THE PILGRIM AND THE PIRATE by HENRY JOHN COLYTON

25¢

# Adventure

A POPULAR PUBLICATION

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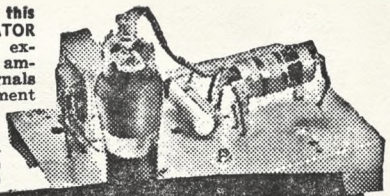

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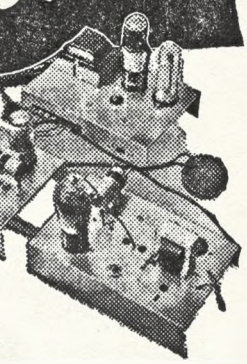

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Adventure
(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 113, No. 5 for September, 1945 Best of New Stories

## NOVELETTES



## SHORT STORIES



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## BE OUT ON SEPTEMBER 7TH ◆◆◆



### SERIALS



### THE FACT STORY



### DEPARTMENTS



*Cover painted for Adventure by Ernest Chiriacka*
*Kenneth S. White, Editor*

**IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—**

**We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.**

***—The Publishers.***

# THE CAMP-FIRE

*Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet*

HENRY JOHN COLYTON, whose pirate-turned-pilgrim, Captain Willifred of the *Drake*, begins his Jorsaltrek this month on page 12, writes anent his new novel—

I am always finding parallels between the 12th and the 20th centuries, and I guess "The Pilgrim and the Pirate" got its start when I realized that D-day for the First Crusade was just 845 years to the day from D-day for the Last Crusade—we hope—June 6, 1099, June 6, 1944. There are some other interesting parallels, too—the fact that the victory in both cases was due to the united efforts of several nations, who had dropped petty quarreling to win a great cause, and the fact, too, that both expeditions had to cross dangerous seas and endure terrific hardships, and did not turn back until they had accomplished their purpose.

I don't suppose the GI Joes of the First Crusade differed in essentials from their modern counterparts—they were probably all Mauldin types—whiskery, dirty and fond of spiritous liquors and gold-bricking. They probably cussed the brass-hats and got blistered feet and combat fatigue and wished they had stayed at home—and many thousands died. They weren't well-organized, and they had all kinds of crazy ideas in their heads, some of which got knocked out by hard experience, and some of which carried them through to their impossible goal.

The chroniclers of the Crusade tell us that a gang of English pirates joined the army at Beirut, and were of great help in taking the city of Jerusalem. I figured that Sir Francis Drake might well have had an ancestor in the party; a fellow who was level-headed and practical as a successful pirate ought to be, and yet quite prepared to take the impossible in his stride, and to dream up a variation of the fireship trick that defeated the Armada in a later day. I hope Sir Francis won't mind my bestowing upon him a forefather like Willifred.

As for Lady Claude, she had her counterpart in many a damsel who accompanied her men-folk on the Crusade, binding wounds, carrying water to the fighters in the thick of battle, or taking part personally to the extent of throwing rocks at the astonished Sarrazins (how straight their aim was, history doesn't say). And because human nature hasn't changed much in eight centuries, there were probably in the party a few potential quislings like Count Gaston, ready to make a deal with the enemy for what they could get out of it. There was Count Stephen de Blois, for instance—William the Conqueror's son-in-law—who got a bad attack of cold feet after he had got his share of loot at Nicaea, and joined forces with the treacherous Emperor Alexis, leaving his comrades to their fate. Afterwards he went back home to Blois, and his disgusted wife, the Countess Adela, made it so hot for him around the house that he was glad to get back to Palestine, where he got to running the wrong way in a battle and collided fatally with a Sarrazin.

Sic semper quislings.

AFTER reading "Death Penalty" (page 58) we asked Gordon MacCreagh for an additional notation or two on the toilsome task of trochus diving and he indites the following for *Camp-Fire* consumption—

Why, I thought everybody knew about trochus. It's so simple. I quote from the "Synopsis of Rotatoria," Nat. Mus., Wash.—"In the typical form of the evertile corona the cilia of the lobes are conspicuous and constitute the *trochus*."

That's how you can always tell 'em; because the cilia of the lobes are conspicuous. As easy as hunting snarks. But for those of *Camp-Fire* who would like to quit just making money at their desk jobs and go out into the wild open spaces I might explain that the trochus business needs no experience and requires, for equipment, only a birthday suit and a knife.

You find trochus by gashing your foot on a shell that looks like a giant periwinkle—and there's something poisonous about the shell; or maybe in the filthy waters in which they are found; and you get "trochus sores" that don't heal and you may lose your foot.

The bigger and better trochus are in deeper water and you have to dive for them. You sneak up on them and slide the

*(Continued on page 8)*

# LIGHTER MOMENTS with fresh Eveready Batteries

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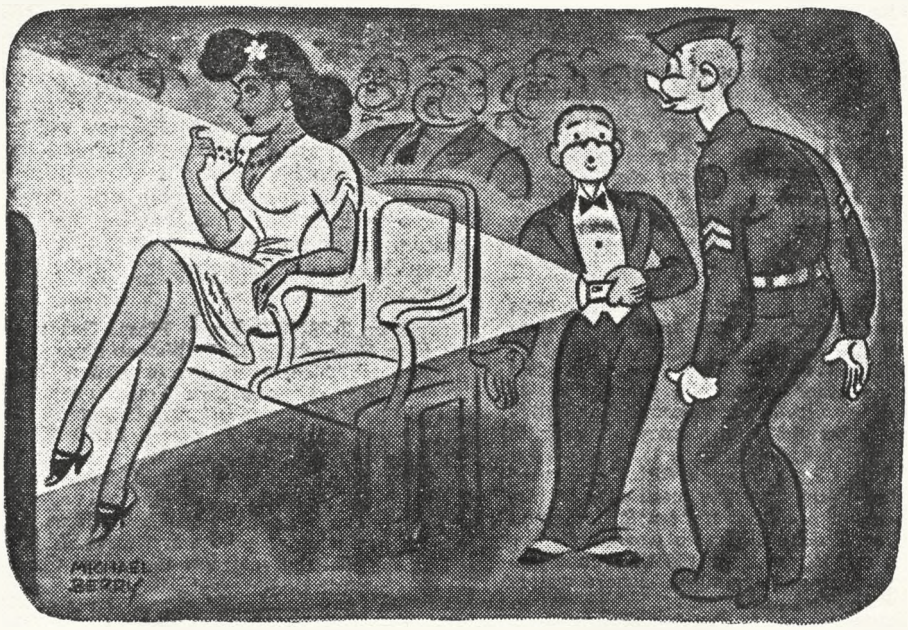

*"This seat all right, sir?"*

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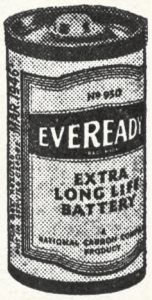


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*(Continued from page 6)*

knife quickly under the edge of the shell while it is lifted off its rock for the animal's feeding apparatus to spew out—the "cilia," you know. If you bungle and slide your finger under, the brute will pinch down and there the knife comes handy to cut the end of your finger off before you drown.

Why do people go trochus hunting? Because they have no experience. And because they're so damn desperate broke that they can't do anything else. As soon as they have learned some experience in skin diving they curse trochus to the sinks of hell and get a job diving for a pearling dhow.

Red Sea pearl diving is a job as difficult to get into as diamond cutting. Because those dhow *nakhodas* count up their profits from what is left over after paying and feeding their crew and they aren't giving jobs to anybody less than three-minute divers. Since a pearl diver can sometimes make money, a hardy youngster sometimes goes and gets his experience on trochus and, if nothing happens to him, hopes to graduate to pearl.

Trochus have no pearls; but good trochus shell is harder and has more color than pearl shell.

How do I know all this? Because me and a couple other guys once thought to go after pearl with a very second-hand diving outfit bought from a banyan trader in Djibouti. We fizzled because the suit leaked more than we could patch with tire cement and the pump valves couldn't deliver enough pressure even for ten fathoms and the blasted Somali pirates ran us off the ground and it was against both French and Italian law to go pearling in inshore waters with a diving suit.

FOUR additions to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. Jess Arnold, whose "young man with a horn" (no relation to Bix Beiderbecke) trumpets victuals instead of blue notes on page 34, introduces himself at the fire thuswise—

Back in 1935 I was a very brash 19-year-old student of journalism at the University of Texas. When Mussolini decided to take over Ethiopia, I decided to attend. I worked my way on a freighter to Barcelona where I was discharged and from there went to Marseille and on down to Djibouti and into Ethiopia. It wasn't all quite as simple as this, but in a short while I was the world's youngest war correspondent, thanks to the kindness of men like Josef Israels, II, then of the New York *Times*, and Edward J. Beattie, Jr., of the United Press. Through their efforts I went to work for *The Times of India* in Bombay and *News of the World*, London.

I returned to the States in July, 1936, and that fall went back to school, but it wasn't any good. In the interim, I've been a reporter in Texas, covering the Texas Legislature for International News Service; a staff man for United Press in El Paso, covering the Border; special feature writer for several Texas dailies; an ambassador of good will to Mexico for W. Lee O'Daniel, then governor; a political press agent in an effort to get a million dollars out of Texas oil; an Army Air Corps washout, a private pilot, a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force and, lastly, a simple sergeant of public relations who scorns a commission unless it is offered on a silver platter. I'm 29 years old and have decided now is the time to write instead of talking about it night after night over whiskey.

CHARLES MERGENDAHL, who introduces us to that fleet-footed phantom, Laurie Cochran, in "The Best I Ever Had" on page 82, has crammed—as so many young men are cramming today—more adventure into his brief one-score-plus than most old-timers thrice his age can ever hope to look back to. Briefing his career much more succinctly than we hoped he would, he tosses his first log on the fire by saying—

Born 2-23-1919, Lynn, Mass. Graduated from Bowdoin in 1941. Was an actor at the Artists' Theatre in Provincetown, Mass., and then went to New York to work for McCann Erickson in advertising.

After I joined the Navy, April, 1942, I went to Casablanca on the invasion, as a boat officer in a landing boat. Then I went to Sicily with the same duty. I was sent to the Pacific and went with the Marines to Tarawa, where I led the first wave. My boat was one of the very few that came through the assault undamaged.

My hobbies are building model ships and woodcarving. I hate athletics, like reading, fish, moving pictures, Scotch and dry martinis.

Traveled nowhere until the war. Since the war have been to Africa, Sicily, Cuba, Panama, Mexico, New Zealand, Honolulu, Samoa, New Caledonia, Tarawa, Marshall Islands, Funafuti, Guadalcanal, and other islands in Pacific too numerous to mention.

WAY back in our September '43 issue, in *The Trail Ahead*, we ran the following announcement—

It's a mighty span of time and distance from New York Harbor in the summer of 1776 to the South Pacific today. Next month we bridge the gaps by giving you rides in David Bushnell's *Turtle*, the first American sub-sea war vessel, and in a modern unit of our under-ocean navy, Mike Fenno's pigboat pride. Two gripping fact stories that brief the history of our Submarine Service from its incubation to its present day lethal peak. "The Undersea Rowboat" by Porter Henry and "Garbage to Gold to Glory" by Maxwell Hawkins tell the tale.

*(Continued on page 10)*


IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $2,000 to $10,000?

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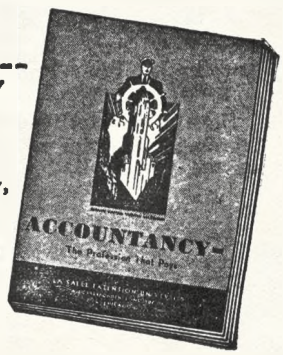


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*(Continued from page 8)*

That's what *we* thought! Naval Censorship took what might be called a slightly divergent point of view, so in the following issue's *Camp-Fire* we had to run this item—

> We regret exceedingly having to postpone Maxwell Hawkins' article on submarine warfare in the Pacific today which was announced in *The Trail Ahead* last month and planned to publish as a companion piece to Porter Henry's account of the *Turtle*. Naval censorship authorities have not yet given us clearance on the material—a portion of Mr. Hawkins' forthcoming book "Torpedoes Away, Sir"—but we hope to be able to include the article before long.

No security regulations were involved, apparently, in the story of the *Turtle*, which we published as announced, but that "before long" we hoped for has stretched into exactly two years. Now censorship restrictions have been relaxed to some degree and Navy officials have given us permission to print the Hawkins article. The book is still "forthcoming"—whatever that means—but we'll keep you posted on its clearance (by Navy) and appearance (under the Henry Holt imprint).

And now we'll let delayed Author Hawkins make his belated bow at the blaze. He writes—

> Left college during the last war to enlist in the Navy and after the Armistice journeyed back to the tall cornfields of my native state, Iowa, and broke into the newspaper business on the Fort Dodge *Messenger and Chronicle*. Thence to Oklahoma and the oil fields. Worked as a roustabout, tool-dresser and scout. Wrote oil news for the Tulsa *Tribune* and except for a few years as a traveling salesman have been pounding the mill for a living (sic) ever since. Have held down almost every city-room job from cub reporter to city editor, in the course of which I have hung my hat in the Tulsa *World*, Milwaukee *Sentinel*, Chicago *Herald-Examiner*, the old New York *Evening Post*, New York *American*, New York *Journal*, New York *Daily News* and the late Brooklyn *Times* and Brooklyn *Standard-Union*.
>
> Have had detective, Western and sport stories in the pulps over many years. Some in the slicks. Had a play produced on Broadway and then wrote another which was produced in a New Jersey barn—reversing the usual procedure. Radio script writer—everything from soap operas to educational (?) items, including "Gang Busters" (crime doesn't pay).
>
> Married? Yes. Children? Two small fry—one of each gender. If my typewriter wears out will probably have to go back to work, because of the priority situation on new machines.

NARD JONES, final member of our quartet of recruits to the Writers' Brigade this month, says—

> I began writing back in 1927 but unfortunately, it took me a long, long time to know that I could do adventure stories. In fact, it wasn't until 1940 when I wrote a novel called "Swift Flows the River," about steamboating on the Columbia River. It was a very satisfactory seller and a book-club selection in England and I never realized until after it was written that it was an adventure novel. So I followed with a novel of fur-trade days at the mouth of the Columbia. I'm writing one now based on the Grand Coulee Dam project.
>
> I've lived most of my life in California and the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. I joined the Navy six months before Pearl Harbor and was assigned to Japanese work on Northwest waterfronts. I was so bad at this that I was put into public relations work and became Public Relations Officer for the 13th Naval District and Northwest Sea Frontier. Saw duty in Kodiak, Kiska, Adak, and Aggatu in the Aleutians. Received an honorable discharge as lieutenant commander in May, 1944, and after almost four years away from the typewriter began writing again—and found it damned difficult.
>
> Recently I moved East to live, to get a better perspective on the West Coast. I've had stories in *Collier's*, *Argosy*, *Liberty*, *American*, eight novels, and once edited a boating magazine. Sure, I'm married, and have one son, otherwise I wouldn't be writing. It's too hard work!

We hope Mr. Jones stays right here in the East where we can keep our finger on him—perspective or no—for we want some Aleutian yarns from his typewriter and intend to do some intensive bulldozing of our new neighbor till we get 'em! Good idea, don't you think?—K. S. W.

# *I can make you a* MASTER OF ENGLISH *give me only 15 minutes a day*

THE mastery of English is one of the greatest assets in the business world. It gives you a tremendous advantage over others who lack it.

Words are most valuable tools. To those who know how to use them skilfully go rich rewards — *money, power, position.* For words are the foundation of all thought, all speech, and all writing. You *think* in words, and it is impossible to think in words you do not possess.

To broaden your thinking and strengthen the power of your mind you must first increase your vocabulary. A limited vocabulary usually means limited thought, limited power, and limited authority.

People judge your mental ability by your use of English. If your language is stiff and stilted, if your speech is slovenly, if you make obvious mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, you are under a serious handicap. If your speech is clear and precise, your expressions varied and interesting, you are recognized as a person of culture and ability.

The BIG JOBS usually go to men who are able to express themselves in fluent, convincing, clear-cut English. People have confidence in such men — but never in those who are always groping for words and whose thoughts are hazy and indistinct.

## A PERSONAL PLAN FOR POSTWAR SUCCESS

As we all know, American industry is even now making plans for the postwar period — for the day when millions of victorious Service men come marching home. Are you planning too? Are you, personally, going to be ready to take your place in the postwar era? Are you going to be prepared for the opportunities of a new, a hustling, and a vastly different business world?

## LATER MAY BE TOO LATE

Right now is the time to prepare for postwar success. Don't put it off. Whatever your present job, whatever your postwar prospects, one thing is certain, a command of English is all-important — it's a "MUST" in any postwar success plan. Grenville Kleiser, originator of the famous course in Practical English and Mental Efficiency can help you — as he has helped thousands of others — obtain the goal you have set for yourself. This world authority will teach you how to use words with ease and confidence — if you will give him JUST 15 MINUTES OF YOUR SPARE TIME EACH DAY. No involved rules of grammar or principles of rhetoric — just a simple, straightforward, inspiring method that will accomplish wonders for you.

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# The Pilgrim

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

# and the Pirate

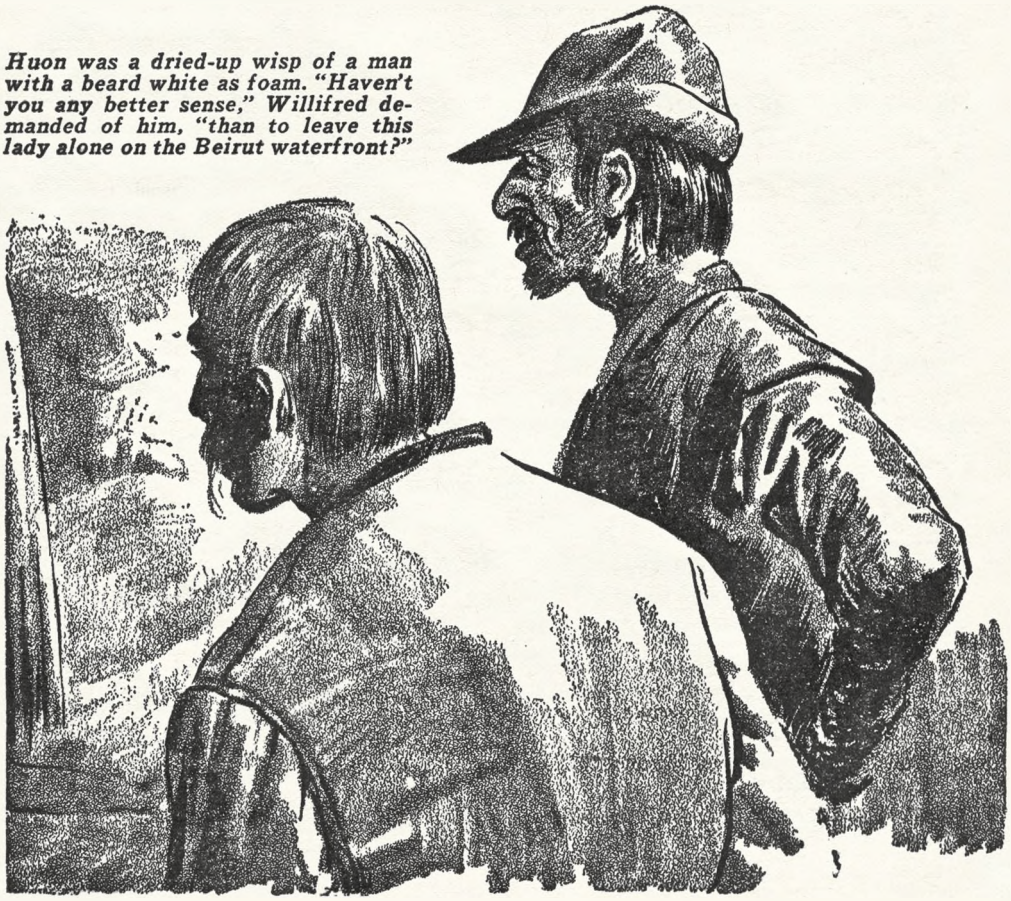
## By HENRY JOHN COLYTON

THE ship bobbed patiently up and down at her moorings, as the rough waves of Beirut harbor slapped her raking bows and weathered sides. A succession of rowboats, manned by gesturing and half-naked Levantines, skipped lightly toward her and then labored heavily back, piled high with bulging sacks.

Beside a half-rotted bollard, a well-dressed young man watched the progress with gloomy eyes. Now and again he addressed the stevedores, his hoarse bellow cutting across the enthusiastic murmurs of the shabby cleric at his side. The pile of sacks on the wharf grew larger, and a gang of dockside all-sorts crowded closer, only to be shoved back by the other all-sorts who formed a wall around the lading. The costumes of these men were peculiar, their speech assorted, their beards long and thick. But their stern sunbrowned faces were as forbidding as their heavy swords and lances. Now and then their hard eyes swiveled to the gloomy young man with a sort of wonder.

"But this is excellent, messire! Noble, if I may say so!" twittered the clerk, jiggling his tally-sticks. "I'm sure we had no idea—"

"Neither did I," grunted the young man. "I might ha' thought twice if I had— Hey, you in the red shirt-tail! Easy with that sack! Want to heave her overside? Good clean wheat out of Egypt. If they'll run those jackasses alongside, they can get it stowed."



*Huon was a dried-up wisp of a man with a beard white as foam. "Haven't you any better sense," Willifred demanded of him, "than to leave this lady alone on the Beirut waterfront?"*

He watched the discharge of the wheat much as he might have watched blood pouring from a personal wound. So intent was he that he did not turn at a sudden clattering of hoofs on the worn stones of the wharf, and the clerk had to poke him respectfully.

"Here is the Count of Flanders, messire, and his party."

The young man turned. The wall of warriors was parting to allow the passage of several parties in mail, mounted on motheaten Syrian nags.

"Look, messire, it wasn't a lie, after all! There it is!" somebody yelled.

The leader of the party, a sunburned young man with sharp blue eyes and a large nose, reined in beside the pile of sacks, and his horse snorted at them with interest. Somebody pointed out the gloomy young man.

"Are you the English captain who has a cargo of wheat for sale?"

The young man straightened. He was so tall that the mounted count did not have to look down very far. Absently, he drew off the round red leather cap that rode rakishly on the back of his head, and bared a crop of reddish-brown, close-cropped curls.

"That's me. Willifred of Avenport, master of the *Drake*. Yonder's m' ship."

The count eyed the ship riding so meekly at anchor, and was not fooled. She was no merchant's slogging dromond. She was built for speed, as her trim lines and extremely tall mast indicated; although he guessed that her hold must be larger than it appeared. He could see her crew, unusually numerous for a trading vessel, draped along the gunwales, their faces turned to the shore. Then he looked at the captain.

Willifred of Avenport knew what was fitting, and he was dressed in his best shoregoing rig. A handsome gown of sky-blue Damask silk opened over a white linen shirt on his broad chest, its gold-embroidered hem stopping just short of the ground to reveal substantial feet in gold-worked leather slippers, turned up at the toes. The hands emerging from the long, loose sleeves were scarred at the wrist, but elegant in white gloves. His brown face, with its blunt nose and deep-set eyes, as blue as the sky of Devon, had been newly shaven. He might have been the most effete of perfumed Levantine dudes, except for the great curved sword thrust through his red sash. He was as deceptive as his ship—and would be as dangerous to run foul of.

"We're glad to get your cargo, Messire Willifred. How much?"

"The wheat's not for sale, messire," the other replied, grinning suddenly, but before the count's jaw could drop he added, "I'm giving it to you free. Don't know how far it'll spread among your crew—understand you're messing pretty light. Prime Egyptian wheat, that is. Been using it for ballast."

The count leaped from his saddle with a jingle of chain mail. "Messire, this is splendid!" He shook the white-gloved hand enthusiastically.

"To sacrifice so great a cargo to feed the soldiers of the Cross—well, Robert of Flanders thanks you. It's well done, by St. Bavon!"

Willifred blushed self-consciously. He had trodden on the toes of the nobility more than once, but a handshake was rare, and he was glad that he had put on his elegant white gloves.

"Oh, it's no sacrifice, messire. It's just business. When the port of Joppa is taken from the heathen, it'll be a handy place to take on water and supplies, and discharge cargo. Anyhow, that wheat"—his eyes slid away, watching the enthusiastic amateurs loading up the donkeys—"didn't cost anything."

"It didn't, eh?"

"No, my lord." Their eyes, both blue and shrewd, met for a thoughtful moment. "Not that I couldn't have sold it in Cyprus. But to have Joppa harbor opened up is worth something."

The clerk, feeling that he had been silent long enough, cast up his eyes piously and murmured, "Did not the Lord tell Moses to spoil the Egyptians?"

Willifred laughed. "I guess Moses and I did our best. That wheat was bound for Askelon when I took it aboard. Maybe you could call me a pirate. I've been working the Middle Sea for a good spell, but I never bother pilgrim ships. Ask anybody. Nothing in 'em but seasick pilgrims."

"I see. A Christian pirate, and practical, too," said the count, smiling. He added, "I hope your generosity will not be unrewarded. We march to attack Jerusalem, and with God's help we will take it. But there are not so many of us as there were before Nicaea, and Doryleum, and Antioch. And there's danger everywhere."

"Don't you worry, my lord." Willifred had recovered his easy assurance. "We'll take Jerusalem."

Robert of Flanders stared. "That's a comforting thought, but—"

"I'm sure of it. The caliph of Egypt thinks you're still aground at Antioch; he's not doing anything. Why, they hardly bothered to chase *us*! And anyhow," he added, "*I'm* going along. That is, if you don't mind. I've never been crusading before, but if your crew is so thinned out that you could use me, why . . ." He glanced down modestly at the great cutlass.

The Count of Flanders uttered a sudden shout of laughter and, for once, looked as young as he was. He grasped the gloved hand again.

"Excellent, Messire Willifred. I believe we can use you."

A pirate ship was necessarily a very close corporation. A stockholders' meeting took place in the short Syrian twilight on the foredeck, and no one defaulted, from the lean and temperamental cook, whose mustaches drooped almost to his collar-bone, to the earnest cabin-boy, crowded off on the jibboom. Willifred, having shed his shoregoing regalia, stood leaning against the mast, clad neatly in a pair of baggy red drawers and a thick-padded leather jerkin. A steel cap was on his head, and an arblast in his hand, and his belt bristled with knives. He addressed the crew while a sunset of purple and gold died gloriously in the west.

"Yes, I know you want to go along with me. But I won't send out a ship half-manned, and I won't let the *Drake* rot here at Beirut. I know those Kentish fellers abandoned ship, but you know the Kentish crew, and anyhow, their ships were stove up. I don't think we ought to waste the *Drake* when the pickings are so good hereabouts. But it's up to you. Say what you think."

The audience shifted and muttered and prodded each other. At last the boatswain coughed importantly and edged forward.

"Whoy, I say, roight enough, Cap'n! O' course, we was all agreed to give folks the grain. Moight ha' rotted afore we got her to Cyprus. And maybe we can pick up a leetle more ballast to make her roide proper-loike. But, Willifred, moind your ways, lad. Fightin' on land ain't loike fightin' at sea. They'll drop rocks on ye, or jump out on ye from behoind bushes."

"That's true," added the carpenter, sadly. "Them low heathens! It'd be a pitiful thing to get kilt in the rocks and sand, and be et by a wolf. Sure you want to go?"

Willifred nodded. They knew his reasons as well as he did. These were men from Devon and Cornwall, his old friends from boyhood, and no waterfront riff-raff. They looked and were extremely tough, and with all his heart he wished they were going along. But business was business, and he had to get to Jerusalem.

"Now then, here's Eadwy." He laid his enormous hand on the shoulder of the slim youth who stood at his side, blushing furiously. "You've seen him fight, and there's no better sailor here. You can't lose him; he'd *smell* the pole star, he would, in the thickest fog. There's no point in picking up good ballast and losing it all by taking the wrong tack. So he's your captain."

A shout sent the gulls squawking off, and, in a waterfront minaret, a muezzin swallowed hastily before he could give out the call to evening prayer.

"And Regner the Dane, he's first mate." He

slapped the broad back of an enormous ox of a man, hair and beard bleached cotton-white, his blue eyes gentle and trustful, like a child's. "You all know what he can do with a boarding axe, eh? And him and Eadwy'll get along like two birds in a nest, because Regner's going to marry Eadwy's sister—you know, Eadgyth, the little one with the curly hair—soon as we make the home port."

A second shout split the last of the sunset. Regner turned a brilliant scarlet, and the muezzin halted his prayer to hurl curses at the Frankish craft.

"Shore leave now. First watch goes with me, second with Eadwy and Regner. Overside now, lively!"

The bright Syrian moon hung high in the midnight sky. The second watch was already whooping it up in the waterfront taverns, and the first watch, loaded to the gunwales, was trying to clamber into its boats, upside down and crossways, at the profane urgings of the boatswain. Regner and Eadwy stood soberly beside their captain, while all three stared across the moonlit water.

"One of us ought to come with you," grunted Eadwy.

"God knows I'd be glad of company," Willifred answered wistfully. "But you know how matters are. When I was walking around the millstone like a bloomin' jackass in that Sarrazin prison in Spain, I kept saying to myself that if I got out, which didn't look likely, I'd make a pilgrimage. I guess this is as good a time as any. I wouldn't give a groat for a pilgrimage that was all trudging and praying, and no fighting. And you know how Dad was supposed to make a pilgrimage for overhauling that Bordeaux craft that was carrying wine to the Bishop of Rotherminster—only he kept putting it off, and the Bishop excommunicated the poor old boy. He's been in purgatory long enough. So I'll fix matters up for him, too, while I'm about it."

They nodded. Bad luck always came from neglecting one's obligations, and prudence was always excellent ballast for audacity.

"Vell," sighed Regner, "maybe ve haf a drink on it, *ja*?"

"Good," agreed Eadwy, and they started to turn away. Suddenly Eadwy extended an arm. "Look, Willifred, there's somebody moving down there where the boats are made fast. Looks like a Sarrazin!"

Willifred set down his arblast carefully, and broke into a run, and they raced across the salt-slippery stones.

A pale shape that had been standing quietly beside a rope-hung bollard detached itself and stood waiting for them. The cold night wind fluttered the ample folds of its Bedouin burnoose, but the *khufiyeh*, held to the small head by the usual cords of twisted goats' hair, shaded the face.

"Avast there, you!" shouted Willifred, grabbing the figure by the shoulders and bestowing a vigorous shove. "Offspring of pigs! Son of a thousand fathers! What the hell are you doing with that boat?" He addressed the shrinking form in mingled Arabic and Devonshire. He made a grab for the *khufiyeh*, and the silent Sarrazin suddenly stabbed at him with a long dagger.

"Oh, you would, eh?" Willifred grabbed the fellow's right arm and gave it a quick twist; the Sarrazin yelped, and the dagger went flying.

"Take your hands off me!" hissed the captive. "I wasn't hurting your filthy old boat. I wouldn't dirty my feet with it! Let go of me! Let go!"

THE words were Northern French, female, and angry. Interested, Willifred passed an experienced arm around her waist, and jerked off the *khufiyeh*. After he disposed of the hand that sought to scratch his eyes out by including it in his embrace, he took a look at her. Very white in the moonlight, her face, and young, proud, and rather scared; the eyes met his squarely, but the round chin was quivering. Her long, tousled hair had tumbled loose and fell in thick shining coils. She wriggled, and stepped on his foot hard. She might just as well have tried to cause pain to the stones of the wharf.

Regner and Eadwy, who had darted off to investigate possible trickery when they saw that Willifred had the obvious situation well in hand, came running up.

"It's a vooman!" gasped the Dane. "Efferyvere dey follow you, don't dey?"

Willifred released her, and made a swoop for the dagger. She did not run. She stood glaring up at him, rubbing her arm. She jerked the *khufiyeh* from him, and put it back on her head.

"All right, duck. What are you doing here around the boats?"

"I tell you, I wasn't near your old boats!" she yelled. "I'm looking for an English pirate who calls himself Veelifred!"

The captain hid his surprise. "That's me, duck. Only it's Willifred, not Veelifred. And if you want me to buy you a slug of whatever poison they sell hereabouts, you're going about it in the wrong way. Mustn't pull a knife on a prospect!"

"Oh, be quiet!" she snapped, stamping her foot. "Listen! Have you taken any passengers aboard this evening?"

Willifred stared. "No. Don't carry passengers. Although I might make an exception—in some cases!" He bestowed his best ogle on her because she had the sort of face he liked. It would have been very pretty, except for a tenseness about the delicate brows and a tight-

ness of the mouth that destroyed its soft curves. But she gave him no heed, and he was intrigued at once.

"A number of men rowed out to the ship a little while ago. Could someone have slipped in among them and boarded her in that way?"

"I haven't heard anything make a splash overside, have you? We're pretty choosy about our lading, and the bosun doesn't think much of foreigners anyhow. What's up? Lost somebody?"

She drew herself erect. The flowing Arab garments gave her dignity, but she was not very big. He could have walked off with her under one arm, and not even felt her. She was shaking all over; he could see her clear shadow waver on the ancient stones.

"That," she answered freezingly, "is none of your business, Messire pirate. If you assure me that you've taken no passengers, that's all I want to know. Good evening."

She turned, her burnoose whipping in the wind, and stalked away. Hearing a snort of laughter from Eadwy, Willifred muttered something crisp, and leaped after her.

"Here, dearie!" He clapped his great hand on her shoulder. "Forgot your paring knife, didn't you?"

She jerked the knife from him, and tried to evade his hand; not succeeding, she glared up at him, her white teeth clamped down upon a quivering lip.

"Scared, ain't ye?" he murmured. "Poor little lass!" Then he shook her gently, and resumed his rough-and-ready French. "Look, madame, this is the Beirut waterfront. It's no place for a delicate damsel to fool around! It's a mercy something hasn't happened to you already! Where are your servants? Who are you anyway?"

"Sir!"

He heard the approaching footfalls of his lieutenants and said hastily, "Now, duck, don't you get hoity-toity. These lads'll tell you that when I sound an anchorage, I sound it. I want to know what a French lady of good family is doing on a Beirut wharf at midnight, in a suit of Sarrazin sails."

She answered, with exaggerated patience, "I was just standing there by the boats, in case anybody tried—in case—while Huon looked through the taverns. And *don't* call me duck!"

"Well, what'll I call you then?"

"I am Claude de St. Lobyn." From the way she said it, he knew that he must be expected to recognize the name.

He didn't, so he said, with a grin, "Well, Claude, what are you doing here? What are you looking for—your gentleman friend? Because I—"

"Somevun iss coming dis vay," observed Regner. "Here iss de arblast."

Hearing the quick pat of running feet, Willifred turned, and saw a skinny little man coming toward them at full gallop. His bony knees pumped up and down, his helm gleamed in the moonlight, and a long white beard, parted in two by his speed, streamed over his shoulders. He waved a huge Sarrazin scimitar.

"There's Huon," she said, triumphantly. "You'd better be off, or you might get hurt!"

"Don't worry, duck—Claude. I'm always careful."

He ran toward Huon, collided with him, and embraced him gently. Then he disarmed him with tender care, and marched him, struggling and swearing, back to the lady.

"Huon!"

"Couldn't help it, m'lady. Took me by surprise, he did— Don't worry! . . . Leggo my arm, curse ye! I'll bite ye! I'll bite ye!"

"Huon, there's no harm done. Listen, did you find anything?"

The little man stopped squirming. "No, m'lady. Maybe no news is good news."

"Please release him!" the girl pleaded. "This is Huon, an excellent soldier, and my friend!"

Huon glanced around him as his captor let go, rubbing himself and muttering. Willifred thought that Huon might have been an excellent soldier forty years ago. He was a dried-up wisp of a man, warped with rheumatism, and

his great beard was as white as foam. He wore a shirt of mail and a patched mantle, both much too big for him, and his helm had slipped down over one eye.

"Haven't you better sense," Willifred addressed him severely, "than to take this lady down to the dockside and leave her there? Ever hear of slavers or assassins? Fool's luck! The wings on your guardian angels must be worn down to stubs, with the risks you take!"

Huon shoved back his helm and sputtered, "Didn't I say it was dangerous? Didn't I, eh? Won't pay me no heed, she won't. Now, you see, m'lady, I'm getting the blame, again!"

"What are you doing here?" Willifred demanded.

"Why, damn it all, we're a-tryin' to find that—"

"*Huon!* Never mind!" came a high-pitched warning.

The ancient said something under his breath, and gave his mantle a hitch. "Come on, m'lady. Let's go back to camp."

Willifred blinked. "Camp? Don't tell me you're *Croisés?*"

"Why not?" snapped Huon, thrusting his recovered scimitar through his belt.

"*Women* crusaders? What sort of nonsense—"

"Some of 'em, young feller, are a damn sight better than some of the men! Why, my little lady here was on the field of Doryleum and, before Antioch, at the Battle of the Lance. Bashed in a Turk's head with a rock, she did, and—"

"Huon, shush!" She stamped her foot. "He exaggerates so. Messire Willifred, may I ask when your ship sails?"

"Why, with the morning tide. Why?"

She clasped her hands. It was odd, how in these last moments, her Arab clothes, her foreign speech and manner had become familiar things unnoted. She was a girl on a waterfront, like hundreds of others—but not like them, either. Her young soft lips were firmly shut, her large grave eyes gave nothing away. She would be as staunch as oak, as loyal as steel. A tingle shot through Willifred's veins.

"If—if anyone asks for passage, will—will you please not take him?"

"*What?*"

"It is serious, messire. There are those of us whose—whose loyalty to the Crusade is unquestioned, but—but who are—are very tired, and—"

"And scared?"

"It has been a long way, messire, and many of us have died."

"Why, I'd never blame anyone for being scared. I'm that way, often. What you're trying to say is that somebody might run away, eh?"

"It—it would be a shameful thing, messire. . ."

"And you and Huon came down here to foul up this scheme, eh? A member of your family—husband? Lover?"

She lifted her head. "I am not married, messire, and I have no lover. It is no time for such things."

"It's always time for such things—duck."

She drew back sharply. "If it would cause you a money loss to refuse passage—" She pulled up the loose sleeve of her burnoose, and bared an arm too delicate and girlish ever to have walloped a Turk over the head. From its wrist she unclasped a gleaming bracelet. "I haven't any money, but this is pure gold. See, you can dent it with your nail."

"Keep it, sweetheart, keep it. I never take passengers anyhow. Boys, you heard what the lady said. Watch out for stowaways."

He took the arblast from Regner, and shook hands solemnly with his officers. "See you in Joppa harbor in two months," he said, "and don't take any lead shillings."

Eadwy and Regner said good-by casually, and walked off without a backward glance, rolling in their gait.

"Come on, Huon," Willifred said crisply. "I'll help you convoy her to camp."

"Oh, ye needn't bother!" snorted Huon. "I fetched her here, and I c'n fetch her back. I don't need no brassy-mouthed pirates to—"

"Nobody needs to fetch me anywhere!" Lady Claude strode off angrily toward a dark alley.

"Aye, aye," agreed Willifred, galloping after her, "but somebody's got to, show me the way to camp, don't they?"

She halted and wheeled about, staring.

"Didn't you know, dearie? *I'm* going crusading, too. Duke Godfrey's feeling greatly relieved, and the heathen are all streaking for the hills, so you make yourself easy. Come along, Huon. Shake a leg, there."

## CHAPTER II

### THE CHRISTIAN INFIDEL

IN the hot spring sunshine, the army of the Crusade straggled slowly southward down the Syrian coast. The long journey was almost over. The Bulgarian forests were a shadowy memory, the splendors of golden Byzantium, the gilded treacheries of the Emperor Alexias were dreams long past, growing fainter and fainter. The long horrors of the road to Antioch, the siege and the starvation and plague, had been swallowed up by the glorious triumph of the Battle of the Lance. Not so far away now, the Holy City and the Tomb.

But of the hundreds of thousands who had poured out of Europe in shouting, praying torrents, scarcely twenty thousand remained. At the head of the long march rode the leaders, the mailed chivalry, on their bony, battered

old nags, their wind-riddled gonfalons proudly high, their helms wound with rags against the terrible sun. Duke Godfrey de Bouillon, big and blond-bearded, modest and utterly fearless in battle; Tancred, the hawk-faced young Sicilian Norman, who spoke Arabic fluently; big-bellied Robert of Normandy; Robert of Flanders. Guarding the rear, gray little St. Gilles of Provence and his knights. Their eyes, hard and shrewd, watched the road, and the overhanging rocks that might hold ambush, and the brown limestone hill-ridges beyond, where a whole Sarrazin army might be hiding. They had learned hard lessons.

Between the van and the rear tramped the foot-soldiers—foul-mouthed Paris guttersnipes, bony silent shepherds from the Midi, stout Flemings who had come with Duke Godfrey, and an occasional disgusted-looking party in rusty mail, whose bow-legs proclaimed that he had once been a mounted knight before his horse died. Long ago, these foot-soldiers had marched clannishly, each with his own companions from the home village in Normandy or Sicily or Lorraine, under the banner of their own baron. But now most of the old leaders were dead, and the remnants had had to join forces—not without snarling and blows—sharing a battered cook-pot, standing watch over each other's slumbers, arguing in a fearsome tangle of tongues; North French, South French, Flemish, plus a jumbled patois of Sarrazin, Greek and Italian.

Willifred's private opinion was that it was a messy outfit, and just what you might expect of foreigners. He had been tramping along since dawn in haughty solitude. He might have joined other sailors from the wrecked English ships, but they were decidedly cool to the captain of the *Drake*, which was doing business as usual. And the pious airs they gave themselves for having sacrificed their ships to join the Crusade he found irritating. Especially since the crafts they had beached were leaky old hulks, whiskered with whelks and barnacles.

So he walked alone, watching wistfully the blue line of the sea, his back turned to the green slopes of Lebanon. He was no longer captain of a splendid ship and a good crew. He was one of a mob, and he didn't like it.

The soldiers of the Cross slouched along before and behind him, disreputable in homemade horsehide brogues, oversized helms pushing ears down, undersized helms balanced on a corner of the skull, Turkish *khalats* of painted leather bursting at the seams, mantles patched over patches, rags and whiskers fluttering in the wind, raw new-healed scars on arms and faces, peeled noses, bloodshot eyes. But these were the men who would take Jerusalem, if God willed it. Of all those who had taken the Cross, these were the men with stout hearts and stubborn wills and all-enduring patience. The others were bleached bones scattered somewhere between Europe and Antioch.

So when a party of battered-looking monks touched off a loud Latin hymn in his ear, Willifred jumped, but bowed to them respectfully.

"But they're mighty slack," he observed. "Why, we ain't gone three leagues since dawn, and, by St. Peter! they're all going to lay off and take a nap. That's a foreigner for you. Lazy. Why, us lads from Devon would have been in Jerusalem a year ago!"

The sun was a seething bowl of brass overhead. Disdainfully, he passed groups straggling

off to find some bit of shade, baggage camels kneeling and starting to chew their cuds. He pulled some greasy flat cakes of Arab bread out of his wallet, and nibbled them as he went down the line of the relaxed Crusade. A wind like a furnace breath blew clouds of dust into his face.

He was not far from the head of the line; on either side he saw the knights working each other out of their hauberks, passing jugs back and forth, unsaddling somnolent horses. Ahead of him, two great rock slopes closed down like curtains and shut off the road beyond. The heat from the rocks and from the sky closed down, too. Presently Willifred found himself tacking to port and to starboard, and his head seemed very far from his feet. The rock slopes fell behind him, voices shouted at him from far away, and a clump of dusty-green trees wavered at him. He felt seasick. He felt horrible. The next minute the dust of the road rose up and clouted him.

Voices came nearer. Hands gripped him. Sarrazins? Well, he couldn't do anything now. A damned dirty trick, jumping a man when he was down! But the voices seemed to be cursing lustily in French.

"S-sorry," he gulped. "S-something I et—that Arab bread—ugh. . ."

Somebody held a cup to his lips, and he drank thirstily. Then a voice addressed the air sardonically, "Don't it take an English a long time to learn anything? Have to rap 'em over the head first. Look, stupid, you don't ever march under a mid-day sun in Syria. Unless you want to addle what brains you got."

"Nope," chimed in another voice, "and you don't run around without your head covered."

Willifred opened his eyes to see green leaves overhead, and against them two faces. One was very dark, wearing a red *khufiyeh,* with a long melancholy nose and a beard like a horse's tail. The other was cheerful and sunburned, with short curly whiskers like black lambs' wool. A sudden gust of hot wind drove the dust over everything, and Willifred sat up, choking, tears streaming from his eyes.

"Thanks, mates," he gasped. "These are new waters for me. Is the dust always this bad?"

"Bad? Call this bad?" grinned Curly-whiskers. "Why, there by Antioch the dust got so thick that some of us was walking twenty feet off the ground, and never knowed it until somebody fell over a bird. Fact!"

Willifred eyed him suspiciously through his tears. He could have topped that yarn, but at that moment someone yelled cheerfully, "Hey, look, supper! Look, Joyce! Alain! Supper!"

Willifred turned and beheld a very tall and very gawky boy of fifteen or so, with enormous feet and hands and a shock of curly red-gold hair. He had an arblast in one hand, and a large bunch of mottled feathers in the other—a partridge, by its look. Behind him came a lean, elderly man clad in a short, sleeveless garment that originally might have been a blanket. Long white hair flowed from under his rakish turban, and his smiling old face was wrinkled like a walnut.

The man with the long nose shook his head. "All right, but you'll have to carry it all the way, Pagan." He hesitated, and then jerked a thumb at the sailor. "This here's a new English that got laid out by the sun."

"Why, ain't he the one who gave us the wheat?" The boy's deep voice broke in an excited squawk. "I was there; I helped load the mules. We got a little extra that way."

"How much did they pay you for the wheat?" asked Long-nose interestedly.

Willifred blushed. "I—er—it was a gift."

"Huh! Ever hear of an English giving anything away and not getting double its value back again, Joyce?"

Curly-whiskers—Joyce, evidently—guffawed. "Don't you mind Alain, English. He's the best damn cook in the whole Christian army."

"Whose men are you?"

"Nobody's. Pagan, this boy here, was a man-at-arms of Count Stephen de Blois, and Father Piers, this is him, was an underchaplain. But the count turned and ran when things got tight at Antioch." Alain spat disgustedly. "Joyce here was one of St. Pol's men, and St. Pol got killed at Maara. Me—I'm on my own."

Joyce laughed. "Alain cut a purse too many, back in Anjou. Got his choice of the rope or the cross. He's a kind of gentleman, and mighty handy he is, too. That crooked money-changer at the gates of Beirut—wonder if he's missed anything yet?"

Alain sniffed, but looked pleased. "We'd better get some sleep, or we won't be fit for anything."

"When do we meet the Sarrazins?" inquired Willifred. "I didn't come along to take walks and naps!"

Joyce laughed and stretched out on the dusty sod in the shade. "Don't you worry, English. We're saving some, 'specially for you."

But nothing happened that afternoon, except that Willifred got better acquainted with his new companions. They were inclined to be raffish, and their jokes mystified him. Joyce insisted that all Englishmen had tails, and offered to pull off Willifred's red breeches and display his caudal appendage. Willifred was forced to roll Joyce's curly whiskers in the dust before he gave up this design.

All that day they saw nothing but a wearisome stretch of dusty trail, running through a barren and rocky stretch of land. A few shepherds and goatherds hustled their flocks out of the way, and watched the Franks from a safe distance. But they were attacked by nothing worse than gnats and flies. These were bad enough, and Willifred scratched and

slapped distractedly. They had made him a turban out of the frayed tail of Alain's mantle.

"You ought to get yourself a *khalat* like mine," advised Pagan, indicating his short hauberk of painted leather, from beneath which his bare brown legs stretched on and on. "I got this off a Turk at Antioch."

Willifred smiled at boyish vainglory. "I'll see if I can catch a Turk, then."

"We'll outfit you tonight," offered Alain. "You need a water-bag, and a mantle—it gets powerful cold at night."

"I'm a green hand, all right," admitted the sailor. "All I got is weapons, and they're getting damned heavy."

"You won't mind that when the Sarrazins crave our company."

THE Crusade made camp at sunset on a barren plateau, and forage parties went out to skirmish for such supplies as could be bought or stolen. But they dined well on Pagan's partridge which Alain reinforced with dumplings made from the very wheat that the *Drake* had brought to Beirut. Willifred had hesitated to share their mess, and was moving off to gnaw his bread, when he got a peremptory order from the cook to hold out his helmet.

After dinner, Alain went off for a stroll—"to settle his inards." He took a razor-sharp knife along with him. The other three took the sailor on an escorted tour of the great camp, showing the main points of interest with the complacence of the traveled, and yelling explanations above the uproar of an army about to retire for the night. Willifred bore up well enough. The quick dusk had fallen; but by the ruddy glow of countless campfires, he was looking casually for a slender shape in Arab dress. Somehow he did not want to ask his raucous companions where he might find the Lady Claude de St. Lobyn.

"That's Duke Godfrey's tent. And that's Tancred's. Ought to see him in battle! And over there's—"

Willifred halted in his tracks. Above the confusion of the camp—bawled arguments, Latin hymns, bawdy songs, the braying of camels, and jackasses—he had heard one voice. A high voice, harsh and excited. A voice that set nerve-ends quivering, that sent shivers up and down the spine; a voice that, once heard, could never be forgotten. It was proclaiming, in very bad Provençal, great loyalty, unselfish devotion and certain victory. It must be—but it couldn't!

"Who's making the speech?" he asked Joyce.

"Him? Oh, that's Abdul of Izmir, our head guide. They call him Le Subtil. He's always sounding off. He's a tame Sarrazin—I mean, he's a Christian. But if you ask *me*, I don't think he's all the way converted."

"But my son, he is always most devout, and at mass he always—"

"That's just it, Father. He's so damn noisy about it. And—"

Willifred drew a hard breath. "Is he a little chap, with a lot of beard?"

"He's a scrawny little runt, all right, although he dresses so grand you hardly notice. But he's smooth-shaven as a monk. Dark and dried-up looking, with sharp cheekbones and sunken temples and a long upper lip."

"Has he"—Willifred could not keep the quiver out of his voice—"has he got a—a lame foot?"

"Why, why, yes, he has."

"Do you know him?"

"Is he in truth a Christian?"

They had all spoken at once. Willifred answered slowly, "A man could shave off his beard. I don't think it could be anyone else. Look, mates, maybe you noticed the scars on my wrists?"

"Yes," answered the bewildered Joyce, "but hell, we all have scars one place or another."

"I got mine two years ago. Turning a great big millstone round and round in a Sarrazin courtyard in Spain, with my hands tied so tight behind my back I thought they'd drop off, and a long black bull-whip wrapping itself lovingly around my neck every few steps.

And the man who put me there is this Abdul of Izmir—though that wasn't his name then. I'd certainly like to meet him again. But what's he doing here?"

A long silence, while the high voice went on with its oration.

"It may be he was truly converted since," quavered the chaplain.

"Maybe, but I rather doubt it. He spun me that same yarn about being a pious convert, and I believed him—then."

"How was that?" asked Pagan.

"Oh, he played a smart game!" said Willifred bitterly. "That was my first voyage as captain of the *Drake*—Dad had died on the last one. I was green as a gosling, and thought I knew everything. I took him aboard off the island of Alboran. He was pitching around in a dismasted xebec, and he hailed us. Said he was a poor Christian merchant who had been attacked by the Africans. Offered me a good sum to set him ashore on the Bay of Almeria—said he had friends there, and knew a good anchorage. He was a wonderful fine talker. He told me how smart I was, and how pleased the blessed saints must be with me, until he convinced me, by God!

"The only thing that saved the *Drake* and her cargo—and we'd had a good voyage—was that I was uneasy about anchorage. I wasn't acquainted with the Bay of Almeria, and there might be shoals my merchant didn't know of—a merchant ain't always a sailor. So I ordered the mate to keep a sharp lookout for trouble, and to hoist sail in a hurry if he saw anything funny; couldn't risk the cargo. Then I and a couple of sailors rowed him ashore in our smallboat—he a-weeping down my neck all the way that I didn't trust him, that I could have had gold for the asking if I'd anchored where he told me to, until the hands began growling mutiny.

"Well, we'd no sooner heard the keel grate on the sand, when a whole gang of heavy-armed Moors hove out of the bushes and jumped us. And what makes me boil is how I fought to save the poor little merchant, because he was lame and helpless. When they had the irons on me finally, I heard him laughing, telling one of the Moors to row out to the *Drake*, and order her to anchor close in, at the captain's command. 'For she is heavy with treasure the infidel hounds have stolen,' says he, rubbing his paws. They shoved off, but my mate, who'd seen the ambush on shore, had hoisted sail as I'd told him to. I wasn't too worried, then. I'd always figured that one Englishman could wallop ten Sarrazins. Well, I learned!"

