Mr. Benson—and sincere pledge to carry on, at least with the sweat.

MR. FRANK A. PARTRIDGE, Berkeley, California, disclaims any interest in the March cover original we offered in connection with this *Camp-fire*—says it wouldn't fit his non-masculine collection—but Mr. Partridge himself, we feel, is a gentleman you'll want to meet.

And here he is.

Quite interested in the latest campfire, and this idea of perking up the old blaze. Like the song they added to Mamselle during the last fracas, "Fat and forty and gray on the head, but there's lots of life in the old retread . . ." More power to you.

I also am a reader from Volume one, number one. Also had one of those Identification cards, and if you should have the old files available, I'd like a re-issue. Lost mine sometime during the first world war. Also one of the old 73 buttons. For your information, the 73 was the sum of the alphabetical value of the letters in the word *Camp-fire*. Not that I'll be doing much more roving. Am pretty well crippled up as the result of Saipan and Okinawa in this last mess, and the only fighting I am doing now is with the VA quacks. Tried to make Korea, but altho the Army was willing to have me along, the doctor said no. So now I am working for the Navy. So be it. Maybe some Russki paratrooper will be sucker enough to drop down within gun range of my old Krag. Quien savvy?

Read Lincoln's letter with interest, but I believe the *Altar of the Legion* was by Art Brodeur instead of by Mundy. Maybe I'm wrong. (You're right—Ed)

About why the old *Adventure* made a place for itself. Well, first, it was accurate. It had to be, because the readers had been everywhere and done everything. Not all of them of course, but someone or more of the readers was an expert on the particular subject. You couldn't mention a (shall we say "dive," Mr. Partridge?) anywhere in the world but what someone of the readers had been in it and knew all the girls that worked there at that specific time, and furthermore, would write in and tell you about any errors that popped up in the story. Which kept the writers on their toes.

But mostly, I believe it was ASH. White did get off to a good start, yes but it was Hoffman that really made the old mag. He had story sense and also the ability to build up a writer. Also he had a bunch of readers who had story sense instead of degrees in literature and an adoration for perfect typing and artistic manuscripts. (Phooie on them) Too bad ASH went highbrow and tried to make a slick outta the old Mag. Just goes to show what evil associations will do to a man.

Well, this is thirty. No use going on any more, but I wish you luck, anyhow. And I'm not shooting for the cover pic. Wouldn't fit in the collection of nudes that I have.

AMONG the gems in this month's grab-bag is the following from Mr. E. R. Crawford, of Banning, California:

My English composition teacher used to say that the simplest introduction was the best. This one deserves the best, but it is difficult to make it simple. The setting—aboard the old Kate Adams, mail steamer from Arkansas Post to Memphis. It was a sunny day, but the river was high—higher than it had been in many years, so when the landing at Helena was approached, it had to be done carefully, so very carefully, to avoid making a wave more than three inches high, else it might wash over the top of the levee and start a break. After leaving Helena I had nothing to do but watch the scenery, and that soon lacked interest, although there were places where the Mississippi was 150 miles wide. Finding a place on the foredeck which was sheltered from the wind I stretched out in the sunshine on the deck. From this position I discovered a magazine, rolled up and stuck behind a brace along the bulwark. All afternoon I read the most exciting and wonderful stories I had ever found in any book or magazine before. It was *Adventure Magazine*, April, 1913, and that day nearly thirty-nine years ago marked the beginning of a long friendship between *Adventure* and me.

During many long years at sea, while in

the Navy, I missed issues of *Adventure*, but always made it a first thing to get on arriving in port. I acquired an aluminum card through the old identification program, and still have it. The number is—. If there is to be a reactivation of that old department I would like very much to retain my card and number.

While in the Naval Hospital, Brooklyn, about December, 1942, I visited the editorial offices there and greatly enjoyed an hour's gab with the then editor, Ken White. There have been many fine stories and some great authors have contributed to *Adventure*, but I think none better than Harold Lamb [the Khlit stories] or Talbot Mundy, the latter of whom I knew here in So. California. *Adventure* format is fine as it is but this last number I have (March), is only about one third as thick as was that April issue of 1913. The first place I turn to is *Camp-fire*, then *Ask Adventure* and *Lost Trails*. There is no intent to slight the stories of course, because they are all good; just the thing to bring back thoughts and feelings of the old times for an old-timer on the highways of the world.

FROM a fellow-editor, Mr. Bernal R. Camp:

For many months I have been intending to express my opinions on the current *Adventure*. As a reader of some twenty years standing I feel that perhaps I have some basis for comparison.

First, a mistake was made in going to bi-monthly publication. That's just too long between issues.

In the years I've read the magazine, I've read some good stories in it, some of them in the last year or two. Recently, I have enjoyed particularly *Dead Man's Deep*, *Son of the Sword*, *Escape*, *Jungle Wallah*, *Prison Ship*, and the fact features. Why drop those features—sometimes they make the magazine for me. (Got a good one in this issue—and more coming up. Ed.)

And why waste valuable space in a magazine re-printing stories we read a few years ago. They were good stories when they were written, but not good enough to bear reprinting in the same pages again. If you want to reprint them why not put them in a special anthology and let the folk who like reprints buy them.

Further suggestions to improve ADVENTURE: More fact stories, particularly about the American past; a format similar to *Argosy* and other men's publications—it wouldn't have to be a copy, and it would make for better display on the newsstands; make it about 80 pages a month—yes, go back on a monthly schedule.

I know I've been critical, but why not give the magazine the break it deserves?

One final suggestion—why not try a few good full-color photographs built around adventurous themes.

(Continued on page 114)

(Continued from page 65)

to retreat slowly. Step by step he moved back, realizing that the wind was in his face, that the bear might not have scented the blood of her dead cub yet.

And then she charged, bellowing.

Buchannan went back one more step. His right foot dropped into a stump-rotted hole. He fell, twisting himself to light on hands and knees. The sharp, flat blasts of rifles came from the hill. He heard the enraged clamoring of the bear. Resting on one knee he swung his rifle around.

The bear's charge had carried her past the dead cub, and then she had gone back. She was snuffling at her offspring now. She cuffed it gently and whined plaintively. Leaf mold splashed around her from bullets off the hill. She sprang to slash at the movements with her forepaws, snarling and biting where the missiles had struck.

Buchannan rose and backed into the timber. The firing from the hill stopped. A few minutes later the she bear shambled in the direction from which she had come, her second cub joining her at the edge of the forest.

"Why didn't you shoot at the very first?" Sargent asked when the three men met on the hillside.

"There's been enough killing—" Buchannan frowned at himself. "Thoughts of killing," he said. He felt like one whose head is suddenly clear after a long fever. "I wanted to yell at that bear, to make her understand someway that *I* hadn't harmed her cub—"

"It was an idiot's trick I did, to kill that cub," Sargent said. "Diedre made me go up the hill to get in the clear. We tried to warn you."

Buchannan didn't seem to hear. "I almost cried out to her to understand. But there I was with all the guilt forced on me. There I stood accused of murder, and every indication pointed to my—" He stopped suddenly and gave Sargent an odd look.

"I know," Sargent said bitterly. "I know exactly how you felt." He stared into the clover at his feet. "Davidson must have told you what they said about McKee and me." His mouth was twisted and his eyes were bleak when he raised his head to look across the valley. "I know how you felt—but that was only a bear you had to face."

For the first time Buchannan read right the expression on Sargent's face—bleakness, the aftermath of defiance that tries to hide despair. Sargent had not killed McKee. Buchannan knew it with far more sureness than he had felt in holding Sargent guilty.

He knew one thing more—Sargent had never known the evil coiled and pulsing in Buchannan's mind.

Diedre's intelligent black eyes were studying Buchannan. "You want to hunt with us—now?" the guide asked gently.

Diedre had known. Diedre had guessed correctly. "Maybe tomorrow," Buchannan said. "Right now I'm going back to camp."

BEFORE noon Arnold Davidson walked into camp. He glanced at the three sleeping bags and gave Buchannan a quick, worried look.