"We learned that, too," nodded Joyce. "It might take an English a bit longer. What happened then?"

"Why, I started turning the millstone, as I told you. I learned that the merchant, Musa of Mojacar he called himself then, was in the pay of the Alcaide of Alumar. Musa would anchor himself in his broken-down xebec—it was furnished cozy with grub and cushions and a couple of female slaves—and wait for a ship to come along. If the captain wasn't a fat-headed young ass like me, and threatened to slit his gizzard, he'd sing a song about this huge treasure buried beside the Bay of Almeria, which he'd show 'em if they spared him. Then the Alcaide would take the cargoes and sell the crews into slavery. He thought he had a good game there; all it would cost him was Musa's salary and expenses. But he didn't know how much Musa held out on him. Maybe that's why he's not working for the Alcaide any more."

"How did you escape?" Pagan asked eagerly.

Willifred was not too old to blush, and he did, although the night hid the evidence. "Well," he said reluctantly, "there was this girl—"

"I knew it!" Joyce shouted with laughter. "I knew there'd be a skirt in it! Go on, English."

"Never mind," answered Willifred coldly. "We all got away, and— For the love of St. Peter, what am I standing here raising a breeze for? Did you say that was Duke Godfrey's cabin, yonder?"

Without another word, he ran toward the big shabby tent which was the headquarters of Godfrey de Bouillon. Horrified, the three ran after him, yelling at him not to be an ass, or he'd get thrown out on his ear. They halted, dumfounded, when they heard him addressing the contemptuous sentry, "Belay! Port your helm, you lubber, or I'll warp you fast to the tent-pole!" just before he lifted the lubber in his great arms, and set him carefully to one side. Then he barged in.

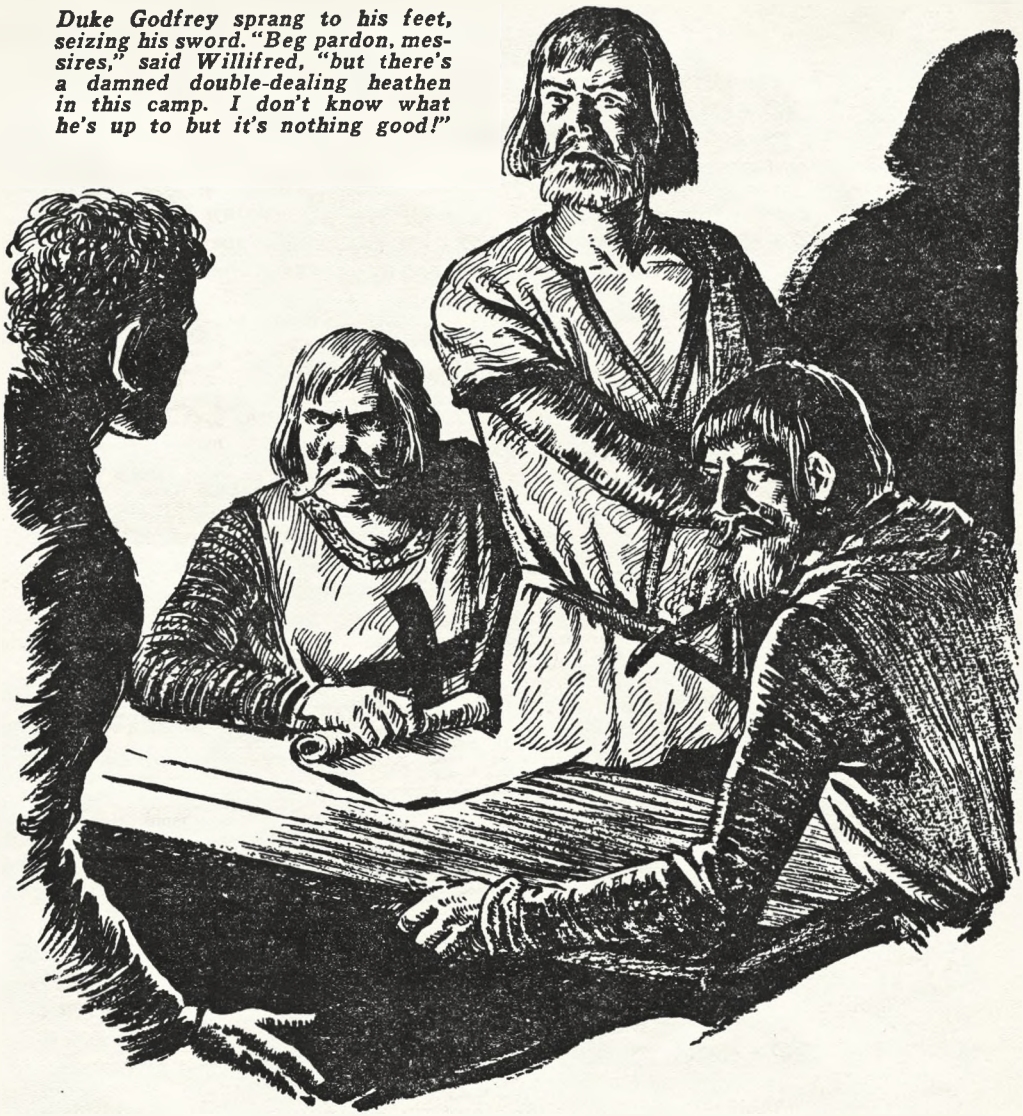
"Stick around," Joyce groaned. "We'll be here to haul off his remains."

AT the council table, Duke Godfrey sprang to his feet, seizing his sword. Tancred and the Count of Flanders rose, swearing, while Robert of Normandy grunted in his sleep and clasped his hands tighter on his belly. Willifred realized that he had been a little abrupt, and he bowed hurriedly before he spoke.

"Beg pardon, messires, but there's a damned double-dealing heathen slave-trader in this camp! I don't know what he's up to, but it's nothing good, and if he's our chief guide, we'll wind up in the wrong port!"

"He's the sailor who gave us the wheat," explained the Count of Flanders, and Duke Godfrey sat down, muttering. But Tancred, who had not heard this explanation, strode forward.

"What's the idea, Red-pants, thrusting in on



*Duke Godfrey sprang to his feet, seizing his sword. "Beg pardon, messires," said Willifred, "but there's a damned double-dealing heathen in this camp. I don't know what he's up to but it's nothing good!"*

our council? By St. George, I'll have the impudence thrashed out of you!"

Willifred forgot whom he was addressing. "You and who else? My lords, if I've stuck my oar in here, it's because it's my duty! Here's this feller who calls himself Abdul nowadays, a dirty low heathen swab that even the devil wouldn't have in hell, a-talking to honest Christians and making himself as much at home as a flea in a shirt!"

Arms folded, head high, he told his story. As he ended it, he glared around at the crusading nobility.

"What good would it do me to lie about him, eh? Fetch him here! Fetch him here! He'll know me, he will!"

Behind him, a stool fell over, and a man strode past him to face the duke. "Who is this fellow, my lord?" he was demanding, in a high nasal voice. "Has the sun burned out his brains? Why has he not been thrown out of the tent? Must every foul dirt-born cur burst in here and pollute the air with his stench?"

Willifred took a look at the newcomer. A slender gentleman, with carefully arranged, curling sandy hair, and a drooping sandy mustache that did not hide a weak chin and a pouting lower lip. Handsomely dressed in loosely-flowing crimson silk, he aimed a contemptuous finger at Willifred, who rubbed his head, puzzled.

"Who the hell's *that?*" he asked mildly.

For a breath there was a shocked silence. Then somebody—probably Robert of Normandy, wakened by the noise—uttered a sudden snort of laughter. The next minute, the ducal tent rocked on its pegs with the wild noisy merriment inside. The princes of the highest blood in Europe slapped their knees and haw-hawed. Only Duke Godfrey's chaplain, keeping the minutes of the meeting, let his jaw drop in shocked amazement.

Robert of Normandy's round red face hoisted itself before Willifred's gaze like a harvest moon. That he had been hoisting a tankard recently was evident even before he waddled forward, still laughing, and jerked his thick thumb at the silk-clad stranger, who was almost green with fury.

"Pirate," hiccoughed Robert of Normandy politely, "meet Gaston—Count of Behind the Rear-guard, Lord of the Backward Spurs, Duke of the Pillows and Baron of the Bed!" He stepped backward, fell over a stool with a crash, and lay there, heaving hysterically.

Duke Godfrey was hammering the table with his dagger-hilt.

"Silence, by God! Silence!"

The racket subsided. Pirate and count remained on their feet. To the latter, Godfrey turned with a courteous inclination of his kingly blond head.

"Though this man lacks the courtesy due this company, Count Gaston," he said, "nevertheless I believe he is sincerely desirous of aiding us. He gave us a good gift at Beirut, and has asked for nothing in exchange save the privilege of fighting beside us."

A murmur traveled around the company and sudden embarrassment was evident on the duke's face. The count's pale blue eyes circled suspiciously around the tent. Willifred thought, "*He* must have asked for a lot, and then wouldn't fight. I guess that's what Normandy meant."

Hastily the duke went on, "Therefore, I request you to tell us, in his presence, what you know of Abdul of Izmir. After his speech, I think we would like to be reassured."

Count Gaston swallowed visibly. His narrow face was curiously mottled as he addressed Duke Godfrey, in a voice that quivered with rage.

"You will recall, messire, that I encountered Abdul of Izmir at 'Arkah, where he was presented to me by the lord Manuel Phalides, the ambassador of the Emperor Alexias, as one who was well-acquainted with the way to Jerusalem, and likewise with the ways of the Moslems, since he was converted at an early age from the worship of their hellish prophet. He was eager to serve the Cross. At my own cost, I hired him, and I asked nothing in return—I asked *nothing!*"

His voice rose to an angry screech. Willifred heard somebody remark, "Nothing, except the privilege of going to bed with fever whenever the Sarrazins attacked us." It might have been Tancred who spoke; his sharp eyes were staring at the count with open hostility.

"I demand of you all," raged the count, "has he not served us well? Has he not found us supplies of water and food?"

"And sweet holy God, didn't we pay for 'em!" That was St. Gilles, the thrifty Provençal, muttering behind a gnarled hand.

"When has he showed lack of faith?" The count was well launched into his speech by now, and in a way, Willifred felt, he was enjoying himself. But in the audience there was much shifting of spurred heels and a general rustling and muttering; the enjoyment was one-sided. Only Duke Godfrey still listened courteously.

"And this—this vermin, this filth of the sea, this pirate, in fact, who has joined us solely for the chance at loot! Not a doubt but he has reason for wishing to deprive us of our chief guide! Perhaps he finds the Sarrazins are good paymasters—"

"Aw, bilgewater!" cut in Willifred, who was tired from the long day's march. "Give us a rest! If you'll have him fetched," he said turning to the duke, "I won't say a word—and see if he won't recognize me!"

"No doubt but he will, as a notorious rogue and thief," sneered the count. "Messire, I suggest that this creature be put to the question at once!"

Tancred got up, handsome as an archangel in his mail hauberk.

"*I* suggest"—his voice held the contempt of the fighting man for the talker—"that you quiet down and hear Bouillon's counsel."

Willifred, watching the great man intently, felt his heart sink suddenly. For Godfrey was hesitating. His eyes were unsure, and he drew slow crosses with his forefinger on the table. He looked unhappy and worried.

At last he looked up at Willifred. "My good man," he said slowly, "that you are in earnest I have no doubt. But I rather think you may be mistaken. After all, what evidence have you, what proof that Abdul is what you say? Thus far, he has served us well enough, I think."

Unconsciously, Willifred rubbed at the scars on his wrists. He had failed. He wanted to bellow at the pack of them, and ask them where their wits were, and what he proposed to do about it, as if he were on his own staunch deck with a green crew to kick into shape. But he knew, deep inside, that *he* had acted the fool this time; he should not have rushed in yelling what must have sounded like impudent nonsense. He should have bided his time, watched that devil, and then presented his evidence. And he should have been more polite. Why, even his father would have hurled a boot at his head if he had ventured to air his ideas

so rashly—and these were the great lords of the world! Nevertheless. . . He shut his mouth grimly, and kept it shut thereafter.

The duke was addressing Count Gaston now. "We thank you for your explanation, messire. I am sure it was heartening to all of us. And now, my good fellow, you must leave us. We are busied."

Scarlet to the roots of his hair, Willifred bowed and stalked out.

## CHAPTER III

### THE LADY AND THE PIRATE

"AH, ah! What did we tell you!" Joyce remarked as the three closed in upon Willifred. But the sailor seemed preoccupied, and when he spoke, in a slow and heavy tone, they were puzzled.

"I guess there's nothing else to do about it. I'll likely run into head winds, but I'm used to that. Now where'll he be, I wonder?"

"Who? Hey! where you going?" Joyce and Pagan made a grab at Willifred's shoulders, then at his baggy breeches as the shoulders eluded them, while the chaplain ran around in front and shoved frantically against the pirate's great chest.

"Wait, my son! What is it you would do?"

"Why, I have to do something about Musa—Abdul before he fouls up the Crusade! I can't get them, yonder, to listen to reason, and you can't tell what he'll be plotting. Anyhow, I ought to ha' killed him long ago; he had it coming, God knows."

"All right, Pagan," muttered Joyce. Pagan curled his huge right foot around Willifred's ankle, and heaved, while Joyce shoved. The distracted sailor went over on his face with a bellow of rage, quickly muffled as the three instantly sat down on him.

"No, no, no, English! You can't do that," Joyce explained carefully. "This here Abdul has a bodyguard, see? Great big blacks, they are—I seen one of 'em tear off a feller's ear with his teeth! Now, don't go barging in on him and get yourself killed, not until you've tasted one of Alain's ragouts of rabbit. Stop heaving and bucking, can't you?"

Willifred, his mouth full of dust, addressed Joyce fervently in earthiest Devonshire. Two of them he might have dislodged, but three large men, sitting solidly on his shoulders, rump and knees, was not fair. He had his duty to do, so he pitched about and bellowed his loudest, hoping to attract helpful attention. But a fight in a *Croisé* camp was nothing special, and even with Joyce's thumb in his ear, he could hear, high above the rumbling of the hosts, the voices of four or five monks, yelling theological criticisms at each other. Nobody was interested in him.

"We'll let you up, if you'll behave, see? Otherwise, well, you ain't no downy feather-bed, but we can sit here quite a spell."

However, the native prudence which had made him so successful in his business was laying a heavier weight on his seething fury than their combined backsides. Night had fallen. He could not find his way about in these strange waters, and unsuccessful vengeance only made one look silly. In broad daylight, it would be different. He jerked his head up.

"All right, all right, let me up! You're keelhauling me!"

They rose, and so did Willifred. Joyce dusted him off carefully, and then they walked him away through the uproarious night, away from the duke's pavilion to the safe obscurity of their own camp among the rocks. A dark shape rose up against the red embers to hail them.

"Well, in the name of St. Lazarus, where have you been?"

"We're a bit late," explained Joyce, "because we had to wait while English here was giving a rebuke to Duke Godfrey."

"Is that so?" snarled Alain. "Don't English like our little Crusade? We'll have to try to fix it for him."

Willifred muttered something about jug-headed jackasses, and sat down, dispirited, beside the fire. Alain kicked at the coals until their light brightened enough to reveal a miscellaneous heap of articles.

"I picked up a few things. Have a look."

Willifred investigated, and found a goatskin water-bag, an Arab *aba* of good camelot cloth, a pair of ladies' slippers, daintily upturned at the toes, a camel's tasseled bridle, a battered pottery mug, a beautiful silver spur, a gold nose-ring, and a fat little leather bag that clinked musically as he lifted it.

"Sweet St. Peter!"

"The water-bag and the cloak are for you. And maybe the money wouldn't pass in Paris, but we can buy stuff with it here. The other stuff I picked up just to keep my hand in. Maybe we can swap it somewhere. I could have stolen a donkey, but there was an old woman on it."

"Where did you get it, Alain, my old one?" marveled Joyce.

"There's a kind of khan on that side road to Sidon. I was in a hurry, or I could have done better. There was a whole Arab tribe hanging out there, shoving the regular trade—the merchants and pilgrims and such—all over the place. So I just wandered around. They were waiting for somebody, the Arabs were, some big Sarrazin baron or emir or something. From the way they sounded, there was going to be a big hand-out when the feller got there. They kept clamoring to their sheik, a big handsome young feller on a lovely gray mare, and he kept shushing them. I don't know much Arabic, but I could understand that he kept saying, 'Be patient, my children. He will come.' They interested me, and if I thought you were going to be this late, I'd have hung around a while longer."

"Better that you came back," said Joyce. "A whole pack of Sarrazins together reminds me too much of Antioch—boo!"

Willifred was wrapping himself up in the *aba*. "This is mighty kind of you, Alain. The air's a bit cool. I never would have thought, hot as it was today, that it could get this cold!"

Alain nodded. "You learn," he said tolerantly. "*I* never would have thought you could make a nice cozy fire out of camel manure, before I came to the Holy Land."

Willifred thrashed around restlessly, trying to find a softer ridge, while one worry chased another through his head. He was sure of one thing. If Abdul of Izmir resembled his former incarnation as Musa of Mojacar, he was not working to free Jerusalem from the infidel. He had cheated the Alcaide as successfully as he had cheated Willifred of Avenport. He was a man without shame, without pride, without mercy. His heart was a money-bag, and his passion and delight was the gulling of some honest tender-hearted simpleton for his personal profit. That count fellow who had hired him, and defended him so earnestly—he'd better count up his cash at night!

"Not that I'd care," Willifred reasoned to himself. "A nasty bit of work *he* is. And not very popular with those others in the duke's tent, judging by the way they laughed at him. Well, I'll see what I can do. . . Claude. She didn't seem like a French girl; they're all curves and bold eyes. I wonder where she is. I'd better find out. If there was to be a fight, I'd want to look out for her. . ."

He sighed gently at the pleasant prospect, and turned over.

"Wouldn't dare lose a fight like that. Musa used to get replacements for the Alcaide's harem—Sarrazins are partial to Frankish girls. I wonder if she likes me. She said good-by very courteous-like, but she was just as courteous to Huon, that poor old bag of bones. The trouble with the gentry is that you never know just how you stand with 'em. Well, she could do worse than me; I've got a ship and two farms and I carry on a pretty good trade. There's always a risk, but even if worse came to worse, I'd leave her well off, and if there were any children, why—"

Willifred broke off short, shocked and surprised at himself.

"Why, I'm talking about *marriage!* I'm crazy! What do I want to get married for? Still, if I do marry, I'd want a wife who's a stout-hearted lass, who can keep her hatches battened when it's necessary, whose eyes are

open and honest, and who holds her head high and proud. . . Of course she's a Frenchwoman. But I guess I could do worse than her. I'll hunt her up, tomorrow, and then. . ."

He grinned up at the great bright stars burning steadily overhead. Somewhere far away a jackal barked. He heard men snoring around him, heard the watch yawning wearily; tomorrow night it would be his turn to stand guard from midnight till dawn. Well, he could do that, too.

In renewed self-confidence, he shut his eyes and slept.

CLAUDE DE ST. LOBYN sat just inside the tent door, combing her hair and worrying. Behind her, on a heap of cushions that were beginning to show wear, her little sister-in-law still slept, her childish red mouth open a trifle, her dark tangled hair veiling the thickly-fringed lids that were still swollen from last night's tears. For her lord had not visited the family tent, and Sophia was hurt and disappointed and rather scared. So she had dragged in her pillows and sought Claude's company. Was this the way, she had wanted to know, Frankish lords treated their ladies? What had she done to displease her lord, that he so seldom deigned to come to her?

Claude tugged viciously at a stubborn tangle with the ivory comb that Sophia had given her.

"The worst thing about marching is that it's so hard to keep clean," she thought, for even in her thoughts she strove to be loyal to her brother, the head of their house now, the lord of so many castles and towns in Anjou. She understood Sophia's puzzled, tearful eyes, although their oral communication was still rather limited. When her brother had married the little Armenian princess, Claude had fought against it; it was so obviously a temporary policy, undertaken because, during the fearful hardships and terrors of crossing the Taurus Mountains, he had lost what taste he had had for the Crusade. It had seemed much more pleasant to pass the winter in the prosperous caravan center that was Sophia's dowry, to lounge in the scented, Oriental luxury of the palace, while the Crusade dragged itself on to Antioch. Claude had scolded and flattered, while her heart sickened within her. She had been taught carefully, back in Anjou, that courage and courtesy were the main things required of a man. Her father had had them both, in good strength. He had tried hard to thrash them into his only son.

"Are we going to loaf here forever, and forego the honor of helping take Jerusalem?" she had stormed, again and again. She need not have worried. Sophia's half-brother, a wild young chieftain, had instantly figured out that his Frankish brother-in-law was a soft article and, gathering his desert horsemen, had stormed the caravan town. A good half of the trusted men-at-arms from Anjou had been sacrificed to cover the pell-mell retreat of their lord and his distressed family.

Since they had rejoined the forces of the Cross, St. Lobyn had not regained any more enthusiasm for the venture. When things had been at their worst in Antioch, it had required all Claude's wiles and those of Huon to keep him from hurrying back to Byzantium and its luxuries, as Count Stephen de Blois had already done. Thus balked, he had begun to suffer poor health. At 'Arkah, he had stated firmly that the heat of a Syrian summer would kill him, and had actually engaged passage on a Genoese dromond before Claude and Huon again took steps. But the story got out—the Genoese captain was chatty—and the tough crusading nobility had laughed their heads off. St. Lobyn had grown sullen and silent; he dosed himself, and hired Sarrazin physicians. He ignored his bewildered little bride, and had tried to ignore Claude. And then Abdul of Izmir had come along.

The girl shook back the gold-brown waves of her hair. The oil-lamp that glimmered under Sophia's holy icon brightened the gold faintly, and laid a warm gilt upon her bare arms, her long throat, the slight swell of her girlish breasts under the plain white linen

shift that she washed herself whenever she could, kneeling by the water like a peasant. She was older than Sophia, nearly nineteen, and should have been married long ago. Sometimes she worried about it. But generally not. She had too many worries over her brother to want to take on any more that were not part of a family responsibility. She desired above all things that St. Lobyn would turn out to be a credit to the family name. She felt protective toward Sophia and affectionate toward Huon. That was all.

She was thinking about Abdul of Izmir. He was influencing her brother too much these days. Surely it was not right that a Sarrazin, albeit converted, should spend so much time with a great Christian nobleman; gambling, exchanging foul stories, watching a hired dancing girl wriggle! No, it was not right. If only she could do something about it!

Last night, St. Lobyn had seemed oddly excited; he had eaten in a hurry, and had ridden away with Abdul of Izmir. To her he had said no word. Since she had balked his escape at 'Arkah, he had not bothered to speak to her. She knew, deep within her, that he hated her—the big brother who had seemed so splendid to her awed childhood, the lord of St. Lobyn after her great father. Now he hated her. Was it her fault that her father, just before he died, and while the Crusade was being preached everywhere, had suggested that she go along? She would not admit, even now, that her father had begun to despair of his heir, had hoped that the Holy War would make a man of him, and that his young sister, with her vigorous tongue, might keep him straight until the miracle was accomplished. Well, if they could reach Jerusalem. . .

She sighed, and reached for her boots. It was nearly dawn, and she could already hear Huon grunting around outside. She would have to help him give out the day's supplies, and check the men for sickness and repairs. There were not many of them left—the St. Lobyn men had not been as loyal as Godfrey's Rhinelanders, or St. Gilles' Provençals. After that flight from the caravan town, they had seemed to lose heart.

"Madame Claude—madame," called a voice outside the tent door. Not Huon. A strange voice; deep, eager, oddly accented. "Madame, I'd like to see you, if you're awake."

She sprang up. Something had happened. . . She thrust her head out of the tent-flap, just in time to whack her forehead smartly against the brow of the young man who was plainly about to walk into the tent with or without an invitation. He said, "Oof!" and fell back, rubbing his brow; she blinked away the shooting stars. Outside, the camp was just beginning to stir in the sharp cold air of the hour before dawn.

"I've had a hell of a time finding you in the dark," he said. "I must have fallen afoul of every tent-stake in the Crusade. Er, are you all right? That was quite a knock I gave you on the foretop."

She stared up at him. A very tall man, broad in the shoulders, lean in the middle; the gleam of a heavy curved sword, the gleam of white teeth.

"Why, it's the pirate!" she gasped. And at that moment Huon came sneaking up behind him, a battle-axe lifted high in his two hands. "No, no, Huon!" she shrieked. "It's the sailor, Willifred, who gave the wheat to the army!"

Huon dropped the axe and swore. "Then what's he a-doin', prowlin' around your tent, eh, madame? Snuck past me, he did. No more manners than a billygoat!"

Willifred, who had wheeled around sharply at Claude's cry, now laughed, in a rather embarrassed way, and said, "I—I wanted to talk to you, madame, if you could. . ." He halted, then plunged on, his accent getting thicker. "I thought you seemed real weather-wise, that night. I've tried to give some help to this craft, but nobody'll listen!"

She suppressed a smile, and said kindly, "I'll listen, and so will Huon. Come inside." She took him to her brother's side of the tent, separated by a sagging curtain from her own side, where Sophia was sleeping. They sat down on the mats, Huon close beside his lady, his axe still firmly grasped.

Willifred told his story—first of the experience in the Bay of Almeria, then, frowning and getting red in the face, of his interview with Duke Godfrey. When he finished, they were all silent, and only Sophia's heavy breathing was audible.

Willifred cast a stern eye at the lady. She had listened, very gravely. But when he had related the episode of Duke Godfrey, he had noticed a dimple in her firm sun-browned cheek, as if she were laughing inside. What, for God's sake, was so funny? But the dimple had been pretty to watch. And so was she, sitting there so straight and alert, with her hair falling over her shoulders, and one small bare foot escaping the hem of her long white shift. He bent forward, earnestly, and saw, by the pale light of the oil-lamp suspended from aloft, that her eyes were the color of the sea on a fair day—blue-green, clear, and sparkling.

He took himself in hand. "Now, madame, Abdul is up to some dirty game. He's dangerous. But so is that other feller, the count, who wanted to have a man tortured for doing his duty! And he hates the other leaders—you could see it in his eyes. When they laughed at him, he looked like murder. He thinks he ain't appreciated. And, madame, a man like that can't stand to be laughed at; a little man has to do something to get back his importance. He'd put this army on its beam ends, if he could, just to see those others fall. Alone, I

wouldn't fear him. But he's cruising with this Abdul. I shouldn't wonder if he's playing Abdul's game, whatever it is. When a mighty unpopular lad hires a pilot from the enemy to steer an army, the army might not make port. I'm not aboard the *Drake* now—I can't do much. But you see how it is. If you'd tell your menfolks, and show 'em the danger, *they* might be heeded in council! I'll talk to 'em myself, if you think they'll listen—"

He broke off short, staring at Claude. Her eyes were on the ground; she was clasping and unclasping her hands.

"Who—who was this man?" she breathed. And before he spoke, he knew that she must know him.

"They called him Count Gaston," he replied tensely.

With a growl of anger, Huon got up on his feet, and Lady Claude rose, too, her hands clenched.

"Gaston de St. Lobyn is my brother," she said, tight-voiced.

"OH, for God's sake!" gasped Willifred, helplessly. For a moment he sat where he was. Then he got up, and looked down at the proud pale face of Lady Claude.

"Well, duck," he said gently, "I'm sorry. But every family's got at least one foul-bottomed craft in it. My uncle, now—"

"Somebody's coming!" hissed Huon, and ran out of the tent.

Now that he gave heed, Willifred also heard the stamping of many hoofs outside, and a high nasal voice cursing someone for not jumping to hold his stirrup. The next moment, Gaston de St. Lobyn, looking exceedingly weary, but triumphant, limped into the tent, and stopped dead. The small man in the flowing cream-colored *aba* and silken turban, who had been following him, now swung to his side, and stopped dead in his turn.

"Call the men," ordered the count sharply. "I'll have this filth impaled at once. And you, you slut!" He spat. "I had suspected something

*Willifred hit the count a solid clip under the chin. He hit the ground so violently that he bounced.*

like this—you and your talk of honor! Wantoning with your gutter paramours when my back is turned—"

Willifred stepped up briskly and hit the count a solid clip under the chin. He hit the ground so violently that he almost bounced.

"Don't you speak to her that way," he addressed the sprawled and breathless nobility. "She's not wantoning, and I'm neither gutter nor paramour."

The small man had not moved, but stood watching the scene with inscrutable dark eyes. If he had been startled to see the tall young man take his stand protectively before the white-faced girl, he had recovered quickly. His hand stole furtively to his chin.

Willifred fixed a cold eye upon him. "Hullo, Musa!" he said. "Remind me to settle with you for that Almeria business sometime, will you?"

The man shook his head, as if bewildered. But the count had risen to his feet, and was yelling for his men, screeching at them, demanding why they lay snoring when vile filth was raping the Lady Claude. At once, angry shouts replied, heavy feet pounded nearer, and a mass of armed men, their axes lifted, eyes glaring, stood in the tent door. Willifred yanked the cutlass from his belt and stood ready. Outside, the light of dawn glowed red.

Lady Claude, with a shriek, leaped in front of Willifred and flung her arms wide. "No, you don't!" she yelled. "This man has done me no harm! He came instead to warn me of a possible danger! Ask Huon! He was with us!"

Willifred saw a vigorous waggle of a white beard as the old man thrust himself through the crowding men-at-arms. The count stood stiffly, his finger still pointing at the sailor, waiting for his order to be obeyed.

Huon bowed respectfully. "No, no, messire," he said. "He didn't do no harm! He ain't got no manners, but what can you expect of a sailor, and an English besides? Men, this is the captain who gave us the wheat at Beirut! I guess our lord didn't understand."

Although Count Gaston still waited, frowning darkly, the men relaxed; some bobbed their heads respectfully. Somewhere outside, the smell of porridge rose on the morning breeze. The men-at-arms hesitated, and then turned away at the summons of a force more powerful than the Count of St. Lobyn.

Willifred had stepped in front of Claude. Musa, alias Abdul of Izmir, had faded away with the men-at-arms. Old Huon still stood beside his master, looking anxious.

"Well," said the sailor, "I guess I'll be going now."

Count Gaston stared at him, his eyes full of hate, the hatred of a weak man who has been humiliated before an inferior.

"I hope I didn't hurt you too bad, messire," Willifred said, "but you had no call to abuse the lady that way."

"Get out," choked the count. "Get out!"

"Thank you, Messire Willifred, for your kindness." Claude extended her hand with great dignity, and the sailor bowed over it respectfully. Then he straightened, and laughed.

"I forgot, madame. I brought you a little present. I wanted to thank you for showing me the way to camp that night. They might be a little too big for you; I guess they're a bit squashed." He drew out two slippers of red leather from his sash, their upturned toes somewhat squashed, indeed. He thrust them at her, and turned as red as the slippers. Then he bowed again, turned, nodded briefly at the count, and ran out of the tent.

"Why—" Claude stared at the slippers, "why, how nice of him!"

"Give me that trash," cried her brother, reaching for them in a fury. Claude thrust them behind her back.

"I really can use them, Gaston. Please don't be so angry at the poor fellow. He was very respectful, indeed he was. Ask Huon."

Huon started to nod, his toothless jaws smiling. The count swung on his heel, struck the bearded old face, and when Huon staggered and fell to the ground at the unexpected blow, the count kicked him in the ribs, hard. Then he strode out.

With a little cry, Claude ran to the old man. "Oh, Huon, did he hurt you?"

"Not him, m'lady." The old man sat up, grunting, and rubbed himself. "But that pirate feller had better be careful."

"Of course," said Claude, helping him gently onto his ancient legs, "he was mistaken about Gaston. He never would plot against the Crusade; not even if the princes *have* treated him badly . . . would he?"

Huon's eyes met hers. Then they both looked away. "I'd better go see about breakfast, m'lady," the old soldier excused himself, and limped out.

Sophia, flushed and tousled, crept out to her sister-in-law.

"My lord returned safely; I heard his voice," she said. "He did not come in to me—"

"Well, dear, he was hungry, I suppose, and it's time to get up now anyway."

"Was that great tall Frank your lover, sister?" inquired Sophia, with interest.

"No, no," Claude replied smiling. "I have no lover. Come, we must eat."

The little princess shook her head. "You should make him your lover, sister. I watched through the curtain. He is very big and strong, but he has such kind eyes, and his hands are gentle."

"Did you see him hit my brother and your lord? Was that gentle?"

"He was speaking falsely of you, sister. It was right that the tall Frank should punish him for that. He is a lion, yes, a camel of the desert!" Her dark eyes were wistful.

Precisely as if they had spoken of the devil, once again the voice spoke outside the door. "Madame Claude?"

"Y—yes," gulped Claude.

"There was something I forgot," he said, ducking under the tent flap.

"Oh, do be careful, messire!" cried Claude. "My brother has no love for you, and—"

"Who cares?" grinned the pirate. The next moment, he had caught Claude in his arms.

The princess Sophia tactfully scuttled out, but they did not notice. Claude struggled for a few minutes, but he was strong—so strong. His arms might have been carved from oak. They pressed her tight to his breast, so that her cheek felt the leather of his jerkin, and the mail-links beneath, and the laboring of his lungs; he must have hurried. She gave up, and leaned against him and, scandalous though she knew her conduct to be, she felt a sweet security, leaning against a strength that she had never known before.

"Look up, my dear," he whispered. And although she did not understand the words, she looked up and smiled, shyly.

Then he bent his tall head and kissed her.

After he had gone, she stood helplessly where he had left her, rubbing her cheek where the bristles of his fresh beard-stubble had left their mark. Sophia was tugging eagerly at her arm and saying something. She blinked, and applied the spur of conscience. This was no time or place for kisses.

"That was very improper of him, and of me. I never was kissed like that. I—I. . ."

Hurriedly, she began to braid her hair.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DUCK AND THE DRAKE

"I WANT him killed. You hear? I want him killed, at once. This is enough!"

"To hear is to obey, Magnificence. And it will please me personally, as well. But tell me, were you pleased with those whom you met last evening?"

"They will do, I dare say, to frighten the rabble. But the leaders, what of them? That fat brute, Robert of Normandy, enjoys a fight almost as much as a dinner; and he is not the best of them."

"There are ways known in the East, Magnificence, by which they may be rendered harmless."

"Poison? But look here, Abdul, none of your well poisonings! The wrong parties might suffer, and what *I* suffer with my stomach, even with Damascus wine as my only drink, the saints only know! I need rest and cool water and medicine. Such griping in the guts as I endured while that sheik was making his speech at the khan last night, nobody knows! I verily believe—"

"Magnificence, you need not fear. Nothing so crude as well poisoning, and if it should become necessary, you will be warned. Now, you understand, the prisoners I take are *my* property. I dispose of them as I please, by cutting their throats, or by selling them in the Damascus markets. They are so lean and scraggly, even the women, that the price I will get will not even pay me for the trouble of transporting them to Damascus. You understand, Magnificence? For you, revenge and a well-earned rest at Caesarea—the arrangements have all been made there—and for me, such profit as I can get from the sale of the prisoners."

"How about that emir? Will he want any more than I gave out last night?"

"Not money, Magnificence. He is pleased to fight for his faith, even as you—we Christians are for ours, ha, ha! But he is a young man, and lusty. Perhaps a present of female slaves would—"

"You can give him my so-called wife, if you can manage it. I'm sick of her, always twining around my neck and smelling of sour milk. The marriage brought me no advantage, none at all, and it is not truly legal. My chaplain, now a saint in heaven, fixed all that; he knew she would be a terrible embarrassment for me in Anjou."

"And, your sister? It would be difficult to get one without the other—"

"N-no. Besides, she rides with the men, in her usual brazen way. She asked to do it, when I was feeling ill and had to be carried in my litter, and I have permitted it. It gets her away so that I don't have to hear her nagging, nagging, nagging, all the time. No—no, I'd better not consider it. She is of my blood, after all. And if she were taken, she might get away somehow, and then the fat would be in the fire. Now and again a prisoner does get away from you, eh, Abdul?"

"Magnificence, I do not—"

"That scum of the sea who was courting my sister while that old villain Huon acted as chaperon. He says he was a prisoner of yours once, and *he* got away. Perhaps he will do you some damage one day."

"But, Magnificence, I do not know the man. Upon all the saints, I swear it! He is mistaken, or else he is merely trying to discredit me with the Crusade. But you say you wish him killed. A man of his superb strength would command a good price at Damascus, but if you say so—"

"It is my order. I will be flouted and humiliated by dirt like him only once. Can I get a good physician in Caesarea? There is a pain, here, under my shoulder, that has been bothering me. . ."

He was about to launch into detail, when Abdul bowed and remarked hastily that he was sure that Caesarea could produce any number of learned doctors; then he set spurs to his Arab bay, and galloped off, attended by his Negroes. The count thrust out his lower lip sourly, and then wheeled his own horse about, descending a rocky gully to the uneven and dusty trail that was the road of the Crusade. He met a dozen or so young knights, Tancred's men, loping ahead of the rest for the fun of it, and making their nags perform. They nodded at him carelessly, and he glared at them bitterly.

"A little while," he thought, "and we'll see how you'll look without heads!"

He had regained his dignity by the time he reached Duke Godfrey, reporting that Abdul of Izmir would be riding far ahead to be sure that the road was clear. He neglected to mention that the road was not being cleared for the *Croisés*, but for a Sarrazin ambush. His conscience clear as a bell, his heart full of vindictive triumph, he went back down the line to join his party.

"IF you want a girl, why don't you settle for a nice little fat Syrian wench?" groaned Alain. "The chivalry won't have you poaching on its preserves! It's all right about the slippers—you're welcome to 'em— But Lord God, be careful, or you'll make an ass of yourself again. Understand me, I like girls, and so does Joyce. Many a night we've—" He broke off short as Pagan came loping up.

"He probably knows all about your little doings," said Willifred, grinning.

"No, he don't. He's a good boy, he is,—so far. You mind what I say, now."

Willifred rolled along the road, in the dust and the heat, but he might have been strolling among the cowslips of Devon in April. She kissed me, sang his heart; she clung to me, and then she kissed me.

He had been rather embarrassed, accounting for the disappearance of the slippers to his friends.

"I thought it was only right to give her a present, since she showed me the way to camp, there at Beirut. Just as soon as I can, I'll give you their worth, Alain, whatever you say."

"I thought you were a pirate!" Joyce boomed.

Willifred crimsoned. "I'm on a pilgrimage. It ain't lucky for me to take any loot."

"Is that so? Then what do you think St. Gilles is crusading for? Yes, and the rest of the chivalry, too, except maybe Duke Godfrey. They fought the Turks all right at Antioch, but you should ha' seen 'em go for each other when it came to splitting up the loot! Why, Baldwin —that's Duke Godfrey's brother—and Tancred almost killed each other over a fancy silk tent! Are you crazy?"

"Well," muttered Willifred, now a rich purple, "I said I wouldn't."

"That is well-said, my son." Father Piers nodded his approval. "And your lady would approve, I know. She is a brave and virtuous girl. She helped tend the sick and wounded at Antioch instead of decking herself with the spoil."

Willifred nodded soberly. "That's why I want to look after her when the trouble comes. She's not the kind to run."

"Have the Sarrazins been telling you their little plans, eh?"

"Well, Alain, you said there was a whole pack of Arabs at the khan. We'll probably hear from 'em. And Abdul's not going along just for the ride. So if I run off when the trouble comes, I'm just looking after Claude, see?"

"She has a brother!" said Pagan. "What do you want to fool around with girls for, anyhow?"

"Never you mind, boy," answered Willifred. "And as for her brother, he'd be as much good to her in a ruckus as a boil would be."

It was after the army had passed Tyre that the crusading host began to lose members.

Not in any battle, and without apparent struggle, and leaving no trace. Somewhere between the noon halt and the night camp, certain stragglers, wandering out to forage, simply disappeared. Old companions of the long march, who liked to camp near each other and stand watch together found, at the next halt, that the

others were not there. Noisy, anxious searchings by the mounted knights and by their comrades, did not locate them nor find any trace of their going.

Around the evening fires, stories of demons and monsters and black magic went the rounds, and hard-bitten mercenaries crossed themselves furtively. Men looked over their shoulders uneasily when they stood watch—double watch now—under the bright spring stars. A dog's lonesome howling made them break into a cold sweat and clutch each other.

The rear guard, the chivalry who rode under the solitary sharp eye of old St. Gilles, felt chills along their spines, even in the heat of noon. The blue height of Lebanon was the menacing shoulder of some gigantic jinn directed against them. Had they come so far, and endured so much, only to fall into the power of something vast, malign, and unknown? The knights, who had been taking it easy in cool linen and cotton gowns and turbans as they rode under the blazing sun, were now once more frying alive in mail and helm, and tempers grew edgy.

Willifred, like most hearty young men, somehow doubted that anything could happen to him. He discussed the mysterious disappearances with his mates, and they all agreed solemnly that this was hostile country, and a man couldn't be too careful; no falling out of line, or wandering off alone. Willifred had particular reason to feel that Musa would be glad if he vanished. He would remember that an English sailor had foiled him once before, and might again.

Nevertheless, on the second day, when a score of healthy pilgrims had somehow evaporated along the way, Willifred behaved foolishly. The noon halt found his section of the line of march in a pleasant little valley winding between rugged rock slopes that were overgrown with brambles and vines. Sprawled on his back on fairly soft turf, his turban unwound and draped over his arblast to shade his face, he was staring vacantly at the opposite slope of rock when he made out the dusy blue of grape-clusters mingling with the green of other growths that veiled the rugged limestone.

Willifred eased himself up gently. Besides his own companions, the little valley held a swarm of Rhinelanders, all sprawled out with their heads pillowed on each others' rumps and bellies. If he made any disturbance, there wouldn't be enough fruit to go around, and he hoped to provide an adequate supply for his friends and himself after he had first picked out the choicest clusters for Claude. So he sidled softly around the snoring soldiers of the Cross, armed with his cutlass—the arblast could not be held in his teeth while he climbed—and with his turban draped over his head like a veil.

The man on watch yawned as he saw the tall figure moving around, and figured that he was answering a call of nature. It was very hot and still, and bees were buzzing somewhere.

He decided he had better not scramble right up the rock slope; he would go around, and then up. He wished his breeches were not quite so red and conspicuous.

He found a little gully, worn by frosts and rains, and thick with feathery ferns. He ascended by this route, trying to watch the grapes with one eye and the sleeping camp with the other.

When he gained the top of the rock-ridge at last, he found its surface flattish, deep-scored with crevices where scrubby weeds found footholds, and hot as a griddle. He did not want to present himself to view, in case there were anything hostile across the valley, so he crawled hastily along on hands and knees over the blistering rock, swearing as he went. He had nearly reached the rim of the rock, when a shadow fell across the ground before him. A squat shadow, for it was the hour of noon, a shadow with something between its hands. He had just drawn in his breath in a sharp gasp when the something was around his neck and being twisted. . .

*(To be concluded)*

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN MEOLA

CLINTON TRAVIS was a Texas pilot who would go anywhere and do anything.

I don't mean to imply that this quality is reserved exclusively for Texans, but I do know it was a vital part of the make-up of Clinton Travis and the all-Texas crew of his Liberator, No Calfrope.

Calfrope, Clinton Travis once explained to me, is a Texas expression one utters when he has been bested. It is the equivalent of surrender—"uncle," or "kamerad." No Calfrope simply means No Surrender.

You've often heard it said that anything can happen in this war, that truth out-fictions fiction every day—well, this story will substantiate that. No, you won't believe it. There are times when I can't believe it, either—times when I even doubt my own sanity, but I know there is nothing wrong with me. Nerves a bit on the ragged side, but that's all. This thing,

*The No Calfrope was a lame duck now and the Jerry fighters spotted us and came in... "Here's a little present for you," said Travis, handing me the Horn. "Take one for me now and then."*

# The Horn of Amalthea

By JESS ARNOLD

I know, is real. I know it, and Clinton Travis and his Texas crew knew it, but they are all dead. Now, only I know it.

I am writing this because I must put it down on paper. Perhaps when I see it all in black and white, it will take the shape of an old dream and gradually pass from my conscious mind. Then, and only then, will I be free of it.

I am writing this somewhere over the Atlantic. The purser of this C-47 has just told me we will land at Mitchel Field in four hours. That is enough time for me to put this story down.

OUR destroyer was lying about half a mile off the Cretan town of Hierapetra, and the evacuation had been going on all night. I was watching them bring the beaten Tommies, Australians and New Zealanders

aboard. I've seen a lot of war, but I'm not likely to forget that May night of 1941.

Some of the cases were horrible, but no man cried out. They were too exhausted to gasp out more than little whimpers, even in their great pain. They were what was left of the Empire's troops on Crete after the German parachutists had dropped from the skies.

It was two-thirty when I ran into the executive officer. I asked when we were going to shove off.

"At 0300 hours," he answered wearily. "We can't delay after that because their Stukas will be on us at the first sign of dawn. Bloody shame, that. Too many of our chaps back there on the island."

I left him and went below to the sick bay, stepping carefully over the exhausted men lying underfoot. I went over to one of the ship's doctors with the idea of offering a hand. It was then I saw him. He must have come in right behind me.

"Say, Doc," he said, as casually as if he were asking for a match, "how about jerking my shoulder back in place?"

I turned around. He was physically the hardest-looking man I've ever seen. Not more than six feet, but hard—hard without an ounce of fat. He had lank black hair that hung down over one eye, framing a face tanned the color of dark brown saddle leather.

But it was his eyes that hypnotized me. They were a quiet pine-smoke bluish gray.

"Sit down, please," the Royal Navy medico told him. As the doctor went to work on his shoulder I noticed he wore torn RAF khakis. The wide stripe on his shoulder straps told me he was a flying officer.

"How did it happen?" the doctor asked.

"They shot me down," he said easily. He grunted as the doctor snapped the shoulder in place and then continued. "Flying a Beaufighter and a pack of Heinkels turned me ever' way but loose. Would have left her, but my gunner was wounded so I had to ride her down. The crash finished him off. Been walking since yesterday mornin'. Pretty beat down." He closed his eyes, and his great shaggy head fell on his chest. He was asleep almost instantly.

It was then I saw it, tied with a rope and swung over his shoulders. It reminded me of a powder horn, the kind you see in the paintings of American Revolutionary War heroes. This was in the days of Too Little and Too Late, and that horn seemed damned symbolic.

I left him sleeping and went to the cabin I was sharing with the executive officer. I would ask the tough flying officer about the horn in the morning. My last thought before falling asleep was that perhaps the Cretan natives were fighting with old muzzle loaders, and he had got the horn from one of them. It would make a good story.

I slept until ten o'clock, Stukas be damned. If they did hit us, there wasn't anything I could do about it, and sleep was far more important. The exec came in with a pot of tea as I was brushing my teeth. He shared the tea as well as some stale rolls with me.

When the exec left I brought out a bottle of Scotch I'd been hoarding and had a small drink. Then I went hunting for the man with the horn.

I found him still sleeping in the same chair. I placed my hand on the shoulder that hadn't been dislocated and shook him gently. He stirred and his eyes opened slowly. The night before his eyes had been more gray than blue but this morning blue predominated. He was suddenly wide awake, all senses alert. In a flash he realized where he was and smiled.

"How long I been asleep?"

"Almost eight hours."

"Well, that's enough for any man," was his laconic reaction.

I held out my hand. "I'm Joe McGregor—correspondent. Mac to you."

He took my hand, gripping it evenly. I felt the strength and knew he could have crushed it had he wished.

"I've read your stuff. Clinton Travis. Clint to you."

"What part of the States are you from?"

"I came out of Texas in the beginning," he said, laughing.

"Let's go up to exec's quarters and maybe we can find you something to eat," I suggested, and then found myself adding, "I think I might scrape up a drink, too." I don't know what prompted me to offer an almost perfect stranger a drink of my scanty supply of Scotch, but this Clinton Travis affected you like that. His personality was as powerful as his physical strength. It was so great that I had forgotten all about the horn, which, I noticed, was still slung over his shoulder.

WHEN we reached the cabin I said, "What do you want first, the drink or food?"

"The drink, naturally," he answered, without any trace of a smile.

"Boy, you *did* come out of Texas." He laughed at that and was still laughing when I brought out the Scotch and a couple of glasses.

"Pour your own," I said, making a mistake, for he filled three-quarters of the glass with whiskey. I mumbled something about there being no soda.

"Oh, that's all right," he said evenly. "Branch water would be O.K., but I guess I can get along on the kind the Royal Navy uses." And he did—filling the glass to the brim from the water tap.

Noticing my empty glass he asked, "You not drinking?"

"Oh, yes," I said, and poured a fairly stiff one, thinking I might as well get a share of my liquor while there was still some to be had.

"Well, here's to a quiet run to Alexandria," he said, gulping down a third of the drink. "Good stuff, Mac. You know the height of my ambition is to marry a woman who has a controlling interest in a Scotch whiskey distillery."

I laughed and forgave him for pouring himself such a hefty drink.

"Where did you learn to fly, Clint?" I asked after he had reduced his drink to within an inch of the bottom.

"U. S. Army Air Corps back in the early thirties." And then it came out. He had been a first lieutenant when the Spanish Civil War broke and had resigned his commission to fly with the Loyalists; had flown right up to the bitter end, had been jailed by the Fascists and barely managed to escape with his life. He wound up in Paris, had liked it so well he remained there and had thoroughly enjoyed himself until the Germans came in 1940.

"Made me pretty damn mad, the Krauts bustin' up my playhouse like that, so I went to London and the next thing I knew I was being checked out on a Spitfire. I really put in a lot of time that summer and fall. After that session I figure anything that can happen to me will be pretty anti-climactic."

"How long were you in Greece?"

"A little less than two weeks. I was with a Spit squadron, but when the order came through to evacuate we didn't have any aircraft fit to fly. I found me a Beaufighter that nobody claimed and was all set to take off when an LAC came running up and said he was a gunner. He wasn't much of a gunner, though, 'cause when them Heinkels jumped us I might as well have been alone. They shot us up pretty bad, and I told the gunner to hit the silk, but he was too shot up, so I had to take her down. And don't let anybody tell you that Crete terrain ain't rugged. I tore a wing off and nosed over. That was the last thing I remember, the concussion must've knocked me out. When I came to I crawled out of the ship, and there wasn't a mark on me. I've rolled over a few cars in my time and been knocked out without a scratch and that's just the way this was. The gunner was dead."

He paused and I stole a glance at the bottle of whiskey. There were about two drinks left, but still a drink short of a Clinton Travis drink. I divided it between us, and he tossed his down and began caressing the horn.

"Where did you get the horn?"

He looked up at me from under his forelock of hair and said, "Mac, if I told you, you'd probably think I was off my nut. I'm not sure myself whether I dreamed it or it really happened."

He settled his big frame in the chair and fixed me with his hypnotic eyes. Then he stared out into space and started talking.

"Well, after I left the ship and started walking I was kinda groggy. I must have walked for three hours, scrambling over all those rocks and hills and never a sign of a human being. Once, I saw a herd of goats and that was all. Finally, I just couldn't go any further. My shoulder was giving me hell and I was as tired as a man can get. I lay down and soon was asleep."

He stopped and looked at me sharply. "Mac, this is what I saw when I opened my eyes. The most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life was standing there looking down at me. Her hair hung to her waist, and it was the color of corn silk at the roastin' ear stage. She had on a white dress, only it wasn't a dress. It was some soft, white material wrapped around her. Her face was milky white and she had lovely big brown eyes, eyes so cool and serene that it was restful just to look at them—like driving through a pine forest at the end of a hot summer day. For a second I thought I had died and actually gone to heaven. But when I looked around I knew I was still on Crete. And when I looked at her again I saw this horn in her hand. Then she spoke, and I've never heard any music like her voice, before or since.

" 'Warrior,' she said, 'you had better go quickly. Your enemies and my enemies are dropping from the sky.'

" 'Yes, ma'am,' I mumbled, 'but which way? I'm lost.'

"She smiled at that, the softest, quietest, loveliest smile I ever saw on a woman.

" 'No, Warrior,' she said, 'you are not lost. You will go into many battles many times and do many great deeds before you are lost.'

" 'Which way must I go?' I asked.

" 'Go in that direction,' she said, pointing, 'and there you will find a vessel waiting to take you far away.'

" 'Thanks, lady,' I said. 'I'm very much obliged. I guess I'll be shoving off.'

"I started to walk in the direction she had indicated, when she stopped me.

" 'A moment, Warrior. There is something I would give you.'

"She put the horn in my hand, saying, 'Take this with you. It will sustain you during the many trying days before you.'

" 'What is it?' I asked.

" 'With this horn in your possession you can never know thirst or hunger. It has the power to become filled with whatever its possessor desires. The Horn of Amalthea has been in the possession of my family for many years, but now it belongs to you—you, Warrior. You will have great need for it.' "

Well, I've heard a lot of tales from Texans, but this one topped them all. This Clinton

Travis, I decided, was either leading up to the punch line of a good joke or else he was completely insane. I held myself in check and waited for him to go on. He did.

"I know what you're thinking," he said. "Maybe I *am* crazy, but I don't feel changed if I am. All I know is that I walked off in the direction she'd indicated. When I'd gone about fifty yards I looked back, but she was gone."

"What happened then?" I had made up my mind to humor him along.

"Nothing. I almost ran into three German patrols, but somehow I got through and found myself in Hierapetra where I caught the last tender out to this destroyer."

"THAT'S quite a story," I volunteered.

"You don't believe it, do you, Mac? I know it sounds impossible, but that's the way it happened."

"Yes, Clint, I believe you." And I did. "I believe you really think it happened that way, but it didn't. You evidently got a terrific clout somewhere when you crash-landed, and you simply aren't clear on how you did get to Hierapetra."

"All right," he sighed, "have it your way. I know it happened the way I said it did, but I don't expect anyone to believe me."

I laughed. "O.K., Clint. By the way, if what you say is true, do you know what that thing is supposed to be?"

"Hell, no."

"That, my boy, is a cornucopia. The Horn of Amalthea is just one version of it. According to mythology, when the god Jupiter was a baby, his mother, Rhea, committed him to the care of two daughters of Melisseus, who was a Cretan king. The daughters fed him on milk from a goat named Amalthea. One day, Jupiter, in appreciation of the care the girls had given him, broke off one of Amalthea's horns and gave it to them. Jupiter endowed it with the power of being filled with whatever its possessor wished."

"Yeah," he grinned sheepishly. "I guess that dame was loco, but Mac, even if I did dream or fancy it, that was one good-looking woman. I ought to have stayed with her."

He began fingering the horn again. It was fifteen inches long—as I found out later when I measured it—and curved slightly at the point. "Big horn for a goat," he commented.

"It *is* an unusual horn," I said.

"Well, anyway, Mac, I wished it was full of Scotch whiskey."

I got up and walked over to the desk holding my portable typewriter. "Think I'll do a short color story," I said. He didn't answer, and I turned to look at him. He had gone deathly pale underneath his saddle-leather colored face, and his eyes were wide and staring. It was then I noticed the liquid sloshing from the horn down to his shaking hands.

"Mac," he croaked, "Look!" I was at his side in one bound. Something that smelled like Scotch was dribbling onto his trousers. For a brief instant I thought I had gone stark,

raving mad, but then I quickly saw through it and began to laugh.

"Clint," I said, when I had caught my breath, "that is beyond a doubt the biggest and the best build-up I ever heard for a magician's trick. Let's have a drink of it. That is, if it's the real thing."

He was still shaking. "Take this damn thing," he shouted. I took it from his palsied hands.

*"When I came to, the most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life was standing there looking down at me. She put this horn in my hand, saying, 'Take this with you. It will sustain you during the trying days before you.'"*

"That ain't no trick!" he snapped.

My answer was prolonged laughter.

"Damn it all, man, I tell you that wasn't any trick!" I laughed again but not so long this time.

"Not only are you the best magician I've ever encountered, but you're one hell of an actor," I said.

His eyes held nothing but contempt as he shouted, "You damn fool, that thing is real, and I'll prove it. What do you want to eat?"

"You mean you have a nice, thick, juicy steak hidden on you? Make a steak appear, O Texas Merlin."

He snatched the horn from my hand and poured the remaining whiskey into the empty bottle. "Rare, medium or well-done?" he growled.

"Rare."

No sooner had I got the words out when he echoed, "A rare steak."

The steak was in the horn quicker than I could bat my eyes!

The fellow was absolutely incredible. He should have been on the stage instead of flying airplanes.

"Now, do you believe in the power of the horn?" he said intently.

"Oh, come off it, Clint. I'm properly impressed. Tell me how you do it."

"Is there anything I can make appear in this that will convince you it's the real McCoy?"

I thought it over a few seconds. "Yes, there is one thing. If you can produce that I will say you're the greatest magician who ever lived. Conjure up a horn full of the special kind of beer I used to get on the second floor of the Hofbrau House in Munich." I had him there. He certainly wouldn't know of that type of beer and, while he probably had some beer hidden on him, he certainly wouldn't have that particular brew.

He removed the steak and handed it to me. Then he said, "The kind of beer Mac used to drink on the second floor of the Hofbrau House in Munich."

Oh, the beer appeared all right. "Let me taste it, and I'll know if it's the real thing," I said.

He gave me the horn, and I tasted it. There was no mistaking the body. It was that beer without a doubt.

"Clint, you've got the greatest routine I've ever seen. How the devil do you do it? Do you—"

I stopped right there, and the horn fell from my hand, but Travis caught it before it hit the deck. I fell back in my chair and broke out in a cold sweat. I sat there staring at him and the horn in his hand for what must have been five minutes. I tried every rationalization process I ever knew, but the answer was always the same. Maybe I had war nerves.

Maybe I was completely mad. Maybe this was a nightmare, and I would soon wake up. I finally found some words.

"It's real—it's the Horn of Amalthea."

"Told you so, didn't I?"

"I'm going to get drunk," I announced.

"Sure." He smiled for the first time since I had announced my original doubts. "There won't be any trouble along that line. What do you want to start with?"

"A Manhattan," I found myself saying.

"Two Manhattans," he commanded, and there they were.

After we had finished the Manhattans, Travis said, "Those are fine for a base, but we had better stick to something throughout. What do you suggest?"

"I know a rare Scotch called Duroch. How about that?"

"Duroch it is. Let there be a horn full of Duroch."

We were well into our first horn of Duroch when I said, "I don't understand it," for at least the fiftieth time.

"Neither do I," Travis said, "but that isn't important. The important thing is that it has happened, and we should accept it without trying to figure it out. I don't believe in cluttering up my brain with the why of everything that comes along."

Such was the philosophy of Clinton Travis. I remember we started on the second horn of Duroch, but I don't remember much after that because I passed out.

I DON'T know how long I was asleep, but all hell was breaking loose when I awoke. I got on my feet just as Travis came bounding into the cabin. "Stukas," he yelled. "Better put on a life jacket."

*"Mac, look!" croaked Clint, his eyes wide and staring. Something that smelled like Scotch was sloshing from the horn onto his trousers.*

"O.K.," I said, "but I'm sticking close to you and the Horn." I will henceforth refer to the Horn with a capital H.

Travis took off for the sick bay with me at his heels. If the Germans sank that destroyer and Travis and the Horn went into the Mediterranean, I intended to be right behind him.

The sick bay was already crowded with wounded when we got there, and the ones who could still talk were begging for water. Travis had the Horn out and was going among them, giving them all the water they could drink. As fast as one would drain the Horn, Travis would cause it to fill again. A Navy lieutenant noticed him and started following him around.

"Doesn't that ruddy thing ever go dry?" the lieutenant wanted to know.

"No, sport," Travis said. "Look." And he turned it upside down and let gallon after gallon of water run out on the deck. The lieutenant stood gaping and then gently collapsed. He knew his overstrained nerves had at last played him false.

The medical man started calling for plasma, but there wasn't any.

"I've tried and tried to get the Horn to produce plasma," Travis said sadly, "but it just won't do that. Only food and drink."

When the Stukas finally left, Travis went above, and I dogged his heels. Everything was a shambles topside.

"We're still afloat anyway," Travis said. "Let's go have a drink of Duroch."

"Swell," I said, and led the way to the exec's quarters.

After Travis had produced a Horn of Duroch and we were drinking, I sipping and Travis constantly replenishing his glass, he said, "When you passed out, Mac, I went to the galley and tried to make the Horn produce meat, fruits and vegetables, but the damn thing wouldn't work. At first I thought it had lost its power, but then I wished for a drink for myself, and there it was. After that I wished for a drink for you and it appeared. But when I wished one for the captain and the exec, it wouldn't work. I got to thinking, and I believe I know what it is. The Horn will only work for me and those people who are close to me."

"What about all the water it produced for the wounded?" I said.

"Well, there you are. I could see those people suffering and was close to them at that moment. That's why the water came."

That night Travis tried again for plasma and supplies for the ship's complement and evacuees. They were definitely on short rations, but the Horn remained empty. We went back to the cabin and started drinking Duroch.

We crawled into Alexandria three days later without any more air attacks or alarms. Travis and I had spent all our time drinking Duroch and eating steak, and I was feeling pretty seedy when we went ashore. Travis, on the contrary, was as chipper as ever and kept on drinking Duroch from the Horn as we taxied to the hotel.

"I'll go up with you for a while," he said when we reached the hotel, "and then I'll find out where to report."

The first thing we did was to order two regular hotel dinners sent up in order to use the silver and china. When the food came we threw it out and Travis started producing our own food. We started with two Manhattans each. Then we had turtle soup, omelette, thick steaks, fresh string beans, baked potatoes, celery, ripe olives, crepe suzettes, Roquefort, coffee and the best Benedictine the Horn could create.

One of the most amazing things about the Horn was that there was no taste of the previous food or drink. You could make roast beef appear right after oysters and there would be no lingering taste of the oysters.

We got a delightful kick out of the crepe suzettes when we braised them with Napoleon brandy. Never have I seen bluer flame.

Travis, for once, didn't gulp down his Benedictine but sipped it like a normal man. When he finished he got up saying, "Guess I'd better find out what the RAF is going to do with me. I'll come back and sleep here tonight. Want anything before I go?"

"Yes, you'd better leave a couple of Horns of Duroch."

He quickly filled two empty decanters from the Horn and left.

I wrote a pretty long think piece before I had a drink. One of the decanters was empty before it occurred to me that I hadn't filed the story. I picked up the telephone to call a bellboy when everything suddenly went black, and I felt myself falling.

That was the last I remember until I awoke in the hospital.

The first person I saw upon coming to was Harry Selfridge from our Alexandria office. He was sitting by the bed.

"How do you feel, Mac?"

"Lousy," I said. "What the hell happened?"

"The doctors here say nervous exhaustion. You must have had a hell of a time on that destroyer, what with the dive bombings and everything."

"There's nothing the matter with me. How long have I been out?"

"Two days. The docs say you had an enormous amount of alcohol in your system."

"Hell, I was drinking good whiskey. Say, has there been an RAF flying officer named Clinton Travis looking for me?"

"Not that I know of," Selfridge said.

"Well, he was on the destroyer with me, and I'd like to see him."

"On the destroyer with you?" Selfridge exclaimed. "I checked the lists very carefully, and there weren't any RAF personnel on board."

"He came aboard at Hierapetra," I snapped. "They probably didn't have his name down."

"The captain assured me that a record was kept of all evacuees."

"You go see the RAF people and find out where Flying Officer Clinton Travis is."

"All right," he said, getting up to go and giving me a what-a-shame-poor-old-Mac-drinks-so-much look.

I dozed off and when I awakened Selfridge was standing beside my bed looking triumphant.

"Just as I thought," he began with undisguised elation. "The RAF says they have no Flying Officer Clinton Travis and certainly had no one by that name on board your destroyer."

"The hell you say! I know damn well Clint Travis was on that ship."

I DIDN'T sleep well that night. I felt awful the next morning, but left the hospital and went straight to my hotel. I found the manager and we went up to the room I'd occupied. Everything was there—my clothes, my typewriter, everything—with the exception of the decanter of Duroch. It was empty. One of them should have been empty but not both.

"I'm quite certain one of those decanters was full of whiskey," I said to the manager.

"You must be mistaken, sir," he said politely but firmly. "Our glassware is cleaned daily and had there been any whiskey in the decanter it most certainly would not have been touched."

"O.K." I said, and picked up both decanters and sniffed them. There wasn't any odor of whiskey. "Sorry." He went out with the hurt air of an innocent accused of a heinous crime.

I got on the telephone and started calling all over Alexandria. There was one man who would remember Clinton Travis, and that was the executive officer. He knew Travis and I had been together constantly, although we had never let him in on the secret of the Horn. I had, however, given him several drinks, letting him believe it was from the supply I had brought aboard. It took half a dozen phone calls to track him down.

"Do you remember Travis, the flying officer?" I blurted.

"Who?"

"Flying Officer Travis, who came back from Crete with me."

"Wait a minute, laddie. Start over—"

"You know damn well whom I mean. Travis, the American in the RAF, the man I spent so much time with."

"Sorry, old man, we had no RAF personnel on board. You spent most of your time in my cabin alone. I didn't see you becoming friendly with anyone."

"All right, if that's the way you want to play—all right." I hung up on him. I was suffering from equal parts of anger, fear and illness.

I went downstairs to the bar. I needed a drink badly.

"Hello, the war correspondent," the voice said.

I spun around from the bar. It was the lieutenant who had fainted when Travis started pouring water out of the Horn in the sick bay. I took a grip on my nerves.

"Hello," I said. "I say, Lieutenant, do you remember the RAF fellow who had the trick horn that never seemed to run out of water?"

"I'm afraid not," was his straight-faced reply.

"But you saw him doing his trick in the sick bay during the Stuka attack," I protested.

"Can't say I did or didn't, old boy. I got a nasty clout on the head at the beginning of the show and can't recall a single incident thereafter. They say I passed out in the sick bay."

His boyish face was guileless. "O.K., thanks," I said, resignedly, and went back to my room.

I went on the wagon and stayed on it for three months—which is quite a while for me. From Alexandria I went to London and then back to New York. I'm not as young as I once was, and I had been batting around Europe long enough. So I did something I'd been planning to do for years. I took leave of absence—in reality, a long vacation. I went to California and loafed and swam and wrote a book. It sold surprisingly well and put me in the military experts bracket. After the book came out I wrote magazine pieces on the reputation I'd made from the book.

But I could stand it only so long. I had been away from the wars almost three years, and May, 1944 found me back at my Chronicle House diggings in Fleet Street. It was a different London from what I had left. Invasion was in the air, but this time it would be the Allies who would do the invading.

It had been so long since I'd had my bout with the DT's and the strange vision of a man called Clinton Travis and his magic Horn that I could tell my friends about it and get my quota of laughs.

"That's the nicest DT story I ever heard," they would say. "Everybody I knew who had them always saw snakes and fancy animals, but you had all you wanted to drink."

And some would say, "Yeah, Mac, you don't even have conventional delirium tremens. You have to have them with fancy trimmings."

June had come to England and the invasion pitch was mounting higher. I had just got off another of my think pieces when my secretary came in from the outer office with a note.

"There is an American major outside who asked that you be given this," she said, handing me the note.

I opened it and read: *How is your thirst?* It was signed, *Clinton Travis.*

My hands started shaking, causing the note to crackle. Perspiration popped out on me, and I could feel the blood draining from my face.

The secretary noticed it and said anxiously, "Are you ill, Mr. McGregor?"

"No," I croaked. "What does this major look like?"

"Oh," she caroled, "he's really quite handsome. Black hair, beautiful blue eyes and so strong looking. Quite like a cinema star."

"Send him in," I mumbled.

THE door opened and he swept in. Oh, it was him all right. And he had *it* with him. Yes, the Horn! He carried it in a soft leather case, fitted firmly to the outline of the Horn, with a thin silver chain attached. It was slung over his shoulder.

Neither of us spoke for a long time. He was smiling. The same, reckless, hell-for-leather Clinton Travis smile.

"Still like Duroch Scotch?" he finally said.

I found my voice. "Get out! Damn you, get out! Get out and never come back. I haven't been drinking, and there's no reason I should have another attack like the last one." I was incoherent and my voice trailed off in sobs. My head sunk forward on the desk.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked up.

"What's the matter, Mac?" he asked, puzzled. "I don't understand."

My voice came back. "You aren't real. You don't exist. You never did. I will ignore you even though you follow me everywhere. You're nothing but a product of overwrought nerves."

"O.K., Mac, I'll go if that's the way you want it," he said, hurt. "I just thought you might like a drink in memory of our destroyer ride from Crete." He turned and started out.

"No, wait, Clint!" I shouted. I was becoming rational again. "Sit down. There are some things I must get straight." He came back and sat down.

I poured out the whole story of what had happened to me in Alexandria and how no one remembered him. Before I had finished he was laughing and slapping his thighs.

"No wonder you thought you had the DT's," he boomed. "It's all very simple. You see, when I reported, the RAF hustled me out that night for London, where I made a full report to the Air Ministry. I went back to the hotel to say good-by, but you weren't there. You had evidently collapsed and been taken to the hospital. Your room was unlocked, so I went in and waited a while. I drank the decanter of Duroch while waiting for you and a lot more. I was feeling pretty good and forgot all about leaving a note. I barely remember getting aboard a plane for London. As for that Navy Lieutenant not remembering me, well, he probably did get hit on the head—just as he says—and didn't remember me."

It was perfectly logical except for the RAF denying his presence on the destroyer. I asked him about that.

"They wanted to keep it quiet," he explained. "I had come out of Greece with some pretty hot information—hot at that time—and the RAF didn't want it spread around. Typical military hush-hush, which usually doesn't amount to a damn anyway."

"I'm sorry I blew my top, Clint. I was a pretty sick lad in Alexandria, and you can easily see why I thought it was all a dream."

The Horn didn't show any signs of wear. He raised an eyebrow and said, "Duroch?" I nodded, and he passed the Horn over. It was filled to the brim with Duroch. I inhaled the fragrant, smoky flavor and then gave it back to him to hold while I brought out glasses.

After we had a drink, I asked, "How long have you been with the Americans?"

"Since July of '42. Our base isn't far from here."

"You're flying bombers?"

"Yep. Got a B-24 named No Calfrope. Already put in fifty missions."

It was then he told me what Calfrope meant.

"And what's more," he added, "I've got the best crew any man ever had. The boys are all over at the Savoy whipping up a party. We've got three days off."

"I'd like to meet them."

"Certainly. We'll go over in a little while and you can meet them. They're all Texans. The wildest crew any pilot ever had, but the best. Definitely, the best." This last was added with obvious pride.

"I'd like nothing better," I said, sipping the fine Duroch.

"By the way," he said suddenly, "why don't you come out and spend a few days with us and go on operations with us?"

"That's a deal." I'd had several chances to go on raids before, but I hadn't been particularly keen about it. With Clinton Travis it was different. You would walk into the jaws of hell itself if he was around.

"Swell," he said. "I'll call up and get it O.K.'d." He fished in his blouse and came out with a battered address book. Finding the number, he grabbed the telephone.

When he got his connection, he said, "Tell the general that Clint Travis is calling. No, that's all right. Just tell him Clint Travis is calling." He looked up and told me the name of the general.

"Whew," I breathed. I can't tell you the name of the general because it might embarrass him to see his name in print as a result of what Travis told him. He was plenty ranking, I can tell you that.

When the general got on the phone, Travis opened up with both barrels. It had something to do with fighter protection and was too technical for me to follow. The fighters were doing

*Everybody was eating and drinking as if this were his last day on earth. I have never seen a greater concentration of food and drink.*

something all wrong, and Travis was telling the general just what was wrong in anything but soft language.

When he had finished his harangue his tone changed and he inquired about the general's health. He eventually got around to me. It went something like this: "Say, you old reprobate, how about fixing it up for Joe McGregor, the war correspondent, to come out to my outfit? He's an old friend and I want to show him Europe. Yeah, sure . . . You will? That'll be fine . . . Oh, you liked that whiskey? Glad to hear it . . . Sure, I know where I can get some more . . . No, that's all right, Sport. It don't cost me a thing. I'll send you some right away. Don't mention it . . . When you coming out and fly with me again? . . . My crew ain't got respect for rank? Well, that's a fine thing. Them's Texans. What do you expect? They ain't got no respect for anything . . . You were just kidding? Sure, I knew you were. Well, so long, boy. I'll send the whiskey over right away. So long."

He hung up and turned to me. "Know where I can get some bottles? The general likes rye,


*"Promised the boys a party," Clint told me. "It's the most strenuous workout the Horn has ever had. May have to give her a rest."*

and I've got to make him up a batch. Like to get some with fancy labels so's to make it look good."

"I've got some over at my flat. Let's go there and I'll have some Duroch while you're bottling the general's whiskey."

"Good deal," he said. "Let's go."



OUT on Fleet Street we found a cab and taxied to my flat. I found a half dozen bottles and Travis got to work transferring rye from the Horn into them. He had his overcoat off, and I noticed that his blouse was bare of any decorations.

"You have a number of decorations, haven't you?" I asked.

"Sure, but I don't believe in wearing them."

"What do you have?"

"Oh, Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Presidential Citation, British and American DFC's, Air Medal and a passel of clusters, the various theater ribbons and then some unit and group citations."

"And you never wear them?"

"Oh, on occasions, such as going out with a woman who might be impressed by them. Sometimes you can make very good progress with a gal by virtue of these nice little old ribbons."

"You've never been married, Clint?"

"Nope, never saw any need to. Always had plenty of women. The best ones were in Paris. Had the best time of my life there before the damned Krauts came in. Yessir, Paris was the town!"

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-four and no regrets."

"What are you going to do after the war?"

"Nothing."

"What do you mean, nothing?"

"Just that—nothing. I'd like to go back and see Texas once more, then go back to Paris and live out my life. But I know I won't do either."

"You can if you want to."

"No, Mac, it's like this. I'm long overdue. I flew a Spit through the Battle of Britain, and when I found myself alive after that session with the Luftwaffe I knew I was living strictly on borrowed time. What amazes me is that I haven't got it before now. No, Mac, I won't be going home."

He said this as matter-of-factly as if he had announced he was going to give me a drink. There was neither sadness, bitterness, fear nor regret in his voice. It was just Clinton Travis saying he was going to die in this war and that it didn't make a great deal of difference to him.

"I've gone everywhere and done a little bit of everything," he went on, "and there isn't much left that I care about doing. I've had a pretty full life and no man could ask for anything more. In other words, Mac, the world hasn't worn me out—I've worn out the world."

*I've worn out the world.*

If anyone else had told me that I would have smiled wryly and known they were only trying to kid themselves, would have known that the world had beaten them. But not Clinton Travis, because Clinton Travis had beaten the world.

Travis had finished bottling the rye. "Well, that's that," he announced. "Suppose we run over to the Savoy and see if the boys have killed anybody?"

I wasn't prepared for what greeted me when we entered his suite. Of course, the crew of the No Calfrope was there, but that wasn't all. Every type of uniform in the United Nations was represented in that group—British Army, RAF, Royal Navy, Free French, Canadians, American branches, Polish, Dutch, Chinese, South American attachés, Norwegian, Belgian and some others I couldn't label.

And the women. They were as varied as the uniforms. They were all shapes and sizes—tall, willowy blondes, dark, creamy-skinned Latins, brunettes, redheads, short women, fat women, lovely women, beautiful women, pert women, languid women and, yes, even an Ethiopian who had tagged along with a member of the Ethiopian legation.

Everybody was eating and drinking as if this were his last day on earth. I have never seen a greater concentration of food. To give you a breakdown would take pages and pages. I shan't even try.

I looked weakly at Travis. "Where did they all come from?"

"Oh, the boys just went out and rounded them up. Promised them a party the likes of which they'd never seen. The boys carried along a few bottles of Scotch and some thick steaks to convince the skeptics. You've heard of the international language of food and drink."

"It's like something out of the *Arabian Nights*," I murmured.

"We worked for two hours this morning preparing all this. It's the best and the most strenuous workout the Horn has ever had. I may have to rest her a few days after this."

Just then, Travis' crew spied him. One of them, wearing soiled pinks, mounted a table and began intoning, "Ladies and gentlemen . . ."

Travis said aside to me, "That's my bombardier, Judge Corbett. Used to be a lawyer in Austin."

The Judge had succeeded in getting a momentary silence and continued, "Ladies and gentlemen, I give you your benefactor and mine, Major Clinton Travis, pilot of the No Calfrope."

Everyone had turned in our direction. There was absolute silence following the Judge's words. Then this gave way to deafening applause, and people began swarming over Travis, pumping his hand and beating him on the back. The Chinese were bowing, the French were kissing him, and the South Americans were crushing him with bear hugs. The non-English-speaking contingent thanked him with their eyes. A half dozen or so of the women were trying to kiss his feet. The Englishmen had a strange fanatical light in their eyes and could only mutter, "I say, old boy . . ." Then they became tongue-tied.

TRAVIS eventually fought his way clear, but then a hard-bitten little character, wearing high-heeled Texas boots, came over.

"Clint, I want me an earless," he cried.

"You want a what?"

"An earless, Clint. You know, one of them women who is married to a lord."

"Oh, a lady. Do you have any lined up?"

"No," he groaned. "I don't know any, but I thought you might."

"O.K., let me get to the phone," Travis said. "By the way, Mac, this is our right waist gunner, Whitey Blankenship from El Paso. Used to punch cows."

"Howdy," the character said. He didn't seem to be drunk.

Travis began sending out SOS's for a lord's wife. He had to call this high-ranking general again before he found one, but find her he did. The lord's "lady" turned out to be sixty-ish, but Whitey didn't care. She was fascinated by his boots, and they got along famously.

Travis was up to his ears in women. There was undisguised adoration in their eyes, and they were almost clawing and pulling hair to see who would bring him drinks. The lawyer they called Judge finally rescued him and dragged him into one of the bedrooms. I followed, just making it as the Judge bolted the door. Travis introduced us.

The Judge, a drawling, stoop-shouldered individual, had a petulant expression.

"I'm out of rye," he said to Travis.

"We'll fix that," said Travis, and unsheathed the Horn. The Horn filled with rye, and he passed it to the Judge who poured a glass full. He drank deeply and noisily, chasing the rye sparingly with water.

"How did you acquire a taste for rye, Judge?" I asked.

"From my maternal grandfather, suh. Finest drinking man the State of Texas evah produced. Died at the age of ninety-fo' after a bout with pneumonia. The doctors wouldn't give him any rye, and he said he'd be damned if he'd eat in that case. And, suh, he didn't. Didn't eat a bite and was dead in a week."

"I imagine you're anxious to get back to your law practice?" I said.

Travis broke in. "Hell, yes. He'll be busy the rest of his life keeping the crew of the No Calfrope out of jail. When these boys get back home Texas will see more excitement than in the days of the Alamo."

We all laughed, and the Judge took another drink with water buffalo sound effects.

The Judge asked me if I had ever been to Austin. I said, "No," and he gave me that look of pity, the trade look of all Texans when you tell them you haven't seen their part of the state, be it an oil-field town or the vast stretches of the Panhandle.

The Judge had started to sing the praises of Austin when someone began pounding on the door, almost unhinging it. Travis opened it, and a young, thin-faced man, whom I later learned was Bugs Hammer, the radio operator, lurched in.

"Clint," he moaned, "I can't see her. I can't remember what she looks like." His eyes filled with tears, and he grabbed Travis by the shoulders, imploring, "Clint, for God's sake, help me. You can do it."

"Take it easy, Bugs," Travis soothed. "Sure, I'll help you, boy. Anything you say, but tell me what it is."

"My wife, Clint," it came out. "I can't remember what she looks like."

"Oh, but I didn't think you cared. I thought you said she left you because you ran your ham set all night."

"She did leave me because I radioed at night," cried the sorrowful Bugs.

"Wouldn't hold up in a co't of law," interrupted the Judge in the somber tones of the bench.

"At ease, Judge," Travis silenced him. "Go on, Bugs."

"I still love her, and I can't remember what she looks like. Clint, you've got to make her appear out of the Horn."

"But Bugs," Travis said softly, "you know the Horn doesn't have that kind of power. What do you expect out of an old goat horn, anyway?"

"I want my wife," Bugs sobbed.

"Listen, Bugs," and Travis' voice was as smooth as velvet, "tell you what we'll do. After the war we'll go to Paris where I know some of the most beautiful, broad-minded women in the world. They don't care if you radio all night long, and they'll love you always and be loyal. I promise you, Bugs."

Bugs' eyes had begun to light up, and the tears were fading fast. "Dad-blame, you mean it, Clint?"

"Sure do, fellow. I really know some gals there."

"That's the place for me, then," Bugs announced and staggered out of the room.

Travis' face was creased in a frown. "Judge, tell Les to come in here." The Judge got up without a word and went out.

"Les Small, our co-pilot," Travis explained. Then, "Mac, that's got me worried. I thought Bugs was over that, and I think he is, but the whiskey brought it out. I've got to get him straightened out. It's the little things that sometimes cause a man to foul things up, and we can't have that on the No Calfrope."

LES Small suddenly appeared. He was a handsome, clean-cut kid, with a nice smile that exposed his toothpaste-ad teeth. He looked as level-headed as they come.

When we shook hands, I felt as if I had already known him for a long time.

"Les," Travis said, "I hate to break in on your fun, but I want you to coax some food down Bugs. After that, take him to see that blonde in Knightsbridge."

Under the circumstances I might have expected Les to protest, but he only smiled and said, "O.K., Clint, I guess you're right."

The Judge re-entered and started to talk about the "green hills of Austin," but Travis sent him out again to round up the crew.

"Might as well meet the rest of them all at once," Travis told me.

The first one to come in was the left waist gunner. He was a tall tech sergeant. His figure seemed to bend in three places, and his tallness was accentuated by his very thinness.

"Mac, meet Slim Macon, from the East Texas piney woods."

"Pleased to meet you," Slim said, sticking out his hand.

"You sound kinda dry, Slim," Travis said. "Did the whiskey I left you run out."

"Sure did. Nothing but Scotch left, and I couldn't touch thet."

"Slim drinks nothing but East Texas corn," Travis explained, bringing out the Horn and causing it to fill with a white, pungent corn whiskey. Slim took the Horn from Travis and started drinking it straight. His large Adam's apple rose and fell with each draught. He returned the Horn to Travis, half empty.

"Want the rest of it?" Travis asked him.

"Not if you're here."

The next one to come in was a lean, redheaded first lieutenant.

"This is Sliderule McKay, Mac," Travis said, "the most infallible navigator in the AAF. Never smiles and never gives a wrong course."

Sliderule acknowledged the introduction without flicking a muscle. I thought he was the most dead-pan character I had ever met until Travis brought him to life.

"Pulled a few strings down at headquarters and come up with something you might be interested in, Sliderule." Travis delved into his pocket and came out with a beautiful chrome-plated computer.

Sliderule reached eager, clawlike hands for it, and his eyes lit up with a strange fire. He fondled it tenderly and smiled at Travis without saying a word. Travis smiled back and understood.

Two other crew members came in together. One was a handsome, well-built, Greek-looking man, about thirty-five years old. The other was a little dried-up fellow who couldn't have weighed much more than a drink of Duroch.

Of the handsome one Travis said, "Ginny Giannapoulos, from Galveston. Best damn flight engineer I ever saw. Can take an airplane apart and put it back together again at twenty thousand feet. He has only one fault, though, and that's sea food—all he cares about eating.

"And the runt here is 'Live and Let-Live' Johnson, the old professor. Teaches Spanish at Texas Christian University. The Live and Let-Live moniker comes from his tail guns because that's the name of his fifty-calibers."

"Clint!" a voice was thrown into the room, followed by a dark, good-looking kid. "I'd like to try one of them Maine lobsters Ginny is always talking about."

"And this," Travis said laughing, pointing to the newcomer, "rounds out the crew of the No Calfrope—Bucky Smith, who operates the ball turret."

Travis drew a rosy red lobster out of the Horn and gave it to Bucky.

"Hell," Ginny said, "that ain't as big as a real Maine lobster."

"Since when has the Horn produced anything that isn't real?" snapped Live and Let-Live Johnson. "That's as good as any Maine lobster you ever saw. The Horn isn't big enough to give out a lobster the size of a blockbuster."

They all laughed loudly and slapped their thighs.

"O.K., fellows," Travis said. "Just wanted you to meet Mac. You can go back and join the ladies."

After they had gone Travis said, "What do you think of them?"

"Well," I said, "I could make with the double talk and say they're quite a crew."

He smiled. "You can go anywhere with men like that. All individualists until they get in an airplane, and then they're the best team in the world."

"They worship you," I said, and I wasn't making with the double talk.

"That works both ways," he said quietly.

He seemed to be slightly embarrassed. It was the first time I'd ever seen him even faintly so.

"Shall we join the party?" he suggested then, with a twinkle on his fine eyes. "There's a redhead out there who looks pretty interesting."

"All right, but how about throwing some of those dames my way? You know, I'm not exactly the romantic type."

"O.K., Mac. If they won't play with you, out they go. Just take your pick."

HE OPENED the door and we stepped out into bedlam itself. I don't think I mentioned the drinks before, but the tables were groaning with every type of drink known to man in the long history of alcohol. Everyone was clustered in small groups, eating and drinking as if they thought it was all a wonderful dream which might end any second.

The Judge was up on a table reading from a collection of Robert Burns. He kept repeating over and over—although no one seemed to be paying any attention—"tell me whiskey's name in Greek, I'll tell the reason."

A British colonel, slightly the worse for wear, was pursuing a WAC who ran, dodging between knots of people, giggling in high-pitched, piercing gasps.

Bucky Smith came staggering up. "Never had so much fun since the time me and my old man brought in that gusher in the East Texas field," he declared. "If you're going to enjoy this party you'd better start drinking."

I took his advice, and the next thing I knew it was late in the afternoon. I spied Travis coming toward me. With him was a redhead, evidently the redhead he had mentioned earlier.

"She ducked out on us for a while, Mac," he said. "Just found her." The girl was gorgeous, like something in technicolor. Travis introduced me, but I never caught her name. "This is your girl. Treat her right."

"Huh?" I grunted. He was literally making me a present of a goddess. She gave me a straightforward smile with her lips and eyes, but her eyes lied. I didn't have to be a detective to know she would much rather remain with Travis, but that was Travis for you. Even the women would jump off a twenty-story building if he nodded his head.

I linked my arm in the goddess', and Travis walked away. The next time I saw him he was leading his crew in song. I remember one of them went something like this:

"Had a dream the other night,
Dreamed that I could fly,
Flapped my wings like a buzzard and flew up to the sky;
At the gate I met St. Peter who looked at me so neat,
He asked me in to dinner
And this is what we eat:

Turnip greens, turnip greens, good ole turnip greens,
Corn beef, and cabbage and good ole turnip greens.
Oh, boil limber, boil limber, boil that cabbage down."

I don't remember seeing Travis after that, but the redhead must have been around because I can remember her vaguely. I'm not really sure about anything. For a long time I thought I was on a train or else dreaming it, and then I awakened and found I *was* on a train. Travis was sitting beside me.

"What the hell goes on?" I croaked.

"Party broke up a day early. We got orders to come back. Something's cooking."

"I'm in no condition to visit your base," I said. "I've got to get back to London."

"Not this time, Mac. I've got an idea this may be it."

"What—" I started, and then it hit me. "D-Day?"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised."

There wasn't anything I could say. I sank back in my seat.

"Want a drink?" Travis asked.

"No." I meant it.

When we reached the base I went to bed and stayed there for twenty-four hours. I'm not exactly a kid and I couldn't take it like Travis and the boys.

I came out of it with a good case of the shakes. Travis was sitting by my cot. "Figured it's about time you were coming around," he commented.

"What day is it?" I moaned.

"Sunday, June the fourth." He handed me a drink of Duroch. "Wouldn't get started again if I were you. Tomorrow is the day."

I came instantly alive. "D-Day is tomorrow?"

"That's the deal right now. You better roll out of there. We've got a shower with hot water rigged up in a hut across the way."

With a violent physical effort I dragged myself to my feet, took a couple of straight shots of Duroch and dressed. After that, I went out with Travis to the shower hut. It was like stepping into a Turkish bath. I spent two hours in there and felt like a new man when I came out—weak but steady.

When I returned to Travis he said, "It's almost eleven o'clock. Think you could use a little breakfast?"

"I think so. You really treat your guests right around here."

"Nothing's too good for them," he laughed. "You wrap yourself around this, and then we'll go take a look at the No Calfrope."

I started to eat. "This isn't a regular Army breakfast, is it?"

"Oh, no, that's a Horn breakfast." Travis had coffee with me. I hadn't eaten a breakfast like that since I had left the States. I finished reluctantly, went outside and got in a jeep. Travis took the wheel and we started off.

A Liberator took off over our heads. Watching the landing gear retract, Travis said, "Notice how that gear folds up and out? It's a little obscene in a B-24—reminds you of a milk cow running."

"I'd never thought of it like that, but it does. A B-24 isn't a pretty airplane."

"All airplanes are beautiful things. Just depends on the way you look at it. A B-24 is like a woman. If you look at her from the right angle she's lovely. For instance, seeing those wheels retract is just like watching a woman when she wakes up—without any makeup. Watch a B-24 head-on, with wheels up, or high in the air and directly overhead, and you see her to the best advantage. That's like a woman after she's put her face on—not just any woman but a sleek, poised woman, a woman confident of her power."

"You're quite a poet, Clint. You ought to write a flying book, although no one would believe that all those things really happened to you."

"There are emotions in flying which no man can write about. You just feel them, and if you try to put them into words you find you can't do it. Some writers—good ones who know what they're talking about—have come close, but they never really get it. There's always the intangible something that throws them off."

I wanted to press him more on this, but he threw off the mood and began to point out the various airdrome installations. The camouflage wasn't as good as it had been when the Germans came over regularly because they no longer had to hide the dromes the way they did when the Luftwaffe was something to be reckoned with.

We pulled up beside a line of B-24's, and there she was. Lettering, three feet high, proclaimed her name to the world—NO CALFROPE.

THE ground crew was swarming over her, and lying under the left wing, with his head propped against a wheel, was Judge Corbett, reading a book. He got up and ambled toward us with the book in his hand.

"Welcome to the No Calfrope, suh," he shouted. When he reached the jeep I saw he was carrying the same volume of Burns he had been reading at the party.

"Let's go aboard," Travis said, getting out of the jeep. We swung under the open bomb bay and onto the catwalk, and Travis led me back into the waist where we found Whitey Blankenship and Slim Macon working over their guns. They looked up and said, "Hi," and went back to their guns, handling them with feminine tenderness.

We left Slim and Whitey with their guns and went up on the flight deck. Ginny Giannapoulous and Les Small were there.

"How's it going?" Travis asked.

"All right," they chorused. "Looks like we got Number Three back in the groove," Ginny said.

"Fine," Travis replied. "We'll run her up after lunch. Let's get something to eat."

Back in the jeep with Travis, I said, "Do you feed your crew from the Horn all the time?"

"Whenever possible. You see, we all live together and draw Army rations just to throw off any suspicion. Les is custodian of the Army rations, and he gives them to other outfits, spreading them out in small lots so as not to arouse any suspicion on that score, either."

"You mean no one at this field has ever suspected that you have more to eat than other personnel?"

"No. We always eat behind locked doors, and when we have guests we serve GI food, which still comes from the Horn, although our guests don't know it. They simply think we have a wonderful cook. We tell them all that Bugs Hammer does our cooking, when the truth of the matter is that Bugs can't even boil water."

"By the way," I said, "how did your crew react when you first sprang the Horn on them?"

"I spent a lot of time collecting my crew and had to weed out some of them. Then when I was absolutely sure of them, I showed them what the Horn would do. After the initial shock, they accepted it as being something quite normal." He smiled. "They're a damned unusual bunch."

Travis braked the jeep outside a low stone structure and we went inside. There was a row of GI cots at one end and a long table and chairs at the other. Everything was spotless.

"You can sleep here with us tonight," he said. "We're just one big happy family."

"Nice quarters," I commented.

"Yeah. This whole field is part of an estate that belonged to some earl who drank himself to death just before the war. This barracks was converted from a stable for his fine saddle horses, I'm told."

He fished in his jacket and came out with a scrap of paper. "Here is the menu for today." He passed it over. "Sliderule plans our meals. He hashed his way through the University of Texas and claims that qualifies him to be a dietician."

Studying the menu, I noted Sliderule's lunch would consist of roast beef, baked potatoes, lettuce and tomato salad, string beans, coffee and rolls.

"Why no dessert?" I inquired.

"Sliderule says the boys will get too fat if they don't watch their diet."

Travis opened a footlocker and took out the Horn. "Guess I better get to work," he said and began loading the table with food for lunch. "You know," he sighed, "it's a damn shame I can't make the Horn work for the whole field and everybody for that matter. But then, I suppose, if that were the case, some ambitious bastard would come along and try to take it way from me so he alone could use it and pretty soon they'd probably be fighting wars over it.

HE HAD finished wishing up lunch when Live and Let-Live Johnson, looking even skinnier than he had in London, if such were possible, came in. He scanned the table, turning up his nose.

"Sensible fare for the sake of the stomach," he exclaimed in disdain. "Sliderule is a complete fool when it comes to planning a meal. Why don't you let me plan one now and then, Clint?"

"We did that once and you know what happened," Travis said.

"What happened?" I asked.

Travis snorted. "Let-Live would eat Mexican food three times a day if he could get it. Anyway, we had a job requiring maximum ceiling and everyone of us damn near died. What would you expect with all that Mex food in you?"

"It didn't bother me," Let-Live said airily.

"You, my friend, will eat anything that doesn't bite you first."

Let-Live assumed a hurt look, but Travis went on. "Besides, I'm not taking any more chances like that with the Horn. I wasn't sure she would ever work again."

The entrance of the crew ended the conversation on Mexican food. They came in in a group and took their places at the table.

"Do you want anything to drink?" Travis asked me.

"Yes, Burgundy, I think. What about you?"

"We aren't drinking today. Never drink the day before a mission."

"In that case I won't drink, either."

"No, it'll be all right." We were standing a few feet from the table, and the others were talking so loudly they couldn't overhear us. "We made an agreement a long time ago not to drink the day before a show, and it's just as hard on me as anyone. I almost wish I was flying fighters again just so I wouldn't have any responsibilities and could drink whenever I wanted to. But I guess I'd drink myself to death if that were the case, or get myself killed by Jerry. Nope, it's better this way."

Travis' boys talked shop until they finished, and then began clamoring for dessert. Bugs Hammer was the most vociferous.

"All right," Sliderule told him. "You're the cook—why don't you bake yourself a cake?"

"Cook, hell!" Bugs exploded. "I'm getting a little tired of that joke."

The others forgot their annoyance over the lack of dessert and began to chide Bugs, complimenting him on the meal with mock courtesy. Bugs replied with a few choice obscenities.

Ginny Giannapoulos further enraged him when he said, "When are you going to fix me a lobster, Bugs?"

"Lobster, hell! I ain't never seen anybody as big a fool about sea food as you are."

"How about one small taco?" Let-Live asked Bugs.

"Taco, hell! That's all I hear from you. And another thing—this goes for all you guys—you've got to quit telling everybody what a wonderful cook I am because every mess officer on this field is trying to get me to cook for him. A full colonel in Operations stopped me a couple of days ago and said he would take me off combat if I'd be his personal cook."

Everybody guffawed and beat on the table. "What did you tell him?" Travis said.

"I told him I wasn't interested in being took off combat and even less interested in being a cook. Then he said he'd take me off anyway and make me do it for my own good."

"What did you say?" Travis said.

"I told him to go to hell, and then he said he was going to report me for being disrespectful to an officer. When he said that I really got mad. I looked him right in the eye and said, 'I'm one of Clint Travis' boys, and you just try to ram somethin' through on me and Travis will pin your ears back.'"

"That's what he said you said." Travis chortled and everyone burst into laughter again and beat on the table.

"Well, what did you tell him?" Bugs asked, apprehensively.

"Told him I'd pin his ears back," Travis said, and that set the crew off again. He said it half-jokingly but, knowing Travis, I knew he meant it. Bugs knew he meant it, too.

When they filed out to return to the No Calfrope I didn't go with them, but spent the afternoon writing a feature on the crew. Travis left me a bottle of Duroch so I got along quite well.

It was six o'clock when they returned. I let Travis read what I'd written and he seemed pleased enough with it. "You've got us down pretty well, Mac. Some day, maybe, you can write the part about the Horn, although you'll probably be clapped into an insane asylum if you do. Or else you'll make a lot of money lecturing to a lot of fools who will pay money just because they have to pay money to hear somebody talk."

We had an ample but simple dinner of fried chicken that night and, naturally, the crew wolfed everything down and clamored for more. But Sliderule was adamant, pointing out they had a mission the next day and he wasn't going to be responsible for their having nightmares. Travis backed him up and shooed them off to bed at the far end of the building. After he had literally tucked them in, we went into a small room at the front of the building which served as his office.

I had a drink, but Travis refused. "Got to 'keep faith' as somebody said once upon a time," he explained. He watched me down my drink with a wishful smile playing at his lips. "Got you all fixed up for tomorrow," he said finally. "Got you a flak suit, steel helmet and oxygen mask. We'll go up and get the oxygen mask fitted in a little while. Can't afford to take any chances there."

"What's our target?"

"Don't know, but I'll tell you after the briefing in the morning. We'd better go get that mask fitted."

I never knew that an oxygen mask fitting could present so many complications. It was at least two hours before we got back to Travis' office.

I had a couple of snorts of Duroch and then brought up the subject that Travis had touched on that morning, riding out in the jeep to the No Calfrope.

"Clint, you said there are emotions in flying that can't be written down. I think I understand that, but just what is the supreme emotion?"

"That's a tough one, Mac. I may be on the wrong track, but I'll tell you what I think it is. It's camaraderie. I mean the camaraderie between the men who fly. Between me and the boys of the No Calfrope. Between me and my old class at Kelly. Between me and the men I flew with in Spain. Between me and the men I flew with in the RAF. And"—he looked directly at me, and I saw that flash of gray in his eyes—"between me and all the pilots I ever knew who have spun it. That, I know to be true."

Knowing that that was as close as I would ever come to getting the answer, I went to bed in one of the empty cots alongside the crew of the No Calfrope.

DAYLIGHT was streaming into the long room when I awoke. I hit the floor in one bound and began to curse Travis with everything I had.

They had left me!

I had my clothes on when the door opened. It was Les Small.

"What the hell—" I started.

Les saw my agitated state and began to laugh. "What's so damn funny?" I shouted.

He laughed some more and took his time about getting it out. "Called off till tomorrow." I sat down on the bed and laughed, too, but it was slightly hysterical.

Travis and the crew came in a few minutes later, and Les told them how he had found me. They all rocked and slapped their thighs in Texas fashion. It was just what they needed to relieve the tension. They spent the day, off and on, laughing about "pore old Mac waking up and thinking he'd been left behind."

We sweated out the day by making periodic checks on the No Calfrope and playing poker. The stakes were uncommonly high. Travis, Slim Macon and I were the winners.

Before sending the boys off to bed that night, Travis said, "Well, men, I don't think they'll hold this show up tomorrow, come hell or high water. Just got a hunch, that's all. I think we'll be able to give the Germans a hurrahing tomorrow they'll never forget."

"What the devil does 'hurrahing' mean?" I asked Travis when his boys were bedded down.

"That's a term used by cow punchers. When they wanted to shoot up a town, they called it 'hurrahing' a town. It was merely a playful form of intimidation to them."

We were again sitting in Travis' office, and I was sipping the Duroch slowly.

"Clint," I began, "there's one thing I'd like to know. You told me once you had worn out the world. Could you tell me the kind of world you'd make if you had the power?"

He looked at me with his fine, level eyes. "I don't have to think much about that one, Mac. You see, my grandpa told me about it first when I was a little kid, and though I didn't know what he meant then, I do now. Grandpa came out of Tennessee to Texas, but he didn't remain in Texas. No place could hold him. He rode on to California and then up into the Northwest and back down to Texas. Then, he rode back to California and the sea. He couldn't ride his horse into the sea, so he took a boat to China where he got another horse and rode some more. He took another boat after that and went to India and got a horse again. It went on and on until he had been everywhere. It toook a long time for him to discover what he was looking for, but he finally did."

Travis paused and took a drink. The gray was overpowering the blue in his eyes again.

"He came back to Texas to die and, before he did, he told me.

" 'Clint,' he said, 'they's jes' so many places a man kin ride in this world. Then they ain't no more, an' he's got to stop or begin back-trackin'. I wish I could make me a land of my own, boy.'

" 'What kind of a land would you make, Grandpa?' I asked.

" 'A land without dimension,' he said."

Travis' eyes were completely gray now.

"Yes," he whispered, "a land without dimension. It took Grandpa seventy years to learn it, but I learned it in half the time because I had an airplane instead of a horse."

He stopped, and I was afraid he had finished, but then he continued.

"Yes, Mac, that's the kind of land I want. I want an airplane that has a never-ending range; where I could fly over constantly changing patterns of country and, finding one I liked, land and stay a while until I grew bored. Then, I would go on again and find new patterns, but the patterns would be never-ending and unlike the ones I had passed over before. Yes, that's my land without dimension."

And that was Clinton Travis.

I went to bed, but stayed awake, having a pretty Freudian session with myself. I was awake when Travis came to shake me and get the boys up.

"Are we going hurrahing today?" I asked.

"Right."

The crew took it up and began to chant, "We're off to hurrah the Hun, we're off to hurrah the Hun; Oh, a hurrahing we will go, a hurrahing we will go."

They kept it up through the breakfast of ham and eggs and only stopped when they got into the briefing room. Immediately upon getting out, they started it again. I collared Travis as he came out. "What's the target?" I practically demanded.

"Marshaling yards just outside of Paris," he announced gleefully. I had never seen him happier, but there was an intangible something

in his eyes that I couldn't quite figure out.

Riding out to the No Calfrope in a jeep, Travis explained, "Our first leg is to Courcelles. That's four hundred and fifteen miles. We get a check on the towns of Gosselies and Jumet. After that, we cut in to the target, three hundred and seventy-mile leg. From the target back here is five hundred and seventy-five miles. Altogether, that makes one thousand, three hundred and sixty miles."

"Think it will be pretty rough?"

"Shouldn't be bothered with anything more than flak, even though we won't have a fighter escort. They'll all be needed at the beaches and inland points not as far in as we're going, naturally."

The crew was still chanting when we joined them at the No Calfrope. Other crews heard them and began to sing and chant to the tune of *A Hunting We Will Go,* and *The Wizard of Oz.*

I mounted the flight deck along with Ginny, Bugs, Sliderule and the Judge. And then we were airborne in the darkness. Dawn was about thirty minutes away. I never thought much about our own mission, but kept thinking about what would happen at the beaches.

WE WERE climbing steadily. Travis turned his head and smiled at me. He had taken the Horn from his shoulder and had hooked it in place beside him.

"Being a prisoner of war wouldn't be bad as long as I had the Horn," he said.

Les Small, in the co-pilot's seat, leaned over. "I carry a horn, too," he said, holding up a Thompson sub-machine gun, and then placing it back under the seat.

Sliderule and the Judge left us and went into the nose of the ship. I put on a headset. Over it came the voice of Bucky Smith who had now been lowered into the ball turret.

"*Had a dream the other night, dreamed that I could fly; flapped my wings like a buzzard and flew up to the sky. Oh, boil limber, boil them cabbage down . . .*"

As we gained altitude I began to feel the cold. We were going to make our run at 26,000. I tried to make a few notes but soon gave it up. Memory alone has to serve on a mission.

Soon we were out over the channel and dawn was breaking. I began to make out the other Liberators in the formation and, after a bit, could see their vapor trails—beautiful and deadly, as beauty can often be.

And then the coast of Belgium was coming up ahead. With it came the flak as we crossed to the south of Ostende. It was far below and Les pointed it out to me. "Some fun, eh, Mac?" Travis drawled over the inter-phone. I smiled wanly under the oxygen mask I had just put on.

We left the flak behind and kept going well into Belgium. Sliderule came in over the inter-phone: "Navigator to pilot—over."

"Pilot to navigator—over," Travis replied.

"Courcelles ten minutes dead ahead—over."

"It can't be that near," Travis told him.

"Wanna make a little bet, Clint?"

"I'll take your word for it. I ain't betting against no 'Sliderule'."

Ten minutes later, Travis called for my benefit, "There's Courcelles. You can see Gosselies and Jumet over there."

"Navigator to pilot—yah, yah!"

"Pilot to navigator—all right, you win. Now get us to Paris."

We changed course and crossed into France. That's when it began. That was the day the Luftwaffe made itself conspicuous by its absence when the boys hit the beaches, but concentrated on us and us alone.

Live and Let-Live Johnson gave us the first warning. "ME-109 coming in at five o'clock high. Here comes another one right behind him."

I felt his fifties vibrating the ship. "Take him, Slim. He's passing around." Slim cut loose, and Ginny joined in from the top turret.

"Three ME's at twelve o'clock high," Ginny announced a second later.

After that it seemed as though everybody was firing.

"Got a deflection," whooped someone, but I never knew who it was. "Got him, Clint. Got him. There he goes."

"All right, all right, shut up. I saw him."

The inter-phone settled down after that, and their voices became as impersonal as a telephone operator's. The whole thing couldn't have lasted more than forty-five seconds. I saw a Lib off on our right drop out of the formation with what I judged to be an engine smoking. Just after that another one dropped through the formation in a mass of flames. It came so close I imagined I could see the pilot fighting the controls. From those things I knew the ME's had been there and gone.