"He's hunting with the guide," Buchannan said.

Davidson slipped his pack and sat down on it quickly as if his joints were loose and his muscles jerking with fatigue. "They told me, at Little Bear, where your guide generally took his parties." He lit a cigarette and studied Buchannan's face a moment. "You're yourself again, I see. I'm glad, Stu. The man who accidentally shot McKee gave himself up three days ago."

"Sargent said he might."

Davidson stared.

"Around a fire at night you can read a man's face," Buchannan said. "Last night I knew Sargent wasn't guilty, but I didn't admit it until today." He told Davidson about the bear, and watched his friend's face turn white.

"You hadn't tried the rifle?" Davidson asked.

Buchannan shook his head.

"I'd fixed the firing pin so it wouldn't shoot before I lent it to you. It was childish, I know, but it was all I could think of to try and stop you."

"The Good Lord takes care of everything, including bears and madmen," Buchannan said simply.

Davidson stood up. He wasn't tired now and he hadn't been physically tired when he dropped limply on his pack. He smiled. "I brought a replacement. While we're here we may as well stay a while and hunt."

(Continued from page 81)

monotony of the hours keyed the two on the *prahu*. Words between them were cut to edged curtness.

They sped on a laughing breeze. The everlasting parade of the islands trooped by. Waves skipped over reefs. Occasionally they saw groups of stilted nipa shacks sheltered in coves. Great mounds of banyans lifted above all other growth, their crowns majestic above cool jungles. Screeching sea birds whirled above the *prahu*. And when it seemed they would be going on this way for all time, it ended.

Strader was near the bow. He turned suddenly. Kim's muscles tightened.

"See it?" asked Strader, huskily.

"Bud Dao," said Kim, tightly. "Jolo just ahead."

Strader looked toward the humped shadow lifting above the island forest: old Mount Bud Dao, the sentinel peak of Jolo. He shrugged and took a deliberate step toward Kim.

The sunshiner couldn't miss the harbor now. He could go the remainder of the distance alone. Kim reached for a club he had hidden in a coil of rope near the tiller. Strader saw the move and stopped.

"All right," Kim said, thickly. "You said there'd be a showdown, Strader. If we fight it out to see which goes on into the harbor, now's the time."

"I suppose," said Strader, "it is. But I hadn't figured it that way for quite a few days, kid." He shook his heavy shoulders. "You talked a lot when you were out of your head. About a girl named Jane. I had to listen. She's waiting for you back home."

Strader blew a breath between hairy lips. "Funny. There was a girl waiting in the States for me too. I stayed here too long. When we get to Jolo, you get the hell out of here while you can."

The lapping of the sea at the side of the *prahu* was laughter that jeered.

"When two whites set their necks to go some place, kid, they stick together and go." Strader half turned toward the bow. "We're going to Jolo together. I'll keep lookout. Take her in."

THE weekly freighter from Manila was a glowing raft of light beside the dark wharf as they slipped into the harbor. Native dogs yowled back of huts on the shore.

The pearling fleet, in for the night, was a forest of masts. The scent of the *dama de noche* bush hung heavy in a blend of musty odors of copra. A native gong orchestra beat a throbbing rhythm. The *prahu* slid, almost wearily, to a berth beside the Chinese pier. There was a light in the tienda of Chino Charlie.

Kim climbed slowly along the *prahu*. Strader stood on the wharf. The sunshiner reached down a hand. There was a stout, sure grip as he helped Kim to the planking.

"Made it," said Strader, roughly. "You know, there's something to this idea—white men shoulder to shoulder." He drew a slow, hard breath. "It's a sure-as-hell fact, I had a girl waiting for me back home." He took a short step. Kim hesitated. Thinking of Strader, the islands, a girl waiting. The sunshiner whirled on him. "Come on," he snarled. "Get off the dime."

He was walking ahead as they entered Chino Charlie's. The moon-faced trader came heaving up out of the chair where he sat.

"Whassa matta?" Charlie looked from one to the other, quickly.