"Pilot to crew—everybody O.K.?"

They reported they were all right.

"We'll probably get some more of them before we get to Paris," Travis announced.

He was right. Sliderule had just announced Paris was coming up ahead when they hit. They came so thick and fast that the boys quit calling them and just fired with everything they had. Flak was puffing all over the sky. We were now into our target run, and another two minutes would see us unloaded. Travis had to fly straight and level now that we were in the run.

The No Calfrope lifted suddenly, and I knew we had been hit.

"Pilot to bombardier—you all right, Judge?"

"Yeah, I'm all right, but we ain't got a navi-

gatah anymo'. Ole Sliderule's cashed in . . ."

I slid off the flight deck and crawled into the bombardier's compartment. There was one hell of a big hole in the nose and several smaller ones, and the air was blasting through like hundred-pound ice blocks. One look at Sliderule told me there wasn't anything I could do for him.

The Judge was over the bombsight, and I could see blood on him. I saw him squeeze off his bombs, and I knew he had gotten his "bums away." He rolled over and looked at me, and I saw his chest. It wasn't pretty, and when I looked into his eyes I knew he was going fast. I crawled to him, tore away his oxygen mask and placed my ear to his mouth.

"Get me some rye from Clint," he said softly. I clapped his mask back on and eased my way out of the nose and back onto the flight deck. Snatching off my mask, I screamed at Travis, "The Judge is dying, and he wants some rye."

In one consecutive motion, faster than I could follow, Travis unfastened his safety belt, grabbed the Horn at his side and was off the flight deck before I was aware he had moved. He had even shed his flak suit. Les had automatically taken over.

Travis had the Judge's mask off and was holding a full Horn of rye to his lips when I got there. The Judge looked up at Travis with grateful eyes and then pulled deeply from the Horn.

"Tell me whiskey's name . . ." he tried to get out and died.

TRAVIS hurled himself past me back to the flight deck. I followed. The ME's had been joined by Focke-Wulf 109's. The flak, of course, had never left us.

I'll never know how a flight deck could be so riddled and any man survive, but that is just what happened no sooner had Travis taken over. Bugs Hammer and Ginny Giannapoulos were literally cut to pieces. They died without a sound—full of fifty-caliber machine-gun bullets. Les helped me drag them aside where they wouldn't be in the way. It was messy, but you don't think about such things at a time like that.

Travis had now lost his navigator, bombardier, radio man and engineer. He was calling his gunners to see if he still had them.

"Pilot to tail gunner—over."

"Still here. What's going on?"

Travis ignored him.

"Pilot to crew, report—over."

No one answered. The gunners were waiting for the others, not knowing they were dead.

"Pilot to waists—come in."

"O.K." It was Whitey.

"O.K." Slim.

"O.K." Bucky. "Ain't got much ammo left."

"Stretch it out," Travis said. "Make every burst count. We've got a long way to go."

Travis had no sooner got the words out when flak took out our number three engine, and it was that burst which mortally wounded handsome, clean-cut Les Small. Les slumped forward against the wheel and then, with an effort that must have taken all the resistance he had left, pulled himself back in his seat.

"Where you hit?" Travis shouted.

"Side, I guess. Feel like I'm squashed inside." He kept trying to smile, but I knew he was in hellish pain.

I gave him some morphine tablets, as Travis directed, and Les mumbled, "'Fraid I can't help you much going home, Clint."

"We'll get there, fella. Just take it easy."

I don't know what the hell happened just after that, but the next thing I knew the No Calfrope went into a dive. I think Travis pulled her out by sheer strength alone. I know no other man could have done it. It was really a series of three dives. After the third one we were down 8,000, the first dive starting at 26,000.

I had been banged around considerably while Travis was wrestling the ship around and was pretty addled when we got on an even keel again. I took a look at Les to see how he had taken it—but he hadn't. He was dead.

"Take him out of the seat," Travis told me, "so he won't jam the controls." Travis' eyes were terrible to see.

When I unfastened Les' safety belt and pulled him out, I could hear Travis reassuring the crew that everything was under control.

But it wasn't. We were a lame duck now, and the Jerry fighters spotted us and came in. The No Calfrope gunners held their fire until they couldn't miss, but, good as they were, the odds were too unequal. The sky simply swarmed with Jerries. I counted nine that our gunners sent down in flames, and there must have been more that I missed.

I'm supposed to be a non-combatant war correspondent, but I wasn't that day. I manned the top turret gun, which would have been handled by Ginny Giannapoulos. I think I got two, but I don't know. I just fired.

It couldn't last forever. Not even the No Calfrope could take that kind of punishment forever. We might have got away if they hadn't fired our number four engine. Travis had to fight his airplane with everything he had now.

"The inter-phone is out," he said. "Go back and tell the boys to bail out." There was tragedy in his voice. I went back.

Slim Macon was still firing, with blood streaming down his face, but Whitey Blankenship was done for keeps, surrounded by empty cartridge belts and spent shells. The entire waist was a sieve. Bucky Smith was still in the turret and I told him that Travis had said to jump.

Live and Let-Live Johnson was stretched out over his guns in the tail. When I touched him he didn't move, and I dragged him out of the turret. He had been drilled neatly between the eyes.

I didn't have time to speculate on anything much because I felt the whole tail section vibrate. I looked down and out and saw what had happened. Slim Macon had already jumped, but I could see parachute shrouds tangled on the tail surfaces. It was Slim's chute. He had pulled it too soon.

I went back and reported it to Travis. "He's still alive," I screamed in his ear.

"Tell Bucky to come up here!"

Bucky was climbing out of the turret, but he never got out. Flak literally sealed him in. Dazedly, I went back to Travis.

"Sit down in Les' seat," he said, "and do as I tell you. Hold that left rudder in. Hold her just like that."

He swung out of his seat and picked up the Thompson sub-machine gun.

He was going to shoot Slim Macon!

It seemed an eternity before I heard the Thompson chattering, and then he was back beside me and taking over.

"You'd better get going, Mac. This airplane won't hold together much longer."

"But what about you and Bucky?"

"We'll be all right. Me and the Buck is going to take this one together."

I looked at him in horrified disbelief. "Does he know?"

"I told him."

"Can't we get him out?"

"Not the way he's stuck in there."

He smiled. It was the old Clinton Travis smile. "Here's a little present for you. Take one for me now and then." He handed me the Horn. "Now git!"

I got. I looked in on Bucky. He smiled up at me. I had to turn my head away.

Floating down, I had a good view of the No Calfrope. She was settling fast and trailing flame across the sky of France. Then, as I watched, she blew into nothingness.

When a detail of American paratroopers found me I was quite drunk. Frankly, I didn't particularly care what happened to me. I was back in London the next day.

AND that is the story of Clinton Travis who found a Horn. I hardly expect you to believe it, nor do I greatly care. I have put it down exactly as it happened and, as I said, by so doing, perhaps I can one day be free of it.

No, that is not the end of this story. Twenty minutes ago I drank a toast to the men of the No Calfrope. I started with Slim Macon and drank to him in East Texas corn whiskey. Next was the Judge in rye. The others I drank to in Duroch. I saved Travis until the last and did my best to down his size drink. I did.

I called the purser after that and had him open one of the portholes. Then I threw the Horn into the sea.

"What kind of a horn was that, sir?" the purser asked.

"That was the 'Horn of Plenty.'"

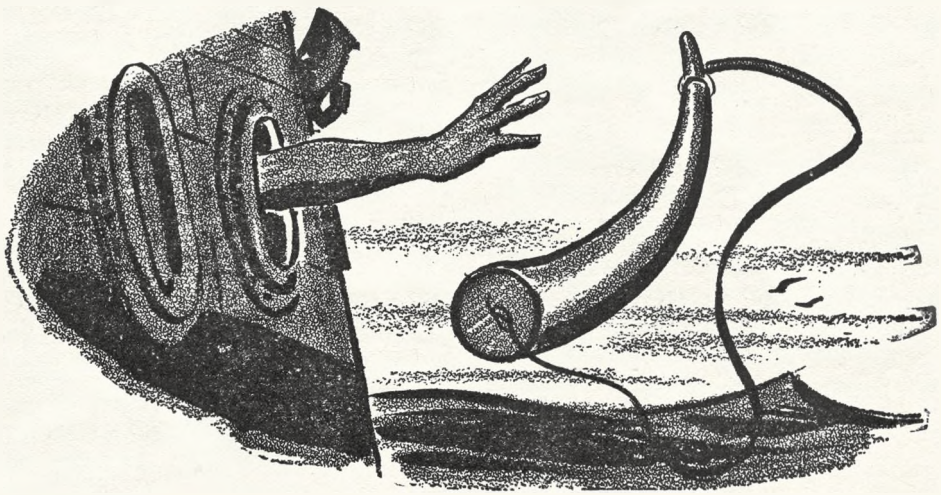
"And you threw it away?" He was trying not to laugh in my face because he thought I was drunk.

"Yes."

"Why, sir?"

"Because I don't deserve it."

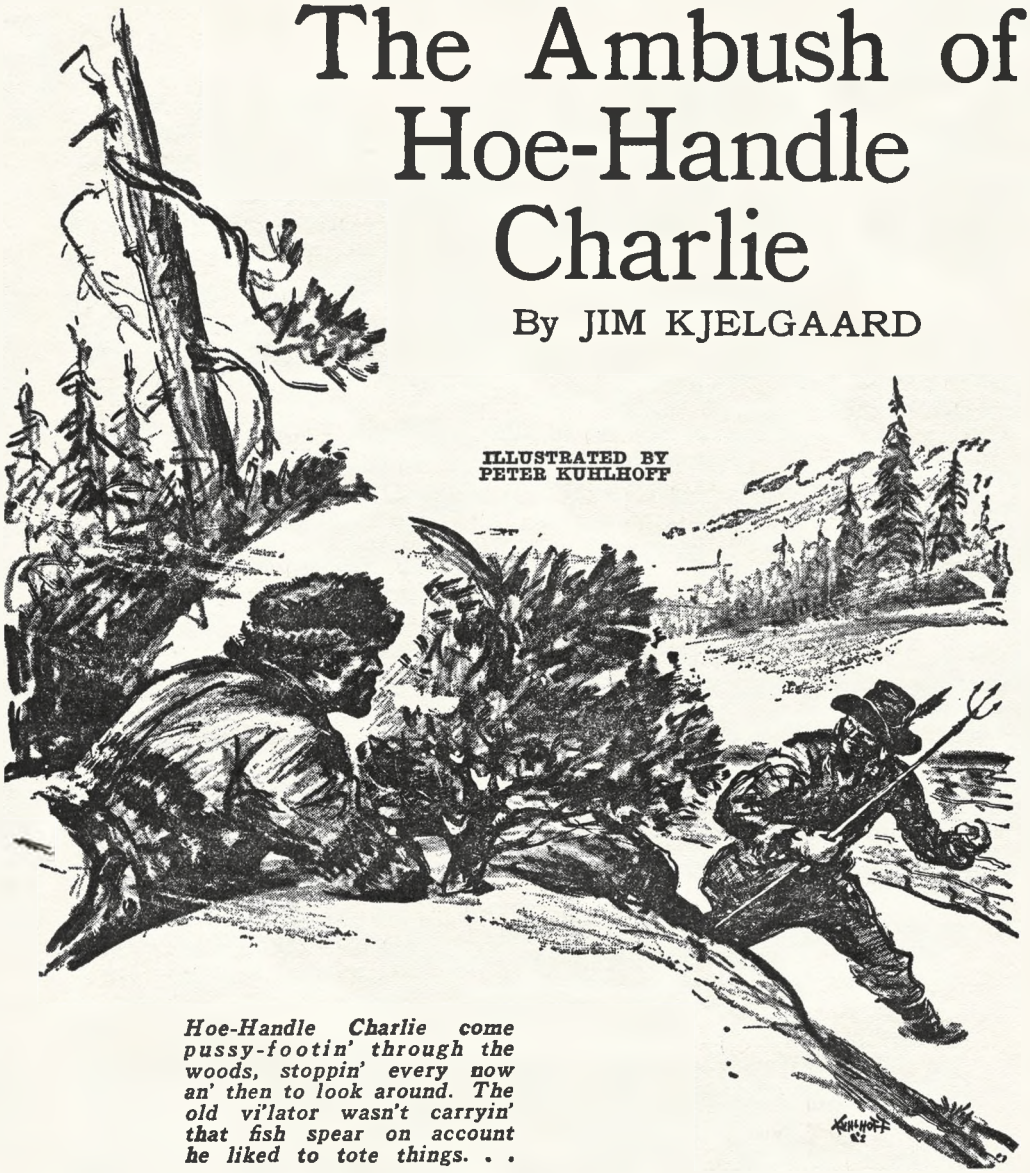
He went away, shaking his head in unconcealed amusement. How could I explain to him that only a man like Clinton Travis and the crew of the No Calfrope deserved to have a Horn of Plenty?



# The Ambush of Hoe-Handle Charlie

By JIM KJELGAARD

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF



*Hoe-Handle Charlie come pussy-footin' through the woods, stoppin' every now an' then to look around. The old vi'lator wasn't carryin' that fish spear on account he liked to tote things. . .*

NOW this Horse Brannigan was plenty mad. He was chief game warden, an' up in the northern section of the state, old Hoe-Handle Charlie had just made a star-spangled jackass out of the last warden Horse had sent to bring him in.

The more Horse thought about that, the madder he got. An' the madder he got, the more he made up his mind that he was goin' out to bring in that Injun poacher. The old savage had been makin' fools of half the wardens on the conservation force for thirty years, doin' just as he pleased an' takin' what game an' fish he wanted without regard to the laws. But nobody made a fool out of Horse Brannigan. He had a careful plan, founded on these known facts about Hoe-Handle Charlie.

1. Every warden who had ever been on the old devil's trail had tried to take him with some kind of trick.
2. Every warden had come back licked, his own trick backfired.
3. The old swamp-cat had been slick as a trap-pinched coyote to begin with,

through thirty years had grew thirty times slicker, and could not be took with tricks.

Horse Brannigan studied them facts, applied to 'em all he had learned in thirty-two years of bein' a game warden, an' came up with a smart idea. The only way any warden was goin' to catch Hoe-Handle Charlie was by goin' up to Thicket County an' playin' wolf with him in his own briar patch. So Horse studied maps of Thicket County, every knob, every lake, every stream, every road. He knew where the deer herds was, where the fish ran.

By spring, he felt he knew the place 'most as good as Hoe-Handle Charlie did, an' was ready.

Horse got on the train and rode her north. In his pack was a sleepin' bag, enough cold rations to last two weeks, an' a pair of high-powered field glasses. But instead of ridin' the train clear to Deer Junction, which is also the Thicket County station, he fixed with the conductor to slow her down an' swung off ten miles short. Horse stood in the middle of the tracks, a big man with a bull neck an' broad shoulders, watchin' the train whistle on up the tracks. He grinned, an' stepped into the woods.

It was a warm spring day; the willows beside the tracks was green an' the few aspens around was hung with buds. But snow still lay in the woods. Horse took off his coat, hung it on top of his pack, an' set a compass course to where he was goin'. Whenever he come to an open place he swung around it so as to stay in the woods.

It was late afternoon when he got to Haystack Knob, which was covered with evergreens hardly four feet high. Between 'em was fresh coyote tracks, dozens of 'em crossin' an' criss-crossin', an' in some places the snow was packed solid where they had played. Horse dropped to his hands an' knees, crawled through the evergreens to the edge of the knob, peered at the sun to make sure it wouldn't glance off his glasses an' give him away, an' looked.

Five hundred yards away, in a clearin', Hoe-Handle Charlie's cabin sat like a black bug in the spring sunshine. Blue smoke come from the chimney, an' the door was open. Hoe-Handle Charlie was beside his cabin, hackin' away at a block of wood with a bucksaw. Horse's glasses brung him so close that he could almost count every wrinkle in the dusky face, see every streak of dirt in the old felt hat.

Horse settled back, satisfied. The game was on, an' the old wolf down there didn't have the least idea that another wolf was on his tail.

All afternoon Horse watched Hoe-Handle Charlie, an' when night come he still watched, until the light in the old hellion's cabin winked out. Horse opened up his rations an' ate a can of corned beef—to build a fire would be to give hisself away—an' dragged his sleepin' bag to the edge of the knob. The wind in the trees soon lulled him to sleep.

But he didn't sleep tight. A dozen times he woke up to look for a light in the cabin, but saw none. He was up with the dawn, still watchin' the cabin. But all Hoe-Handle Charlie had done was to chop a little wood an' drink half a jug of hard cider. That night his lamp winked out again an' didn't come on.

The next mornin' Horse saw what he wanted to see.

HOE-HANDLE CHARLIE come out of his cabin, shy as a shot-stung fox comin' out of its thicket, an' looked all around. Then he went to his woodpile, prodded beneath it, an' come up with a fish spear. Horse was so tickled that he laughed out loud, but not too loud, as he watched the old hellion carry the spear and the three pieces of wood handle into the cabin. Horse trained his glasses on the window, saw the old outlaw sittin' at a table, sharpenin' the spear with a whetstone. Then he put down his glasses an' done some thinkin'.

Hoe-Handle Charlie didn't go after small game, an' the biggest game anybody could get with a spear at this time of year was wall-eyes. The closest place he could get big wall-eyes an' plenty of 'em was in the Narrows between Twin Lakes. Wall-eyed pike, in the spring, went from the upper to the lower lake through a four-foot channel that hugged the east side of the Narrows. Horse knowed all that from his study of Thicket County. If Hoe-Handle was goin' somewhere else . . .

Horse tossed a penny an' it landed heads. He had to take a chanst—nobody could be sure all the time. For a second more Horse watched through the cabin windows. Then he crawled back to the knob, rose up, an' began to run. Hoe-Handle Charlie had eyes keen as a bat's, an' some wardens swore he had eyes in the back of his head. You just couldn't follow him without his seein' you. But to get to where he was goin' before he did, an' then hide . . .

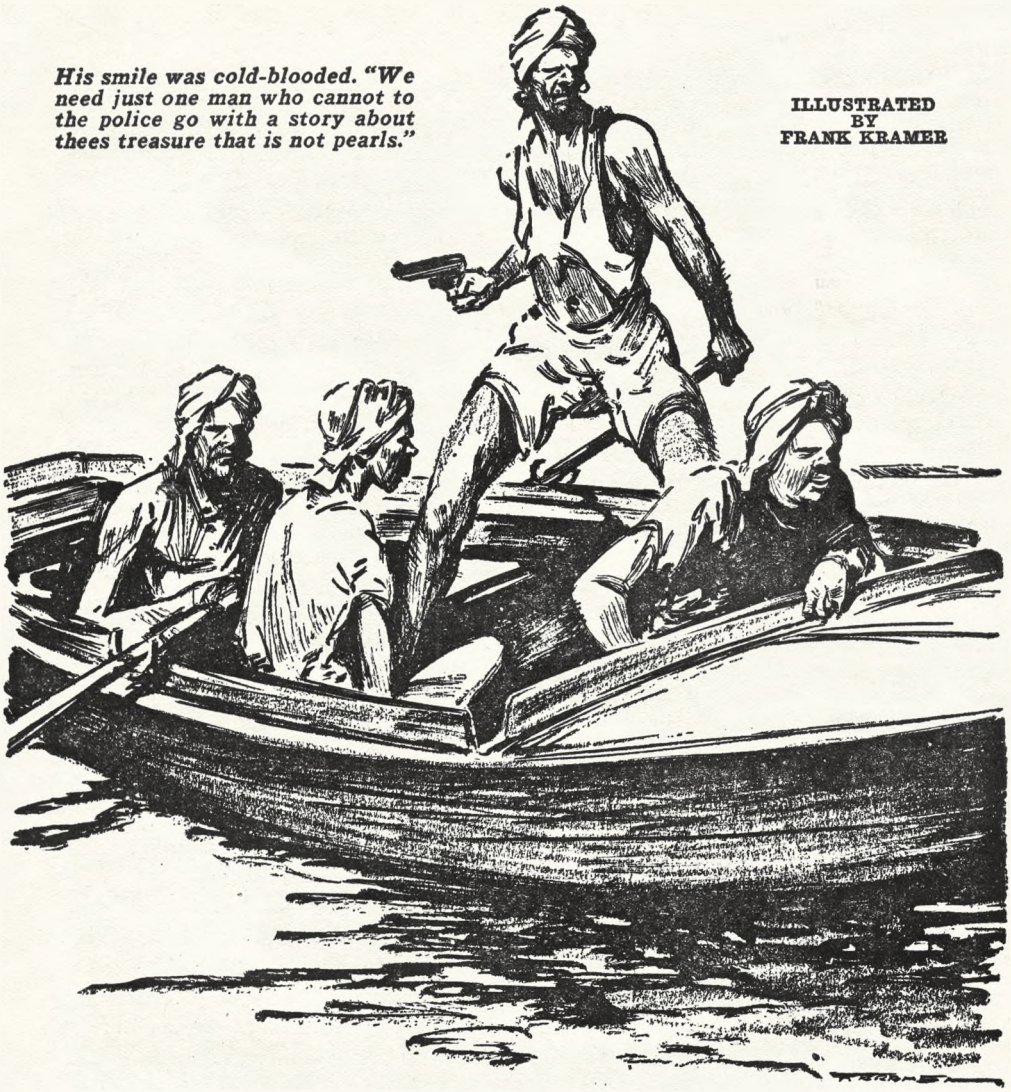
Horse raced through the evergreens, dodged down off Haystack, an' run through the forest. The snow down here lay in patches, but by runnin' around 'em Horse left no tracks. He was pantin' a little when he come to the Narrows, a mile-long, hundred-and-fifty-foot-wide neck of water between the Twin Lakes. He stood a minute on top of the little bank that led down to the water, an' picked out a big overhangin' buttonwood as the place he would spear from if he was goin' to spear wall-eyes. The wind was blowin' in fits, an' every now and then a lazy wave rolled up on the ledge that ran the length of the Narrows. But after a minute—Hoe-Handle Charlie might be along any time—Horse hid under an evergreen with low branches that almost touched the ground

He hadn't been there ten minutes before he

*(Continued on page 142)*

*His smile was cold-blooded. "We need just one man who cannot to the police go with a story about thees treasure that is not pearls."*

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK KRAMER



THE court-martial was hard-boiled and grimly determined to make an example in a situation that had become a scandal to the A.M.G. It was a mixed court—because the ex-Italian port of Massaua on the Red Sea was under British military administration, and American officers were included to see that justice, and nothing but justice, would be meted out to one of their men.

The presiding officer read out the charge—"Sergeant Timothy Hogan, you are charged with having diverted to your own use, over a period of six months, a total quantity of—" the officer peered closer at the paper to assure himself that he was reading it correctly, and his voice indicated incredulity—"of twenty-one thousand gallons of high-test petrol!" He stared at Hogan as at a phenomenon. "The court will hear your plea."

Sergeant Hogan stood stiffly to attention, towering over both guards, his head bare, his jaw set, eyes alert. He knew well enough what he was facing.

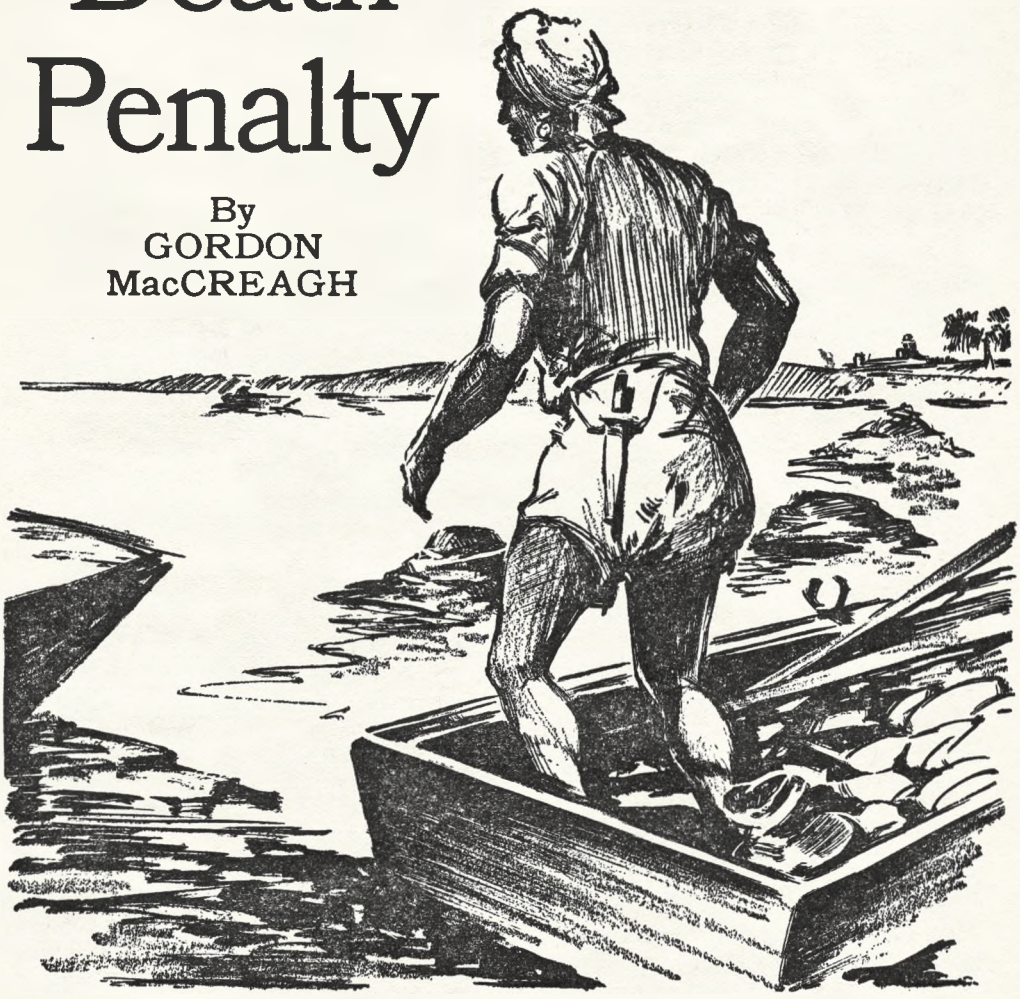
"I offer a categorical denial to the whole charge," he said.

The presiding officer turned to the American major assigned to Hogan's defense. The officer shrugged. "In that case all we can do is hear the witnesses."

The first witness was a British corporal. He testified that, having been assigned as interpreter, on such and such a date, to a convoy of nineteen trucks loaded with petrol in charge of Sergeant Hogan, routed from Asmara to

# Death Penalty

By GORDON MacCREAGH



the desert airport of El Ahmed, he had noted that only seventeen trucks arrived. He did not know at what point the missing trucks fell out of line because, on those mountain roads, the convoy was very often strung out over a distance of three or four miles. Nor did he know at what point of the return the two empty trucks had rejoined the convoy. He knew only that nineteen had come back to Asmara. He knew nothing about the paper work, receipts and so on, involved.

The presiding officer looked at the defendant. "Sergeant Hogan?"

Hogan said firmly. "The convoy proceeded under forced march conditions, sir. Sometimes from before dawn till after dark. I submit, sir, the impossibility of maintaining a check at all times on all trucks in the circumstances. I must admit delivery of only seventeen truck loads."

The P. O. turned to the defense officer.

The American major said, not very convincingly, "We submit, sir, that the evidence establishes nothing more than dereliction of duty."

The P. O. demanded, "Where are the drivers of those missing trucks?"

In that matter there appeared to be extraordinary confusion. Drivers had at no time stayed with any one truck. They had changed about. Very well, why had they changed about? They had changed, it seemed, as the sergeant had caught up the first nearest man in the misty dawn, ordered him to the next truck

in line and hurried him off. Nobody could say who drove which truck over what portion of the six-day route.

"Very clever," was the P. O.'s comment. He called the next witness. This one, also a British Tommy, deposed that on a convoy of fourteen trucks, also in charge of the delinquent sergeant, and on the short eight-hour run from Massaua to Asmara, one truck had managed not to show up and had mysteriously reappeared in line sometime during the empty night return to Massaua.

The defense could again offer no better than dereliction of duty.

IN similar manner witnesses, sometimes two or three together, testified mysterious shortage of trucks at point of delivery. For one such convoy the drivers of two missing trucks were definitely identified.

"Ha! Very well then," the P. O. demanded, "what had these drivers to say?"

A damning admission was that the two men were "temporarily AWOL."

And so, in weary detail, the astounding total of twenty-one thousand gallons was added up. The defense submitted, as a matter of routine, that none of this was proof that the defendant sergeant had at any time "diverted to his own use" the precious gasoline. To which the objection was reiterated that the man was obviously very clever. More damning was the proof that the sergeant had tampered with the figures as receipted by the receiving officer. The defense's plea that the sergeant had done so only to cover his carelessness that had permitted convoyed material to disappear so often from under his very nose, bore little weight with the court. And utterly damning were two final witnesses, civilians, who testified that the man there in court, Sergeant Hogan, had sold to each one, separately, one drum of petrol!

The court conferred. The American defense officer nodded his head in stern agreement. The presiding officer summed up.

"Sergeant Hogan, it is the opinion of this court that the charge against you has been substantiated. Although you have been very clever in covering up the method of your depredations, it has been shown that you have deliberately stolen military equipment and sold it in the black market. The charge, the current conditions of war being what they are, is sufficiently serious to justify this court in imposing upon you the extreme penalty that military law allows!"

The officer had more to say, detailing the enormity of black market operations, the justification of the court's opinion, and the need of imposing exemplary sentence on all persons involved in these peculations that had resulted in a marked slow-up in the direct supply route to Burma and China.

Hogan did not hear any of it. His big frame stiffened between his guards, as though he already saw the firing squad before him, and waited for the officer's signal that would send the searing shock of pain through him before oblivion.

He was not listening to the measured drone of the presiding officer's precise English accents. His agile mind was racing ahead to feel out every next step of what he knew would be the procedure. He would be sent, of course, to the Prigione Uffizi that the military occupation had taken over. The prison, built for civil purposes before the war, was situated wholesomely apart from the town. The road passed through the Cuartiere Indigeno with its rabbit warren of native huts bordering a great stretch of backwash salt lagoon. In the warren lived, as Hogan well knew, more than a few irreconcilable Axis fugitives who still nursed implacable hate for the British conquerors. Everybody knew how they hid, but it seemed to be impossible to rout them out. The ferocious conglomeration of the Red Sea's worst waterfront, Somalis, Arabs, Danakils, who had always considered all and any alien rule an insufferable interference with their hereditary rights of pilfering, pearling or piracy, would hide any fugitive from any authority for exactly as long as he could pay their price.

Sergeant Hogan knew all this; and he knew that, with that astounding military confidence in its own supreme authority, the court would send him to prison, probably in a military pick-up truck, possibly even a jeep, if it were handy, and he would be escorted, handcuffed, by not more than two armed guards who would undoubtedly shoot if he should make any attempt to escape.

IT WAS a pick-up truck, and the two guards carefully made Hogan sit between them on the bench under the canvas hood that made a covered wagon of the thing and offered protection from the fierce sun of Massaua. In front, on the other side of a partition, was the driver. As likely as not, Hogan guessed, with his side arm in its heavy web belt tucked back of the partition instead of around his waist.

The truck picked a slow way through the mass of natives who remained maddeningly unconscious of the auto traffic of war; as unconscious as their undersized donkeys hidden under unbelievable loads of grass feed that they had carried unbelievable distances from the coastal escarpment, and their camels that could understand nothing but the security of their own bulk.

Both guards knew Hogan, even before he had been a prisoner. They had liked him. Everybody had liked the big sergeant who had never used his size to be tough. "Tough luck," one of them commiserated.

Hogan surged out of his thoughts to speech. "Yeah, but it's not all over yet. I didn't do it and if it'd been an American court they wouldn't have counted all that circumstantial stuff in with the two drums they proved up on me."

The guards were hard-boiled about protestations of innocence. "Could be. But the two made a pretty convincing cinch on all the rest, the way we heard it."

Hogan was furious in his insistence. "O. K.! O. K.! They got the proof on me for the two; and truth is I bought 'em and I'm not squealing from whom; and O. K. I sold 'em and made my change on the deal. But that's not proving I got the rest and it's a hell of a rap to hand a man on no better evidence."

"They're handing 'em the works in France for the same line o' lootin', I suppose you know? And that's all-American courts."

"Well, maybe they are. But I'll bet they got better evidence. And they haven't handed me my finish yet. I'm appealing to something bigger'n a Limey colonel."

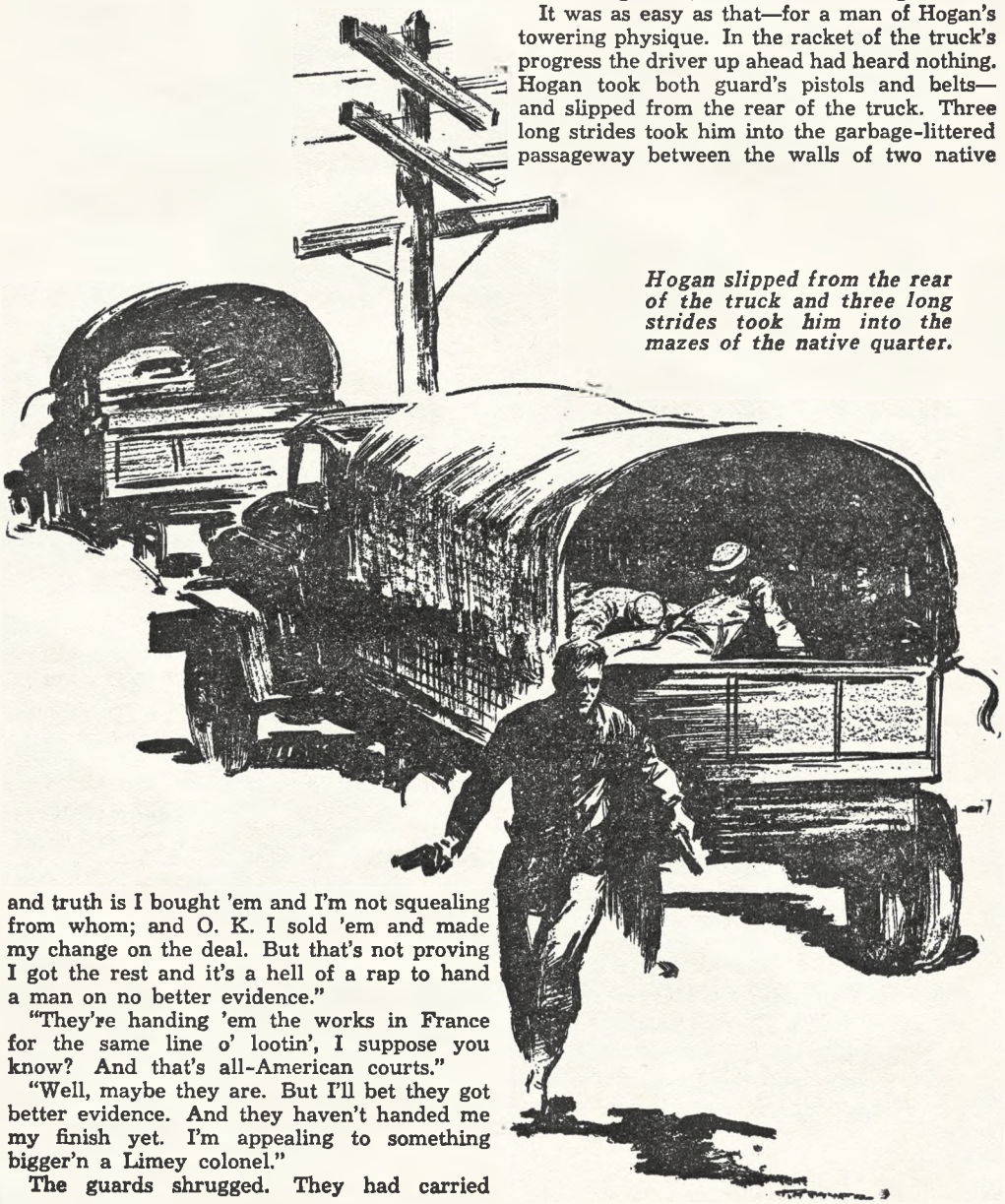
The guards shrugged. They had carried prisoners away from court-martials before.

The truck was lurching and rocketing over the cobble stones of the waterfront native quarter. Hogan said, "I'm apologizing to you boys in advance."

"What the hell for?" one of the guards wondered.

"This is what I'm appealing to," Hogan said. He jerked a murderous uppercut to the chin of the man on his left, whirled and smashed a left fist like a knot of wood against the other man's jaw. Smashed him again with an even heavier right fist, and that was enough.

It was as easy as that—for a man of Hogan's towering physique. In the racket of the truck's progress the driver up ahead had heard nothing. Hogan took both guard's pistols and belts—and slipped from the rear of the truck. Three long strides took him into the garbage-littered passageway between the walls of two native



*Hogan slipped from the rear of the truck and three long strides took him into the mazes of the native quarter.*

huts, haphazardly built, bulgy-sided and so close to each other that Hogan could hardly squeeze through.

The sergeant had thought he knew all about the fugitive club but he quickly found that he knew only the rumors that were current talk. It was true that fugitives skulked a frightful existence amongst the natives; even after three years and the amnesty offered by A. M. G. to all who were willing to accept the hard fact of local defeat and come out and live under not too oppressive regulations; true that these implacables maintained an underground organization that had enough cumulative cunning to contrive every now and then, some major act of sabotage—such as the blowing up, a few months ago, of a tanker right in the inner harbor. That smart piece of business had been credited to so unmilitary a person as a Japanese trader who used to maintain a curio store in the town before its capitulation. There was supposed to be a high ranking German engineer officer, too, who had been a liaison man with the Italian Command; and various irreconcilable fascisti.

Thorns in the smarting side of A. M. G. they were; but they flaunted no "club." Wherever they hid and however they hid, they did it with the practiced cleverness of men who knew that they too, faced a death penalty. And they were all imbued with a hate that was spurred by their desperation.

Hogan met none of them, but he did meet an Arab who nursed his own hate because British patrols had broken up his flourishing business of high-jacking pearling dhows in the good old days. The Arab cannily weighed the value of two American pistols. It was high these days. Those underground people who had gotten away with their money before the occupation would pay well for them; but not enough to support a new fugitive indefinitely. Hogan would have to earn his precarious right to remain alive.

The Arab appraised his bulk. He spoke the Red Sea pidgin of English-Italian-French. "You be big strong bravo, *hein*? You capish sweem?"

"Sure," said Hogan. "I can swim."

"*Bene.* I trade you boat. You dive trochus."

## CHAPTER II

### ALL SHARKS DON'T SWIM

TROCHUS shelling was one of the things about which Hogan did not even know a rumor. But he learned —along with every frightful angle of being a fugitive. The Arab furnished "instructions" with his sale of a double-ended thing that floated and could be rowed laboriously about the maze of island lagoons.

Islands? Barren, burned up rocks, rather; some of them no bigger than a table-top; but scattered by the million along a shore that looked as though the desiccated coastal hills had cracked off under the sun and rolled into the sea. But their very unnavigable profusion offered perfect hiding for people who could live on a native boat.

The instructor showed Hogan how to peer through a *shoofa* that was no more than a section of hollow pandanus bole; in effect a primitive "water glass" such as used by bottom fishermen the world over. Through it, surface reflections eliminated, you could see every here and there the giant whelks that are trochus and furnish mother-of-pearl in larger slabs than ever came from pearl oysters.

The man spotted one at a depth of some fifteen feet. He took his knife between his teeth, slipped overside and swam down to it. It seemed to Hogan that he must have spent about ten incredible minutes gouging at the tenacious thing before he could pry it loose and swim up with it. It was as big as a plate. The man dropped it into the boat, hoisted himself aboard with an expert heave of lean arms and a wriggle. He gasped breath back into his lungs. Then with an air of a job of teaching well done he said, "*Bene.* Now you capish how for feesh *sadaf.*"

As simple as all that, it was. The universal question remained in Hogan's mind. "Sharks?"

"*Oui,*" the man reassured him. "*Molto* shark." He pointed out to deeper water. "Here *poco.* Shark come, you—" He made a swift, slashing motion with the knife an inch from Hogan's belly. "Hawkay. I go. *Allah wafikh!*"

It meant, God give you health. Hogan didn't understand the need of the good wish until he had been a trochus diver for a month. The depths were no trouble to him. His sturdy frame could stand twenty-five and even thirty feet, and he learned the skin-diver trick of filling his lungs with huge preliminary breaths to let his blood absorb as much oxygen as possible before he went down to stay, not ten minutes, but a good three. But everything else about trochus diving showed him why it was the last resort of a desperate man who could do nothing else. His skin was the kind that burned easily. Salt water and sun cooked it to a scaly old suitcase texture. His black hair bleached as mud yellow as any coast Somali's. He got, of course, trochus sores—little shell cuts that poisoned to festering abcesses.

He met—after they were assured that he was as genuinely badly off as themselves—other unfortunates of his profession. They taught him tricks of the business. Where to look for shell; how to distinguish good shell from worm-drilled stuff; how to slash at a shark's belly; and most priceless of all, how to cut out the ink sac of an octopus and carry it with one, and, if shark were too big or too many, to burst it and happily escape in the black cloud that immediately suffused the water, just as an octopus did.

He learned to subsist, as they did, on rice and fish, and, on good days, fish and rice. He learned to drink tepid water that was stored in a mussuk, a whole goatskin with the leg holes sewn tight, and that tasted it. He lived perforce, on his boat, under a little tunnel built of pandanus thatch.

ABOUT once a week Hogan dared to steal by night to the Cuartiere Indigeno and sell his *sadaf*, his shell, to an Arab for enough rice to keep him through another week. He dressed like a native, in a twist of forever wet rag about his waist; he ate like a native; he looked like a native; he was, to all intents and purposes a native who could do nothing better than be a *sadafi*. But he was alive.

But for what? He could look into a slimy future encompassed by trochus. He would think furiously of the possibility of graduating to pearl and competing in the none too enviable life of a skin diver. But pearl shell lay in open tide-swept waters—open to observation. Escape? Yes, with money one could find every hand of a million coast natives reached out to help a man escape. Hogan bit futile profanity through his teeth.

He counted time by his irregular trips into town. Six trips, or maybe it was eight now. He knew why time didn't matter to a native. Accordingly he didn't know how many weeks, or months, had passed when a boat crawled round the hell of a rocky island and headed toward him. In those back channels it was polite for boats, when they met each other, to edge discreetly away again. But this boat came purposefully in his direction. It was bigger than his boat and held four men. One strained heavily at the oars. Hogan wondered whether he could outrow it. But he saw in a moment that it could easily man two men to an oar. He couldn't tell who or what the men were; they might be natives. At all events they were not white MPs. Though in those waters, anybody else could be just as dangerous—to anybody the least bit better worth looting than a trochus diver. The only weapon Hogan had was his thick-bladed trochus knife.

The boat crawled nearer and slowed to drift. The men in it appraised Hogan critically. They muttered to one another—in English, of all things, but not much better than the coast pidgin. It was extraordinary how English predominated in that *lingua franca* that men of different nationalities use for inter-communication.

At last one of the men hailed Hogan. He said, "You prutty goddama sick with thees job, yes?"

Hogan said, "So what?"

"So we got a job for a strong fella, good skin diver."

Hogan's present circumstances were not such

*"You capish sweem?" the Arab asked.*

that he could jump at a job with blind thankfulness. He said, "Who is 'we'?"

The linguist grinned at him. "I am Ali. This is Yussuf. That is Daoud, and that is Abram." The speaker was as dark and burly as a gorilla. Daoud was taller, less heavy in the shoulder but a whole lot of big, tough-looking man. Yussuf was small, with a high forehead and an intelligent face. Abram was startling; he might have been a monkey that under fear and privation had gone a little bit mad.

Hogan looked them over and said, "All right, and I am Ibrahim."

The burly one, Ali, grinned again. He said, "Oh no, you are not Ibrahim. You are Hogan, and if police catch you, you have death penalty." He grinned wider. "Or even if somebody tell police where he find you. We know of you. We know everything."

Hogan said, "I guess you guys know something about death penalties, too. So you aren't holding all the chips."

Ali's brows twitched down as a gorilla's could. His voice rumbled from his stomach. "You plenty tough, yes? Only I tella you for remember fellas like you don' make threatening."

Yussuf of the high forehead cut in. "Stop immedi-ate-ly zis persiflage." He pronounced it with a schooled French intonation. "Question hier iss, do you work for us; or iss it like you have in America—or else?"

Grotesque, how these fugitive men threatened each other in English which labeled each with his origin.

Hogan's face set like the scaly outside of a

*Yussuf smiled. "Or else!" he threatened.*

trochus shell. He rumbled every bit as gruffly as the gorilla, "I don't work for anybody in a fix as bad as myself. I might work with them. What's your proposition?"

YUSSUF let himself smile thinly. "You think we are stupid and give you over us a handle? The work iss diving for a deep-going man. The pay iss hundert times, thousand times, more as trochus."

"If it's pirating pearl beds," Hogan said, "you can get a hundred Arabs. And I've thought of it myself; only you need a dhow."

"We have a dhow," Ali said, "and it is not pearl and we do not need a hundert Arabs. We need"—his smile was coldbloodedly candid—"just one man who cannot to the police go and tell a story about thees treasure that is not pearls."

"Ah-ha!" said Hogan. "And I'm the one man. And who's threatening now? And if it's as tough as all that, suppose I prefer to take my own chances of getting clear of here?"

Daoud cut in for the first time. Daoud was a little bit afraid of the whole business. "Ah, he's know too mooch alla ready, these tough fella." Daoud kept passing a gun from one nervous hand to the other.

Yussuf hissed out at him with the sudden furious venom of a cobra. "S-s-s-it down, you!" Daoud did not sit but he sulkily subsided. Yussuf smiled at Hogan. "You have no chance of getting clear from here. Already you know zis—even if not for our so impatient Daoud. Also I tell you one thing more. Zis work, zis treasure zat we pick up, will not be for harm of Americans. And if it turns out for harm of British, we know zat you have not good reason to be care too much for British." He nodded satisfiedly to himself. "You see, we know everysing about you."

The distinction between American and British welfare was, in the circumstances, specious. But it was at least distinction. Clever Yussuf with the high brow could see Hogan's eyes narrow down on it. He added the clinching persuasion. "Or else!" He pointed the inference with a glance toward Daoud.

Hogan stood up in his boat and studied the four men. A fantastic crew. Rag-wrapped, like himself; as Arab-brown as himself; two of them purely animal, as powerful as predators and as soulless; one of them an intellectual and for that reason their leader; the other an apparent maniac and for that reason possibly the most dangerous one of the pack. But still only four men.

He said, "Well, you don't leave a man a hell of a lot of choice. O.K. I'll throw in. What's the deal?"

Yussuf nodded again with the satisfaction of a man who had calculated everything without a flaw. But he said, "We do not tell you the deal. We offer to you, when you have succeed in the good diving work, the opportunity"—he hissed the reward between his teeth—"opportunity to es-s-cape! Yes-s-ss, and money enough to pay the way."

Again Hogan said "O.K. A man in my position's got short of nothing to lose. It's a deal. But I'm telling you guys once again, you don't hold all the chips."

Yussuf could afford to smile. "Enough of zem, my so bold friend, to control your behavior. So very well. You leave your boat as iss. It will be zat Ibrahim the *sadafi* is not escape from the latest shark. So he iss finished. Lost to the world. The which, for you, my good friend, iss good. For since we could find you, others too, perhaps, who would not be so good friends. So you come now wiz us."

HOGAN had no regrets about leaving his home and board. He pushed it from him as he stepped onto the larger boat and let it go with its half-load of shell and its sack of rice that had taken him a week of sweat and a year out of his life to earn, and anybody who might find it was welcome to it and *bi'l hana wi'sh shifa*, may Allah give him pleasure and health of it.

Ali, at the oars, pulled the boat laboriously in the direction of Massaua town. A qualm chilled Hogan whether it might be possible that they had cleverly tricked him and were taking him

in to sell him to the police. A quick plan of fight began to form in his mind, as he sized up spaces and positions and how best to tackle the gang. But the boat stayed in the island maze till dark. Hogan had a natural curiosity as to just what he had connected with. But Yussuf only smiled thinly at him. It was as though he had divined Hogan's suspicion and was returning it to him.

"We take no chance that you perhaps escape and think to win for yourself pardon by selling of us information."

After dark the boat nosed out of the labyrinth and crept to an Arab dhow in the outer harbor. It was exactly like every other Arab dhow: sixty-odd feet of floating slovenliness. A short mast supported a towering sprit of a lateen sail that was tied to the spar with the bunchy shapelessness of a string of fat women. A cabin consisted of a low deckhouse painted green to signify that the owner had made the *haj* to Mecca. Steamy bilge odors rose from its blackness. The deck was of uneven planks scarred and nicked to a million splinters that were murderous to bare feet, and the ineradicable stench advertised unmistakably the boat's calling.

"I thought you said it wasn't pearls," Hogan said.

The man who called himself Yussuf laughed silkily. "Yes, the boat iss a pearler in every shape and look; but we do not go for pearls. And now that you are hier wiz us and cannot get to the land, I will tell you."

And then suddenly Hogan realized that he was as much a prisoner as though locked in the death cell of the Prigione Uffizi. Lost to the world, Yussuf had said. Here he was surely lost. Anything could happen and nobody would care. Nobody would know—only the four men to whom he was an enemy. No man could swim that pestilential harbor into which not even stringent British sanitary regulations could prevent the native populace from throwing every dead thing, from chicken entrails to camels, and that consequently attracted whole packs of those ferocious Red Sea sharks. And even if a man could survive the swimming, he would probably die swiftly of typhoid.

Yussuf was saying out of the dark beside him, "Yess, the boat iss registered in an Arab's name ass a pearler. So can we go out and dive where we will by the day time; but by the night must we come in and signal our number on account of this so cursed law that the British have ordered for the war. Otherwise, in the outside, one may be investigated by a patrol boat; and investigation, you understand, iss for us not too good; although, heh-heh, we, and you too now, can most surely befool one of these stupid English officers who can never recognize any accent of the world except their own."

"Just as well," Hogan said, "that you propose to operate outside. I wouldn't dive in this water

*Abram, the mad monkey, had nothing to say.*

for more money than there is in all Africa."

"Yes, outside the harbor; but not too far. And now I tell you. You will dive, not for pearls, but for some little affairs zat were taken out quick-quick and sunk before these British captured the town; and if we are careful, zey will think that we dive, wiz all the ozzers, for pearls. Hea-hea, it iss all so very simple zat it gives one to laugh."

And he laughed, chucklingly, with that characteristic hissing sound of his that Hogan now knew came from ill-fitted false teeth. The plan, evidently, was all his and he was well satisfied with it.

Daoud's voice came out of the forward gloom, cautiously whispering so that English words might not carry to the next near dhow, but not so confident as Yussuf's. "Simple to mak fool of those so proud military commanda, but not so simple from those goddam Arab pearler that got eyes like a gull's."

Ali, the gorilla, growled his bit. "Any one damma pearler stick his nose, I rip him up."

Abram, the mad monkey, had nothing to say.

## CHAPTER III

### A QUESTION OF L'S AND R'S

THE blackout had been lifted from Massaua harbor. Hogan looked across the scummy black water at the signal light that could be seen on the dome of the governor's mansion—now military headquarters. It seemed to stare at him with merciless clarity.

"Tomorrow," Yussuf chuckled, "we go out at first dawn wiz the pearl fleet."

*The crews were Arabs but the divers were usually Negroes.*

It was a dispensation of Allah's that the scorched coastal hills cooled off during the night faster than did the water and therefore there was always an off shore breeze at dawn. Otherwise those keelless dhows could never have beat out of the island-blocked channel. And conversely, Allah, may his Name be praised, arranged that the rocks would burn under the sun quicker than the sea; so that there was invariably an in-shore homing breeze with the evening.

Before the first light there was a great creaking of cordage through never-greased blocks and the bedlam of yelling without which no Red Sea denizen can move himself or his beast or his boat. The fantastic lateen sails towered high; and the pearl boats jostled their way out of the night's pen, screaming, cursing, shoving each other off with hard heels.

From a little whitewashed guard-house on the tip of the south mole a guard was supposed to note the registered number of each boat as it went out. Some of the numbers he could see; many were blurred deliberately by their owners with their hereditary instinct against regimentation of any sort; others on the far side of the swarm were screened from view. An Arab assistant of the guard screamed questions at them. They screamed numbers back at him, all at once and outyelling each other. The Arab interpreted in the manner that would save himself the most trouble. Ali and Daoud adroitly maneuvered their boat along the farthest edge of the fleet. Daoud yelled numbers in perfect Arabic. And the fleet passed out to sea like a flock of dirty geese.

Pearl beds were scattered here and there on both sides of the harbor. Nowhere in profusion sufficient to warrant the expense of modern operation with diving equipment; but enough to make a better than coolie or farmer living for such natives as were strong enough and tough enough to go down in their skins, with the ever-persisting lure of finding, by Allah's favor, the pearl that meant fortune. It was that which, in the beginning of things, had made the straggling hut village that grew up to be Massaua Port.

Daoud steered south into the Dah'hlac channel. Most of the fleet passed him. Arab *nakhodas,* skippers, know the way over the waters by some sixth sense. A good one, having been there before, knows the way, out of sight of land, to an exact landfall at Jidda, the port of Mecca, or for that matter all the way to India. Daoud had to pick out cross bearings from reference to a scrawled map. It was quite a trick to maneuver a dory-shaped hull that had no keel and could not come within six points of the wind. Daoud cursed. Ali dropped the anchor to bring the boat to, cursed, broke it loose by sheer pulley haul, cursed again as the boat payed off, dropped anchor again. Both cursed. Finally they seemed to be satisfied that they had found the point of intersection of their bearings. They had a waterglass, a real one, a wooden bucket with a sheet of window glass puttied into the bottom. They peered through it at the bottom, beckoned to Hogan and handed him the bucket.

Hogan lay flat on his belly over the gunwale; the weight of the others on that side brought it low enough to the water to immerse the glass pane so he could look through.

To one who has never used a water glass the view is startling. All surface reflections eliminated, there emerges a limpid pale blue world of stillness where sea weeds wave lazily in errant currents of the tide and sometimes fish nibble in their deep security, until some larger fish comes like a projectile out of the sudden nowhere and all the others disappear as though blinked out.

Hogan could distinguish, a bit to one side, some barrel-shaped objects, weed grown and fuzzy. He judged the depth to be about thirty-five feet. Pretty stiff skin diving but a good man could do it.

"What are they?" he asked.

Ali scowled at him. "Whaffo you care wat they are?"

Daoud was less crude. He grinned. "Mebbeso they are barrel full with petrol. Petrol is ver' valuable these days; like you know it, I think?"

Hogan could not see that joke at all. He said, "How would you feel if somebody was to make you swallow a couple of those big ape teeth?"

"Wat you say?" Daoud was not quite as big as Hogan, but he was no whit afraid. It flashed to Hogan, as the man crouched and inched forward, that he must have some pretty effective trick of Oriental fighting up his dirty sleeve to give him so much confidence. He wondered what it might be and whether to try a smash for the man's jaw or to grab for a wrist and risk the over-the-shoulder jerk that breaks the arm.

Yussuf cut in with venomous fury. "Stop it, you both. Immedi-ate-ly. Daoud, you! Get at once back! We need him, iss it not?"

DAOUD did not have that gun of his in sight, as, in the role of breech-clouted native boatman, he had no concealment for it. It would be stowed in the cabin somewhere, Hogan guessed; and that was a thing to remember. Yussuf was dressed as the *nakhoda;* he wore a dingy sheet draped about himself in imitation of a burnous. He would be armed. But it seemed to Hogan that the sheer flaming force of him controlled the lesser minds. Daoud backed away, growling. He said, *Ebbene*, we need him."

And suddenly it came to Hogan that he was safe amongst these men—for just as long as they needed him. And they needed him, Hogan's shrewd guess was, because they couldn't dive. Any of them were strong enough. Ali, particularly, had the chest expansion of a gorilla; he ought to be able to negotiate phenomenal depths. But their backgrounds would explain them. Born on some Sicilian or Sardinian farm, probably, emigrated early to the hoped-for wealth of a colony where Europeans just did not venture into the pestilential water. No, neither Ali nor Daoud could swim; and perhaps that was something to be remembered, too. A prisoner on a boat—a prisoner pre-condemned, Hogan was beginning to suspect—with four men, of whom two obviously could not swim. That might be very useful to keep in mind against the time when they would start whatever it might be that they would start. The thought was a basis for encouragement to keep up a front as tough as their own.

And all that, with its near showdown, being past, Hogan remembered that he had his trochus knife in a sheath that hung over his buttocks.

Yussuf gave him his orders. "You will now dive and bring up one of those—barrels."

Hogan said, "All right. Tell your monkeys to haul their boat four fathoms to port and drop her back about three on the cable."

Yussuf was venomous at once. "To me you do not give orders." His eyes seemed to have no lids.

Hogan told him hardily, "You've calculated pretty damn cleverly to hook me into this. But there's some things you have to learn, too. You're *nakhoda;* but diving, it's the man who's going down who orders how he wants his ship. I'm fixing it so if I have to come up in a hurry, I'll be right at gunwale and no race to see what gets there first."

Yussuf digested that with his lidless stare; and then he shrugged his agreement. It took them, inexpert as they were, more than an hour, fighting wind and tide, to execute the maneuver. Hogan, as diver, having to conserve his every ounce of stamina, assisted in none of it. He looked around and observed other boats at work. They dotted the bay, the nearest about a mile away. Crews were almost universally Arabs, the divers usually big Negroes. Hogan wondered with something of a qualm whether that might be on account of the widely spread superstition that sharks would not attack blacks. Or could it be that the Negroes were just that much more callously stupid than the Arabs?

At last the boat seemed to be directly above one of those weed-hidden rounded objects. Hogan gave orders. "All right now. Tell your deck hands to lash me a couple of slings on a line and I'll see what I can do."

The two glared at him. Hogan had to explain, and he could not keep the gibe out of his voice. "I suppose you think a diver goes down and brings 'em up in his other hand. What I've got to have is slings and a rope; and then, if I can make fast to anything, you haul it up."

"Wat you mean, if you mek fast?" Ali's apprehension expressed itself in anger. "You mean you mebbeso can't bring?"

Hogan grinned at him. "Mebbeso just that. This is deep water, *paisano*. It's rather a suit job. If I can do it in skin it's a stunt."

They stared with feral eyes. Their thought was as clear as though written out. If he could not get the thing up, what use to keep him? Their eyes dropped away reluctantly and they set to tying a pair of loops into a rope.

Hogan had already found the descent line that is the one necessary piece of equipment on a pearler. It consisted of no more than a stone in a net with a stout stirrup woven in and a light line to hoist it with. Hogan took no fancy header. He sat on the gunwale and sent his final look around for any sickle-shaped fins. He filled his lungs and held the air tight; blew it explosively, filled and held again. Three times. Then he hooked a foot into the stirrup, took his hoist slings in one hand and let go.

THE stone carried him with his big lungful of air down slowly. Like a convict with ball and chain he hobbled the few necessary steps to the nearest of the barrel objects. They still looked like barrels, only lacking the bulge. More like—Hogan's mind flashed back to

*Daoud was a big, tough-looking man.*

Daoud's joke—gasoline drums; and he could discern, under the encrustation of barnacles and weeds, reinforcement hoops. Good; so much the easier to adjust hoist slings. He worked fast. Under water the thing in hand was not too heavy for him to work his fingers under the sand and heave up an edge to stuff a sling under. That fine Red Sea sand rose in clouds about him and obscured his vision. He damned it; but he knew enough now about the barrel's contours to adjust the other sling more or less by feel.

He hobbled clear of his sand cloud, cast his precautionary look upward against any marauding fish too large for comfort. He could see only the surface shimmer of the water that obliterated all vision into the lesser refraction medium of air, except, like a great, scarred whale's belly in his own world, the hulk of the dhow, cut off sharply at the water line. Behind it, like its calf, the shape of the rowboat. A school of paradise fish pushed out their mobile lips at him for all the world like they were jeering at him. Nothing more. He must have been down about two and a half minutes; he had a good extra half to spare, he felt, even at his depth of somewhere near forty feet; but no need. He unhooked his foot from its stirrup and swam strongly upward.

He broke water and there was Ali, eager enough to offer the courtesy of a helping hand to lift him to the deck. "You gat heem?"

"Hoist away." Hogan spread-eagled himself on the deck, arms wide, sucking in huge breaths, his eyes closed against the sun's vertical glare. The barrel thing sloshed to the surface. The two men looked around to be sure that their own ship's bulk screened it from the next pearler a mile distant; and then even Yussuf the *nakhoda* gave a hand to hoist it to the deck. Out of the water it required all their combined effort. They rolled it quickly into the covered hole that they called the cabin.

And then, for the first time, Abram, the fourth member of the crew, the little mad monkey, came to life. He scuttled after it and Hogan could hear him chattering to himself over it as he chipped at barnacles with a hammer.

In some ten or fifteen minutes he stuck his head out and announced with chuckling satisfaction, "Or right. Mech'nism is not spoired. Can crean and fix."

And then Hogan knew what the man was—a Jap. Nobody else would have that difficulty with the letter L. Hogan felt his heart shrink inside him. A fine gang, this, that had kidnapped him the way they did with their threats of squealing or shooting or else. Two Italo-African colonials, a rather obvious German, and a Jap! Or, at best, some sort of Malayo-Jap half-breed; for the man did not look too patently Mongoloid. What a devil's brood! With some desperate devil's game in hand. Hogan still didn't know what the hooped drum was.

The Jap—Abram, he fantastically called himself—emerged from the cabin and came toward Hogan. "Or'right. You go again; bring 'nader one."

Hogan opened one eye at him. "What the hell d'you think this is? Pressure-suit diving? I need a good half-hour, at this depth, between jumps."

The man showed teeth at him. Hogan could almost fancy his ears moving backwards, as a monkey's would. "You go down right away quick, I terr you. This mus' finish orr today."

Hogan compelled himself with a tremendous effort of will, while his skin crawled, to shut his eyes again. "You're crazier'n you look."

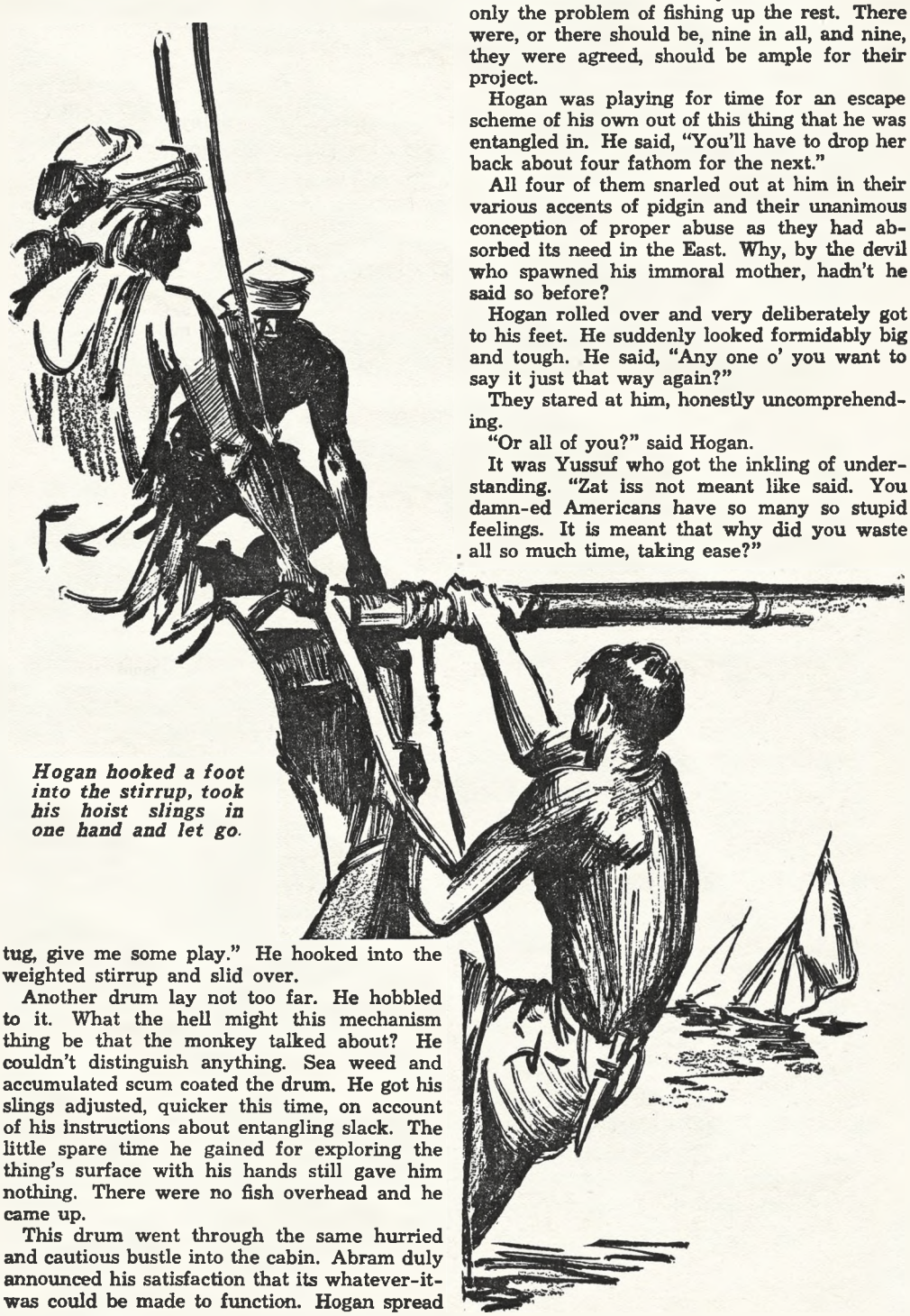
Abram chattered in fury to Yussuf, commanding him, "You terr him quick!"

Yussuf of the high forehead had the greater sense. He said, "Half an hour iss not too much rest." And to Hogan, threateningly, "But not more, you understand?"

## CHAPTER IV

### SIX IS ENOUGH

HOGAN kept his eyes shut. Their threats were no more than bluff as long as they needed him. He made the most of his half hour and rolled presently to the side again. "Shorten up a bit on those slings," he ordered. "There's too much free loop to tangle around. And keep your hoist end just hand-taut. If I



*Hogan hooked a foot into the stirrup, took his hoist slings in one hand and let go.*

tug, give me some play." He hooked into the weighted stirrup and slid over.

Another drum lay not too far. He hobbled to it. What the hell might this mechanism thing be that the monkey talked about? He couldn't distinguish anything. Sea weed and accumulated scum coated the drum. He got his slings adjusted, quicker this time, on account of his instructions about entangling slack. The little spare time he gained for exploring the thing's surface with his hands still gave him nothing. There were no fish overhead and he came up.

This drum went through the same hurried and cautious bustle into the cabin. Abram duly announced his satisfaction that its whatever-it-was could be made to function. Hogan spread out and made the most of his time, blowing hugely, listening for some clue. He got none. The others knew and they needed to discuss only the problem of fishing up the rest. There were, or there should be, nine in all, and nine, they were agreed, should be ample for their project.

Hogan was playing for time for an escape scheme of his own out of this thing that he was entangled in. He said, "You'll have to drop her back about four fathom for the next."

All four of them snarled out at him in their various accents of pidgin and their unanimous conception of proper abuse as they had absorbed its need in the East. Why, by the devil who spawned his immoral mother, hadn't he said so before?

Hogan rolled over and very deliberately got to his feet. He suddenly looked formidably big and tough. He said, "Any one o' you want to say it just that way again?"

They stared at him, honestly uncomprehending.

"Or all of you?" said Hogan.

It was Yussuf who got the inkling of understanding. "Zat iss not meant like said. You damn-ed Americans have so many so stupid feelings. It is meant that why did you waste all so much time, taking ease?"

Hogan threw the blame back at them. Why the hell hadn't they the sense to know it? They had all looked through the water glass; they could see how the weedy shapes lay scattered down there. And if they thought it was easy to drag a stone around on a forty-foot bottom and get in a job of work too, why not one of them go down and see how it was?"

The last problem cut their fury down to growls and they frittered away another inexpert half hour maneuvering the boat to suit their diver.

Belatedly it worked its way through to Ali's mind. "By gally, is it that he mak threat on us?" His brows twitched down over his small eyes. "*Corpo'd'dio,* I rippa him up."

Yussuf instantly hissed out at him. "You sh-shutt immedi-ate-ly up-pp. He iss now going down."

Hogan went through his routine of making fast the next drum—and then he was suddenly desperately glad for his fussiness to maneuver the boat so that he had to waste no time or energy in covering distance under water. He looked up for his ascent and this time it was there! The long leprous-white belly of a fish! He could see it shading into the darker gray around the sides; and the lipless smoothness of curved gash that was its mouth. It didn't take water with any of the protruding suction of a goldfish. The mouth remained agape, like a sewer entrance; it might have been static, but for the rhythmic pump of the multiple gills, four to a side, and the eddies of water behind them.

The brute was suspended motionless above Hogan. Long and damnably streamlined, as evil as a torpedo with a will of its own. Its thick pectoral fins stood horizontally out from the arc of its body, like stout limbs that should have been legs but had never grown. As it hung there, it looked to Hogan to be as big as the bottom of the dhow. And it was looking at him!

HOGAN knew all the stories about sharks; that most of them were not man-eaters; that most of them in the Red Sea were very much so; that they attacked only what looked to be wounded or helpless; that they attacked anything and everything. The only one of the stories that he knew to be positively untrue was that they had to turn on their backs to eat anything. They turned on their backs, he knew, only to engulf something on the surface of the water. Anything below them they took in their rush.

Hogan's heart and marrow and his whole being pounded out of his chest into his head. He felt as though they would have to burst from him in an explosion of breath that would have been his natural call for help. It was only behind the pounding, almost obliterated by it, that a dim instinct remained of what to do and a desperate thankfulness that he still had energy and breath enough to do it.

And to that doing he devoted every remaining ounce of what he had. With hand and foot and the stout trochus knife he dug into the sand; stirred it furiously; threw it up in frantic handfuls. It made its silver-gray cloud about him and above him. His one prayer was that the cloud might reach sufficiently above him.

At last, with his lungs almost at their limit, he collected his feet beneath him and heaved upward. He could see nothing. Aeons passed as he rose. Then his head bumped something hard. It might have been the bottom of the dhow, or it might not. Both hands on the haft of his trochus knife, he stabbed up at it. If it had been the dhow, the knife would have gone through its wormy planking. He knew it was not the dhow because it jerked away and water boiled about him and something slapped his shoulder and rasped the skin from it. Another temple-bursting second, and he exploded from the surface! And there was the dhow's gunwale to his hand. He gripped it and hoisted his body out of the water and to the deck in one spasmodic heave. And then he let his pent gallons of breath go in the long diver's yell.

"*Haa-a-a-a-beel! Ha-aa-aa-beel!*"

The pearling boat a mile away took up and broadcast it. *Haa-aa-aa-aa-bee-eel!* Farther boats repeated the broadcast.

How badly Hogan might have hurt the fish, he did not know. But it bled. Somewhere down there, speeding like a wounded torpedo, erratically, it was leaving a trail of that wispy gray-pink smoke that is blood under sea water. And then, incredibly out of nowhere, fins appeared on the surface. Even more incredibly, in a medium like water that would seem to be incapable of disseminating odors very fast, the fins followed the erratic course. They came as vultures appear out of a spotless African sky when something is about to die. Then a something splashed once enormously. The fins converged upon the splash. It repeated farther away. Fins rushed toward it. The splashing became a fury of cannibal fight.

"*Haa-aaa-aaa-bee-eel!*" The repeated cries came uselessly from boats that couldn't even see the fuss. Uselessly, because every diver was well aboard and would stay there. Hogan voiced a fine satisfaction.

"Well, that finishes diving for the day."

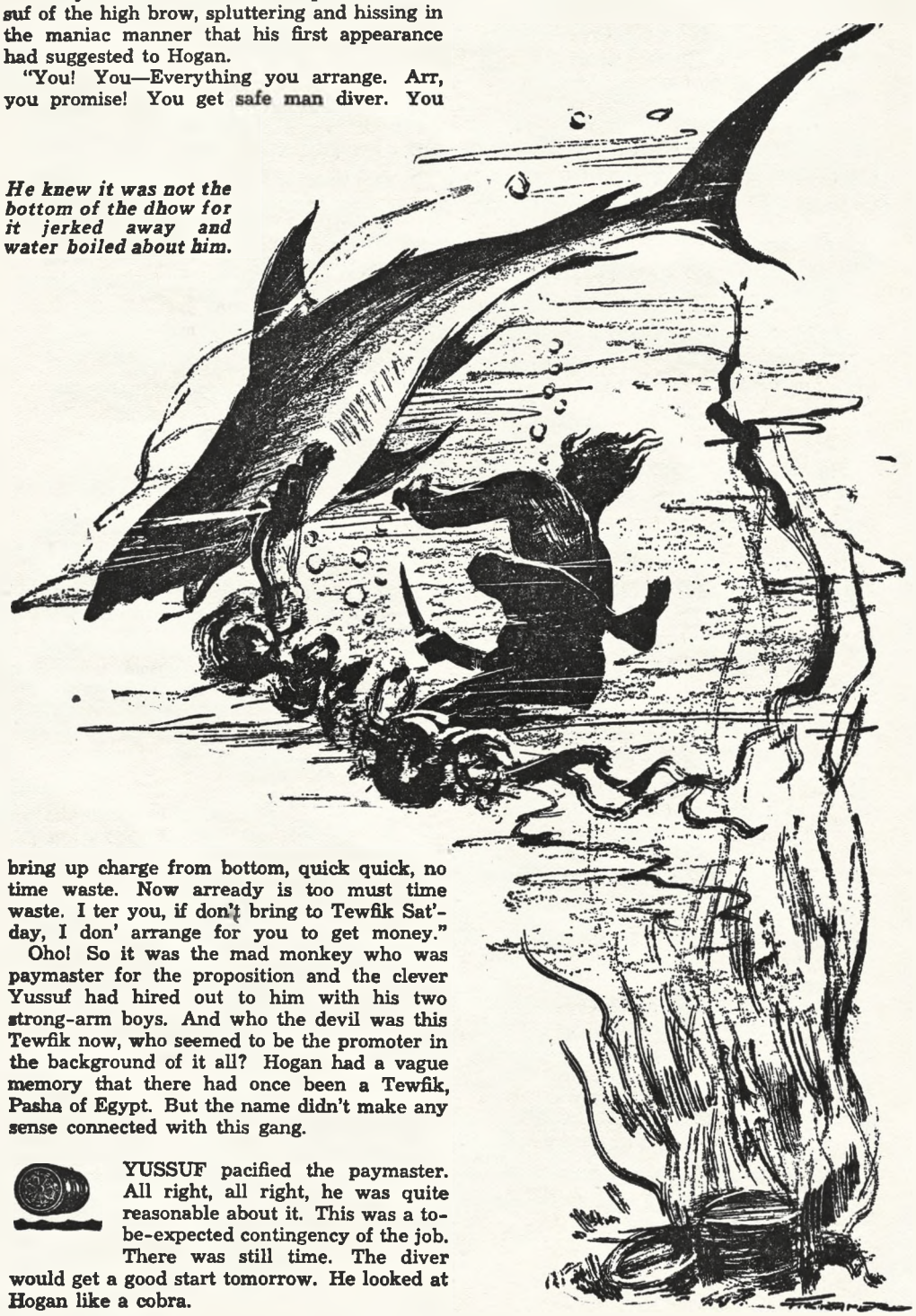
Immediately the four converged their eyes on him—like cannibal fins.

"Sure," said Hogan. "Nobody'll be going down from any boat till all is clear and quiet."

The eight eyes looked murder. "Yeah, and if," Hogan clarified his point, "I'd be sap enough to go down, some of the other boats would be wondering what priceless pearl bed we'd found and they'd come barging in."

He had the hardihood to grin at the futility of their rage. It was Abram, incredibly, who suddenly turned and vented his spleen on Yussuf of the high brow, spluttering and hissing in the maniac manner that his first appearance had suggested to Hogan.

"You! You—Everything you arrange. Arr, you promise! You get safe man diver. You bring up charge from bottom, quick quick, no time waste. Now arready is too must time waste. I ter you, if don't bring to Tewfik Sat'day, I don' arrange for you to get money."



*He knew it was not the bottom of the dhow for it jerked away and water boiled about him.*

Oho! So it was the mad monkey who was paymaster for the proposition and the clever Yussuf had hired out to him with his two strong-arm boys. And who the devil was this Tewfik now, who seemed to be the promoter in the background of it all? Hogan had a vague memory that there had once been a Tewfik, Pasha of Egypt. But the name didn't make any sense connected with this gang.

YUSSUF pacified the paymaster. All right, all right, he was quite reasonable about it. This was a to-be-expected contingency of the job. There was still time. The diver would get a good start tomorrow. He looked at Hogan like a cobra.

Ali had ape cunning enough to put his finger on a danger. "Wat we do with thees thing on board for wan night in harbor? If by bad chance they catch us, we alla go up, whoo-oommba."

Yussuf put the hope to Abram. "If perhaps three charges iss enough and we have then no need to work more in this locus—" he spat it out with the German implication in the word —"we do not return to this cursed harbor. We fly."

But Abram squealed rage and danced. "No! No! Three is not. All I must have. Or, at least, six."

And what the hell, Hogan wondered, was it that the madman proposed to do, and what was this material of which he must have at least six drums? Now words that had dropped began to build a pattern with old memories and he thought he began to know. Charges, mechanisms, whoomm. He had seen them in movies: things that looked exactly like gasoline drums and flew out in graceful arcs from the after deck of a speeding ship. Depth charges, of course. And mechanisms could be set off to go at any predetermined depth. Yes, that had to be it. So these clever fellows had taken out and sunk a batch of explosive material before the British came in and now they were retrieving it for some new sabotage effort. Hogan wondered what. Sabotage was getting to be more and more difficult these days. Nor was there much point to it, now that the African campaign was a dead issue—unless it could be just the implacable hate of hunted men.

Other pearling dhows were hoisting sail. Tomorrow would be another day, and if Allah in his wisdom had sent sharks today, it would be impious to struggle against his will; and fins still cruised questingly about the bay; and Allah's breeze was beginning to blow inshore to fill the emptiness caused by the uprush of furnace air from off the coastal hills.

*Nakhoda* Yussuf had to conform. The fleet began to straggle together before the harbor entrance. And then occurred a spectacle that must for ever leave the more efficient Christian white man marvelling at the way of the East. The sun touched the edge of the hills. It was by no means astronomical sundown; but the sun was no longer in sight; therefore it had set. Therefore all good Moslems must pray; and Moslems who are not so good must go through the forms of prayer, lest they be scorned. Wherefore lateen sails laboriously clattered down; the fleet drifted and banged about. Men turned seawards, toward Mecca, and muttered the faith in their aborted Somali Coast Arabic.

*" 'Llah'll'llah!"* Stressing aspirates, swallowing vowels to run the whole into a single throaty mumble. *"M'h'mmed a-russool'lah!* And they prostrated and raised up and "heard the voice of God" with their hands cupped to their ears and they "received the spirit" through their nostrils and they purified themselves and so on, all through the ceremony that has really something of dignity and reverent thought; though white men by their millions have laughed at the absurdity of so inconvenient a faith in all the ports of the East. And white men who pose as Somali Coast pearlers must conform, too, lest they attract attention. So Hogan kneeled with the four international desperados and made obeisance to the East and laughed at their impatience.

The moment it was all over, the nearest Arab boat yelled the most blood-curdling curses at the next nearest boat that fouled its sprit, and that boat howled back all that an Arab can think about the perverted degeneracies of the fathers and mothers of all the other crew; and with the standard confusion and bedlam the fleet made port and took up its uneasy anchorage.

Here, at last, Hogan's private scheme of escape took shape in his mind. It was simple, if somewhat desperate. Come dark, he would watch his chance to slip into that trailing dinghy, and if it should come to a fight, well, that would have to be one of the chances that he would have to take. He doubted that the four, with their own need not to attract attention to themselves, would make too much of an outcry. He would get ashore, even though it must be in the very harbor, and if he should get picked up by a shore patrol, that would have to be another chance he would have to take. Better, all of it, than the chance he stood with these bandits the moment he ceased to be a necessity to them.

A nice plan, even though desperate. But Yussuf of the forehead might have been a mind reader. He told Ali and Daoud to haul the dinghy up and hoist it over the narrow stern and he smiled silkily at Hogan. "Just in case, my friend, zat you do not wish perhaps to dive again tomorrow in zat same water. Myself, I must be too busy in the cabin, cleaning depth mechanisms; and while I am not on deck to watch, you, my so clever American, might contrive something over those two fellows. Zay are so stupid, iss it not? But"—he shrugged—"one uses, of course, the lesser races as one has need."

"Yeah." Hogan could positively feel the man's religion of the Herrenvolk pervading the dark. "Yeah, and you take your orders from a Jap."

The man was instantly venomous again. "Almost I would think Americans, too, are stupid. For a man, my friend, who knows already too much about us, you are very bold."

"You need me." Hogan flung his security at him.

"Yes-ss," Yussuf said. "We need you—yet."

Nobody came to make any inspection of the pearl fleet and find three salvaged depth bombs. As a matter of fact, the pearlers were considered to be a rather innocuous, if troublesome,

necessity of current native economy. The boats were registered; they checked in and out; and it was only boats that prowled at night that came under suspicion.

A neighboring boat yelled across, *"Bishm'illah,* in the name of God brother, is there tobacco?"

And Ali faultlessly replied, *"Insh'allah,* by the favor of God, there is."

The man sculled across and together the two joined in damning the Frangi who would not permit a respectable pearler to go ashore at night for a little shopping without a special permit; and how did they think a poor man, who had a meager living to earn by day, could find time for daylight shopping?

It was the identical plaint of the American white-collar clerk and the dime-store counter girl. Only the suggested remedy was different. "May Allah mate their mothers to dogs!"

THE night passed and the morning saw the customary scramble of the fleet to get out. Abram chittered his anxious orders to everybody to get the dhow moored and get to work. With the usual confusion and bungling his chitterings rose to a hysteria of actual insanity. No fins cruised the water. Hogan went down and got his slings under another one of the depth charges easily enough; and it was while he was down that clarity of thought flashed to him.

"Tewfik!" He remembered it now. There was a Port Tewfik somewhere, named for that old Egyptian Pasha. So it was at Port Tewfik that this explosive would have to be delivered and there the gang would get their pay—if they could deliver it by Saturday. After that, the sabotage project remained a mystery.

Hogan wondered about it as he lay on the deck with eyes closed. He didn't know what was at Port Tewfik to make it worth while—maybe a desert caravan, for all he knew. He had his own more important problem to speculate about. He was safe until he had hoisted five more of these things. Nine all told, wasn't it? Well, he could perhaps string those five out to run over into a next day's job again; and then this night he would just *have* to figure out some means of getting away, even if it meant taking a chance with those harbor sharks that he could not see to fight in the dark.

He dawdled and fussed about the dhow's exact position. One time he came up unsuccessful and complained that the drum was wedged in coral. He would have to go down again for that one, possibly two or three times.

Yussuf looked at him cunningly. "Is it zat you play, perhaps, a game?"

Abram was a monkey more than just a little bit mad. He was gibbering. He babbled the word "Saturday" as though that would be the ending of the world with no thereafter.

Hogan went down again. And again. Three more of the things to be gotten now. Hogan wondered whether he could dawdle along to extend them into tomorrow. Or even one of them, on some promise of a quick hoist and early away to wherever this Port Tewfik might be; *and* then there would be his last chance. He almost wished for another shark.

He was resting from the third hoist when Abram opened his mouth with worse effect than a shark and smashed every hope and plan with a sudden decision.

"Or'right. Six is enough. We go now immediatery quick."

Six! Enough! Then he was no longer a necessity to these men! Hogan heaved up to his feet. So it would be now. All right, if it had to be. Four of them! It could be worse. If only they didn't have those pistols somewhere. Well, it would be a fight and they would know it. Hogan looked at the water. Six miles to Little Dah'lac Island. It could be done—if—His stomach pulled in tight at the thought. But they would, of course, shoot him swimming. He noted the next pearl boat; it was nearer than it had been, perhaps half a mile. Perhaps he could make enough of a fight of it so that they would hear. But why should they interfere? On the other hand, perhaps the possibility of interference—drawing attention—might give the gang pause to postpone their whatever they planned to do about him.

Postpone! Inspiration came to Hogan. He said hardily, "Port Tewfik. If there's likely to be an inspection, coming into a new place, I'm warning you, don't be so dumb as here. Drop 'em in shallower water. Make it twenty feet, and I can get 'em up in half the time."

All four of them looked at him, as though assimilating a new thought. Yussuf said thoughtfully, "Yess-s. There may be yet an inspection."

Hogan let his breath go as though coming up from a dive.

Everything became confused bustle. The sail creaked up the stumpy mast that had never been greased, though that would have saved endless labor. The inshore wind was already commencing. That put it a little abaft the beam; a wind that a dhow can sail. She sped past the harbor mouth of Massaua; began to meet boats coming in from the northern pearl beds to roost. They yelled their curiosity, what about regulations? And Ali yelled back, let *Shaitan* swallow the regulations. The wind freshened with the dusk. The dhow sat up and flew. Abram glowered ahead, as though that speed were not enough.

"And what about night patrols?" Hogan wondered.

"Nowadays between ports are few," Yussuf told him. "Coming near by Port Sudan will again be patrols. There we arrange to pass by daytimes." He was the all confident organizer

again, sure of his plans and contented enough to be as cordial as a tame cobra. "We arrive to Port Tewfik by Saturday all right."

And what, Hogan wondered again, would be happening at this Port Tewfik place so importantly on Saturday? Whatever it might be, there would be his last opportunity to escape.

## CHAPTER V

### TEWFIK

PORT SUDAN came and went. The devil who fosters evil doers averted trouble for them. Yussuf even sibilantly whistled German *lieder* about enduring sentimental love. "By Saturday iss Tewfik now sure; and we get, then, our money and—disappear from three years hiding into some more successful hiding. Ha-ha!"

"Well, what the hell is it," Hogan had to know, "that makes Saturday in Tewfik so important?"

Yussuf looked at him with amused surprise. "Ss-so-o-o? It seems hier iss something our so clever American does not know. You do not know where is this Tewfik?"

Hogan shook his head.

"Port Tewfik, my friend," Yussuf tasted the satisfaction in his own words, "is a nothing, a mud bazaar and a signal station. But it is the end of the Suez Canal!"

Hogan's eyes squinted at him in the sun and then opened to blink a pained stare as all the implications began to race through his mind, stimulated by that potent name, Suez Canal.

"And not Saturday," Yussuf went on, "but Sunday iss the day. Only for good precaution have I arranged to be ready by Saturday, as an intelligent organizer must always. And the importance of Sunday also I suppose you do not know, since news does not come to a man in the trochus creeks. So, since you are now here and cannot in any possible human manner spoil my plans, I now tell you. On Sunday, my friend, comes the big British convoy for whatever they plan against our good Abram's people in Burma or Malaya or somewhere. In this I am not interested."

Hogan's eyes were staring wide now, despite the sun.

"In what I am interested, and for what I earn my money, iss that I have an information that in the convoy travels, first a scout ship, for which there iss no interest, and then—ha-ha—those so always stupid censors hope to conceal—to conceal here in Africa! Ha-ha-ha! After the scout ship travels what iss for me an interest. There comes then the great British super, so extra proud, giant battleship, the *Blunderer,* or *Dunderer,* or what iss it, that they feel they do not now any longer need in North Sea for fear of the German ships that are no more. Ha-ha, ha-ha! It gives to laugh, no?"

So Yussuf laughed and Hogan stared. A queer, empty feeling weighed down on his stomach. His face must have said something, for Yussuf said, "You do not laugh?"

Hogan said, "I'm not going through with it. I'm quitting. I never liked your deal anyhow and I'm quitting right now."

The futility of his talk escaped him. He was filled with a horror that mounted as pictures of the awful possibilities flashed to his mind.

To Yussuf's mentality there was an incomprehensibility about it. He said, "But zis iss a British affair. And you, as my so careful informations were in advance, do not have reason to love zese British." He made a motion of a man pointing a rifle. "Bang bang, no?"

"I don't care," Hogan said. "I'm not in it. I won't dive."

Yussuf's face required only the turn of an eyebrow to turn his expression from surprise to poisonous rage. Hogan saw it turn and was immediately wary. If this was the showdown—his hand went to his back for the trochus knife—and Daoud's grip from behind smacked down on his wrist!

Daoud was strong. Hogen knew that, and he suspected, too, some pretty deadly tricks of rough-and-tumble that gave Daoud all his confidence. Almost with the same motion of catching his wrist, Daoud had Hogan's arm excruciatingly up between his shoulder blades with the wrist forced down so that his fingers could keep no grip on the knife. It clunked to the floor. Another lift, and the elbow would dislocate.

Hogan had only one thing to do. He jumped high and flung all his weight backwards. Daoud sagged beneath it and Hogan's weight flattened an "Ugh!" out of him and the near broken arm was free.

Hogan was on top, but on his back. Which was no very great advantage; and it was Hogan's for only a grunted breath. With a smooth, fast move Daoud rolled Hogan and then there was Hogan, still somehow on his back and Daoud on top. So that was it, it flashed bleakly to Hogan. Daoud was something of a wrestler. Which was a very great advantage indeed. Why, in God's name, the flash seared through Hogan's mind, did any man let himself grow up without learning scientific self-defense? He was down and all that he had was his strength.

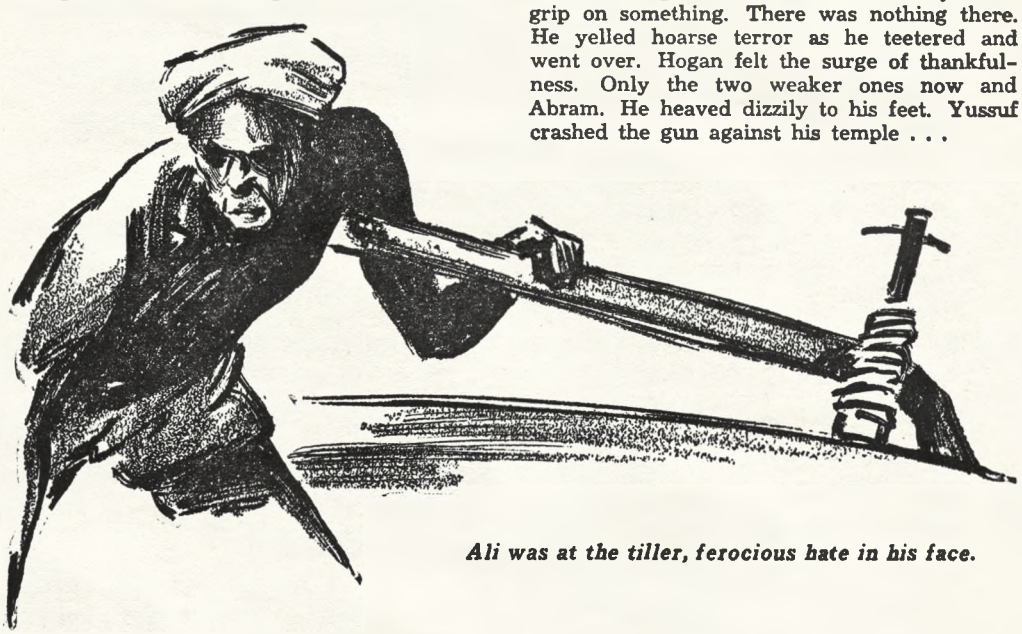
DAOUD was clawing for his throat. The ship heeled to a sickening forty-five degree angle. Both men rolled. A long running wave sloshed over them. Daoud let go an inarticulate noise and clung to Hogan, more in the manner of a drowning man's clutch than a fighter's.

Yussuf was spluttering rage. "The God's

cursed fool! He would upset us all!" He scrambled aft, trampling on the fighters' bodies, and, positively hissing rage between his teeth, he beat Ali back to the tiller, slapping at his face, kicking, cursing. Ali, head ducked under elbows, took hold again and the ship leveled up and raced on.

Ferocity came again into Daoud's eyes and he fought to choke the life out of Hogan. Hogan had his grip on Daoud's wrists and he was able slowly to twist them till Daoud yelled.

Yussuf had sufficient courage to fling himself upon both men and apply his two hands to a counter twist on Hogan's wrist. And there Hogan was prayerfully glad that he had, at least, strength. The three fought now with curses



*Ali was at the tiller, ferocious hate in his face.*

and gasps. Ali hopped up and down beside the tiller and howled.

It seemed problematical whether the two men would be able to subdue Hogan. And then Abram, gibbering, flung himself in. Four of them now—Hogan under. Splinters from the shell-gashed deck were a torture to every squirm of his naked back. The three swarmed over him, grunting, bubbling through the sweat that dribbled over their lips.

The Jap had a devilish trick of jabbing two stiff fingers at the soft parts of Hogan's belly and groin. Each stab jerked a moan from him. Otherwise they fought silently; only that the Asiatic babbled. His thick hair was jammed against Hogan's face. He smelled different to the others, too. A loathing of his rank sweat surged through Hogan. He found an arm momentarily clear and was able to jolt a smash against the Jap's cheek that rolled him clear of the pile. Ali howled from the tiller.

Abram howled too, for once not like a mad monkey; chokingly, like a mad dog. He lurched into the cabin, came out again with one of the pistols in hand. He hopped about the fighting tangle looking for his shot.

Yussuf saw him and screamed, "No! Not that, fool! *Gott,* we may need him yet worse as ever." He shoved clear of the fight to take away the gun. Hogan's knees were drawn up to protect his belly from numbing finger punches. Daoud pressed over them, clawing always for his throat. Hogan kicked out desperately with both feet together; hoisted Daoud clear of himself.

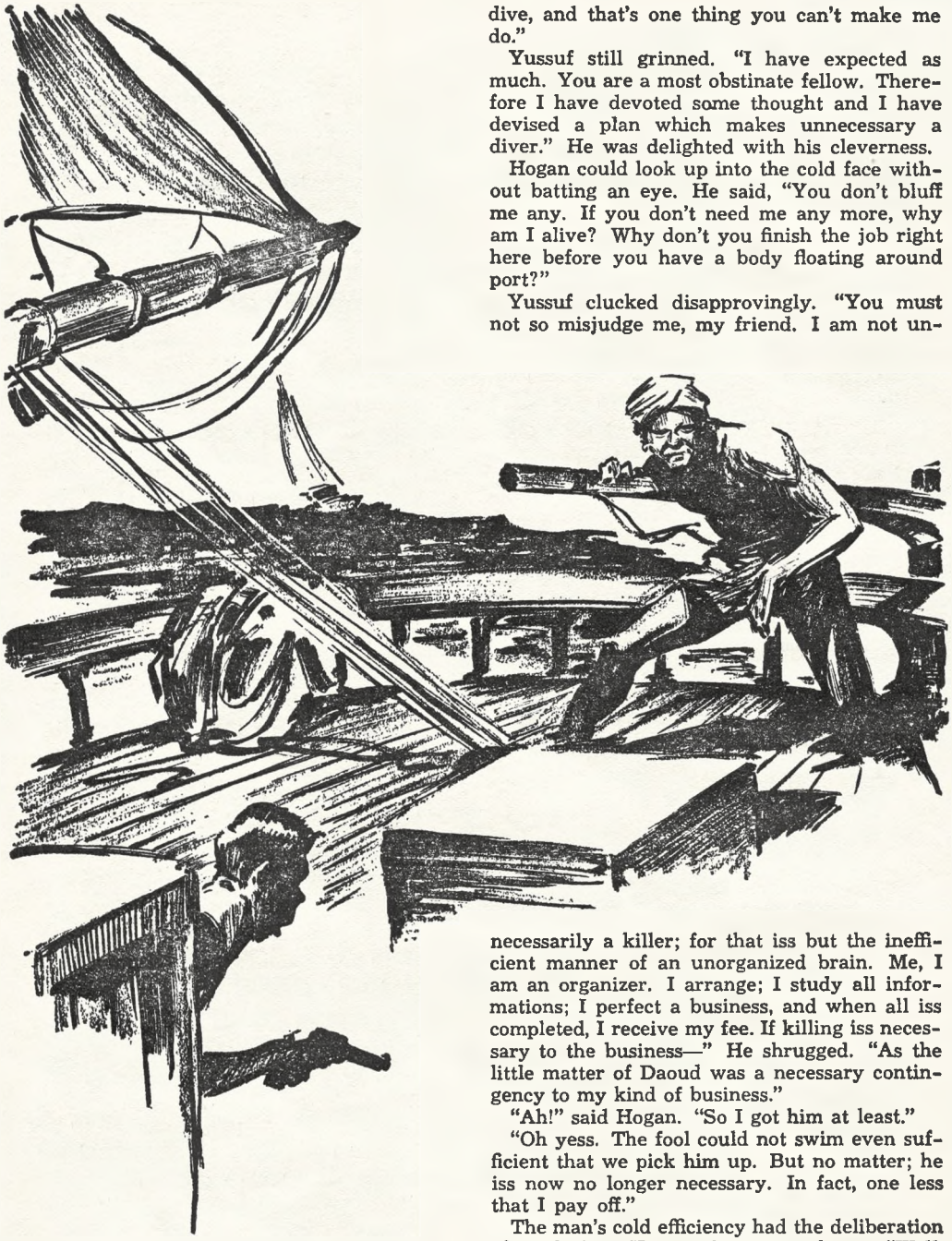
Daoud came down on one foot, spun, lurched toward the gunwale. He clawed madly for a grip on something. There was nothing there. He yelled hoarse terror as he teetered and went over. Hogan felt the surge of thankfulness. Only the two weaker ones now and Abram. He heaved dizzily to his feet. Yussuf crashed the gun against his temple . . .

WHEN he came sterterously out of it, Hogan knew that his fight was finished. He was lying against the water cask, very efficiently tied at wrist and ankle and made fast, besides, to the cask cradle.

Just aft of him he could see Ali at the tiller, his face more ferocious than Gargantua's. Hogan rolled away from the hate in it. Forward he could see Yussuf and Abram, both staring ahead to a something that was not yet there.

He baked in the sun, trussed like a barbecue. The water cask slowly leaked. He was able to roll his head under it and pay a prayer for every drop. The dhow sped on and the hours crawled.

Yussuf came to relieve Ali at the tiller. Ali dragged out a three-legged clay pot and set it up in the lee of the cabin and started a charcoal fire in it. It was the universal ship's galley of all the East.



Yussuf was extraordinarily genial. His plans were up to schedule. He smiled unwinkingly down on Hogan and told him, "Zat haze ahead iss Tewfik. We make there by evening." His smile became a grin. "And zis iss Saturday."

Hogan knew that he could be no worse off than he was. He said, "I don't care. I won't dive, and that's one thing you can't make me do."

Yussuf still grinned. "I have expected as much. You are a most obstinate fellow. Therefore I have devoted some thought and I have devised a plan which makes unnecessary a diver." He was delighted with his cleverness.

Hogan could look up into the cold face without batting an eye. He said, "You don't bluff me any. If you don't need me any more, why am I alive? Why don't you finish the job right here before you have a body floating around port?"

Yussuf clucked disapprovingly. "You must not so misjudge me, my friend. I am not unnecessarily a killer; for that iss but the inefficient manner of an unorganized brain. Me, I am an organizer. I arrange; I study all informations; I perfect a business, and when all iss completed, I receive my fee. If killing iss necessary to the business—" He shrugged. "As the little matter of Daoud was a necessary contingency to my kind of business."

"Ah!" said Hogan. "So I got him at least."

"Oh yess. The fool could not swim even sufficient that we pick him up. But no matter; he iss now no longer necessary. In fact, one less that I pay off."

The man's cold efficiency had the deliberation of a glacier. Hogan clung to a hope. "Well, where are you being so smart in holding me?" Since he was alive, they must be intending something, and in that something there might be a chance.

Yussuf crushed the hope. "For you, my friend, I fear it iss not so good. The Jap now wants you."

"The Jap?" A chill began to creep round the back of Hogan's neck.

"Yes, the Jap. For myself, if you had not been too clever to find out things, I would have paid you off, like was promised. But the Jap now demands you because you slapped his face, ho-ho, which, for a Jap, iss very bad."

"What's he want me for?"

"I do not quite understand—they are very funny fellows, these Asiatic races. It seems you must be some sort of spirit attendant to his hara-kiri."

"What d'you mean, hara-kiri?"

Yussuf laughed. "Look, now I tell you." The enormous conceit of the man impelled him to chuckle over the perfection of his plans to this witness who could not now affect them. "Thus and so have I perfected this business. Observe. I have found an information that there comes this convoy. The Jap whom we call Abram iss at once interested. He has money to pay and iss, besides, fanatic, a little bit mad, like you see.

"So for me it iss so easy. I know of these depth charges. I find Luigi, that is Daoud, who knows the place. I need, to bring zem up, a man who dares not to squeal. Zat iss you—I have already a note of your affair, as one who might be useful. The depth mechanisms, I learn, are proof to water. It needs now only a means to bring zem under this Blunderer of the British."

"Yeah, and that's where your plan flops," Hogan jeered. "How to depth-charge a battleship?"

"But you do not give me credit for planning." Yussuf positively beamed his satisfaction with himself. "Observe now. At Port Tewfik I receive my pay and with my stupid Ali I go. I have no more interest. Abram remains. This iss now his affair. He sets the depth mechanism for forty feet—this he has studied. It iss permitted to native boats to enter the canal—this iss old treaty with Egypt. When a native boat cannot get out of the way of a steamer it iss unfortunate for the native boat and the company pays a damage to his wives."



HOGAN was beginning to understand the devilish design of the thing now. His breath was coming through his open mouth and his eyes bulged. Yussuf seemed to take it as a compliment to his dramatic exposition of all his cleverness.

"Very well, zen. So now what happens?

*They fought with curses and gasps. Ali hopped up and down beside the tiller and howled.*

Abram, fanatic, very simply blunders his dhow into the way of this super Blunderer. The ship rolls him over, rides over him—I have studied the action of ships. At forty feet down, which iss the deep of the canal, the mechanisms release. Whoo-oomps!"

"Good God!" said Hogan's choked voice.

"Yess, iss it not? Touching the very stomach of the battleship! In such restricted area the effect iss col-los-sal! Ze great battleship comes practically apart. Ze canal iss blocked for I do not know how long. Ze British drive for wherever it iss, iss delayed and gives the Japs time to prepare whatever they prepare. Our friend Abram, whose name I now tell you iss Hiroshigo, has done his hara-kiri for this Hirohito—ha-ha, it gives to laugh. And you, my too bold American, it seems, accompany him as a slave to his spirit because you slapped his face and because he hates your people even more zan these British. They are funny fellows, these Japs."

"And so you sold me to him—like meat. A sacrifice to the ancestors."

"But my dear sir!" Yussuf insisted on the practicality of his machinery. "Do not say so. Already you were a danger to me, knowing now my face, which I might yet have overlooked, since I admire much your prowess and we might have worked together. But my employer demands now that you shall be included in the contract before he pays my fee. So—" Yussuf spread his hands apart in the gesture of finality.

"I wouldn't work with you," Hogan hoped to show the loathing in his voice, "if you were—"

"Tsk-tsk-tsk!" Yussuf reproved. "Do not say things that might spoil my mood. Look. Ali brings food."

Ali came with a tin pan in which were lumps of a goat stew that had been cooked over now three times to prevent its quick putrefaction in the heat. Hogan felt that, in spite of Yussuf's assurance, he was being fed as a precaution to conserve his strength in case they might have to make him dive again. He was fiercely resolved that they had nothing that could make him do that; but he was just as fiercely resolved that, somewhere in all this adroit maneuvering, there must occur some sort of flaw, some sort of chance to get away, and against that chance he would have to conserve. So he ate.

Chance! Bound hand and foot in the power of a soulless thinking machine, and consigned by it to a suicide maniac!

Ali took the tiller. He wouldn't untie foot or hand of Hogan's; but squatting, one arm could reach up to the tiller and the other one to Hogan and he fed him by hand, shoving the chunks into his mouth with a great spatulate thumb. Hogan retched.

Dusk came outside of Port Tewfik. The dhow craftily waited till dark. There was no harbor, as at Massaua, no mole with a guard. Giant concealed guns guarded the canal, but nothing prevented a native boat from coming in under the breakwater. A precaution was that it had to undergo inspection and a thorough check of papers.

Yussuf, who missed no detail, gave Ali an order. Ali with the same thumb stuffed a gag into Hogan's mouth. The dhow ghosted in to a dark anchorage. Ali yelled loud Arabic to proclaim honest arrival of a trader. Then Hogan saw the bright little scheme that Yussuf had devised to take the place of diving. The six drums were in the cabin, well lashed together in line to a length of rope. They were quietly rolled out; quietly lowered into the water; the anchor was hauled up, and there swung the dhow, anchored all innocently to three thousand pounds of TNT. Then Ali lifted his voice to bray that an honest pearler awaited inspection. The three men hoisted Hogan into the cabin and let him lie.