Strader slammed his big fist on the counter.

"Something with horsepower in it," he ordered. "I've got a thirst that's five hundred miles long and deeper than the keel of hell. Good American stuff, Charlie. If you haul out any nipa rum, I'll strangle you."

He picked up the bottle, tipped it, his hairy throat working.

"It's funny the things that'll make you remember," he said. "A tourist's laugh in the market place, the captain of a trader swearing in Yankee slang, or that kind of a drink. Some damnable little thing—and you think of back home."

"Well you can go if you want to," Kim said rustily.

Strader turned wide eyes on him.

"You've got the pearls," stated Kim.

Strader pulled up his ragged pants and stuck his blunt hands into his pockets. He fished out the little bags, holding them up, and sounds came in from the outside. The island sounds throbbed just outside the doorway. With a fierce toss, Strader threw the bags on the counter and turned on Kim.

"Now, you young fool, get the hell out of here while you can," he roared. "Get the hell out!"

He swept the bottle from the counter and started toward the door. Kim caught up with him and spun him. They both staggered.

"And where do you think you're going now?" demanded Kim.

"Not going," Strader said, his voice deep in his chest. "I'm already there. The Islands. That's where. Blast you, get out of here."

Strader walked to the threshold and halted there, as though he had reached an invisible line, and if he crossed it he could not step back.

"Strader," said Kim, "there's two of us. We've come this far together. If you go out there, I'm going too."

"You're off your nut." Strader turned back angrily. "What you talking about, kid? Go on home."

"There's one way," Kim said savagely. "It's no worse for one of us than the other to go under in these islands. If it's good enough for you, it's good enough for another white man."

Strader shook his head, slowly. He began swaying, drawing slow breaths between his teeth. He turned and walked to the doorway. He stood there, while seconds dragged.

"I damn well mean it," said Kim. "There's enough in those sacks to take us both where we want to go. Or stay here and hit the tobboggan in a way that would be magnificent. Which way does a white man go, Strader? Out there? Or home?"

The sunshiner looked into the shadows of the street. The night air throbbed with the rhythm of the East. The breeze was thick with scents of the islands. Intrigue, something illicit and seductive, seemed just beyond fingertips in the velvet blackness. Suddenly Strader threw the bottle into the street. The glass smashed. Then the sunshiner laughed, not quietly, but with a great shaking bellow. He walked back to the counter in long, lusty strides.

"There's a lot to do," he said. "I'll leave enough of my share of the pearls to take care of the Moro women. There's Lakat's wife and the others, too. You'll want to get off a wireless to that girl named Jane. We'll have to hustle, kid, to get on that freighter when she rides out on the tide at midnight. Out on the tide—towards home."

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.

Would very much like to get any news concerning Arthur Carl, last heard of in Miami in 1922. He served with me in the English Machine Gun Corps during World War I in France. He left England after the War for the U.S.A. and was making good in Miami when suddenly all news from him stopped. Colonel G. Gauntlett, 18 Vine Road, East Molesey, Surrey, England.

Information wanted about Camerond Cox. Was in Rhyolite, Nevada in 1906. Write R. E. Ware, Clemson, S. C.

As a matter of interest I would like to hear from any one who knew Corporal Francis D. Howard, Company A. 109th Infantry. 28th Division. Killed in action July 16, 1918 at Chateau-Thiery. H. Thorne Arnold, 221 E. 46th St., New York 17, N. Y.

Sweeck, Joseph E., U.S. soldier, U.S. sailor. According to War Dept. Records was discharged from U.S.S. Denver on Pacific coast 1917. Gave us as his forwarding address, 255 Shelton Ave., New Haven, Conn. Never arrived. May be amnesia victim. A reward will be paid for proof of his existence or evidence of his death. Please write Tom E. Long, Box 203 Key West, Florida.

Would like to get in touch with Walter Norton, deep-sea diver on the battleship Arkansas in World War One. The family once lived in Springfield, Mass. Please notify Dawes Alward, Box 868, Waterford, N. Y.