Presently a launch chugged out. A white man with a Frenchy sort of accent came on board, looked cursorily at grimy papers under a flashlight.

"Hmm! Pearler from Massaua. Why did you leave Massaua?"

Ali's whole appearance was brute stupid enough to put over the diabolical cleverness of Yussuf. He babbled the familiar circumstantial tale.

"Because, *effendi,* by the inscrutable will of Allah, a man of our crew was bitten by a dog. His *kismet* was that the dog was mad and the man thus took the disease. So we have brought him to the hospital here where the white men doctor such things."

"There is no rabies hospital here, you fool," the inspector said. "You must take him up the bay to Suez."

*"Wah'llah!"* Ali mourned. "How is the world so full of liars who delude poor men! It was told to us that where the great canal came out was the place."

The inspector grumbled. "A lot of fools think that the Suez Canal comes out at Suez. Where is this man?"

"In the cabin, *effendi.* We have bound him, of course; for he is already violent and he foams fearfully at the mouth when the rages come upon him."

The inspector flashed his light into the cabin and saw it empty but for a heaving figure that was nearly succeeding in spasmodically jerking itself up the three short steps of the companion way. He knew the awful fear that the East has of rabies and the brutal treatment of it. He said, "You'll have to take him up to Suez tomorrow. You must stay at anchor for the night." He stamped the greasy papers, entered the dhow's number in a book; and it became a duly registered craft authorized to go about its lawful business.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Blunderer

HE GOT into his launch and went away.

The anchor was carefully lowered and the long string of loaded death was carefully hauled aboard. Yussuf, panting after the chore that took the combined strength of all three, chuckled to Hogan, as being the only one with intelligence enough to appreciate such exquisite craft.

"So simple, iss it not, my friend, when one but uses the head, no?"

"Mm-mh, mm-mmm, hmm," said Hogan through his gag as they stowed him back into the cabin, with the depth bombs.

Sweat oozed from him, but only part of it was due to the stifling heat. The monstrousness of the plan overshadowed his own infinitesimal part of it.

It came to him as he squirmed to less excruciating positions on the barnacle-studded drums, how easy was sabotage against precautions built on white men's absurd values of individual life, when an Oriental was calmly committed to a patriotic suicide. His own rage of impotence sweated from him in little trickles that tickled his nose maddeningly.

Morning crawled over the desert, the sun already a sullen red before it would reach its white heat of a little later.

*"La Allah il Illah."* The muezzin, close to Cairo's influence on purity of speech, pronounced the words coherently. Yussuf and Ali went through their extravagant show of the ritual. Abram Hiroshigo seemed to be engaged in some quiet prayer of his own.

Grotesque! Hogan writhed in his lashings like a caterpillar's cocoon. Damnable, what deviltry could be covered under a show of holiness!

The off-shore breeze swung the dhow so that Hogan could look through the little square of companionway straight into the alleyway of desultory date-palm tops that bordered the canal. Only the Tewfik breakwater was between himself and the deep water cut.

Abram—was it some satanic humor of Yussuf's that had suggested for a despised Oriental the name of Abram?— sculled ashore in the rowboat. Obviously—Hogan's mind was racing—to get the pay-off money. Obviously, because, had he had it with him on the dhow, his oblique mind would never have trusted any hired gang to complete their job. Damnable again, how a Jap could contact cooperation in any bazaar of the polyglot people in the restless and discontented East that surged under its new-found freedom!

Amongst the date-palm tops Hogan could see the masts of a steamer. They crawled down the alley at the regulation speed of three knots, slow enough so that the backwash would not cut away the canal banks. A freight steamer, not a warship.

Abram Hiroshigo returned from shore. Hogan could hear a mumble of cordial talk. Everything, apparently, was satisfactory. As completely satisfactory as Yussuf had planned from the very beginning. Not a hitch. Not a thing to stop the plan.

Hogan could see, above the breakwater wall, the upper decks of the steamer slowly emerge into his square of vision. A giant hope was taking shape; a steamy something, as yet without form in his boiling mind. Yussuf, paid off, would be going. In the riddance of that efficient devil was hope.

Hogan could hear his joint chant with Ali. *"Ig'r—fok—hai!* Heave, up she goes!" and the screech of the lateen sprit jerking itself up the mast. Their last service. He saw their forms pass before his opening; heard the thump of the rowboat against the hull, the swish of oars.

An absurd indignation impinged for a moment on Hogan's mind. He had vaguely expected some sort of a good-by—a last gibe, a chuckle, at least, for the complete triumph of a perfectly worked plan. But why should there be? He was a helpless nothing, an inconsequential casualty in the progress of international business.

So they were gone! Hogan's steaming hope condensed down to a definite shape. With that inhumanly clever Yussuf out of the way, even a man tied hand and foot might do something.

ABRAM Hiroshigo came into view and stood at the tiller. His expression was utterly dead-pan. The dhow heeled over and fell away on the wind; and just before it did Hogan saw, through his square hole, the masts of a battleship creeping between the date-palm tops!

The dhow staggered out from behind the breakwater. There was no acting about his clumsiness; this madman was no sailor. There were other native boats in the bay, criss-crossing this way and that, loaded with bricks or Nile pottery or just camel feed, all the desultory industry of native life.

Hogan could look out of the cabin directly into Hiroshigo's eyes. They were wide open and set, as though they saw nothing. Only the movement of the eyeballs, watching the traffic, showed that they were not of glass. Once the dhow inexpertly blundered into the path of another. Yells and lurid cursing came from it and for the tense few seconds terror stared from the eyes. A crash and a sinking here would be disaster to the cold deviltry in hand that nothing else could now stop.

Hogan was inch-worming himself over the serried drums. Barnacles gashed him like sawteeth.

The other dhow grazed past the stern in a fury of abuse and obscene gestures. Hiroshigo was like a carved idol. His eyes were fixed straight ahead. Then Hogan could see, lengthening out behind, a stone wall. The breakwater, by God! It projected the canal mouth into the bay. Inside of it was the cut! The madman was now in the very neck of the canal!

Somebody shouted. The voice came from higher up. The signal station on the breakwater. The madman never even looked up.

The voice shouted grumblingly, "All right, yer bloody fool. If yer gets in the wye of trouble it eyen't my ruddy fault."

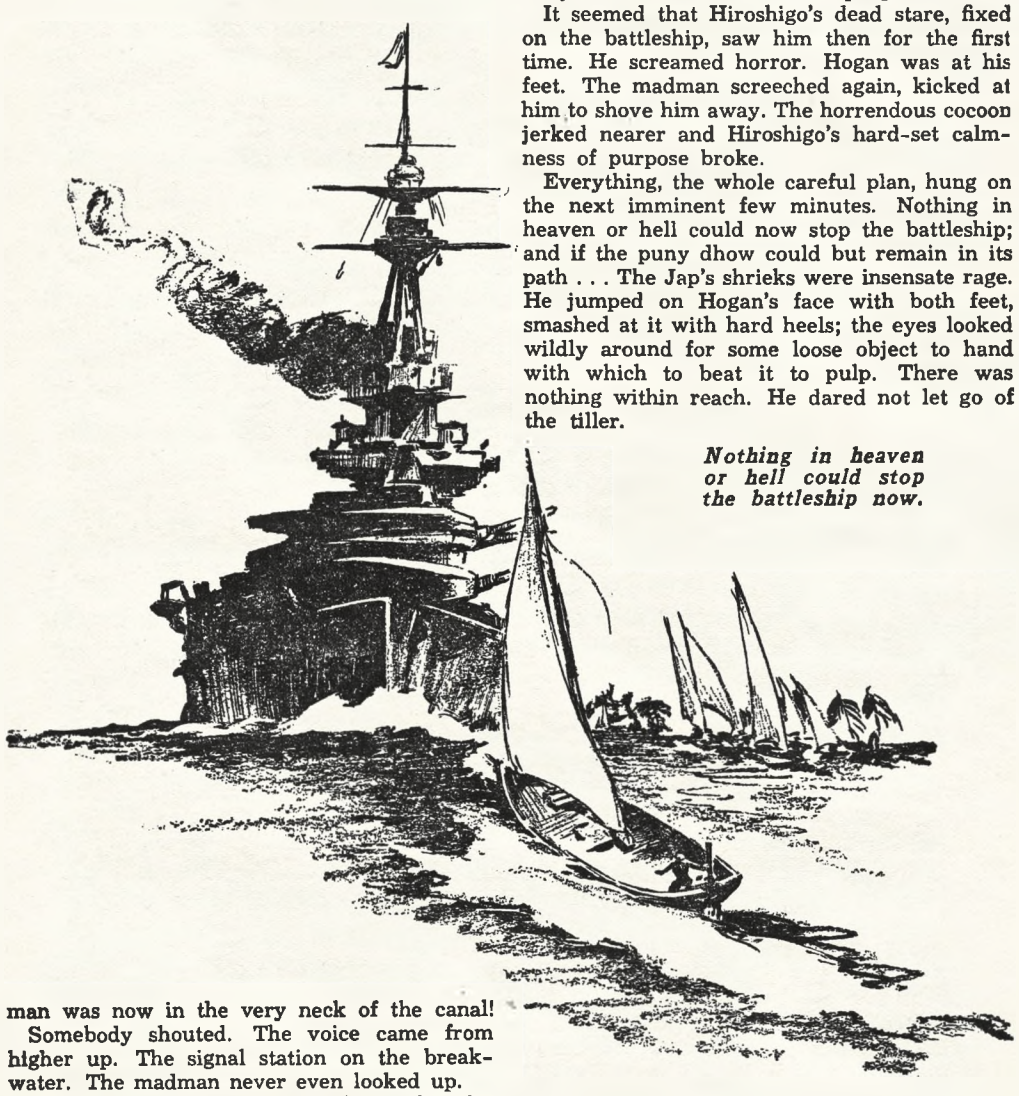
At that point Hogan came out of the cabin. He came like a giant cocoon, in spasmodic jerks, heaving whichever way the angle found him, without control of direction. In one of his contortions he could see the battleship. Monstrous, bearing majestically, irresistibly down.

He could see, with the sudden clarity of a still photograph, other native dhows creeping past its sides, squeezed close to the sandy banks. The monster ship's bridge was higher than the lateen sails.

Hogan jerked himself haphazardly toward the tiller. He was a portent. An inhuman thing without arms or legs. A great sinewy body that bled, and somehow progressed.

It seemed that Hiroshigo's dead stare, fixed on the battleship, saw him then for the first time. He screamed horror. Hogan was at his feet. The madman screeched again, kicked at him to shove him away. The horrendous cocoon jerked nearer and Hiroshigo's hard-set calmness of purpose broke.

Everything, the whole careful plan, hung on the next imminent few minutes. Nothing in heaven or hell could now stop the battleship; and if the puny dhow could but remain in its path . . . The Jap's shrieks were insensate rage. He jumped on Hogan's face with both feet, smashed at it with hard heels; the eyes looked wildly around for some loose object to hand with which to beat it to pulp. There was nothing within reach. He dared not let go of the tiller.



*Nothing in heaven or hell could stop the battleship now.*

Here was Hogan's surging hope—if he could but do it. He jerked in galvanic frenzy. He could feel the sick crunch of splinters breaking off under his shoulders. But he managed to heave his legs high. The Jap screamed. Feet tied, as they were, Hogan brought them down in a savage double kick into the Jap's stomach!

The mad screaming cut short in a choked gasp. The Jap fell away, curled in the agony of a shocked diaphragm, and retched for breath.

Hogan could not reach the high tiller grip.

But he was able to jerk his body along to the lower butt of it, to get his back against it and his feet to the stern rail and thus heave against its short leverage.

The dhow yawed away and softly ran up on the beach.

HOGAN jerked to where Hiroshigo was trembling out of his solar-plexus punch and thudded both feet against him again. And again!

And then the vast gray bulk of the battleship was sliding past. Indignant voices came from her high sides. "Gor'blime fat 'eads!"—"Could ha run 'em blinkin' well dahn."—"'Ere, what is this? A bloody performin' seal?"—"Bloody is right, chum. Look at 'im. Strewth!" And a sterner voice. "Signal the control tower, Mr. Stanton. It looks like some Wog is killing another one here." The ship slid on.

Presently a launch chugged up. Fussy. Important. Hogan said, "Mm-mh, hm-mm, mm-mm." The French official of the canal patrol said, "*Dieu les encrache!* God spit upon them! What a nuisance are always these Arabs!" And, "God save us! What a combat is this of a man who is bound, yet batters another with his feet!"

The official ripped away the knotted rag from behind Hogan's head and got the gag out of his mouth.

Hogan mumbled stiffly: "Telephone provost—Suez—immediately. Sabotage."

The official said, "*Dieu!* A white man!"

"And get the dragnet out at once for two men, Yussuf and Ali, very recently gone ashore at Tewfik."

"*Bien.* And you?"

"Never mind. Hold this one. I don't think he's dead. He's a Jap."

"Oho! One finds here two Arabs, and the one is a white man and the other one is a Japanee. I think, *mon brave*, I hold you, too. Perhaps, since you have the appearance of a devil most powerful, I leave you bound. We discuss better this affair in the Bureau of Provost . . ."

In the office of the provost, Yussuf spat venom like a Gaboon viper. "All right, very well, you have only the word of zis man that Luigi and I are engaged in a sabotage. All zat you have of proof iss that we are enemy alien until now at large. Ziss iss not so very much a crime."

"The Japanee, too," said the provost, "has identified you."

"*Schwein!* He implicates me because he stole my ship while I went to buy food." Even this detail of a plausible explanation against a possible accident in the plan had been prepared. "So all right. Ze charge can be no more zan zat I have some explosive—some long-ago sunken explosive, zat I hope to sell. Nothing even stolen. I am in possession of some contraband—inside of neutral Egyptian territory. Sir, you surely do not take ze word of an Asiatic who has stole all and hoped to find a black market."

"I am taking the word," the provost said, "of this American."

"Zis American? He has dared to speak? All right zen, I tell you now. Do you know who he iss, this American? He iss Hogan, one time a sergeant of occupation forces in Eritrea. Court-martialed for so-and-so many thousand gallons of petrol and iss given death penalty. So how good iss a word of such a one?"

"He says he has an explanation of that, and I'm checking upon it. We know his record, and we know that you are Von Ehrlich, the cleverest enemy agent at large in Africa."

Von Ehrlich first bowed stiffly in acknowledgment of the compliment, then fumed back on Hogan. "Explanation? What explanation has a man for a court-martial? This iss an information that iss known to me as well as to your official notice of escape."

The provost said, "Yes, official notices have informed us that you, Von Ehrlich, have organized a very complete underground information service about nearly everything that went on."

Hogan's face was a pulp from Hiroshigo's heels. But he was still dogged in his insistence.

"And maybe I should have stayed a fugitive. Only there's some things that a man can't stand for, even if he has a firing-squad rap hanging over him. And your game was one of them. So all right, I had to get taken; but I don't care, I'll put in my appeal and I'll take my chance of getting straightened out; and I know I damn well will get straightened out. Army'll give me a square deal. Army should never have stuck me on that kind of a job anyhow. I'm no blasted tally clerk; I'm not truckin' and delivery. I'm front line infantry."

Von Ehrlich's smirk had grown to a most self-satisfied grin; and there the hunch that had been forming in the back of Hogan's mind suddenly crystallized. He shot a red finger out at the man like pointing a gun. "And, by God, I've got it now! What you're so pleased about is that your so clever information service knew all along who was looting all that stuff and shoving it through the underground. Damn if you aren't my chief witness, Mister Yussuf Von Ehrlich; and that'll square us for a whole lot of things."

Von Ehrlich's face set wooden and arrogant again. "I know nothing of all zis," he said.

But the provost marshal cut in, "By God, Hogan, I believe you're right. When your case goes up for review, Army'll get at the truth. And of course this job you've just turned in isn't going to hurt you any." He grinned at Hogan as one pretty tough soldier to another.

Hogan said, "I'm cured. Long as I don't have to go back truckin'."

"What do you want?"

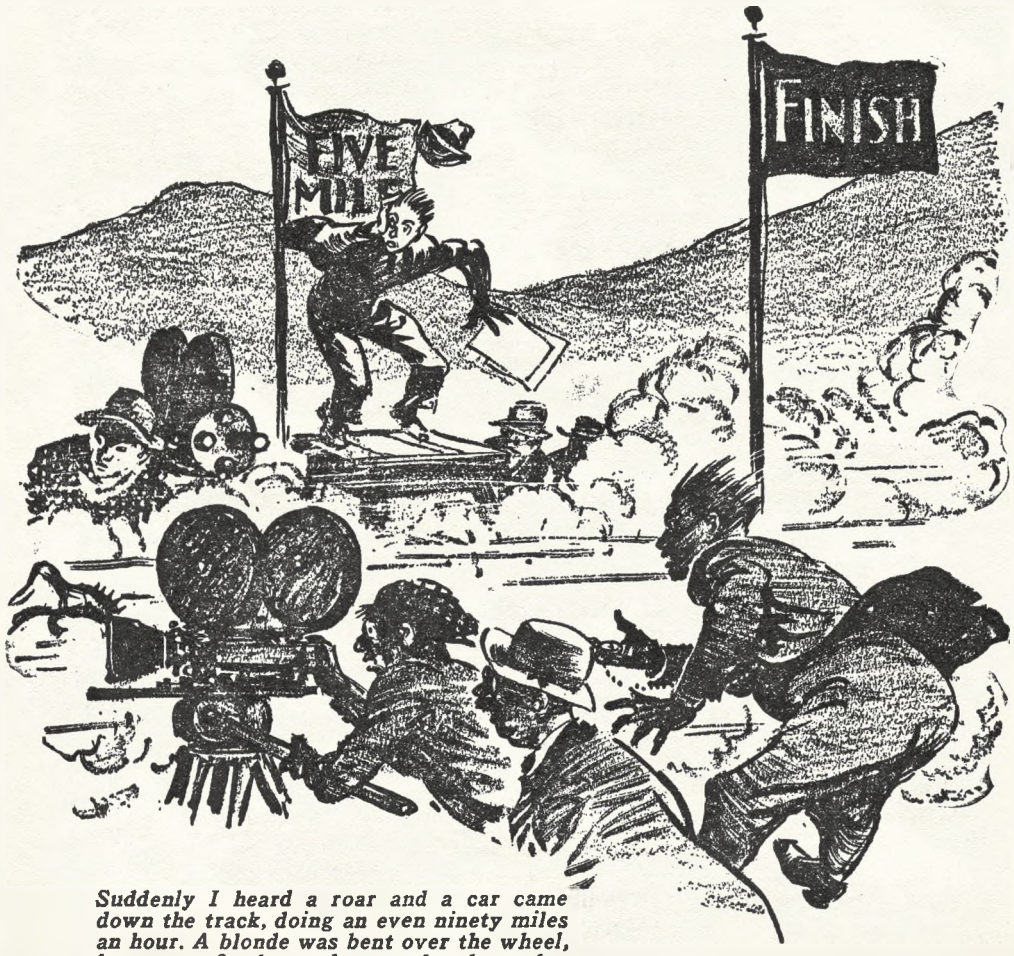
"Front line infantry," Hogan answered. "Truckin's too dangerous."

# THE BEST I

By CHARLES MERGENDAHL

I'VE seen some good runners in my time. Back around '24 I saw Charlie Paddock do a ten-second hundred over a plowed field; and once, at the Penn State Relays, I saw Jesse Owens drop out of a locker-room window and go through a crowd of autograph hounds like black lightening. I've seen Glenn Cunningham and Bill Bonthron, Gregg Rice and Gunder Hagg. I saw Hagg run his 4.2 mile, and it was a big day in my life. Yes, I've seen some good runners, and I've coached a few myself. None you ever heard of, because I'm the track coach for a small club in Cincinnati, the Booker Club. It's not big and well-known like the Olympic Club in Frisco or the BAA in Boston or the New York Athletic Club. But it's a nice little place, and, like I said, I've had some good runners.

One was a young fellow who could run a 9.7 hundred ten minutes after breakfast, and another was a quarter miler, who could break 50 at a trot. But you've never heard of them,




*Suddenly I heard a roar and a car came down the track, doing an even ninety miles an hour. A blonde was bent over the wheel, her eyes fixed steady on the dust that was Laurie, disappearing over the flats.*

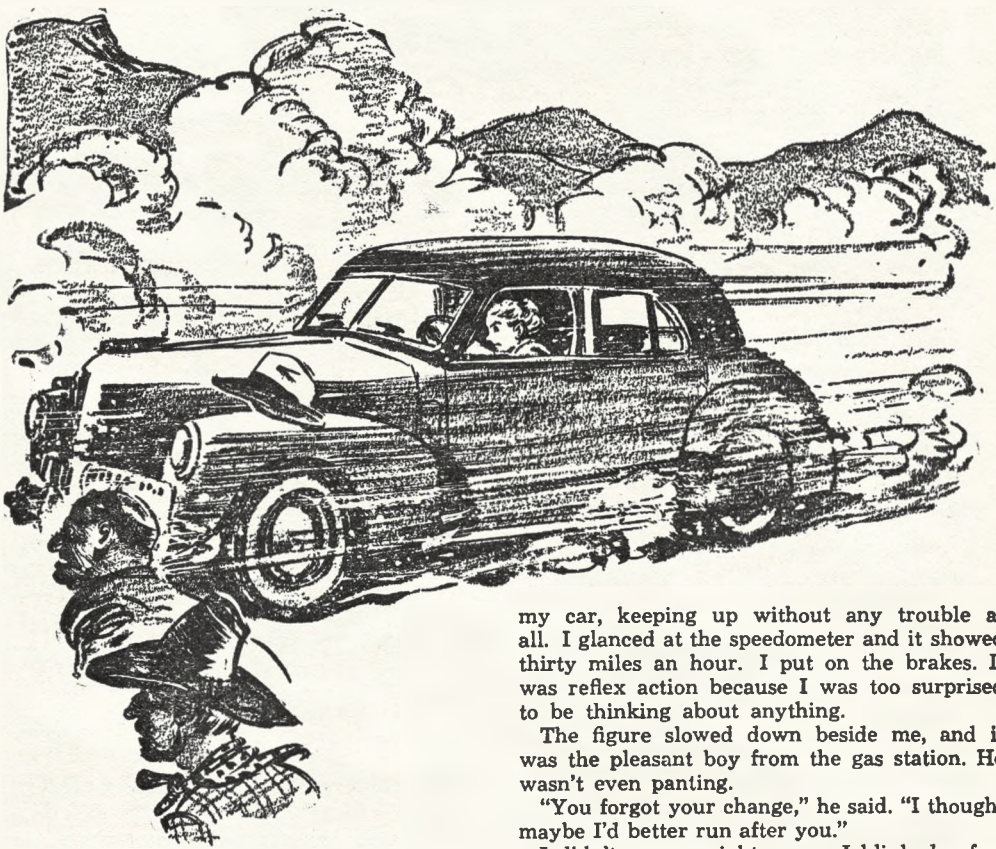
# EVER HAD

and you've probably never heard of Laurie Cochran either.

Laurie was the best runner I ever had—the best I'll ever have. I don't think anyone will ever get a runner as good as Laurie, and whenever I think about what happened to him, how he was all set to be the greatest champ of all time, and then, phooey, he disappeared, whenever I think about that I get a sad feeling inside, and it takes two or three shots to straighten me out again.

I ran into Laurie in a small town about two hundred miles northwest of Cincinnati. I was driving along one day on my way to Chicago, and I stopped at a gasoline station for a fill-up. There was a young fellow there, a long-legged boy with sandy hair and freckles, and he smiled at me real pleasant-like as he filled up the tank. I didn't think anything about it except what a nice kid he was, and I drove out of the station, never giving him another thought.

Well, I'd gone about seven miles, doing maybe twenty-five miles an hour, just easing along, when I happened to glance in the mirror, and I saw this figure coming up over the hill behind me. It was a man running, and when I say running, I mean just that. I mean he was moving. He wasn't pumping very hard, but the strides that fellow was taking were a track man's dream. He just loped over that hill and down the straightaway like an antelope flying, and in a few seconds he was right alongside



ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH FARREN

my car, keeping up without any trouble at all. I glanced at the speedometer and it showed thirty miles an hour. I put on the brakes. It was reflex action because I was too surprised to be thinking about anything.

The figure slowed down beside me, and it was the pleasant boy from the gas station. He wasn't even panting.

"You forgot your change," he said. "I thought maybe I'd better run after you."

I didn't answer right away. I blinked a few times and looked over my shoulder at the stretch behind and the hill behind that. Then I turned back to the boy. My voice was croaking. "How far is it back to the gas station?" I said.

"Oh, about seven miles."

I gulped. "You ran all the way?" I said.

"Well, most of the way. I walked the first couple of miles."

"You did, did you? Walked the first couple of miles?" I took a cigarette and tried to light it, but my hand was shaking so hard I couldn't hold the match. Finally the boy lit it for me, and his hand wasn't shaking at all.

"Your change," he said.

I said, "thank you" in an automatic way, but I was thinking so fast and so hard I can't remember exactly what was going on. When I finally did get my mind straightened out I said, "What's your name, son?"

"Laurie. Laurie Cochran."

"Glad to meet you," I said. And I stuck out my hand. "I'm Tom Delaney. Cincinnati."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Delaney." Then he shuffled his feet around because he couldn't think of anything else to say, and because I was looking at him the way a gem appraiser would look at the Hope diamond.

"How fast can you run?" I asked. "Ever time yourself?"

He thought for a while, and then he said, "No, Mr. Delaney, I never did."

"Well, how fast would you guess?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe sixty or seventy-five."

"Sixty or seventy-five what?"

"Miles an hour," he said.

Well, my eyes popped then, and my Adam's apple got bobbing up and down in my throat so I thought I'd choke to death. Finally I got hold of myself and I naturally figured the kid was pulling my leg. "Seventy-five?" I said. "Well, well, seventy-five."

Then Laurie said, "I wouldn't want to swear to that, Mr. Delaney, because you see I never opened myself up. Sometimes you have to run a certain speed to catch someone or get away from someone or get some place in a hurry. But I never really opened up. I mean I never thought much about it one way or another. Never seemed much reason to."

I could see the kid meant all that. He was dead serious, and besides, I had seen him come over that hill; I had seen him lope an easy thirty miles an hour, which is faster than any man I've ever heard of, so I didn't bother to question him any more. I just started enumerating the virtues of the Booker Athletic Club of Cincinnati, telling him how pleased we'd be to make him a full-fledged member, and how I'd see he got a good job in Cincinnati so he wouldn't have to work out in the sticks pumping gasoline any more. But somehow he didn't take to the idea as much as I thought. I felt pretty sure nobody else had been making him any propositions because he was so innocent, and probably nobody else had ever seen him run.

"What's the matter?" I said. "You want to stay in this hick town all your life?"

"Yes, sir," he said. "Yes, sir, Mr. Delaney."

"For God's sake, why?"

BUT he wouldn't talk for a while. He wouldn't say anything, and even if I do say so myself, the smartest thing and the hardest thing I ever did was to get that kid to tell his story. Only after a couple of quarts of beer in a saloon back in the town could I get a peep out of him. And when he finally did break down, his eyes kept watching the door, and his mouth trembled all the time he was telling the story. It was some story. About the saddest story I ever heard, although I guess it's happened to a lot of young fellows.

It seems this Laurie Cochran boy was twenty-two years old, and he used to live on a farm down in Tennessee. When he was only eighteen years old, he got himself mixed up with a middle-aged widow from over the mountain, and in the end she tricked him and badgered him into marrying her; and after that his life wasn't worth a red cent. This woman —Katie was her name—was a two hundred-pounder, blond and blowzy and disagreeable, and she led that poor kid a dog's life. She never let him out of her sight for a minute, and she was always holding onto him like he was Charles Boyer and she was some movie heroine. You can see what that did to the kid. In the end he couldn't take it any longer, so one night he sneaked out of the farmhouse where they lived, and he took off for points west. Katie never had a chance of catching him, not the way that kid could leg it, so he finally lost her and ended up at that gas station. And he liked it there because he hadn't heard from Katie for over two years, and he figured it was about the best hiding place he'd found yet.

That was the story, and when he'd finished, he dropped a few tears in his beer glass, and clutched my arm across the table. "Don't ever tell her," he said. "Please, Mr. Delaney, don't ever tell."

"Well . . ." I said, seeing my big chance.

"You don't know her, Mr. Delaney. She's been following me all over the country. I know it. If you knew Katie you'd know it, too. Anybody'd know it, and if she ever catches me—" He shuddered and took a long swallow of beer. I thought he'd break out bawling any minute, and it gave me a pretty good idea as to what kind of a witch this Katie really was.

So that was my chance. I put my hand on his shoulder, and told him it was a secret between him and me, that all he'd have to do was come down to Cincinnati, go to work in a nice job, and do a little running for the Booker Athletic Club on the side. I'd personally see that Katie never found him.

"Well," he said, "that's very nice, Mr. Delaney, but—"

"Look," I said, "if you don't come, I can't guarantee anything about Katie. Not anything." I admit it was a cheap trick, blackmailing him like that. But, well, you'd understand if you ever saw that boy run. You'd understand a lot of things.

So in the end I finally got Laurie Cochran to come down to Cincinnati and join up with the Booker Athletic Club. Like I said, it was a tough job persuading him, and for a long time, drinking beer that afternoon, I thought he never would give in. But he finally weakened, partly because I promised him a nice room, right in the club, and partly because I promised him a good job without any work; mostly, though, because I promised that Katie would never find him if he did come, but I wouldn't guarantee anything if he didn't. I even hinted that maybe Katie would find out by foul means or fair, but probably foul. So Laurie came down to Cincinnati.

Everything went pretty well for a while. I got the kid a job in the bank of one of the club members, and I didn't have any trouble at all talking the board into giving him a free room in the club.

"Look," I said, "you've heard of Jesse Owens, and he wasn't a member of this club."

They nodded.

"And," I said, "you've heard of Charlie Paddock and Glenn Cunningham and Gunder Hagg, and none of them was a member of this club either."

They nodded, kind of sad because they never had a real star at the Booker Club.

"All right," I said, "so Charlie Paddock was a snail compared to this kid. Gunder Hagg will be struggling down the first hundred yards when this kid breaks the mile tape."

They listened and nodded, and then they said, "Show us." That's all they said. Just, "Show us."

So I showed them. I took that kid out on the track and had him lope a slow three-minute mile, just to warm up. He wasn't even breathing hard afterwards. Then he went back into the club and had three malted milks and two ham and cheese sandwiches. It was like he had just walked around the block to work up an appetite.

They didn't have to be shown any more after that. They let me handle the kid the way I wanted, and I stayed up many a night trying to figure the smartest way to do it.

You see, that boy was almost *too* fast, and maybe it would be hard getting him into meets if anybody knew how fast he really was. So I made all the club members promise to keep it a secret until I had it figured out, and I spent the rest of my time trying to teach the kid how to go just fast enough to make himself look good, but not so fast that people would think he was a miracle. I wanted to break him in easy, and I even had to teach him to pretend he was breathing hard after he finished a mile or so. At first he didn't catch on very well, and he'd just stand there smiling at me, hardly breathing at all. Then I got the idea of filling him up with malted milks and cokes and tuna fish sandwiches before he worked out, which made him so logy he was almost sick to his stomach. That worked pretty well. He'd run a two-or three-minute mile, just loping along with a pop bottle in his hand, drinking as he went, and when he got through he'd be so loaded down with soda pop and sandwiches that his face would get pale and green, and he'd have to sit down and hold on to his stomach. It didn't have anything to do with the running, but it looked good anyway, and I figured that in time I could teach him to put on a pretty good show of being tired out.

***He'd lope along with a pop bottle in one hand, a sandwich in the other, eating and drinking as he went.***

ALL this, of course, was done in secret, with the doors of the club's indoor track closed to all comers. For a while everything was going along pretty well, and I figured that before very long I'd have him tamed down enough to let him run an official race. But there was one thing wrong. Something was bothering that kid, and it was pretty simple, but every important. It was Katie. Every day he'd come up to me and say, "Mr. Delaney, do you think Katie's found out where I am yet?"

And I'd say, "How could she, Laurie?" Just how could she?"

"Well," he'd say, "she used to chase me around the mountains at home all the time, just fooling, you know, when she was courting me, and if she hears about a new runner you got, maybe she'll get suspicious."

"How's she going to hear?" I'd say. "It's a secret, isn't it? Nobody knows, do they?"

"Well," he'd say, "maybe they will. Those things leak out, Mr. Delaney. And besides, what about when I start getting into regular track meets? Then she'll hear about me all right."

"Don't you worry," I'd say. "You just leave everything to me." And I'd walk off fast because that was one thing I hadn't figured out yet—how to make him a champ without Katie hearing about it.

Well, I sweated about that for a long time. I knew it was an important problem, because if Katie ever found him, his goose was cooked, and I knew he'd never run for me in any official meets. He'd never run for anybody. That boy would just get himself dragged home to Tennessee, and that would be the last of him. He'd never be heard from again. I knew that, and yet I knew it didn't matter a hoot in Hades how good he was unless there was something official about it. Without that official stamp, the Booker Athletic Club would never get the credit for having the fastest miler in the world. So he had to make an official run, and yet I couldn't advertise it. I couldn't even have him race anybody because that would give him away to Katie, the only person in the world who suspected how fast that kid really was. It was some problem, and I thought about it for a long time. I beat my head against a wall for a good many nights before I got the big idea, and even then I wasn't so sure of myself. But I decided to go through with it anyway.

Here's what I did: I looked up three or four of the big track officials from the AAU, and I told them I had the fastest runner they'd ever seen, but for very personal reasons he wouldn't be able to race anybody. However, and I made this quite plain, the Booker Club would be only too glad to pay their expenses to a private running. Each official could bring his own stop-watch and time the runner. He'd run a straight mile, and one man could stand at the hundred-yard mark, another at the two-twenty, one at the quarter, one at the half, and another at the end of the mile. The kid would run the mile on a straight course, and he'd break every world's record in existence along the way. All they had to do was bring along their stop-watches and clock him off as he passed the various finish lines.

Well, most of the officials could hardly stand up from laughing when I told them the proposition, but after the president of the club talked to them, and after we made it very very plain about who would pay their expenses, they finally agreed to clock the boy just for a laugh. They also agreed to make any record official, if he should happen to break any, which they all doubted.

So the next thing was to find a place for him to run. I talked that over with Laurie personally.

"What do you think?" I said.

"I don't care, Mr. Delaney. I guess it depends on how fast you want me to run."

"Look," I said. "Look, boy, I want you to run as fast as you can. I want you to open up."

"You mean I don't eat any sandwiches or malted milks or anything just before the race?"

"Not a thing, Laurie. You see, everything has changed now. You're not racing anybody, and I've warned these officials they're going to see something pretty spectacular. So you just get out there and open up. Just let yourself go."

"Well, I don't know," he said. "I don't know, Mr. Delaney."

"What don't you know?"

"Well, I—I figure I've got to have plenty of room. I mean, I don't know what'll happen when I really open up, and besides that, I've got to get pretty far away from Katie. A lot further away than Cincinnati. Yes sir, Mr. Delaney, I've got to get far away, and I've got to have plenty of room."

"Room?" I said. "Room?" Then I walked up and down, thinking about it. I thought for a long time, but I still didn't get anywhere, so that afternoon I went down to the public library and studied a big map of the United States. I thought of racetracks and highways and every kind of runway imaginable, but none of them seemed to be just right. Either they were too public or too near Tennessee, or else there was some other hitch, like having to pay for the use of the runway. I wanted to give that boy plenty of room, and I mean plenty, because I was as wary as he was about his opening up. God only knew how long it would take him to slow down once he got going at full clip, so any normal track, any mile or even five-mile straightaway, might be too short. Then, too, the oval-shaped auto racing tracks weren't any good either, because I didn't want him to have to take any cor-

ners. It's hard enough for a fast automobile to take those turns without tipping over, and you can imagine what would happen to a man under the same circumstances.

So for a while the thing looked hopeless. I thought I would never figure it out. And then, suddenly, like a bolt, the thing hit me. The salt flats of Utah. That was where Malcomb Campbell had set his speed records, and if a racing car could find a long straightaway, then so could Laurie Cochran. It was the perfect place, flat and long, and a good distance from Tennessee and Katie. The perfect place.

Well, arrangements were made to get Laurie and myself and the officials out to Utah, and all that took maybe a month or so. I had to go out and look the place over first, and then I had to get railroad tickets and mark off the various distances over the salt flats. I marked off the hundred, two-twenty, four-forty, half mile, mile, two mile, and five mile. At first I had only planned on Laurie's doing a mile, but the flats were so long and perfect I figured he might as well knock off another four miles once he'd gotten up steam, and that way he could break seven world's records at a crack. Then I had to make arrangements with the newspapers. Most of them thought I was nuts, but you know newspapers. A crazy man is news like anybody else, so they all agreed to send a reporter along, and I even got a newsreel man from one of the big studios to come and take pictures of the finish.

It was quite a gathering I had lined up, and it took a long time, like I said before. The hardest part, though, was to keep it hushed up. I had to warn everybody who got invited that it was all a secret, and I tried to explain about Katie. But most of them just laughed and put their fingers to their lips. They thought I was nuts, and the whole thing was going to be just one big joke with me the goat. They agreed to come, though, and that was all that mattered as far as I was concerned.

I'LL never forget that day. It was warm with low clouds, and the salt flats looked nice and compact —the perfect track for a world's record, let alone seven. It was the kind of day for history, and I studied the sky all the way out to the flats from my hotel room in Salt Lake City. Laurie was in the cab beside me, and he thought it was a nice day himself. He said so once, and then he didn't say anything for a long time. He just sat back in the cab, staring out the window, and after a while he began chewing his fingernails nervously.

"What's the matter, Laurie?" I said. "You think you can do it all right, don't you?"

He jumped when he heard my voice, and then he looked at me with his eyes wide. "Do what, Mr. Delaney?"

"You think you'll break the records all right? You're not worried about letting yourself out—top speed, I mean?"

"No . . ."

"Because you don't have to worry about a thing. These flats are hard enough and long enough so you'll have plenty of time to slow down. Besides, I'm having you head west. I figure the wind will be from the east, and that will give you even more speed."

"That's fine," he said. "That's fine, Mr. Delaney."

But he was still nervous, and I still had to try and buck him up. "I'll have a red light," I said. "I'll be standing right at the five-mile mark, and when you pass the red light, then start slowing down. But take plenty of time. Run two or three extra miles if you have to. I wouldn't want you to stop too suddenly and ruin yourself."

"Yes, Mr. Delaney," he replied, still looking out the window.

I grabbed his arm, swung him around in the seat, and talked right into his face. I was mad and I was worried. "Look," I said, "come right out with it, son, and tell me what's the matter."

"Nothing, Mr. Delaney."

"Something's the matter. Something's been the matter since you got up this morning. I noticed it in the hotel."

"Well . . ." He looked out the side window and the front window and the back window. He chewed on his nails for a minute, and then he said, "I've got a funny feeling. That's all. Just a funny feeling."

"You feel sick?"

"Sort of. Not like you mean. Sort of, well, like something's going to happen."

"Something is," I said. "You're just going to set seven world's records in about ten minutes. That's all."

"No, something else. Like, well, like Katie's around somewhere. Like she's watching me."

"Nonsense," I said. "Nonsense." I started to laugh to show him how silly it was, and then, suddenly, I felt it, too. Nothing I can explain, you understand, but almost as if there was something hanging over us, a kind of omen. I looked out the window, and there was a big black cloud moving in from the east. Just a black cloud, that's all. But it gave me a queer feeling and I stopped laughing, slowly, so it choked in my throat and I had to cough for a while so the kid wouldn't notice I was getting nervous myself.

I dropped Laurie off at the beginning of the track, and gave him his final instructions. "We've strung a telephone wire from the finish down to where you're starting, and the officials here will set you off. Just run till you see the

red light, and then slow down easy. There'll be officials along the way to clock you as you go by. Got it?"

He nodded, swallowed a few times, and I walked off fast, leaving the officials to take care of him. The last I saw, he was putting on his track shoes and looking back over his shoulder at the same time. He looked like a scared rabbit with freckles.

Then I got back in the cab and drove down the five-mile straightaway over the salt flats. It was a beautiful track. I can say that much. The officials were all in their places each wearing a set of earphones, so when I gave the signal, they could all start their watches at the same time. I passed seven officials on the way, each at the particular mark he was going to check. They all glanced up at the cab as I passed, and then I could see them talking into the phones to each other and looking after me. A couple of them were laughing, and I can't say I blamed them much. It did look a little foolish, the whole thing, but that didn't worry me. It wouldn't be long before I'd be giving *them* the big laugh, right back in their faces.

The reporters were all waiting at the finish line, and the newsreel men were there and the officials were there. Everybody was there. They all looked at me when I stepped out of the cab, and they had a platform all rigged up for me to stand on and give them a short speech. I can't say I'm much of a speechmaker, but I did the best I could.

"Gentlemen," I said, "today you are going to witness perhaps the greatest sports event in the history of the world. Seven track records —note that, seven—will be broken here this afternoon, by one man running once over a five-mile course. I am not going to elaborate on the man, where I found him, or anything about his future. Just let me say that his name is Laurie Cochran, and that today will be long-remembered in the annals of track. And in conclusion, let me remind you that this history-making race is being sponsored by the Booker Athletic Club of Cincinnati, Ohio."

Then I got down from the stand, shook hands with the officials and newsmen, and walked over to the telephone that connected us with the beginning of the track, five miles to the east. I looked around at everybody, and cleared my throat. "Ready?" I said.

"Ready," the officials said.

"Ready," the reporters said.

THE newsreel men ducked behind their cameras and got set for the finish.

"All right," I said. "Here we go."

Then I switched on the red spotlight and moved it so it was pointed down the track. I pushed the button and spoke into the phone, and at the same time I raised my left hand. "Ready," I said.

I could hear the official at the other end of the track repeat the word to the starter. "On your mark . . . get set . . ."

I held my breath for a second and I prayed for a second. Then I said, "Go!" I dropped my left hand. I heard a sharp crack over the phone, and I knew the starter had fired his gun.

For a second or two there was nothing. Then, looking far down the track, I saw a little cloud of dust, and the dust came nearer, all the time going faster and faster until it was a blur and a whirl. In the end it was going so fast I could hardly turn my head quick enough to see it cross the finish line, and the cameramen never did swing their cameras fast enough to follow it. It was like wind suddenly howling around a corner, and though I never did see Laurie himself, I knew it was him just the same. There wasn't anything else in the world that could have traveled that fast.

So one minute I was seeing a rise of dust on the east side, and the next minute I was seeing one on the west side, going faster and faster and always further and further away. I felt my knees shaking, and I took out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat from my forehead. I was worried to death about Laurie's slowing down, and I was scared half crazy that the officials wouldn't count the race because they hadn't even seen him cross the finish line—not the clear figure of a man anyway.

As I worried and looked after the disappearing dust, I suddenly heard a roar from the east. I turned my head and looked back down the track. There was a car coming down that track, and it was doing an even ninety miles an hour. It didn't slow down, and there was just that second rush of wind as it passed. Just that wind and the flash of a passing car. That and one more thing—in that car, her blond hair streaming out behind, was one of the fattest and most determined looking middle-aged women I've ever seen. She was bent over the wheel with her mouth set and her eyes fixed steady on the dust that was Laurie, disappearing over the flats. Then, in a flash she was gone.

I raced for the cab, got in and told the driver to head down the flats—to head west and not to spare the gas and tires. We took off after that woman hell bent for election.

I'd like to tell you about that ride, but I get weak in the knees just thinking about it. We passed through Austin, Nevada, doing ninety-five with the cops blowing whistles behind us, and we whizzed through Carson City with the accelerator on the floor. All the time I could see the other car ahead of us, but then, when night came on, we lost it and I had to start inquiring along the way.

I never did get much of an answer from anyone. A rancher in western Nevada said a small cyclone had passed over his field and ruined his crops for months to come, and a man in eastern California told me he had heard a noise like wind going down a drain pipe, and then suddenly he had been knocked off his feet by a rush of air. He said when he picked himself up there was another rush of air and a car went by with a fat woman in it. He said, "Maybe she was real an' maybe she wan't, but she was the dangdest fat woman I ever seen." Then he added, "Maybe that first rushin' air was a cyclone twister an' maybe it was one of them low runnin' flyin' machines, but it sure was goin' like hell."

And that's all anybody could say.

Well, we drove all the way through California to Sacramento, just following the main highway, taking turns at the wheel, and all the time the cab driver was swearing up and down that he was going to quit hacking and raise chickens. "This," he said, "is my last trip. I never chased a cyclone before, and I ain't never gonna chase one again."

"That wasn't any cyclone," I said. "That was Laurie."

But he just laughed like I was crazy, and somehow I didn't blame him.

So that was the way it happened, and early the next morning we saw San Francisco in the distance, and in back of it the Pacific Ocean. We slowed down and stopped right on the edge of the cliff overlooking the bay. We had come seven hundred and sixty-six miles in a little over twelve hours, and if you don't think that's traveling, try it some time. Just try it. We got out of the car and walked slowly along the cliff overlooking the bay. I don't know what we were looking for, but we didn't find anything. We didn't even find any trace of Katie, who must have stopped somewhere because she couldn't have chased that boy right over the cliff. Or maybe she did. I guess that Katie woman could do just about anything.

WELL, I stood there on the edge of the cliff, watching the morning mist blowing in from the sea, and straining my eyes into the distance. I felt like Balboa when he first saw the Pacific, and I had to swallow a few times to keep my emotions from getting the better of me.

After a while I cupped my hands to my mouth and shouted into the fog. "Laurie!" I shouted. "Laurie!" But there was no answer. Only the gulls and the surf roaring along the beach far below. And suddenly I felt a great loneliness, almost like what the poets used to feel, and I turned and got back into the cab.

"Take me to a hotel," I said.

"You feel all right?" the cab driver said.

"Just take me to a hotel."

And we drove off with the sea and the mist and gulls fading out behind.

So I moped about in my hotel room for a good two weeks. Then I got to wandering around the streets, stopping people to ask about Laurie, going into corner bars to find out if they had seen a fat woman with blond hair. And still there was nothing. Some had heard of peculiar air disturbances, and some thought I was a crazy, wandering man. And still there was nothing—just one small clue: a couple of old fishermen along the waterfront claimed that on the exact day of the famous race, they had been fishing about fourteen miles off the bank, and suddenly there was a quick little gale and a splash in the water a few yards away from their boat. They said they figured it was either a big fish that had jumped out of the water, or maybe even a sea serpent. Of course I don't take much stock in that story myself. Fishermen are usually pretty gullible fellows, and any fool knows there

*(Continued on page 143)*

# GARBAGE—TO

## A FACT STORY

By MAXWELL HAWKINS

ILLUSTRATED BY HARVE STEIN

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER FENNO'S submarine was out dumping garbage. This would appear, at first glance, to be a menial task for more than three hundred feet of deadly undersea fighting craft that had set the taxpayers back almost six million dollars, but it was just an accommodation to the inhabitants of Midway Island and in no way compromised the big gray sub's dignity or placed her in the category of a garbage scow.

Midway was only a couple of empty atolls in the Pacific sun until a few years ago, when Pan American Airways decided that what this country needed was a clipper service to China. Almost overnight, it became a vital way station and fueling depot on the trans-Pacific air route. From that it was only a few steps to becoming an important outpost in our national defense; just how important was brought smashing home to the American people June 4, 1942, when the pride and might of Japan's Navy was sent reeling and shattered back toward

# GOLD—TO GLORY

Tokio in the battle to which Midway gave its name.

By December, 1941, Midway was bustling with activity; Marines, Army and Navy personnel and construction workers swarmed over its limited area. Sanitation was a problem and, in order to keep the beaches clean, it was necessary to haul the refuse well out to sea where the currents wouldn't sweep it back in. Some one of the ships that put in there customarily performed this chore, and on this occasion Fenno's immaculate submarine, built to be the scourge of her foes, had volunteered to be the scavenger for her friends. She pulled out of Midway on December 6, over a calm sea and beneath a peaceful sky and cruised to a point some twenty miles southwest on her garbage mission. Having dumped the Midway refuse overboard she continued about her principal business, the routine patrol on which she had set out from Pearl Harbor late in November.

THAT night, the American submarine cruised on the surface, charging her "can," as the sub men call the huge storage batteries which supply electric power to operate an undersea craft when submerged. With her can fully charged, Fenno's sub dove. In the control room below the conning tower, Lieutenant Albert Clark, the craft's executive officer, was in charge of the diving.

With Clark as he kept his eyes on the vital depth gauges in the control room that Sunday morning was the sub's captain, Lieutenant Commander Fenno, known as "Mike" throughout the Submarine Service. The enlisted men on watch were standing at their stations with that quiet alertness that submarine duty demands. Farther aft, in his cubbyhole adjacent to the control room, the radioman, headphones clamped to his ears, was breaking down a message that had come over the air waves.

There was nothing unusual about that scene

***Beneath a waning Manila moon they tugged and heaved at that ransom of half a hundred kings.***

down under the waters of the Pacific. It was familiar to everyone present; it had been duplicated hundreds of times before. Nothing to indicate that this Sunday morning would be any different from the many others spent diving the big American sub.

Suddenly the radioman slipped the headphones off, eased out of his seat and emerged from his nest of dials and tubes. He made his way directly to Fenno, but he was too well trained to show by any facial expression that he was making anything more than a routine report.

"A message just came for you, Cap'n," the radioman said.

Fenno broke off his conversation with Clark and walked aft to the radio room with Sparks. Nobody paid much attention to them. It had happened just like this many times before. But in the radio room, Sparks handed the submarine's skipper the most important message ever flashed to American warships. It was Admiral Kimmel's war dispatch to the Pacific Fleet.

The Japs had raided Pearl Harbor! Long-expected hostilities had begun!

Fenno studied the message. Finally, he glanced at the radioman and said: "Looks like the real thing."

"Yes, Cap'n, it does," Sparks replied.

Still pondering over the dispatch, Mike Fenno returned to the control room. He moved to Clark's side.

"Well, Al," he said, "we're at war with Japan! The Japs have just raided Pearl Harbor!"

Clark comes from Saco, Maine, and there's more than a touch of Yankee skepticism in his makeup. He removed his eyes from the depth gauges and gave Fenno a faint grin.

"Hell," he said, "they have one of those raid tests there every Sunday morning."

Mike Fenno shook his head, recalling the warning he had received at the Flag Office of Admiral Withers in Pearl Harbor only a couple of weeks before.

When Captain C. W. Styer, Chief of Staff to Admiral Withers, had given him his orders for this patrol he had also delivered, verbally, a message from the admiral.

"Admiral Withers was sorry he couldn't be here when you called," the captain had said, "but he was detained elsewhere. However, he wanted me to impress on you that, in his opinion, we will be at war before you return from this patrol."

That warning had never been far from Fenno's thoughts. Now, the dispatch he had in his hand permitted no misinterpretation. He held it out so Clark could look at it.

"See for yourself," he said. "It's plain enough in this message. So far as I'm concerned—we're at war!"

The submarine had been on a war footing for months. She was ready for it. There was very little to do beyond informing the crew of what had happened. Letting them know that the practice days were over and that the marble game was for keeps now. They were through using water-filled exercise heads on their torpedoes. It was war heads, crammed with high explosive, from there to victory.

Fenno walked aft to the galley, between the control room and the crew's quarters. The cook was busy getting breakfast in his sea-going kitchenette.

"As the crew come in for breakfast," the submarine's skipper said, "tell 'em we're at war with Japan."

There was a brief pause. Then the cook's jaw fell open, but for a moment no sound came forth. At last, he found his voice.

"Yes, sir," he gulped.

FOR the next half hour, Fenno and Clark, in the mechanical labyrinth of the control room, discussed Admiral Kimmel's message, speculated on what had happened at Pearl Harbor. Finally, Mike Fenno made his way aft and looked in the mess room. Some of the boys, their breakfast out of the way, were sitting at the mess table playing poker.

The Army may thrill to the click of the galloping dominoes, but in the Submarine Service, with the men who know what their luck is—it's poker two to one. Perhaps a psychologist could trace a parallel between submarine operation and the proper playing of poker to account for this. The same elements of luck, bluff, ability to figure percentages of chance, catching your opponent by surprise, unexpected daring and yet an over-all need for caution and biding your time. At any rate, when you participate in a poker game in a submarine mess room, you play your cards close to your belt—there isn't enough elbow room to play them otherwise.

The sub's captain gave the after-breakfast poker session a good looking over. Then he took a deep breath.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "We go to war—and you birds play poker!"

With that, the skipper withdrew. But in telling about the incident, Mike Fenno said that after he had left, he began to think it over and saw things from a different angle.

"By George, why not!" he told himself. "It's a good way to relax. And it's a good sign—shows how cool they are."

Never again was anything said on that submarine about poker-playing.

Although the crew may have been cloaking their excitement under an air of insouciance, nevertheless the first-day jitters were stalking the deck and almost cost the sub her captain. The ship was running on the surface. On the bridge, besides the several enlisted men on watch, were Fenno and his first lieutenant, Fritz Harlfinger, of Albany, N. Y. It occurred to

the captain that it might be a good time to have a practice drill, so he decided to have the alarm for "battle stations" sounded. The signal for this is a loud gong which rings twelve times. It's carried to every corner of the ship over the loudspeaker system. With the first stroke, all hands leap to their combat posts, and everybody from the messboy up has one.

Another ear-shattering signal on a submarine is the diving alarm, which consists of two raucous blasts on a klaxon-like device. Nobody can miss it. And nobody on the topside wastes a second getting down the hatch into the conning tower, because at the first vibration of the diving alarm, the sub starts to dive.

In a quick dive—what those outside the Submarine Service call a "crash" dive—it doesn't take long to submerge. And virtually every dive is a quick dive these days. So there isn't much time for a half dozen men to get through a single hatch, and either you get below—or you're "left in the pool." They don't wait and they don't go back in a submarine in wartime.

Both the "battle stations" and diving alarms are sounded from the bridge by large push buttons, which are fairly close together.

"I passed the word to sound the alarm for 'battle stations,'" Fenno said. "But someone was jittery. Instead, the diving alarm was sounded.

"Before we knew it, we were starting to submerge. There was one hell of a scramble to clear the deck—get down the hatch."

Mike Fenno, who played on the Naval Academy baseball team for about three years, is about two hundred pounds of brawn. It's a rather neat fit under any circumstances when he goes through a standard 23-inch submarine hatchway.

"I was last," Fenno continued. "Fritz Harlfinger was ahead of me by a split-second. He's small and wiry. Weighs about one-fifty. But as we went down the ladder, I was riding his shoulders all the way, like the Little Old Man of the Sea—and I had the sea right with me! We managed to close the hatch before more than a little of it spilled in, but that water was too damn close for comfort."

WHEN the Japanese task force swept in to shell Midway, Mike Fenno's submarine was too far away to get at it, and the islands themselves lay between. Helplessly, those aboard the sub listened to the distant boom of guns, saw the flashes against the sky, which some of the crew mistook for lightning. Although they promptly maneuvered to be in a position to intercept a second attack, it failed to materialize.

January found the American submarine back in Pearl Harbor. So far, she had sunk no enemy ships. The area of her patrol had been poor hunting grounds; she hadn't even flushed any Nipponese game.

Fenno was summoned to the Flag Office, and this time Admiral Withers was there. He gave orders for a pressing and dangerous mission, an unusual one for a submarine. Fenno's undersea warship was to deliver sixty tons of sorely needed shells to the island fortress of Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay, in the Philippines.

"Get out there just as fast as you can," Admiral Withers said; then he added, "But on your way back, if you want to, it'll be all right to do a little hunting."

The mission was a call for speed and more speed. While the shells, taking the place of ballast normally carried by the submarine, were being rushed aboard, supplies also were taken on in a hurry. The wives of the Submarine Service cast about for something they could do for the valiant band in the Philippines. They had a small fund which was used to buy little luxuries for, or otherwise help, the enlisted personnel, and they drew on this to purchase eight hundred dollars' worth of cigarettes. These, too, were stowed aboard.

With her oddly contrasting cargo of bad news for the Japs and good cheer for the men fighting them, the submarine shoved off from Pearl Harbor.

"My one worry," said Fenno, "was what I could substitute for ballast after I'd dropped those sixty tons of shells at Corregidor. Of course, I figured they'd probably have plenty of sandbags there, and in a pinch I could use bags of sand. But you don't like to do that. They get your ship all dirty," he added.

Mike Fenno's comment on getting sand strewn around his submarine typifies the attitude of the present-day sub captain, or enlisted man for that matter, toward the state of cleanliness of his undersea craft. To call a modern submarine a pig-boat is an anachronism. It's like calling a Flying Fortress an egg-crate. And as for referring slightingly to a sub as a "sewer-pipe," because of the faint aroma of Diesel oil that sometimes clings to the clothing of the crew after they've been submerged a long time—your submariner is ready to raise hell about that old chestnut. Both these ancient slurs no longer have any foundation of fact. In general, submarines today, with their gleaming jungle of machinery and instruments, are kept immaculate enough to make a Dutch housewife ill with envy.

The big submarine, her captain still pondering over the matter of ballast, pushed ever westward toward the beleaguered Philippines. Not since Dr. Rudolf Diesel, of Munich, invented the oil engine named after him, and one of them first was installed in a submarine around 1912, had Diesels been called on to propel a

ship on a stranger voyage than lay ahead.

The officers aboard represented a good cross-section of the United States. Fenno was from Westminster, Massachusetts, Clark from Saco, Maine, and Harlfinger from Albany, New York. The sub's diving officer was Lieutenant F. A. "Pop" Gunn, from Kansas City, Missouri, and her communications officer was Ensign Harry E. Woodward, from the State of Washington. The commissary officer was Ensign Ray Pitts, USNR.

Besides these, as C and R officer, was Lieutenant (jg) George Schottler, USNR, from Baltimore, an ROTC graduate of Georgia Tech. Schottler will tell you exactly why he joined the Submarine Service.

"Those surface ships aren't safe!"

But on this mission, for the most part, Fenno's submarine was a surface ship, driving into the Pacific waters at her best speed, which she could attain only above, and not under, the ocean. And the course she was following was certainly not safe. She was traversing waters controlled to a large extent by the enemy. Her luck was good, however, and for a considerable part of her journey the sea was her exclusive property.

"Then one night," Fenno said, "we picked up a steady light ahead." He smiled faintly. "I knew the crew wouldn't like it if I passed up a chance to sink a Jap ship. So I decided to investigate."

It was a dark night, with low-hanging clouds. Ideal for a surface attack. The submarine moved cautiously forward. On the bridge, all eyes were straining to penetrate the darkness. The Americans slipped closer through the gentle Pacific swells. At last, they were within range. One torpedo leaped from the sub's bow. There was a long, tense wait. But nothing happened.

The sub continued to press ahead until she was scarcely five hundred yards away from the mysterious light. At that point, those on the topside discovered it came from a Jap patrol boat; and at the same time, the enemy discovered the submarine.

"We'd stuck our neck out," Fenno related ruefully. "That Jap started right after us. We made a quick dive. After about an hour, I decided to come up for a look around. This time there were a lot of lights ahead. The Jap patrol boats were signaling to each other."

Fenno's submarine had met the enemy, but she couldn't afford to stick around for a decision fight. There was an important date to be kept out there in the Philippines, where the unflinching Americans and Filipinos were beginning to battle with their backs to the wall. So Mike Fenno maneuvered his ship around the nest of Nip patrol boats and proceeded on his course.

Later, in the South China Sea, Fenno had occasion to remember that unblinking light he encountered on his way to Corregidor.

THE shell-laden submarine reached her rendezvous on time, was led through the mine fields and presently was unloading her deadly cargo at Corregidor with even more speed than when she had taken it aboard at Pearl Harbor. Added incentive was dropping from the skies out here in the far Pacific—bombs!

The Japanese by this time had complete mastery of the air and were raiding incessantly. The sub had to lie on the bottom of the harbor during the day for protection; only at night could unloading operations be carried out.

"I was still wondering what to do about ballast," Fenno said, "and began to make a few inquiries about getting some sandbags. It looked like that was the only thing I could get. But finally they told me that if ballast was what I was looking for, they'd give me something a lot better than sand." He laughed. "The first thing we knew, a flock of trucks began to arrive. We could hardly believe our eyes! They were loaded with gold and silver!"

Toiling at feverish speed, the crew of the submarine and the soldiers of Corregidor began to unload the treasure from the trucks. The gold was in heavy, gleaming bars; the silver was in coins, packed in canvas bags. Panting and sweating, the men lugged the precious metal into the submarine and stowed it in the place that had been occupied by the brass and steel of the shells on the voyage out. Beneath a waning Manila moon, they tugged and heaved at that ransom of half a hundred kings; standard bars of gold and bags of silver coins are heavy to handle.

"We worked like hell to get that stuff aboard so we could shove off before it got light," Fenno said. "It was a hot spot for a submarine.

"The bags the silver was in must have been lying in vaults a long time. Some of them had rotted. They broke while we were carrying them. Money was rolling all over the pier, dropping through cracks and splashing into the water.

"One of the crew said he'd never in his life expected to let so much money slip through his fingers. They were all laughing and wise-cracking about our 'ballast,' but working like the devil to get it loaded."

Before dawn, however, they had won their race against time and the Jap bombers. The submarine cast off her lines and headed toward the mine fields guarding the harbor entrance. Enough lights were turned on to enable the guide boat to get her bearings and lead the gold-filled sub safely through.

Never in history had a ship put to sea with such bizarre and valuable ballast. In addition to the many bags of silver, there were twenty-five tons of gold bars! All told, the metal in the hold of Mike Fenno's submarine represented about twenty-five million dollars.

"Before we got through," Fenno said, "I would have swapped it all for a few more torpedoes."

ADMIRAL WITHERS' orders to Fenno had been to deliver the shells to Corregidor as fast as possible, but he had added that a little Jap-hunting on the way back would be in order, if the sub's captain wanted to indulge. It was an opportunity no submarine skipper would turn down, gold or no gold.

"After we left Corregidor, we headed up toward Taiwan," Fenno said.

The big sub poked her nose northward through the waters of the South China Sea. Not until several days out did she encounter anything, and then it was a typhoon. One of the worst storms Fenno had ever experienced. The sub fought mountainous waves and terrific winds. It was impossible to get a bearing. For four days, the sub's captain admitted, they weren't sure where they were. The only thing certain was that they were still afloat—and thankful for it.

Eventually the storm passed, and the doughty sub, shaken but intact, arrived in the vicinity of Taiwan.

She had begun the war pinch-hitting for a garbage scow. Then she had been cast in the dual role of munitions transport and belated Santa Claus. Her next assignment had been that of a treasure ship, by accident. But now, at last, she was about to come into her own, to fulfill the destiny for which she had been built and her officers and crew had been trained so long and thoroughly—the sinking of enemy ships!

It was a bright moonlight night. The sea was rocky with a hangover from the storm, the kind of water that operates to the advantage of a submarine, because it makes the prey less apt to spot a periscope.

Fenno's craft was cruising on the surface, everybody on the topside peering across the tumbling, moonlit waves in hope of catching the faint smudge that would indicate the approach of a ship. They knew they were in an area where enemy shipping could be expected to rise over the horizon at any moment. But it was from below decks that the quarry was detected.

The man at watch at the listening gear picked up the sound of a ship's screw.

"It was too light for a surface attack. We dove and waited," Fenno said. "It wasn't very long before we saw her. A freighter, coming right across us."

The air within the round gray hull of the submarine was charged with suppressed excitement. At their battle stations, the crew were tense and quiet. Standing at the periscope, eyes fixed on the image of the approaching Nip vessel, Fenno passed the order to make ready the bow torpedo tubes. Presently the word came back to the control room that the "tin fish" were all ready for launching. At the firing circuits, the Chief of the Boat, the top-ranking enlisted man in a submarine, addressed the captain.

"All ready, sir."

There was a brief pause, as the submarine's skipper lined up the unsuspecting Nip freighter. Everyone in the control room was watching him, waiting for the command to fire. At last it came. There was a faint thud, a gentle quiver that ran the length of the craft as the torpedo sped from its tube through the waters of the South China Sea. The bow planesman already had set the bow planes to hard dive, in order to compensate for the torpedo leaving the tube and keep the sub's bow from being forced upward. In the torpedo room, a torpedo man had jerked up the vent that flooded the empty tube with sea water to maintain the ship's trim.

"The freighter was making about ten knots," Fenno said. "She was such a pushover, I felt sorry for her."

As the torpedo with its explosive-laden war head churned toward the enemy, the sixty-odd men in the sub, drawn from all corners of the United States and now thousands of miles from home, waited with tightened throats. The seconds were hours. But at last, came a dull muffled boom. Instantly the tension snapped. It was a hit! First blood for the Fenno sub. Some of the men cheered, and some of them pounded each other on the back.

"That first torpedo slowed her down to about three knots," Fenno recalled. "I decided to poke her with another."

Again a lethal tin fish leaped from the submarine's raking bow, and again her crew waited in grim expectancy and hope. A second muffled explosion told them they had scored twice.

"Down she went!" was Fenno's terse description of the Jap ship's demise.

The sub continued to patrol the area without success for some time. And then one night about midnight, dead ahead, appeared a fixed light. Fenno's thoughts immediately swung back to his experience with another light on the way out to Corregidor, but he kept his sub pushing steadily forward.

"I was expecting them to start shooting any minute," he said. "But they didn't. We dove and picked up the light through the periscope."

Slowly and cautiously, the submarine eased in. Finally the order came to fire one torpedo. At their battle stations, the crew held their collective breath, waiting for the dull explosion that would tell them they had scored a hit on the target. The blast of a torpedo when heard aboard a sub is sometimes described as resembling the muffled sound of a boiler blowing up. No such heartening noise came to the

*(Continued on page 144)*

# THIS IS IT!

By ROBERT H. WALL, Jr.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN MEOLA

THERE never was anybody like my boy Stinky. At least I hope not.

This time it's an ingrown toenail. Sure, I know; your Uncle Elmer on your mother's side of the family had one and nobody ever wrote a story about him. But your Uncle Elmer wasn't broken from a technician, fourth grade, which is almost a sergeant, on account of it.

*I tuck the bottle of alcohol under my arm and tip-toe back to the ward where Stinky is waiting for his water.*

Before a lot of public-spirited people start writing letters of protest to the Pentagon Building, I better add that the Army doesn't go around breaking people on account of they have trouble with their feet. Look at my arches, for instance. . . . But that's another story, and I'm trying to tell you about Stinky's ingrown toenail and a few assorted other troubles stemming from it.

There's this fatal day when I meet Stinky limping up the road to the Base Dispensary. I hail him and ask him is he going some place.

He raises a mask of agony for my inspection. "I don't know. At present I am suffering deeply."

"What's wrong?" I can see that his left foot is partly encased in a cutaway shoe that was once GI, but now looks like a cross between a huarache and a Grecian sandal. "Mice?"

Stinky turns his face away. "Please don't give me another thought. Just go heedlessly along in your vehicle and leave me alone. I am going on sick call."

"O. K. I'll buzz off, but I'll drop in on my way back and ride you down to Special Service."

He brightens somewhat and thanks me.

So I park outside the dispensary about twenty minutes later and go inside to look up Stinky. There's a lot of confusion and lines of people showing off various parts of their anatomy to lieutenants and groups of serious-looking medics. I narrowly escape getting a stimulating dose of anti-tetanus. An eager beaver bears down on me with a dripping needle. I step aside and some other innocent who's waiting for dental care gets the shot—probably because he's got his shirt off and somebody is listening to his heart with a puzzled expression on his face. It is all mixed up, like I said. Anything can happen on sick call.

I find Stinky getting a treatment for athlete's foot with his trousers rolled up just high enough for the cuffs to drag in the red liquid in the foot basin.

"Got the New Guinea itch, son? Is that all?" I am all set to ride him. "Maybe you will change your socks once a week now."

"My dear boy," Stinky informs me with a grimace of distaste, "I am suffering from . . ." It's a Latin name that keeps coming out of his mouth for a long time and has him breathing like Sinatra. "And I am being admitted to the Base Hospital, yet." He is a very proud boy.

"Little man, you are indeed making progress and we all should certainly be proud of you, but what shall I say is the matter with you to the other lay minds back at headquarters?"

"It will be an exceedingly painful operation, they tell me. But chances are I'll be as good as new when I'm well again."

It sounds like a snow job to me, but I nod. "Of course you will. Maybe we shouldn't talk about it if it bothers you and unmans you."

Stinky looks at me gratefully and suspiciously, but he leans back and closes his eyes wearily.

Casting about for suitable conversation, I give my mental wheel a whirl and it comes up with, "The funniest thing I ever had happen to me was my Aunt Clara who went to the hospital once to have her tonsils removed and woke up without her gall bladder."

Stinky glares at me.

"The doctor apologized, but Aunt Clara sued the pants off everybody concerned. It seemed to give her quite a lift and an entirely new outlook, somehow."

Stinky raises first one foot, then the other, out of the footbath.

"Don't let them monkey with your gall bladder, old man. It's dynamite," I caution him.

"You are quite a joker," he tells me. "But I suddenly find your humor is ashes in the mouth."

*"Chacun à son goût,"* I state. "Each to his own taste."

*"Ou est l'encre de ma tante?* Where is the ink of my aunt?" Stinky snarls.

*"Dans la fenêtre* . . . Or is that 'window'?" I ask, being quite carried away with myself. "I have spoken so little French lately that I am a bit rusty."

"In addition, you have a very gruesome accent," he tells me. "And I'm not sure that we should talk anyway, as I am undoubtedly supposed to get lots of rest and not be excited."

"I shall bring you many baskets of fruit, all of the new novels in bright wrappers, and dozens of roses," I promise him.

Just then a medic bustles up. He looks at me and commands, "Take off your shoes and socks."

"Wait a minute—"

"How long have you had it?" He shakes a big bottle at me, full of what looks like very thin blood.

"There's nothing wrong with me," I explain. "I'm waiting here, well, I'm waiting to take my friend to the hospital."

"Well, why didn't you say so?" he wants to know.

"Sorry," I apologize, trying to figure out whether he's a sergeant or a buck private, which is what he acts like.

He turns around. "You sure there's nothing wrong with you?"

I spot the lack of chevrons. "Just a slight trace of leprosy."

"Some day," Stinky warns, "you are going to get into difficulties with that big yap of yours. Those new corporal's chevrons of yours have made you stripe-happy."

I ignore his prophecy. "Oh, pish tosh," say I, secretly admiring my reflection in the glass

case where they keep the liniment, aspirin, and cathartics that rumor says they use to treat broken arms and legs.

"I'll bet you've got stripes on your shorts."

"No," I tell him, "but you've got to admit that's an idea."

So I bundle Stinky off to his tent after he has had many forms filled out to cover his case and is given instructions to report immediately to the Base Hospital. At his tent we pick up the few odds and ends he has to take with him—his shaving stuff, mess gear, writing material, change of clothing, steel helmet, gas-mask, and his raincoat. He's leaning heavily on my shoulder and groaning horribly with each step. I am carrying his barracks bag which only has in it the articles I listed above and something else which I suspect to be a solid block of lead.

MY SYMPATHY knows no limits, so I drive the three miles to the hospital trying not to hit too many bumps on the way and without making an effort to cheer him up. We get into a sort of reminiscent mood together.

"Remember the first time I met you, Stinky? Before we came over here to New Guinea?"

"Yeah. At the P.O.E."

"Know what I thought?"

"No. Know what *I* thought?"

"No. But *I* thought, 'Holy smoke. There's just about the snootiest little jerk I ever seen.'"

"And I thought, 'They're getting pretty snafu'd when they begin drafting old men like him.'"

"And I thought, 'How I'd like to sock him in the kisser!'"

"And I thought—"

"Well, here we are!" I tell him as I jerk to a full stop in front of the door marked *Receiving*. "I'll help you in."

"Oh, no."

"Oh, yes."

"I can manage."

I drag his barracks bag out of his hand and spring lightly over the spare tire. It's anchored alongside of the driver's seat for reasons best known to the designers, who must be morticians in their spare time.

"You needn't bother coming in," Stinky insists after I've helped him down.

"But I want to. Lean on me, brother."

"Oh hell! All right, but I don't want you coming up to the desk with me."

"Why not?"

"Well, you might worry if you know what I have."

"Is it catching?"

"No," Stinky replies sharply, "but there are occasions when I devoutly wish it were." He hobbles away from me. "Now stay right there and wait."

A major confronts me. "What's yours, son?"

"Nothing. I . . ." I gesture helplessly toward Stinky and the weapons-carrier which is parked outside next to the *No Parking* sign. Majors always make me lose my voice. Except our commanding officer, who is a major. He has never complained about that.

"No visitors until fourteen hundred," he says.

"Two o'clock?"

"Fourteen hundred."

"Thank you, sir." I'm thinking what dry wit officers seem to have.

I hear the orderly at the desk say, "Here's another one for Surgery, sir."

"Put him in Ward Eleven," the major says as I take a long, last look at Stinky and walk out. If it's Surgery, it must be grave, I'm thinking.

I give her the gun all the way back to headquarters only to find that the sensation has preceded me. I charge into the office and meet Little Joe. "Stinky has just been—"

"Gangrene," says Little Joe, shaking his head sadly. "Just run a nail in his foot down on the dock. New Guinea gets the best of 'em."

I hurry over to the sergeant-major.

"Where the hell have you been with that truck?" he snarls.

"Stinky—"

"Sure. Stinky has a carbuncle, but why the devil do you have to go gally-whooping all over the base because of that?"

"I'm sorry, Sarge." He's obviously going to be narrow-minded about my errand of mercy on Army time.

"O. K. Be sorry while you drive a truck down to the beach and collect a couple loads of gravel."

And that's how I land, first on my side on the sharp gravel and then flat on my back in bed number 31, Ward Eleven, right next to Stinky who says only, "My God! Such devotion. He even moves in to be close to me, yet," and goes on reading a battered copy of *Little Women*.

"I fall off a truck and skin my side, so they put me in the Surgical Ward," I point out to him. "Does that add up?"

"You should have been more careful," he tells me, dispassionately. "You know, this Jo was quite a character. Wonder what strange light modern psychoanalysis would shed on her—"

"Frankly," I state, "I think she was in love with her father."

"She did cut off all her hair."

"A sure sign," I reply, nodding sagely. "But you must have been peeking ahead. That doesn't come until later."

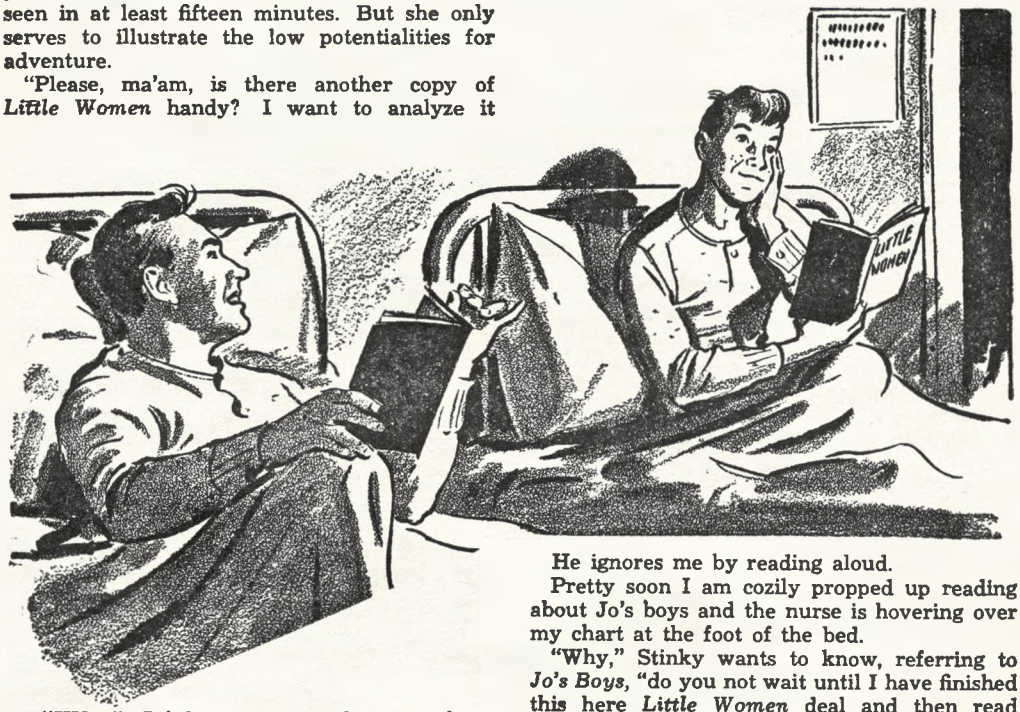
Our discussion is interrupted by lots of people lifting up my pajama jacket, looking at me, and standing off to one side to mutter together ominously. Then they begin plying

me with big white pills and the nurse hands me a card marked *Intake* and *Output*.

I am busy for quite a while. Compresses are put on me and taken off almost instantly. People have a lovely time looking at my raw places some more. I begin to feel like a prize rose at the flower show. Then my popularity falls off. And Stinky is pointedly unable to concentrate on my stream of consciousness and *Little Women* at the same time.

The nurse pauses indifferently. "Anything you want?" She's the first white woman I've seen in at least fifteen minutes. But she only serves to illustrate the low potentialities for adventure.

"Please, ma'am, is there another copy of *Little Women* handy? I want to analyze it from a psychological standpoint even as my friend in the next bed is doing."




*"Why," Stinky wants to know, referring to* Jo's Boys, *"do you not wait until I have finished* Little Women *and then read them in the proper sequence?"*

"You what?"

"Did Jo have an Oedipus complex? Have you ever given that serious thought?"

"Now look, friend. I think we must have a fever."

"We have no fever, speaking for myself at least. I'm not kidding. I'm not the kidding type. Now, take my friend in the next bed. He's the joker of the combination. And a student of psychoanalysis, withal."

"Any pressure?"

"Pressure? Not unless you mean the way these pajamas itch."

She is taking my pulse. "Funny," she mutters.

"I would feel much calmer if I could immerse myself in a bit of Louisa May, nurse. You've no idea how soothing she can be. Right now I crave *Little Women*—in a nice way, of course. Can you manage it?"

She gives me a look like I am a very interesting spirochete and says, "No, but I think I can bring you *Jo's Boys*."

"Her own?"

"I guess so."

"Thank you, blessed one," I tell her and turn painfully to ask Stinky, "What sort of strange light does modern psychoanalysis shed on that, buster?"

He ignores me by reading aloud.

Pretty soon I am cozily propped up reading about Jo's boys and the nurse is hovering over my chart at the foot of the bed.

"Why," Stinky wants to know, referring to *Jo's Boys*, "do you not wait until I have finished this here *Little Women* deal and then read them in the proper sequence?"

"Nurse!" I cry dramatically. "He spoke to me. The silence is broken."

She drops her jaw.

"I asked a civil question, is all," Stinky huffs.

"I don't really know what my decision would be. Care to discuss it? Nothing like talking out these things."

"Scarcely. I find *Little Women* too engrossing. What a bunch of mice! Always running up and down stairs and crawling over the furniture playing Pilgrim's Progress. Nothing but a bunch of masochists, which are people who like pain, in case this conversation is getting over your head by any chance."

"I also know what a sadist is," I proudly tell him. "And I don't think the big nurse likes psychology because she just took off down the ward like a big-eared bird."

"A fig for the nurse!"

Because Stinky is in such fine fettle, I

reopen the entrancing subject of his mysterious condition. "It cheers me to see you all smiles and dewy-eyed over your book when all the time I imagined you writhing and twisting in agony."

"They must have given me something to quiet me down and deaden the pain." He's reading again with even greater intensity.

"Leave us face it now," I wheedle, "because I am truly interested in what is wrong with you."

"Leave us not face anything until we come to the bridge. It unhinges me no end to have my infirmities pried into."

BUT the mystery is about to be solved. The solid-looking nurse comes back with a boyish little captain in tow. "These are the two," she tells him. "This one is our ingrown toenail." She nods toward Stinky.

"Ingrown—" I drop *Jo's Boys* on the concrete floor and laugh until the tears come to my eyes. When I can see again, there is a thermometer in my mouth and the nurse is enjoying my pulse.

The captain is sitting besides Stinky's bed with the book in his hands. "Like *Little Women*, soldier?"

"I find it rather confusing," Stinky says, using that tone of voice he thinks is so dignified and impressive and looking like he has a mouthful of something that tastes very bad. "I mean all that running upstairs and downstairs with burdens. They must have been a bunch of unsettled mental cases. If you know what I mean."

"Hmm," the nurse lady says, looking sort of cross-eyed at my thermometer. She takes a long look at me with her eyes uncrossed, then goes over to huddle with the captain.

"And now," I ask Stinky, "is our epoch-making ingrown toenail?"

He doesn't answer but I can see that he's been reached.

"Whyn't you tell me? I could have cut it out for you with my pocketknife."

"Read your book," he snaps.

The captain is back, but keeps a respectable distance as he speaks, I notice. "And you are also reading Louisa Alcott, soldier, nurse tells me."

"Yes, sir."

"How's your head?"

"It's my side, sir."

"Yes, I know. But about your head . . . No pressure?"

I've been here before. A number of pert quips come to my mind but you don't quip at captains. "No, sir."

"Dizzy spells?"

"No dizzy spells."

"Get along pretty well with the rest of the boys?"

"We all hate him," Stinky says.

"Quiet," I tell Stinky. "The captain and I are talking together and we don't need assistance."

"Apparently he did not find you very stimulating," Stinky sneers. "He has just departed."

I am alone again. Stinky is reading. It is very boring. I sigh, "I wish that something would happen."

Me and Cinderella. About two minutes later, Stinky is being wheeled out of the ward in a wheel chair. Fifteen minutes or so later, it is my turn. We go down covered passageways between wards until we come to a nice, cool room and I am facing a fatherly-looking major who is making a tent with his fingertips and smiling at me. "Now, then, son. Just relax. Close your eyes. That's it. Let your head fall back. That's fine."

It is very nice like that.

"Now tell me just what you are thinking," he urges me quietly.

"It's nice."

"What's nice?"

"I dunno. Just sitting like this, I guess. Relaxing."

"Is that really what you were thinking?"

"Yes, sir. It isn't much, is it? 'A poor thing, but thine own,'" I quote, on account of it never does any harm to show majors how erudite you can be in a pinch.

He coughs. "Come now. I'm your friend. You mustn't be antagonistic. I am here to help you. You can tell me everything."

It occurs to me for a fleeting moment that this is the chance of a lifetime, but there's something about him that I don't trust. It's like feeling that there are dictaphones under the carpet. "But that's all I was thinking," I insist.

"I'm not trying to compel you to tell me anything you don't want to." His voice is soft as marshmallows and he rolls the words out like he's talking around a mouthful of gumdrops. "I think you really do want to tell me something, don't you?"

I remember suddenly the week of K.P. I drew once during basic training when I gave a truthful answer to the battalion commander during Saturday inspection after he had asked me what I thought of the chow. "No, sir. There's nothing to tell."

He's old-hand enough to see I've clammed up, so he sighs and shoves a mimeographed form across the desk for me to fill out. It occurs to me while I'm working over it that the Army is going pretty far in its efforts to make patients happy in the hospital. But orientation is a big bug in many steel helmets. Some of the questions are downright intimate. Others are only silly. One or two annoy me.

After I've finished the form and returned it to him, the major nods and I am wheeled out. As we go out of the door I turn and tell him, "Sir, may I say that the question about my

mother seems to me to be very crudely worded?"

I am outside the room before I can catch his answer.

Stinky isn't in his bed when I get back to the ward. And the ward boys and the big nurse all seem to quicken their steps as they pass me by. Or maybe I'm just imagining it.

I hail the nurse. "Is it all right if I shave?" I am groping in my kit for my razor. I remember packing it in there, but I can't find it.

"We'd better wait until morning," she suggests as she rushes on down the aisle.

The razor is not there. I glare at Stinky's bed. The joker has most likely hidden it, just to be a cute kid. All right. If he wants to play games, he'll find me a fun-loving fellow. I reach over and snatch *Little Women* and tuck it under my pillow.

I HAVE my temperature and pulse looked into by an assortment of anonymous characters. It seems to be the new thing. Everybody takes a crack at it. Total strangers, even.

They bring Stinky back on a flat table with wheels. He is lifted off and dumped delicately into bed while he bites the lip and looks brave.

"Chin up," I keep telling him all the while.

When we are alone, Stinky leans over. "Where did they take you this afternoon, or did they take you in there, too?"

"To see a man who asked me silly questions and wanted me to tell all."

"You answered them carefully, I trust?"

"I gave my answers a great deal of thought, dear boy."

"You realize the significance of them?"

"Sure. Just another one of those fancy twists the Army is putting on things these days. Guess they want to fit you into your surroundings."

Stinky shakes his head. "I been giving this a lot of cerebration. I was thinking about it all the time I was under the knife. And, frankly, I'm worried."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes. There's something fishy about this business of us going to the psychiatrist—and the base psychiatrist, at that."

"Nothing to get excited about. Remember the man who looked out of the window when you were inducted and asked you questions like those we had to answer?"

"Do you know what I think?"

"Pursuing that problem is a career that doesn't appeal to me at the moment."

"Don't be like that," Stinky pleads. "I've got a very solemn thought working inside me."

I think of my razor. "And I, too, have a little worm gnawing at me."

"You've heard of Section Eight?"

"Sure. They give it to mental cases."

"That questionnaire—"

"Silly, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but the thing that worries me is that it's the same one they give to men who are under observation for discharge for mental reasons."

"And I thought. . ." I am flat on my back and cold, all of a sudden. "They think—"

Stinky nods solemnly.

I try a laugh. "You're just off on one of those tangents of yours."

"That wasn't just a routine examination," he insists. "That was it."

I can feel the perspiration standing out on my forehead and cutting gullies down my side. "We've got to do something about that. And quick."

"Now wait—"

"No. We've got to convince them that we're as sane as anybody. I'll get up and talk to the nurse. She looks like a kind soul."

"How?"

I have one foot out of bed. "Why, just—just. . ."

Stinky makes a grim mouth. "See what I mean?"

"I bet you are enjoying this," I snort. "You got us into this with your ingrown toenail. Now get us out of it."

"*I* got us into it?"

I guess we must have been talking pretty loud because I've got another thermometer in my mouth and there's a ward boy counting my pulse. Then I am drinking something out of a little glass.

When I wake up it feels like a week later. It's morning and I am very fuzzy. But at least it's the same ward and I can see Stinky dimly under his mosquito netting in the next bed.

The night nurse, who looks more like she was born and not just issued, pulls my mosquito netting out from under the mattress and wants to know if I've spent a restful night.

I thank her politely and try to look bright and normal, although I can't think how it should go. In spite of the knockout drops and my hangover which gives me a frayed feeling, I remember our dilemma. I've heard things about the psycho ward. We won't go into that, in any sense of the word.

Stinky is awake. But knowing him, I'm aware that it's mostly reflexes he's having and there's nothing to be gained by starting a discussion about our common problem until he's had breakfast and coffee. So I invite Inspiration. She sends her weak-minded sisters, Perspi and Despe, instead.

After breakfast has been nibbled at, Stinky joins me in the blind alley.

"What are we going to do?" I ask him meekly.

"What are we going to do?" he asks me.

It looks like a meeting of the minds.

"Here," I tell him, feeling full of last-minute repentance. I return the copy of *Little Women* to him from under my pillow. "Now just give me my razor."

"I haven't got your razor. You have mine."

I look at him. He returns the favor. "Oh," we both say. "So they have taken away our razors."

"We're dead ducks," Stinky moans.

"Don't say that," I urge him. "I'm not in the mood for truth. It's too soon after breakfast. I'll think of something."

"You've already thought of enough."

"If we relax, something will come to us."

We both relax. Something comes to us. It is our commanding officer, the major.

"Well," he says, "since there's hardly anyone left at the office, I thought I might as well come up here and see how the company is doing."

We grin, sickly.

"How are they treating you?" he asks.

"Fine," I reply. "Just fine and dandy, sir."

Stinky is making faces at me.

"Well, it's not regular visitors' hours so I better go before they begin reading the regulations to me," the major says and starts to leave. "Take good care of yourselves and keep out of trouble."

THAT does what Stinky's face-making couldn't do.

"Sir," I call after him.

The major comes back.

"We've already done it so I guess it's too late not to do it, sir."

He frowns at me.

I try again. "Trouble, I mean."

The major sighs heavily. "I might have known. What have you been doing now?"

"Well, sir. . ."

"I'll sit down," the major states. "You two never do anything simple."

"It's not really too awful, sir. It's just that we think they think we're crazy. That's all." I outline how come we two have become innocent victims of circumstance. He isn't too happy about any of it.

After a moment's reflection, the major says, "I ought to let them lock you both up." He can't help smiling a little. "I'll see what I can do." Then he stops smiling. "But if you two get into trouble again, I'll have two new privates. Get me?"

We tell him, "Yes, sir."

"At ease," he snaps and marches out of the ward.

"Splendid character," Stinky observes.

"Solid."

"Rugged but right."

"No more monkey business," I promise Stinky. "Right?"

"Right. From now on we shall become exemplary people." He picks up *Little Women.*

We spend a restful afternoon shooting the breeze with a few nearby people who tell us mostly about the wonderful alcohol backrubs they give you at night if you ask for them.

After chow, Fate's fickle finger starts twitching. An emergency appendectomy is rushed in and out. You'd think the whole hospital was being evacuated. That quiet way both nurses and doctors have of rushing around is one of the most nerve-racking things I know. It's so quiet that the rubber-wheeled table sounds like a medium tank going into action.

Stinky, meanwhile, agitates for a backrub. It's a losing battle. No one has any time.

Lights are put out at nine-thirty. It's nearly ten when Stinky asks me if I'm asleep.

"No. Can't you sleep?" I whisper.

"I can't seem to get those backrubs off my mind. Maybe," Stinky murmurs, "if I had a drink of water I'd be all right."

I get up to draw it for him. After I fill the glass in the kitchen at the end of the ward, I am struck with the happy thought that maybe it's not too late and the nurse will rub Stinky's back now that the excitement is over. But no one is in the office. The bottle of alcohol is, though. And another happy thought comes over the plate. I may just as well extend a helping hand to the night nurse, who is probably a very tired lady, and give Stinky his backrub, myself. Nothing to it. The bottle says *Alcohol* on it, so I tuck it under my arm, look up and down the ward to make sure the nurse isn't in sight to do the job, and then tiptoe past the cots to where Stinky is waiting.

"Look," I whisper, "what I've got. Drink your water and I'll take care of your back."

"All right, you two!" It's the ward boy. "Gimme that bottle of alky."

"This?" I hold it out. "I was just going—"

"Yeah. Too bad I was just across the hall when you sneaked into the office and pinched it. Spoiled your fun, didn't I?"

"If *you* want to give him a backrub it's all right with me," I say.

"Backrub?"

"Sure. Thats what I got it for."

"Using grain alcohol for a backrub? Don't give me that, junior."

"What did you think we were going to do with it? Drink it?" I know right away that I'm saying the wrong thing.

"Get back in bed. We'll talk it over with the ward officer in the morning," the ward boy says.

"Oh, my poor aching back," Stinky moans.

I wonder what the major said when he heard about it.

All I know for sure is that backrub made two privates where there used to be a technician, fourth grade, and a corporal. Better, as Stinky says, we should have drunk that backrub, yet.

# NEW GUINEA GOLD

By
THOMSON BURTIS

ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

THE STORY THUS FAR:

CAPTAIN ANDREW SINCLAIR, ex-World War I flier, doctor, scientist, explorer, owner of the schooner *Seeker*, decides to quit the South Seas where he has been roaming aimlessly since the end of the war and return to civilization for study and research. Before he can start the long voyage home, however, he is persuaded by the fabulous JUMBO JOHNSON, trader and adventurer, to engage in a pearling expedition. If this pans out Johnson offers the rosy possibility of cleaning up a quick fortune later in New Guinea, a vast and unexploited territory. After a short time Sinclair learns that he's been played for a sucker by Johnson, an unscrupulous crook, who only wants to acquire the *Seeker*. Sinclair winds up in an Australian jail after having been caught by the authorities with the forged pearling licenses Johnson has foisted on him. His boat is appropriated by the government and Johnson promptly buys it at auction for a song and vanishes.

Having served his sentence Sinclair's one idea is vengeance on Johnson. Broke and cut by his old acquaintances who regard him as an ex-criminal, Sinclair finally becomes an itinerant beachcomber roaming the Pacific in search of Johnson. In the course of his wanderings he encounters NICK BRANDON, an old

R.F.C. fellow officer, who is now flying a plane into the interior of New Guinea for a gold-mining company. With him is a girl, SANDRA HOPE, daughter of the outfit's president, who is flying in to visit her father. They will bring out a load of bullion—several months' accumulation at the mine.

Months later, having reached Santa Cruz in his fruitless search for Johnson, Sinclair meets VIVIAN DAUBREY, "The Duke," an aristocratic British remittance man gone to pot with drink, and his fawning cockney hanger-on "MOUSY" SYKES. The pair is as crooked as Johnson ever was and out to get a quick stake. They tell Sinclair that they know where Brandon and the girl, Sandra, have crashed their plane in the jungle on their way out with the bullion, and that they intend to salvage it. They need a man with bush savvy such as Sinclair has to help them into the interior of New Guinea. The added information that Johnson in another of his schooners, the *Early Morn,* is also on the trail of the gold is sufficient to persuade Sinclair to go along.

On the way to Port Moresby to refit Daubrey's schooner, the *Susan,* for the expedition, two native crew members vanish overboard. Sinclair is sure that they have been murdered because they know too much about how Daubrey and Sykes killed ATMORE, the captain, and stole his money.

Six weeks later, with BUMIDAI, a coast native piloting them, and a crew of Kanakas, the four, aboard the *Susan,* start up the Florel River for Lake Murdoch, in the interior of New Guinea. Caught in a tidal wave at the mouth of the river, Sinclair has an opportunity to save Bumidai's life, winning his complete loyalty, though the rest of the crew are Daubrey's men. In the same accident the Britisher mangles his nose horribly and Sinclair performs an operation and gives the Duke a new and much handsomer appendage than he had originally.

Sailing on into the interior, the adventurers are beset by headhunting savages but manage to escape. They discover, however, the head of the pilot, Brandon, cured and hanging outside a native village but no sign of Sandra, his companion. They also discover a drifting dinghy from Johnson's boat, the *Early Morn,* with a speared crewman of Johnson's in it, and later see the looted wreck of the schooner. Now they know they have Johnson where they want him—marooned in the interior with no boat to get away. They follow Johnson's trail and come upon the man with his crewmen and porters outside a native village where some sort of ceremony is in progress before the *ravi,* or clubhouse. Johnson hands Sinclair a pair of binoculars and through them he sees an emaciated white girl who is the central figure of a sorcerer's ceremonial dance. Obviously she is about to become a sacrifice of some sort.

## PART III

SINCLAIR looked past Johnson to the alert Daubrey. "That's Sandra Hope over there," he said.

It was as though high-powered arc lights had suddenly replaced ordinary bulbs deep in the caverns of Daubrey's face. Sinclair jerked his thumb in a direction away from the amphitheater.

Johnson raised one hand and crooked a forefinger. In instant response, ten strapping Hanaubada warriors, who had not appeared to be watching him at all, bent low and started drifting from their points of concealment. A short, fat little black man walked around a giant fern and joined them. Finger to lip, Sinclair gestured to his own Kanakas. Not a word was spoken as the three white men and sixteen blacks made their silent way into the concealment of the brush. Now the drums were louder and increasing in tempo.

Sinclair was walking beside Johnson, Daubrey behind them. The Britisher was holding his gun alertly, head thrown back, his new nose appearing to sniff breezes in which he smelled rare and intoxicating aromas.

"Now the women'll be joining the dance," Johnson said.

"How do you know?" Sinclair asked.

"That little fat Kanaka who doesn't look happy comes from a tribe near here. Picked him up by a lucky accident."

They stopped in a small clearing adorned with the crumbling remnants of huts long unused. Three of Johnson's boys, along with Bumidai and another of Sinclair's crew, were ordered to take positions as outposts. The remainder of the savages squatted down, Sinclair's three on one side of the white men, Johnson's on the other. Automatically, the tiny armies had formed separate lines.

"Bit of luck, what?" Daubrey said with careful nonchalance. "The pretty lady will know exactly—" His voice trailed off as he gazed at Johnson inquiringly.

"Where the bullion is," Johnson finished for him. "Don't forget I found her first."

"And don't forget we're official government agents for the gold and you have no legal status, old boy."

"I suppose we're going to have a fight now about who gets the gold none of us have even seen and don't even know the location of?" Johnson said sardonically.

"Not at all," Sinclair returned evenly. "The first thing which must be done, of course, is to rescue Miss Hope."

"I doubt," the cynical Daubrey remarked, "whether three more chivalrous blokes ever lived than are right here, what?"

"Does your black man know the situation with those Negritos?" Sinclair asked. "Why didn't they have any scouts out? How come the

girl is still alive? What's the ceremony—"

"The girl's in no immediate danger, he says," Johnson interrupted. "This is a seasonal spring festival, having to do with the approaching end of their rainiest season." He grinned his wolf grin at Sinclair. "There'll be a sort of saturnalia, on a small scale, when the younger women join the dance. Finale, a day or two, or maybe a few hours from now, is the sacrifice and eating of an important captive. Save 'em for months sometimes, or go raiding if they haven't got one. Treat 'em fine—fatten 'em up and everything."

"I presume the attraction of the festival accounts for their not bothering with sentries," Sinclair said.

"Plus the fact that they're never in any danger up here, except from other hill tribes, and this is the biggest," Johnson said. "The gods of the mountain and these miniature black monkeys up here in the fog scare the lowland tribes to death."

"I suppose their sacrificial person is highly important to them, then," Sinclair said thoughtfully. "I mean that they might do things to keep her—or recover her—that they wouldn't dare do otherwise."

"Probably," agreed Johnson.

"That means that getting Sandra Hope out of here down these narrow trails won't be easy," Sinclair said.

"Easier to surprise 'em and get her than to keep her, what?" Daubrey commented.

SINCLAIR lit his pipe. No one said anything. Johnson stared at him with a sort of blazing curiosity. Daubrey was measuring Johnson with cool appraisal.

"One thing is certain," Sinclair said finally. "And that is that any matters of business between myself and you, Jumbo, or among the three of us—so far as the gold is concerned—are academic until we get Miss Hope to the boat and get her well—"

"What makes you think she's sick?"

Driving ahead, Sinclair calmly proceeded to capitalize on his medical education, despite the fact that through the binoculars Sandra Hope had looked surprisingly well to him considering the circumstances.

"Chances are she's dying of malnutrition, terror and despair." Sinclair conjured up a grim picture. "That's what it looks like at a distance. Anyhow, we need every hand—especially every white hand—until we accomplish our first objective. We join forces. Correct?"

"No," Johnson said. "I've got ten boys—eleven, as far as that goes, although one isn't much help. I play a lone hand unless I get a full fifty percent of the gold, and I've got plenty of paper and ink cached with my supplies to write the agreement with."

"Where would you go?" Sinclair asked. "Presuming those pygmies would let you go anywhere?"

"None of your business. The girl knows exactly where the gold plane crashed, of course. No matter how much you think you know, she can save weeks and maybe months of prospecting for a month-old wreck, probably covered over by vegetation now. This is one time when a woman around helps instead of fouling everything up. The hombre that gets her gets the gold, and I'm here fustest with the mostest men. The grateful gal talks freely to her heroic white rescuer, et cetera."

"Then what, old boy?" Daubrey asked.

"I had plans before you got here, and I'll have plans after I kick you out. I can use help, but it's fifty percent or nothing."

"Hard bargainer, what?" Daubrey said blithely. "Eleven boys to our five and all that sort of thing. Rum spot we'd be in, Sinclair, old boy, if Johnson had a boat."

Johnson's great head snapped back as though jerked by a string.

"What did you mean by that crack?" he snapped.

"Just this," Sinclair said, and told Johnson of the murder of his man Bardai and the loss of the *Early Morn*.

"Now what you're thinking of," he concluded serenely, "is that you can use our boat. You can, if proper arrangements are made. But there is a white man and a crew aboard her. We knew you were upriver and that the crime you wouldn't commit for a million dollars doesn't exist."

"Generally speaking, you flatter me. But continue."

Sinclair spoke with deliberation. "My point is," he said, "that if you appear at our boat without us, your appearance will constitute, in our man Sykes' mind, proof that we have met with foul play from an unauthorized treasure hunter. He is a very tough baby, and you would be very thoroughly shot."

Daubrey snorted a little. The idea of Mousy Sykes not welcoming Johnson and Sandra Hope, and celebrating the demise of the two shares in the bullion represented by Daubrey and himself likewise, caused Sinclair's lips to twitch, too. Nevertheless, he concluded, "You'll never get aboard our boat if we're not with you. Savvy?"

"I savvy," Johnson said. "And I don't believe that natives were responsible for Bardai's death. You, Sinclair, had a score to settle with Bardai. Evidently you settled it. I also savvy that you people killed, or got rid of my boys and destroyed my boat."

"What makes you say that?"

"Because I might have done the same thing myself."

"Be that as it may," Sinclair said, "the first consideration is to stick together. Daubrey,

I suggest that instead of three shares in the gold there be four. Johnson becomes a partner in an authorized expedition. Agreed?"

"Agreed," lied Daubrey.

"Not me," Johnson said. "I didn't say a quarter share. I said fifty percent."

"No," Sinclair said. "And I wish to warn you now, Johnson, that I am extremely fast and skilful with these forty-fives. Your blacks may beat ours. That will not signify much to you because at the first sign of trouble you'll be the first one shot. Twenty-five percent to you is fair, and twenty-five it will be."

*Sandra ran swiftly toward the jungle, the two sorcerers in hot pursuit. Sinclair's rifle roared and the leading black gave one last convulsive bound forward, then fell.*

"Strikes me," Daubrey quipped, "that I ought to let you two kill each other off and carry on from there."

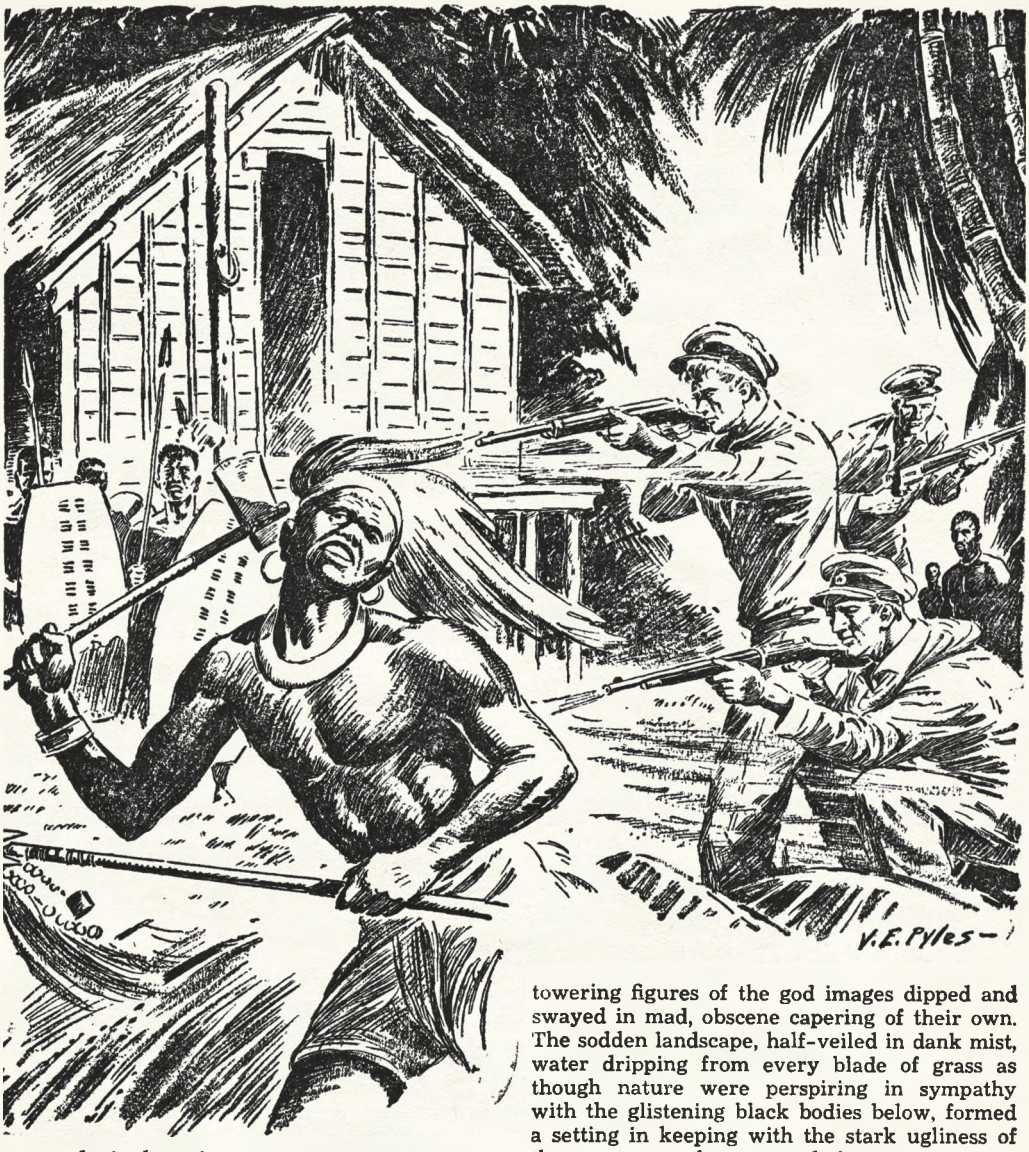
Sinclair laughed. "If you knew a little more about medicine, the jungle, and boats, you probably would," he said. Then he went on, "There are a couple of other things to consider. First, Johnson and I must declare an armistice to our personal feud until we reach the coast. Second, any plan to rescue Miss Hope must be one that can be carried through immediately. Even if she is safe for a little while longer, as far as the Negritos are concerned, she had the look of one who is trying to die and has almost succeeded. In other words, there'll be no waiting for reinforcements or elaborate preparations. Are we agreed?"