I would like to make contact with an old friend in Lost Trails. I would appreciate it if any one knowing the whereabouts of Dewey Kornegay would contact me. We were shipmates for three years on the cruiser U.S.S. Milwaukee during the war. The last I heard of him he was on the U.S.S. Montauck, in 1944. Contact Jack D. Mays GM3 USNR #266-13-82, U.S. Naval Hospital, Navy 961 Box 8, c/o F.P.O. San Francisco, California.

(Continued from page 36)

JOE ALBERS stumbled out. When he hit the sand he fell down. The strength had left him. Reaction set in. While the other dogs sat around in a wondering circle, he let his head rest on the crook of his arm.

He lay there for three long minutes. He'd been right at the gates of hell, right on the lip of eternity. Only a cross-bred wolf-dog had saved him. He gave a great shuddering sob.

"I ain't worth it—"

At last he raised his head and looked about him. A dozen feet or so away sat the Soosoo dog. He'd come back, taking up the slack of the line. He was panting, saliva running off a red-curled tongue. Then he quit his panting, to watch Joe Albers, curiously.

Joe pushed himself to his knees. He shook his head slowly, as though clearing it; as though something were beyond his comprehension. Then he extended his hand, snapped his fingers.

"*Kwoos, kwoos!* Come here, ol' boy—c'mere!"

There was something different in the tone, a quality the dog hadn't heard before. It cocked its head to one side, to the other—then slowly it got to its feet and came across.

Its head lowered, tail gently wagging. Right up to Joe Albers it came, looking steadily into the man's eyes. It sniffed a couple of times, then rubbed its nose against Joe's scarred and twisted cheek.

Joe broke down completely. Face working, he blubbered like a kid.

(Continued from page 85)

of the rail shipment and Alaskan trip of the American entry. It was along this stretch that Koeppen, Maas and Knape had hoped to overcome their handicap.

But both cars spent more time in mud holes than in actually running. The crews of both were tired and dirty, with no baths to be had except in the streams and rivers, which were about as muddy as the men. Due to lack of any bridges the cars had to ford the streams or be pulled through.

LEAVING Verkhae Udinsk the Germans found that they had but a single day's lead over the Thomas Flyer and the terrible grades of the Baikal mountains had to be crossed before reaching Irkutsk. Over these mountains the Thomas made better time than the Protos, and the American crew reached Irkutsk just in time to see the Germans loaded on the steamer and starting across Baikal Lake. As the steamer made but one trip a day—when in running condition—the crew of the Thomas feared the worst.

But the German was probably too intent on the race to think of pulling another trick out of his sleeve, and the steamer was back in Irkutsk ready to sail on the afternoon of June twenty-first, so the Thomas lost only 24 hours at this point.

Arriving at Tomsk, after incredible hardships and terrible roads, which included the sinking of a small ferry boat, the Protos was just ready to leave when the Thomas arrived.

By continuous driving the Americans caught up to and passed the Protos just before arriving at Omsk. After an overnight stop at this place the Thomas Flyer crossed the Irtish River at noon of July first, leading the Protos by three hours. Beyond the river the crew found a mile wide swamp in which the road was covered in some places with straw. While this covering was enough to keep the horse carts from miring down, it was not sufficient for the weight of the Thomas.

With the front wheels just barely out of the swamp and on solid ground the rear wheels sank into the mud and a drive chain broke. With this repaired, the car made good speed to the boundary between Asia and Europe, leading the German Protos.

While there had been but little road traffic through Asia this condition was now changing.

At a small village after leaving Perm a broken drive gear caused a four-day delay and while the Americans were awaiting a new gear the Germans in the Protos again passed them.

The Protos stopped in Moscow only long enough to refuel.

On July twenty-fourth the Protos arrived in Berlin at about the time the Thomas was crossing the border between Russia and Germany. And regardless of the continuous day and night driving of George Schuster and the rest of the crew of the Thomas Flyer, the German Protos reached Paris on July 26th, just four days ahead of the American entry.

The American Thomas Flyer, however, with its original lead of thirty days, was declared the winner. The German crew were the first to admit defeat and Lieutenant Koeppen celebrated the admission with a copious flow of French champagne.

New York to Paris. A great adventure for man and a great test of machinery. A great race—but a race which can never be run again, even with modern automobiles and the almost perfect highways of today. Even though the traffic and its laws be disregarded there would still remain the iron barrier of Russia to halt the wheels going west.

(Continued from page 104)

WE HAVE never believed in roasting people at the *Camp-fire,* but an incident brought to our attention would suggest a slow burn as a fitting solution.

Elsewhere in this magazine its editors conduct a *Lost Trails* department, a free service to readers who wish to re-establish contact with old friends and acquaintances, separated in the drift of years. Whether or not communication is established depends entirely on the persons involved—*Adventure* simply acts as a vehicle for the transmission of pertinent information. Over the years certain unscrupulous riff-raff have worked out a free-loading angle to this service, utilizing the real anxiety of some of the correspondents to get in touch with one-time trailside comrades.

The procedure is as follows: Our communicant receives a request for some personal memento of the person to be located—personal property or "last clear snapshot"—for purposes of "final identification." The next request is generally for "expense money" to finance further investigation. At this point the original seeker of information generally grows wary—and discovers that unless he complies with the monetary demands, the memento which formed his final link with the missing friend is forfeit.

It's a petty racket. The actual money involved isn't much. We feel we're sullying a page of a man's magazine by giving it space. But there have been thousands of instances where *Lost Trails* has served a vital purpose, and we would like to warn our current and future correspondents against permitting a situation to arise where they feel it necessary to finance this slimy racket.

OUR sincerest thanks for all the letters that were crowded out of this issue—there wasn't one of them that didn't serve both to give us that fine feeling of friendship that all of us need—and help to clarify the trail ahead. The March cover original now belongs to one of you, not as a prize—for we would have needed too many prizes—but as a memento simply.

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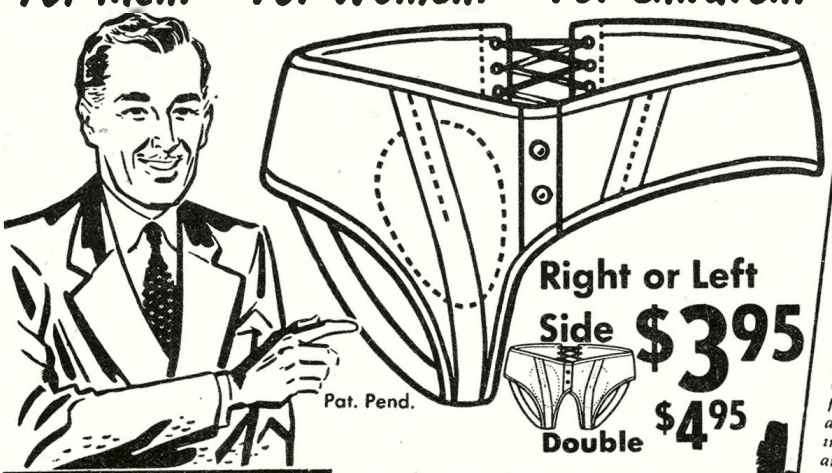

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EASY TO ORDER

Just measure around the lowest part of the abdomen and state right or left side or double.

10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

Money-back guarantee if you don't get relief.

DELAY MAY BE SERIOUS

ORDER TODAY

Piper Brace Co., Dept. PFG-62
811 Wyandotte, Kansas City 6, Mo.

PIPER BRACE CO. 811 Wyandotte, Dept. PFG-62, Kansas City 6, Mo.

Please send my RUPTURE-EASER by return mail.

Right Side ☐ $3.95
Left Side ☐ $3.95
Double ☐ $4.95

Measure around lowest part of my abdomen is _____ INCHES.

We Prepay Postage Except on C.O.D.'s
Note: Be sure to give size and side when ordering

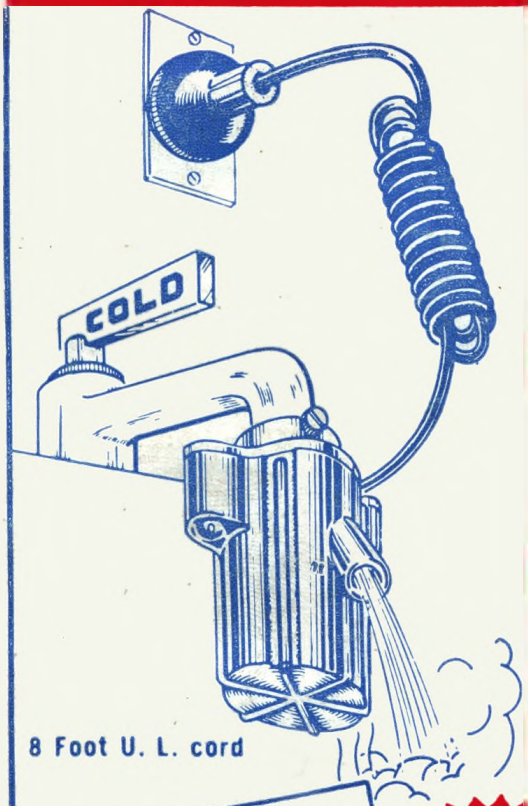
Enclosed is: ☐ Money Order ☐ Check for $_____ ☐ Send C. O. D.

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____

Running HOT WATER -in a Jiffy! from any COLD WATER FAUCET



8 Foot U. L. cord

It is almost too good to be true! You just must see for yourself the steaming hot water running continuously from a COLD WATER FAUCET. With this dependable JET INSTANT HOT WATER HEATER—you can get water from Lukewarm to Real Hot—when you want it! No WAITING—No FUSSING WITH FIRES or BOILERS—No TANKS or GAUGES to watch!

JUST ATTACH AND TURN FAUCET TO REGULATE TEMPERATURE!

A turn of the faucet gives you water of ANY DESIRED TEMPERATURE from Lukewarm to HOT! No further adjustments are necessary. Attaches itself to most any faucet easily—without the need of tools—just turn three set screws to hold firmly in place. No diagrams or special charts needed. ANYONE CAN ATTACH IT TO A COLD WATER FAUCET!

JET INSTANT HOT WATER HEATER FILLS A GREAT NEED!

A long and urgent need is now easily fulfilled. You can get hot water ANYWHERE! in kitchen, basement, garage, summer cottage or cabin, camp, office, factory—on the farm or barn wherever a cold water faucet and an electrical outlet are handy!

FULLY GUARANTEED — 10-DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!

The JET INSTANT HOT WATER HEATER is fully covered by factory guarantee against defects in workmanship and material. Should the JET INSTANT HOT WATER HEATER fail to give HOT WATER *instantly*, return for full refund.

✓Check THESE ADVANTAGES

- No Moving Parts to Wear Out.
- Operates on AC or DC current.
- Constructed of Chrome Steel and Porcelain.
- Measures 2¾" x3¾". Stores away easily.
- Fits any Standard sized faucet.
- Comes with 8 Ft. U. L. Approved cord.
- Attaches quickly — without tools.
- Costs only few cents to operate.
- Full Factory Guarantee against defects.
- Money Back Guarantee if JET does not deliver hot water instantly.

ONLY $4.98

SEND NO MONEY! Do Not Delay — No longer need you wish and hope for the convenience of HOT WATER —when you want it. For only $4.98 you can enjoy the benefits and *instant* use of HOT WATER. No expensive equipment or installation is necessary. SEND YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS. Enclose $4.98 and we will ship your JET prepaid or if you prefer, pay postman on delivery plus few cents postage and C.O.D. Charges.

SUCCESS PRODUCTS, 246 Roebling St., Dept. 507, Brooklyn 11, N. Y.

☐ Send JET INSTANT HOT WATER HEATER. I enclose $3.00.

☐ I enclose $1.00 deposit. I will pay Postman balance on delivery, $3.98 plus postal charges.

NAME .....

ADDRESS ...

CITY..... ZONE STATE

10 DAY MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!