"O.K. with me," Johnson said. Daubrey nodded.

## CHAPTER XI

### BLACK MAGIC—AND WHITE

JOHNSON had cached a considerable quantity of trade goods some distance back along the trail. From his supply depot and Daubrey's stock a large variety of gaudy cloths, trinkets, shells and trade tobacco were




secured. An hour later preparations were complete, and three white men and sixteen blacks stood deployed well out of sight of the two hundred hysterical little figures in the amphitheater.

Daubrey, Sinclair and Johnson stole ahead and peered through the undergrowth. Bumidai and two other Kanakas were encouraging their more timid brothers, whose faith in firesticks and the white man's magic was being strained to the utmost.

Only the very old women and very young girls, plus babies, were left in the row of sitting figures now. Men and women were twisting, turning, stamping and chanting in the rising frenzy of a sort of courtship dance. The towering figures of the god images dipped and swayed in mad, obscene capering of their own. The sodden landscape, half-veiled in dank mist, water dripping from every blade of grass as though nature were perspiring in sympathy with the glistening black bodies below, formed a setting in keeping with the stark ugliness of the creatures who cavorted there.

"What do you think, Sinclair?" Johnson asked, smiling a little.

"Their condition seems to be a cross between hysteria and hypnosis," Sinclair said with scholarly precision. "I have an idea that predictions would be pretty silly. Let's get along to it."

The Kanakas started forward. The three white men were screened by only a few inches of undergrowth. Then Sinclair raised his hand, and the blacks behind him froze. With one accord Sinclair, Johnson and Daubrey raised their rifles and aimed.

"Maybe we won't need to demonstrate white magic by shooting a bird," Johnson said.

Two sorcerers, if their pipe-clayed bodies and elaborate head-dresses and staffs were any index to their identity, were standing before the captive's platform. Their staffs, adorned with various ornaments which included a human head each, were held in their left hands, stone axes in their right.

"Left one's mine," Sinclair said. "Hold your fire, Daubrey. You might hit the girl, and Johnson and I won't."

They held their fire while the sorcerers cut the lengths of woven vine which bound Sandra Hope's legs, and the longer ones which roped her to the uprights of the structure. They motioned her to rise.

Sandra did not move for a moment. Head thrown back, she stared at the ferociously adorned blacks before her. Then she rose stiffly to her feet. Her legs, bare to the thighs, were a mass of scars and dirt, but Sinclair noted that they did not seem emaciated. Her face, though, was wan and hollow-eyed. Her body had been fed, but her mind was feeding on itself.

Then, with one mighty bound, she hit the ground more than ten feet away from the platform, ran swiftly toward the jungle.

As one, the two sorcerers pursued her. Axes raised, they kept up with her for a moment, and one started to gain. Warriors joined the chase. Sorcerers were usually older men, Sinclair thought, as he squinted down the gun-barrel, but this one ran like a champion.

The medicine man was but three or four feet behind the frantic girl when Sinclair said quietly: "I'm taking the first one."

His rifle roared, and Johnson's was but a split second behind. The leading medicine man gave one last convulsive bound forward. Whether by accident or design, his axe swept down as he fell forward, and grazed the fleeing girl's head. Almost as though they'd rehearsed it as a team, Sandra and the two sorcerers fell prone. The blacks twitched before they died, but Sandra Hope did not move.

"Now—quick!" snapped Sinclair.

The entire procession moved into the open.

"Good show," murmured Daubrey tautly as they moved forward. "Think she's dead?"

"I don't know. Ready—aim, fire!"

Sixteen guns fired into the air. And down in the amphitheater, an entire tribe of Negritos stood transfixed with such fear and stunned amazement that for the moment they were like forms in a photograph.

Their visitors themselves presented a somewhat unusual appearance, even to themselves. The three white men had bright-colored cloth draped over their shoulders, and each black had a huge and gaudy turban wrapped around his head. The white men carried nothing but their rifles and green boughs. But dangling from poles carried on the shoulders of the blacks were many lengths of cloth, and in their hands were smaller treasures. Sinclair did not know whether these hill people savvied tobacco, nor how much they valued shells. Three blacks waved shining axes, which the Negritos should identify.

WITHOUT haste but with enormous dignity, the parade moved straight toward the core of the paralyzed savages. Sinclair knew now that they had never seen nor heard of "firesticks." The guns of Sandra and her pilot, Brandon, had been lost, no doubt, and the pair had had no tools with which to demonstrate their superiority before Brandon had been killed.

Green boughs were a symbol of peace down on Lake Murdoch, but probably meant nothing up here. Nevertheless, the white men waved them.

Muttering in strained voices, the whites of their eyes gleaming madly, the blacks fell back. Sinclair led his group straight for Sandra's body until finally they were surrounded by a circle of Negritos, fifty yards in circumference. Giving ground most grudgingly was another pair of sorcerers. These two upheld the great, cone-shaped god images. Sinclair could see the gleam of their eyes through the eye-holes of their masks. These gentlemen might prove hard to deal with.

Sinclair halted his band. At the word of command, all raised their guns. The salvo shattered the dank air, and a thousand birds squealed and squawked and cawed from the jungle. They walked forward again, and now Daubrey and Johnson were watching the flanks, and Bumidai walked backward in the rear to keep an eye on the Negritos behind them.

Sinclair stopped beside Sandra Hope and bent to examine her. She was not dead, but her dirty tangled blond hair was matted with blood from a furrow along the left side of her skull. It was harder to recognize her now than it had been at a distance. Her wasted face was smeared with mud and the haggard features bore little resemblance to the poised beauty Sinclair had first encountered on the flying field at Lae.

"She may be all right, as far as the head wound goes," Sinclair said conversationally. "But of course, you never can tell about concussions. I don't think the skull is fractured."

Daubrey exhaled slowly. "Never thought I'd meet a lady whose life was worth a fortune to me," he stated. "We have these apes rather stopped, what?"

"For the moment," Johnson said, eyeing the circle speculatively. "That is, until we're out of sight. Let's make time. I've got an idea."

With great ceremony, Johnson, Sinclair and Daubrey took the cloths and other presents from the poles, one by one, and demonstrated

their beauties to the transfixed crowd. Never had Sinclair seen such ugliness or smelled such odors as came from these gnarled, flat-nosed, blubber-lipped specimens of the not-so-human race. Frizzy hair, often dyed in bright colors; eye and ear ornaments; naked bodies which somehow gave the impression that they, too, were rotting in the dampness, formed a picture out of a sunless world having no resemblance to even the one which lay below the mist.

They saved the axes for the finale of their performance. Sinclair had noted a small thicket of spears thrust into the ground somewhat back from the circle. With two bodyguards he walked over, plucked a dozen of them from the earth and carried them back. Suddenly some warriors started leaping about madly, eyes gleaming with resentment. Sinclair signaled for a volley from the guns. The blacks ceased the demonstration abruptly.

It was entirely possible, Sinclair thought, that these primitives had temporarily forgotten how mysteriously the sorcerers had died. The women were eyeing the pile of presents with simian curiosity. Like some of their white sisters, they were much more impressed with tangible entities than with the silly posturing of the men.

Sinclair, Johnson and Daubrey each took a bunch of half a dozen spears, held them closely together, placed them on the ground, and hacked them in two with a few blows of the axes.

The warriors looked at each other in complete stupefaction. Here was something they could understand. Here were axes which had more magic in them. Suddenly they were grinning and gesticulating, but always the eyes of the two sorcerers were gleaming implacably through their eyeholes. No dent had been made in their dignity.

Sinclair felt Bumidai plucking at his sleeve. The black gestured at the motionless medicine men.

"Him fella he think. Him fella he see we finish."

Sinclair nodded. "Maybe he fella he finish," he said.

The presents were now in a huge semi-circle around the unconscious white girl. Sinclair made many gestures as he talked pidgin for the benefit of his own blacks. He addressed himself, however, to the uncomprehending hillfolk, as though they could understand. He explained that the white girl was a goddess, important to the white men who ruled the entire world, and that these priceless presents were being exchanged for her.

Then he picked Sandra up and slung her limp body over his shoulder. It was pathetically light. Body and limbs were not thin, but the flesh was soft and bloated to the touch and had neither tone nor solidity. Not even a deep tan could make it look healthy.

JOHNSON came up beside Sinclair. Daubrey and the Kanakas formed an alert inner ring around Sinclair as a center, keeping all parts of the outer circle under observation.

"Hell of a time for a conference," Johnson said, grinning at Sinclair without warmth. "But business is business. I said I had an idea."

"Shoot."

"I know you've been chasing me all over the South Seas. A fellow like you doesn't kill for the sake of killing, or for revenge."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"You've figured all the time on getting me to tell the truth, about that pearling deal, take the rap, and return your boat. Fat chance—up to now."

"Why that 'up to now'?"

"As a matter of fact," Johnson said, "I'd have bought your boat at the start instead of rooking you out of it, but I didn't have the cash. The more I expand, in my trading operations, the less cash I've got. But I always intended to get you that hundred thousand you were so determined to have."

"In your place," Sinclair said, "that's just what I'd say."

"I happen to mean it." Johnson grinned. "All right, to hell with that. For me, the end justifies the means. And if I'm any judge, you're in the same mood, and just about as ethical at this moment as a coiled cobra, and twice as dangerous."

"From you, that's a compliment."

"From me, it is a compliment. I respect a calculating man who can keep his temper. This is a hell of a place for a business conference, so let's get down to hardpan. I can be a lot of help to you alive, clearing your record of that false arrest, and none whatever—up here or on the coast—if I'm dead."

"Now that you mention it, I agree."

"So I can't conceive of your hoisting anchor and high-tailing it down river and leaving me behind."

"Correct."

"O.K. We don't stand any chance whatever in this god-forsaken steambath, on that narrow trail, if these monkeys forget to be scared and try to ambush us. They've tasted white blood, so to speak. They know, because they could handle the gal here, that white people are human. So we've got to play it smart."

"Agreed."

"Thing to do is leave a rear guard riding herd on these none-suches until we get the girl to the river and build some rafts. The rear guard can put the fear of God into these Kanakas, travel light and outfoot them, if necessary, to the rafts. Then we can float down to the rapids in comparative safety. I and most of my boys can stay behind and keep these blacks quiet."

"Damned handsome of you, on the surface,"

Sinclair said, slate eyes hard and level. "Knowing you, I know there must be a trick in it. And a dirty trick at that."

Sinclair felt Daubrey's suspicious eyes on them.

"Use your head!" Johnson snapped. "You're a doctor of a sort. The girl needs attention. Daubrey's no bushman. If the gal dies, we're all losers. What could be more sensible than one good man going ahead, and one staying behind, or that you take charge of the girl, and me and my boys do the dirty work?"

"Nothing," Sinclair admitted.

"And what could be more sensible than you and I eventually taking over this gold?" Johnson said calmly.

Sinclair grunted and smiled a little.

"I say, no time for secrets, you know," Daubrey shouted peremptorily.

"Why not?" Johnson went on in businesslike fashion. "You take a flat hundred grand, and your boat. I found the girl first. I knew as much about the gold as you did. I and my boys could have tied you all up and left you here, and taken the girl and your boat. On the other hand, you may be the one necessary to bring her back to normal. You and I could be, and should be, in the driver's seat."

"What would you do with Daubrey and Sykes?"

"Pay 'em a reasonable amount for their services," Johnson said. "You want a hundred grand and your boat, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Think it over."

"I seem to remember serving some time in jail, and that I'm a convicted criminal," Sinclair said.

"Don't be naive. I say it was all a misunderstanding. I got a man to apply for the proper papers for your boat. He took the dough, and forged the papers. I didn't speak up because there was no sense of me serving time as well as you—wouldn't help any. Delivering the gal safe and sound, and finding the gold, will help to have the whole thing forgiven and forgotten."

Then the blond giant laughed that laugh which had neither warmth nor real mirth in it. Never had he looked more like a great predatory beast than when he added, "Besides, a man with a hundred grand and a boat like your *Seeker* is never guilty of anything."

"It sounds O.K.," Sinclair lied, and in an instant regretted it.

He realized that Johnson probably knew he was lying and that Johnson, so far as revealing his real thoughts was concerned, had been far from truthful himself. Johnson might have realized that he needed an ally against Sinclair's allies, even if not against Sinclair himself, at least momentarily. Down on the coast he wouldn't need allies against anybody any more.

THEY walked forward and ordered the procession of boys to fall in behind. Now the Negrito men were restive and uneasy. The women, casting frightened looks at the men, were pawing over the trade goods. A sharp command from one sorcerer made them stand back. When the parade had passed beyond the circle of warriors, Johnson outlined his plan to Daubrey. That relieved gentleman naturally considered it a masterpiece of intelligence and self-sacrifice.

"All right, I'll herd these monkeys into their huts, keep 'em there until dark, and I'll make it down that side trail to the river with my flashlight," Johnson said crisply. Then as he turned, "Oh-oh!"

For the two sorcerers, talking in turn with the authority of the gods on their shoulders, suddenly had the warriors in an uproar. One did not need to understand a word to comprehend that the tribe was being incited to attack the tiny band of interlopers. Suddenly Sinclair's Kanabas were uneasy, and the Hanaubada men were stealing uncertain glances at each other and Johnson.

Suddenly the human skeleton who bore the image of the male god on his shoulders stepped forward a pace. The warriors gave way before the dread image. The sorcerer started to speak rapidly, his right arm describing ceaseless gestures and the left pointing upward occasionally toward the leering face of the deity high above.

It was characteristic of Papuan tribes, Sinclair had learned, that as men grew old they automatically became sorcerers because they took over custody of the gods of their tribe. The representations of the various deities, in whatever form, were usually kept from public view in a sacred room in the *ravi*. Members of the tribe placed in appointed spots gifts of food and other offerings to propitiate the supernatural beings. Thus the old men lived out their days full of good food and wealthy with shells and native luxuries.

"That old boy is smart enough to know that some warriors will be killed killing us, but that eventually numbers will tell and that they'll have a bunch of fine heads and other souvenirs," Sinclair said with deliberation. "And their gods are losing caste because of us, which means that the medicine men's authority is being ruined. To cap the climax, we're taking Sandra away from them. They've got everything to gain and nothing to lose. Take her, will you, Daubrey?"

As he handed over the limp body, he said to Johnson, "Take a shotgun and blast that male face when I throw."

From the sheath at his belt he drew the heavy-handled knife which he had carried with him since Santa Cruz. There was a flash of light, and the blade buried itself in the right shoulder of the ranting sorcerer. At the same

moment, the concentrated fire of the shotgun almost decapitated the frail peak of the cone-like body of the god.

The sorcerer screamed behind his mask. His right arm remained suspended in midair. The belligerent capering of the warriors, some of whom had rushed for their spears, ceased, and they murmured among themselves.

That knife they understood, and the skill with which it had been used was a superhuman but still a human thing. How much of their sudden fear was because of sacrilege against the god and how much to the thrown knife, Sinclair could not evaluate. Probably some of both.

"Beat it now, and leave this to me!" bawled Johnson. Then, typically, he flashed that hard, white-toothed grin at Sinclair. "Did I say a cobra? Chum, you're a zoo!"

Johnson, impressing the Negritos, bawled in a mighty voice his orders to four of his men to go with Sinclair. With many gestures, he ranted wildly as he herded the tribesmen toward their hovels while the procession filed out of sight into the undergrowth surrounding the amphitheater.

SINCLAIR took over Sandra. As soon as they reached the remainder of the cached supplies, which included morphine and the elaborate medical kit Daubrey had insisted on bringing, he would attend to that wound and see to it that she stayed mercifully unconscious for a time.

They looked back at the fantastic scene below. The wounded sorcerer had plucked the knife from his shoulder and was examining it with curiosity so strong that he seemed to have forgotten the new wound in his much-scarred body. But as he did so, he was giving way before the raging Johnson. Trade goods in the arms of many of them, the entire tribe was now streaking for the hovels toward which Johnson had succeeded in making them understand, via sign language, that they must go.

"Nervy chap, what?" Daubrey said, as they led the Kanakas toward the trail.

Sinclair smiled bleakly. "Whatever he's lacking, there are a few things he has. He's got size, brains, class and guts, and that adds up to man, in any part of this world."

"Desirable partner, perhaps?"

Daubrey's pointed question forced Sinclair to a conversational offensive a little sooner than his plan called for.

"He tried to make a quick deal for the two of us to gang up against you and Sykes," he said.

"Why didn't you?"

"I did pretend to, because I've got to keep him in hand until I get him to the coast."

"That's good sense," Daubrey agreed calmly.

"And I don't mind telling you," Sinclair lied, "that on the boat, Sykes wanted the two of us to freeze you out. Nor do I mind saying I think Sykes murdered your captain and doped those two crewmen and tossed them to the sharks."

"I'm not surprised at either statement—far from it. As for the first, you're a captain, a doctor, and know the jungle. For those reasons, I'd like to make a deal with you myself."

"Meaning that you have designs on our white brothers?" Sinclair asked, shifting Sandra to the other shoulder.

"They both have designs on me, haven't they?"

"Plenty."

"Unless you turn out to have too many scruples," Daubrey opined, "you're the perfect partner."

Sinclair almost said, "Until we get close to the coast, and then Johnson will be your best bet. Then you can finally cut him out of any important share in the gold because he had no permit and you can say you were forced into an agreement."

What he did say was, "Then it's us against the others, and the gold split two ways?"

"Precisely. Johnson will have no legal standing, what? As for Sykes, now that he's proved to be cutting my throat—he did actually kill our captain and those Malayan crewmen, you know, and if you testify that he told you so, and I add my testimony, that takes care of him, doesn't it?"

"I would think so," Sinclair said.

Suddenly, despite his legitimate objective, he felt unclean and ashamed of his own ...ning and deceit. But these men, he reflected, in this country, were like nations for whom there is no higher law. And perhaps Daubrey, Sykes and Johnson were to be blamed no more and no less for concocting their individual versions of the law of tooth and claw.

He still preferred savages.

## CHAPTER XII

### A MADWOMAN'S EYES

THREE hours after dawn the following morning three rafts, ten feet wide by nearly twenty long, were floating down the unnamed river toward the rapids and Lake Murdoch. A torrential rainstorm poured out of the mist with such fury that Sinclair felt as though he were under the waterfall behind them. Tired as he was, and inured to rain, he could not sleep. Beside him, wrapped in trade-cloth and covered with two thicknesses of the canvas they had used for hammocks to carry their supplies on the uptrail, Sandra Hope lay in a coma.

The bottom of the raft was two thicknesses of saplings laid crossways and bound together with sturdy vines. Rough planks had been

*The crude rafts floated down the unnamed river toward Lake Murdoch. Sandra lay in a coma broken by occasional nightmares and inhuman shrieks.*

hewn and sawed to make a low railing all around each crude structure—some protection from any arrows that might spray from the bush at any time the current carried the unwieldy craft close to shore.

On the raft carrying Sinclair, Sandra and the medical kit, were Bumidai and all but one of the *Susan's* blacks. On another, Daubrey was in command of five of Johnson's Hanaubada boys and the remaining crewmen from the *Susan*, with Jumbo Johnson himself enthroned on the third raft with the remainder of his Kanakas. With long poles, two of each crew helped a rudderman, armed with a plank, to give a semblance of guidance to the clumsy platforms.

Those on duty had had two hours sleep while awaiting Johnson's arrival at the river. Apparently as fresh as a daisy, but with his troupe of Hanaubada warriors asleep on their feet, the trader had reached the river two hours after sunup. It was characteristic of this scion of the Vikings that he had kept his rearguard on duty until after the danger hour—dawn—and also that he had carelessly mentioned a minor detail. "Had to kill three of those medicine men before they got the idea. Nice work, these rafts. How's the lady?"

"Not good," Sinclair had told him truthfully. "Still out of her head."

In the middle of the night she had come to. Unfortunately, the countenance of a peculiarly homely savage had been first to meet her eyes. Screams which still made Sinclair's flesh creep had rung through the dripping darkness, and it had taken both Sinclair and Daubrey to subdue her. There were still marks on the flaccid flesh of her arms and legs where they had held her by main strength.

An injection of morphine had quieted her and she had not been conscious since. Sinclair felt that a fast would help rather than weaken her, at this point, and was relieved that all functions of nature seemed to have been suspended in her. Absolute and complete rest, so far as was possible, and obliteration of dreams which would surely be nightmares was the best possible thing for her.


He was endeavoring to give himself the same treatment. Every muscle relaxed, his mind as close to a blank as he could make it, he lay quiet and let the rain wash his body and even his mind, as it would. He avoided thoughts of the trouble which he felt—and Bumidai seemed to know—awaited them down in the Lake Murdoch country. Those warriors who had tasted white blood and showered arrows at them on the way up country would know that the white men, their boat and their treasures, would be passing through on the return trip some day. The forest of camouflaged spears they'd encountered had proved that the lakemen could plan ahead.

But that was days in the future. And as far as his white antagonists were concerned, Sinclair felt that he was absolutely safe. He would be cared for as tenderly as Sandra herself, if necessary, until he had done all he could for her. Getting around the rapids; the comparatively safe haven of the *Susan;* days of recuperation and rest—it was a blissful dream which he consciously embraced. Lying safe from ambush behind the protection of even these crude railings was a blessed relief from the jungle trails, from which unpleasant, unseen and inescapable death might erupt at any instant. There did not seem to be any crocodiles up this high, either. There was no need for him to stay awake, but somehow strength was flowing back into his relaxed body without benefit of sleep.

THE rain ceased as suddenly as it had started and the mist began to thin out. The rays of the sun could be felt now, and physical comfort washed over him as though he had been immersed in warm water. Daubrey and

Johnson were also resting, it appeared, but the Kanakas on duty were shouting happily to each other. They thought they were on the way home.

Their chatter disturbed a colony of flying foxes hanging from some casuarina palms on the bank. The great bats took off, swooped about, and then settled back on their limbs. Idly, Sinclair watched them alight in an upright position, sway for all the world like a man going to sleep on his feet, and then fall over until they were head down, gripping the limb with their feet. There they hung, until their sway ceased like a pendulum coming to rest.

But not to rest for long. Again they filled the air as Sandra Hope came alive with a shuddering scream so permeated with anguish that the jungle itself seemed to vibrate with the horror of it.

Her legs and arms were fastened to the bottom of the raft with lengths of vine, four or five feet long, which allowed her freedom of movement but kept her a captive nevertheless. She bounced to her feet as a series of metallic screams rasped from her throat. Just as she had fairly flown off that prison platform the previous afternoon, a mad impulse for flight now made her leap toward the edge of the raft.

Sinclair was on his feet in time to catch her as the vines brought her up short and would have hurled her to the deck. He gripped her in a bearlike hug. One hand held her quivering chin in an iron grip, clamping her head into rigid position, but he did not attempt to stifle the horrible sounds that tore their way through her wide open throat. What sounded like thousands of birds screamed and cawed from the riverbanks in a mad chorus which could not drown but rather seemed to reinforce the girl's inhuman shrieks.

Deliberately, Sinclair held his own face within inches of hers, his narrow eyes staring into the cloudy blue ones. Blank, opaque curtains hid the ghastly something behind them which was releasing itself. The metallic screaming neither rose nor fell in strength or tone, but continued as though coming from a mechanical source.

He said nothing for a while, nor did the frightened natives. Rather, Sinclair let the face and eyes of a civilized white man impress themselves on her, if anything could penetrate into her crazed mind. There was something infinitely horrible, and yet so pitiful that it made his eyes smart, in their caricature of an embrace. The body in his arms had not been washed in months, and the wasted face which had once been so lovely was contorted into that of some mythological Fury, mouthing curses which originated behind the eyes of a woman who was stark, raving mad.

Then they widened a little more, and the screams lessened in volume and took on variety, as though expressing degrees of relief from lessening pain. He held her cheek close to his, so that his lips were at her ear.

"I am a white man and a doctor. You knew me in Lae. I am Sinclair—Andrew Sinclair. I am a white doctor, and I have saved you and will make you well. You are safe, Sandra—safe—"

Over and over again, in a hypnotically monotonous voice, he pounded home the simple thoughts. When he drew his head back to look into her eyes he could discover no sanity there, but behind the blank stare there seemed to be expressed pain and bewilderment. Her cries died away into a whimper, and suddenly her taut body slumped in his arms.

Sinclair held her motionless for a few seconds, which seemed longer because of the number and variety of the thoughts which fell into place in his mind as he stood there. He forced himself into the detachment of a surgeon at work. He felt sure now that he had penetrated a little way into her consciousness and that eventually her mind would return to normal. Perhaps very soon. Nevertheless, just as she was she provided another tool ready to his hand, capable of assisting the task which he had set himself. The fact that using her as he planned to would be to her own advantage made it nicer all around, of course.

But be that as it might, Sandra Hope might as well be his pigeon.

It was well that he had thought things through because as he gently deposited her on the deck he looked up to find the rafts of both Daubrey and Johnson closing in. The Kanakas on all three craft were still reacting with the superstitious awe of primtive peoples to persons possessed of strange spirits. Whether they thought of madmen as possessed of devils, or as being unusually close to whatever Great Spirit they believed in, rarely if ever did a savage in any part of the world known to Sinclair consider a mentally unbalanced person as anything except a being to be treated with uncertain fear and uneasy respect.

Daubrey was leaning on his pole, and said conversationally, "Hard to handle for the moment, what?"

Johnson's voice was so gruff that he had to clear it as he said, "How is she, really?"

"Her physical health," Sinclair said deliberately, "may be all right, but the problem is to save her sanity."

There was an effect of false heartiness in Johnson as he helped pole his raft away from Sinclair's, saying, "I knew her a little on the coast, you know. Poor kid. She's had herself a time, but she'll come out of it. Plenty of guts."

"There's always something wrong with a woman," Daubrey said. "If it isn't here, it's there; and if it isn't one thing, it's another. Cheerio."

When the Britisher spoke, Sinclair noticed that the trapped blood discoloring the scars on his nose had been draining away during the last twenty-four hours. The facial surgery he done on Daubrey was turning out to be a good job.

TOWARD evening of the next day they were within a quarter mile of the shoreline opposite the *Susan*. So exhausted that every step through the swamp was an effort requiring most of their strength, they stopped while Bumidai fired three shots into the air.

It was the agreed upon signal with Sykes, and never had thirty seconds seemed longer. When three returning shots finally crackled through the sunlit air, even Johnson's huge body seemed to slump a little. He wiped his brow, the black boys chattered gaily, and Daubrey smiled his thin smile.

"For once," he said, "Sykes has been equal to the bloody job."

When they struggled to the deep mud of the shoreline, Adla-Bawi was paddling the dinghy toward them, less than fifty yards away. On the deck of the *Susan*, Sykes was dancing a hornpipe, taking swigs from a bottle during his frequent rest periods.

Sinclair and Sandra, plus Bumidai, the medical kit and two of the Hanaubada boys were in the first boatload. Sinclair had intended to hold important private converse with Sykes, but the cockney was a little too much on the drunk side. He was also dirty, unshaven and bloated. Eyes like two sunsets gleamed with elation above the wriggling mustache which was now long, scraggly and unclean.

"Cor! Am I glad to see you blokes!" he burbled. "'Ave a drink. . . . Blimey, it's a woman!"

"Sandra Hope," Sinclair said, and then sent Bumidai for a glass so that he could take the largest drink of brandy he'd ever swallowed. When he had finished his explanation of Sandra's presence, Sykes went skyhigh with liquorish exultation.

"All the gold, and a 'andsome reward on top o' that!" he crowed. "And a woman aboard besides! Makes it 'omelike, that it does."

Sinclair left him talking to himself, and with Bumidai's aid carried Sandra down into the after-cabin. She had come out of her coma infrequently during her long carry around the rapids in a canvas hammock slung from a pole, and had only occasionally cried out in her sleep.

As the dinghy plied between ship and shore, Sinclair had the natives clear the supplies out of the after-cabin. Pots of water were heating in the tiny galley forward between saloon and foc'sle, and a can of clear bouillon was steaming in a small pan.

While they worked, with Sandra motionless on the bunk, Sinclair talked in low tones to Bumidai. With no spoken word except those uttered weeks before in the estuary of the Florel, when Sinclair had saved his life, Bumidai had become his alter-ego, protector and worshipful slave. Now Sinclair learned from the black that Bumidai was not alone in his respect for his Taubada.

"Sinclair fella he know. He throw hurry up. He shoot straight hurry up. Black fella say Sinclair fella he altogether good fella."

"You tellum black fella Hanaubada fella Sinclair fella Taubada alonga this boat, savvy? Johnson fella he no big fella alonga boat. When me fella say 'do' black fella Hanaubada fella they do hurry up. Savvy?"

Bumidai savvied that and much more that Sinclair said.

Up on deck there was triumphant excitement and relief as Sinclair got to work. Sandra was conscious, but she kept her eyes closed most of the time as she gulped brandy eagerly, and then the soup. Sinclair cut hair from around her wound and did a thorough job of cleaning, disinfecting and bandaging it. Then he got underwear, duck trousers, flannel shirt, slippers, a spare toothbrush, soap and comb from his own stores and a robe from Daubrey's sea-chest. The white men were drinking enthusiastically, and Sykes was at the stage when he leered whenever the girl was mentioned.

The cockney had come completely apart at the seams during the time he had been on his own, Sinclair reflected. He set up the collapsible canvas tub and tested the water which Bumadai was pouring into it. From what Adla-Bawi had said, an attack by the natives would have had every chance of succeeding. The white fella had been unfit to stand watch most of the time and the black man was gaunt and hollow-eyed from lack of sleep.

Sinclair sat down beside Sandra and repeated his routine about being a doctor. She seemed to understand about taking a bath, although her eyes never opened wider than a slit. He got her to her feet, showing her the tiny lavatory, and said as he left, "I'll be right outside the door, Sandra. When you've finished, you'll still need another one. Take it easy—you're safe."

The quick darkness swooped down on the *Susan* like a giant hand. And as though it were a signal, there rolled up from the Lake Murdoch country the throb of drums. Perhaps it was his exhaustion, but suddenly it seemed to him that a thousand enemies who would not be denied were right then swarming through the jungle to inundate the *Susan*. For other drums took up the clamor, some closer and others far away, until finally they were rolling faintly down from the mists of the mountain.

From somewhere close by, the arrival of the white men on their boat was being heralded, even as their appearance on Lake Murdoch on

the way in had been the signal for those fires, and that drumming. He hated to think how he would have felt had he been on the trail when the farflung jungle came alive with human menace.

He dared not leave his post at Sandra's door. He could hear the water splashing, and then the sounds of her leaving the tub. Finally when he knocked and called and got no answer, he entered.

She was crouched on the bunk, swathed in the bathrobe, like a shrinking animal. She started whimpering a little until he soothed her. He emptied the filthy water, had Bumidai get more, and left her alone again. This time, when he reentered, she had washed out her hair also. Still a third tub she took without objection, but her mouth was slack and she seemed to be moving in a sort of trance. This time she had dressed herself in the much-too-large clothing and was in bed, shrinking toward the wall as he came in.

He gave her more soup and a sedative with it. He stroked her forehead, talking to her in a repetitious monotone until she drifted off into sleep. Already, he thought, some of the lines were smoothing out of her face. He locked the cabin door after him, and went on deck.

## CHAPTER XIII

### "AND THEN THERE WERE THREE"

ONCE again, fires were blazing against the hillsides, and the air quivered with the voice of the drums. The three white men were still drinking in the cabin amidships, but the brandy served only to bring them temporarily up to par. Sykes had eaten, and was drinking great gulps of hot tea, his shoe-button eyes darting from face to face as they talked. He was obviously determined to stay sober enough to know all that was said and done.

"What do you make of that drumming and those fires?" Sinclair asked Johnson.

"It's like this," Johnson said with careless contempt for Kanakas and all their works. "I went through the central country on the other side of the Owen Stanleys with Fred Leahy, a few years back. Tribes almost continuous, but fought each other most of the time. One bunch would take you to the edge of the next tribe's territory, and then turn back. But when our plane came in, with supplies, they declared an armistice. Did it with drums, too. Thousands of 'em gathered to look at it when it landed."

"You mean the lake people are calling nearby tribes to see our boat?"

"Don't be silly. To get our boat, and us—gathering of the clans," Johnson said. "They got the best of the white men before, and you say they got Brandon's head. Nothing to worry about."

"Blimey, you're a cool 'un," Sykes said unhappily.

"Don't forget we killed a few Kanakas and medicine men," Johnson explained, as though to a child. "All you've got to do is get the jump and keep it. Let one native get away with stealing one shell, and they're out of control. You'll have nothing left in five minutes. I've killed a black, when there were too many others around, for even touching a hatchet without permission."

"What would seem to be our strategy?" Daubrey asked.

"Nothing to do until we make the lake, and probably the Heberd River," Johnson said, a little bored. "They'll repeat whatever their tactics were against my boat. We just fog the *Susan* right through, raking the banks with our fire. There'll be hundreds, maybe more, waiting and we may never even see one. What about Sandra, Andy?"

Sinclair told them, then concluded, "We white men have to stand watches on her—waking up and seeing a black face might throw her back into insanity, even if she were well on the road to recovery. Another, of course, has to be on deck at all times. So that's two of us on and two off, twenty-four hours a day. And in case you don't realize it, Johnson, those are the captain's orders."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n," Johnson said, grinning.

"I'll stand the first watch, with Sykes," Sinclair said. "I'd rather make the first two long ones so everybody can get a real sleep. I ought to carry Sandra through the next few hours, too. She savvied soap and a bath and clothes, all right, and maybe we'll get a break on her before long."

"Brings up a matter of business," Daubrey said crisply.

Sinclair noticed that Daubrey was drinking casually now. There was no hint of the almost suicidal gluttony with which he had soaked up alcohol before. The trail had toned him up, and in the shadows cast by the lamp his new nose looked as though it had always been there.

"No time to conceal anything," Daubrey said. "Johnson, we planned to cache part of the gold and come back to get it at some future time, without letting Government know. Possibly bury it near the coast. As matters stand, this trip isn't going to be worth the trouble."

"Why not?" demanded Sykes, wiping his mustache.

"In one way, finding Sandra was a bit of luck," Daubrey said. 'Knows where the loot is, saves us the trouble of finding it and maybe our lives, and all that. However, her presence makes it necessary to turn it all in and give Government two-thirds."

"So what?" Sykes said suspiciously.

"Say there's a ton and a half of the stuff. Say it's worth in round numbers, three hundred thousand pounds. One third, our share,

is a hundred thousand pounds. Twenty-five thousand pounds apiece, plus expenses."

"Eyen't enough!" Sykes proclaimed. "The lydy should be worth a very 'andsome reward, 'adn't she?" He cast a knowing look at Daubrey.

The aristocrat returned it with distaste. "Personally," he said, fingering his nose absently, "I plan to marry her."

"If that eyen't the Dook for you!" Sykes said admiringly, and then added his usual jealous innuendo, "Women on 'is mind at all times, they are!"

It would have been funny, Sinclair thought, were there not so many dangerous implications involved, to see the way Daubrey and Johnson each looked at him in secret alliance against the rest. When he had finished mixing Sykes up, the triple-cross would be complete.

"What's on your mind?" Johnson asked.

"She might say no, what?" Daubrey said thoughtfully. "Whether I do or not, we aren't getting enough. Only one thing to do."

He stopped and took a drink absently. There was an effect of urgency in him now, as though for the moment all the conflicting forces in him had been funneled into one channel.

"When she recovers, we go upriver with her, find the gold and, without her knowing it, jolly well get a load of it and pack it back down here. Can't just take her down to the coast, you know—we haven't found the bloody stuff yet as per contract, and Government would stand on the letter of the agreement, as governments will. Red tape unwinding forever."

"Then hide the stuff we've got?" Johnson asked.

"Precisely. Also we make up quite a tale about how heroic we've been. World-famous explorers, grateful father, grateful government—all that. We have a bit of the stuff they don't know about. We also get as rewards a bigger percentage of the stuff we leave behind—leave behind, my dear chaps, because of our concern for the health of the young lady. Take a bit of conferring—get our stories straight and all that—"

He stopped abruptly as a wild scream rang through the boat and re-echoed from the shore. Sinclair hit the ladder halfway up, streaked across the deck and down the after-hatch. The others were close behind him, and the din in the foc'sle ceased abruptly.

WHEN Sinclair opened the door of the cabin, Sandra was cowering in a corner on the floor, babbling incoherently. She was wearing a pair of dark sun-glasses which she had found somewhere.

It took ten minutes for Sinclair to soothe her into silence. When he took the glasses off, she covered her eyes in a panic. She fought him fiercely for a minute, but gradually subsided as the men in turn impressed upon her their identities, and the fact that they were white.

"She'll have to have a nurse all the time for a while," Sinclair said. "Might throw herself overboard if we leave the door open, or go mad forever if we coop her up alone. Sykes, you seem to be sobering up. Eaten anything?"

"Just finished," Sykes said eagerly.

"Stay by her until I get some food in me, and then I'll carry on," Sinclair directed.

Johnson and Daubrey left to see that some food was prepared, and Sinclair eyed the cockney sharply. Sandra was back in the bunk now, her glasses back on her eyes, whimpering softly.

Sinclair gave the alert Sykes some directions, then whispered, "Look, Sykes—you and I have got to stick together. Against everybody."

"What's on your mind, guv'nor?"

"The fact that the other two are against us. Listen. Daubrey told me that before the trip started you'd suggested that you two get rid of me, so you could have my share."

"Why, the dirty liar! Honest, Andy—"

"Don't talk—whisper!" Sinclair snapped, and went to the door again to make sure no one was there. "And Daubrey came to me with this plan: We all stick together for a while, he said, because we need each other. But down on the coast, I was to testify that you'd confessed to me that you'd killed your old captain and those two crewmen. Daubrey would back up the confession with his testimony. You're hanged; Johnson has no legal standing, and Daubrey and I take it all."

Sykes' ratty mustache was wriggling as though each hair were a live thing. Never had he looked more like a snarling rodent. "Why are you a-comin' to me with this, guv'nor?"

"Because I don't trust Daubrey, and because I'm a jailbird whose word isn't much good. I also figure that Daubrey's got some scheme to get rid of me finally—swindle me out of my share, or maybe push me to the crocodiles when the proper time comes."

For a moment Sykes was lost in thoughts which brought a series of snarls to his face. Sinclair was certain that his reference to the original conspiracy of Daubrey and Sykes against him would clinch his status with Sykes. If Daubrey had told Sinclair about that, the sailor would reason, the rest of the story must also be true.

Suddenly raw hate for Daubrey flooded into Sykes' eyes, and over his twisted face. Terrible, whispered curses spat from pale lips.

"I'm the captain," Sinclair said evenly. He thrust out his hand. "Are we together?"

"That we are, guv'nor—that we are," Sykes whispered.

"The funny thing is," Sinclair said, offhanded, "that Daubrey really wasn't telling me anything I didn't know about those sailors.

I saw you push them overboard, so the captain's disappearance—"

"They knew too much," Sykes confessed. "The cap'n went hoverboard by haccident, and maybe we could 'uv syved 'im, but Daubrey didn't try no more'n I did, the—"

Again whispered obscenities came hissing between his discolored teeth. Sinclair clapped him on the back and said conversationally, "That's between you and Daubrey. Meanwhile, for the moment, we need all hands. Don't forget that Miss Hope here is the key to everything. When she's awake, talk to her soothingly, as a white friend. I'll be back as soon as I eat, and then you take the wheel and the deck."

The fawning Sykes followed him to the door. "I thankee, Cap'n," he said, and then added viciously, "Me Lud Daubrey'll rue the dye, that 'e will. Meanwhile, we're pals, eh?"

Sinclair smiled an acknowledgement and went forward.

ONE faraway drum was throbbing through the night, and two fires were gleaming from the lower mountainside, when the rain started. For ten minutes it thundered against the deckhouse as Sinclair ate soup, canned bacon and eggs, and strong coffee.

Then the rain stopped and almost instantly the world outside the porthole lightened as though dawn had come. A great full moon silvered the water, and the stars came out as though a giant hand had swept aside a curtain.

It was just then that Sandra started screaming again, like some terrifying banshee of the jungle. The dozing Johnson and Daubrey came upright as though pulled by the same string. And, unmistakably, Sinclair heard from the deckhouse above the surprised curse of Mousy Sykes.

Instead of guarding Sandra, he had evidently crept forward to eavesdrop. Mousy Sykes, at this point, quite understandably trusted no one.

As his steps thudded across the deck, Sinclair followed Daubrey up the hatch, with Johnson close behind. From the sound of the spine-chilling shrieks coming from aft, the girl was climbing the hatch from the after-cabin.

"Crazy as a waltzing mouse, huh?" grunted Johnson as Sinclair hit the deck.

Daubrey was racing aft on the port side. Sykes tripped over a box of stores on the starboard side and cursed as he picked himself up. The moonlight turned the night into a sort of heavily misted day, and Sinclair noted the little group of natives forward who had just dumped the garbage from the evening meal, and were now transfixed with timid interest and awe.

Sandra scrambled to the deck. She was barefooted, and Sinclair's trousers, flapping around her ankles, impeded her flight to the rail. She still wore the sun-glasses, as though to obliterate a world which held nothing but terror.

"She's trying for the water, just as she did for the jungle," Sinclair was thinking as he ran aft behind Daubrey.

The Britisher reached the rail just an instant before Sandra got there. Running behind the girl was Sykes, yelling something indistinguishable. Daubrey, back to the rail, met the impact of Sandra before he could raise his hands to cushion it. He tried to grip her arms, but she was battling with insane strength. Her clawing fingers found his throat, and for the moment she bent him backward over the rail.

Sykes came to the rail at the side of the struggling pair closest to Sinclair. Andy threw himself forward and downward in a football flying block, aiming for Sandra's ankles. Jumping overboard would be instant suicide, for a dozen crocodiles drawn by the garbage were swirling in the water below.

Sinclair saw Sykes enter the struggle, but the cockney did not touch Sandra. Daubrey, bent back over the rail, was clawing at the girl's hands around his throat. Sykes himself gripped the Englishman's neck. One of Daubrey's elbows gouged viciously into Sandra's diaphragm and his right foot kicked out at her shin.

With a scream of pain, she half collapsed. At that second, Sinclair's hurtling body crashed sideways against the three pairs of legs at the rail. As he gripped Sandra's, and pinned Sykes and Daubrey to the rail, he was looking upward.

With a mighty heave Sykes tried to flip Daubrey overboard. In doing so he turned until his back was to the rail. At the same second, Daubrey's two hands, locked now around Sykes' head, jerked downward with the power of desperation. With his legs anchored by Sinclair, Sykes' body snapped backward and the small of his back hit the rail.

There was an ominous crack. Clinging fast to the struggling Sandra's legs, Sinclair's body rolled away from Sykes. He saw the cockney's legs start to crumple. The next second, they flipped limply into the air. His back had been broken, and his dead body splashed into the water a few feet below.

"Good riddance," Johnson remarked casually.

A second later both Johnson and Daubrey were holding Sandra helpless. As Sinclair got to his feet the water was lathered with competing crocodiles, and when he looked over the side, Sykes' corpse had already been drawn out of sight below the surface.

Sinclair gazed into the three faces within inches of his own. Sandra's sun-glasses were still shielding her eyes, but she was quiet now. Daubrey was panting, his eyes filled with an unholy light.

Sinclair gestured at the crocodiles. "Pretty lucky, Sandra," he said soothingly, "to have three white men, a nice boat and a doctor around you, isn't it? Back to bed now, some more soup, and then some medicine that will make you sleep."

HE LED her to the after-cabin. Then, minutes later, after she had consumed a large bowl of canned soup and was unmistakably asleep without benefit of drugs, Sinclair tried to remove her glasses, but some quirk in her sick mind caused her to fight to keep them on, so he left them there.

He locked the door of the cabin, after making sure that there was no weapon there with which she could harm herself, and came on deck. Bumidai stole aft from the deckhouse amidships on bare, silent feet. Back on the raft, Sinclair had arranged that the pilot eavesdrop as often as he could on any conversation between the other white men or the Hanaubada boys, and now Bumidai had news.

"Johnson fella say he scared alonga you. He go alonga here, you go alonga here. He go alonga there, you go alonga there. They fella talk low alonga you. Me think maybe you finish alonga them, Taubada."

It was no surprise to Sinclair to find his own hunch so quickly corroborated. It was not in the cards that Johnson should confess, even in a left-handed way, his own part in the illegitimate pearl fishing, or give up the *Seeker* and a hundred thousand dollars to Sinclair without a fight. If Daubrey was as cold-blooded and money-crazy as Sinclair thought, it was inevitable that he think that after using Johnson until they got to the coast, he could legally cut the trader off with a very minor share of the bullion, if any. Johnson's failure to declare his obvious intentions to the government authorities would ruin any legal right to the full partnership, if Daubrey contested it.

So Sinclair was a debit item to both men. Daubrey and Johnson might shrink from cold-blooded murder, Sinclair thought, under ordinary conditions. But Daubrey knew that Sinclair now had the whole truth, probably, about those three murders, making Daubrey an accessory after the fact. And Johnson was evidently none too well off for ready cash and wanted to retain the *Seeker*.

To these facts was added that at least eighty thousand dollars apiece would accrue to their shares in the gold, if it was divided two ways instead of three. And both men, he was sure, were planning eventually to take it all. There was certainly no lack of motive for adventurers of their caliber to use extreme methods.

Doubtless they would wait until Sinclair had exhausted his usefulness. All in all, considering only Sandra's condition and Daubrey's terror of being without medical treatment if he were hurt, Sinclair would be a valued aide for some time yet. Nevertheless, another sudden opportunity too good to miss, such as had just happened in Sykes' case, might arise. An occasion which would leave the killer or killers some shred of excuse for rationalizing themselves out of a bald murder. In that case, neither one would hesitate, and the testimony of the Kanakas would absolve them from blame on the coast.

In the space between the after deckhouse and the one amidships, Sinclair decided to wait no longer to start his defense. The best one, he decided, without heat, would be an offense.

As he dropped down the hatch and entered the saloon, Johnson and Daubrey were taking the last drink out of the last bottle, and fighting to keep awake.

"'And then there were three'," Sinclair quoted.

"He tried to dump me overboard, you know," Daubrey said.

Sinclair nodded. "It was partly an accident. I had his feet locked just at the time, which helped break his back," he said. "I've got good news for you fellows. When Daubrey and Sykes were drinking too much at the start of the trip, I started caching liquor. I'll break it out. Then how about you fellows taking a nightcap and getting some sleep? I'll need some rest myself before long."

He got the case of brandy and half a waterglass of it, assisted by more coffee, sent a minor thrill of life along his keel. There was casual conversation, and then Johnson and Daubrey collapsed on their bunks in complete exhaustion. They were far from drunk but their bodies were through.

SINCLAIR talked briefly with Bumidai and Adla-Bawi. Then he went into the sleeping Sandra's cabin and took from his sea-chest two pairs of handcuffs and two sets of light leg irons which he had appropriated months ago when he'd been cooking on a police patrol boat. After all, a captain has to be ready for mutiny.

He left Adla-Bawi standing guard over Sandra, and Bumidai went forward and dropped into the foc'sle. Two Hanaubada boys, in addition to the helmsman and two of Sinclair's own crew were on deck watch, and having a hard time keeping each other awake.

Back in the saloon, Sinclair found Daubrey sleeping with ankles together and knees bent, both arms outstretched. Both wrists and ankles were in perfect position for his purpose, and the Britisher never stirred as light leg irons with a short chain between were snapped above his ankles. Applying the handcuffs was an equally simple process.

The Johnson job was a little more compli-

cated, but accomplished without awakening the giant. Methodically, Sinclair removed all possible weapons from the saloon, and locked the door from the outside. Then he went down into the foc'sle. The deck crew was listening at the top of the hatch.

His pidgin was short and to the point. The other two white men had wanted to keep everyone upriver and lead them back into the jungle. Sinclair was the boss fella. They all knew what mutiny was. Sinclair had put the two white mutineers in irons. He was taking them all back home. The white Mary was a very important person. All black fella would obey orders strictly. Bumidai was next in command, Adla-Bawi next, the Hanaubada boss boy third. And on the coast, as reward for bringing the white Mary home safe, great riches would be theirs.

The blacks laughed with delight at the thought of going home, and the entire situation was as simple as Sinclair, revolving Johnson's status with the Hanaubada thoroughly in his mind, had concluded that it would be.

When they got the boat underway downstream, the natives had forgotten sleep in childish exultation over the present and future. In this case, Sinclair did not believe that there would be any mercurial change in their basic attitude. They wanted to get out of the danger zone and go home. On the boat, they felt reasonably safe. Sinclair would not have needed half the respect he had generated in their simple minds to have been top Taubada—the fact that he was taking them back to the coast provided all the prestige he needed.

All the training of the past year—odd hours, varied work, conscious physical conditioning—was standing him in good stead now as he took the wheel. He had his second wind, and the thought of the two men safely in irons below made him feel suddenly light and free. They wouldn't take it lying down, and if there were trouble ahead with the natives, anything might happen. But for the moment at least, as the *Susan* skimmed rapidly down the stream in flooding moonlight, they were beyond the possibility of doing harm. He would let Bumidai sleep for at least four hours. . .

"Don't you dare move or raise your voice!"

A rifle was resting on the after deckhouse, its steady muzzle pointed at Sinclair's waist.


*"Don't you dare move or raise your voice!" A rifle was pointed at Sinclair and the voice that had issued the order was the voice of Sandra Hope.*

Across it glinted, with blank menace, the black discs of a pair of sun-glasses, and the voice, shaking with emotion, was the voice of Sandra Hope.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OR ELSE!

AS SHE walked toward him around the deckhouse, Sinclair would have given a year off his life—if he had that long to live—to be able to see her eyes. She held the gun at her waist, pointed toward him, and her finger was on the trigger. He could tell by the way she held it that she knew what to do with it.

Only a few yards forward, keeping guard amidships, were two Kanakas. A third was on watch at the bow, and a fourth occasionally swung the lead. In a way, though, he was not sorry that there was no one near enough to startle the madwoman by trying to help him. Just one convulsive movement of her right forefinger, and he would have a bullet through his belly.

"You're feeling better, Sandra?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know whether I am or not," she said, and his heart turned over.

Her voice was the voice of the girl at Lae. That did not mean, necessarily, that she was normal. It did mean, however, that for the moment she had at least a semblance of control over herself. She might still be inhabiting a world of her own, however; the dreamland into which the insane escape for relief from the real one.

He forced himself to chuckle. 'What became of Adla-Bawi?" he asked. "That used to be his rifle, didn't it?"

"He opened the door, and I hit him with the pan you left behind," she said, her voice shaking a little. "He was frightened of me, and I took this gun and hit him again. What's going on, Mr. Sinclair?"

She was standing only five feet from him, and her finger was still on the trigger.

"Daubrey and Johnson, the other two white men who saved you, are in the cabin amidships. They're in irons for mutiny."

"I know that. And where are we going?"

"Home, Sandra, home. You're safe, and soon—"

"Don't prattle at me like a child, please," she said. "I'm as sane as you are—now."

"How long have you been in this happy state?" Sinclair asked lightly.

"Ever since my first bath, I think."

"What about trying to jump overboard—"

"I was pretending that I was still out of my head, for self-protection. I wouldn't have jumped. If you were in my place and had heard all I have—including your own remarks to that horrible Sykes—I think you'd have done the same."

"Mind taking off your glasses?"

"Not at all. I've just been wearing them as part of my act."

One look into her eyes proved her point. Wide open, they looked twice too large for the wasted face, but at that distance he could detect no madness in them. In concussion cases, of course, as in other mental disturbances, intervals of sanity were not uncommon.

"How much do you remember of what happened before the bath?" he asked gently, eyes on the channel as he spun the wheel a little.

"Running away from the medicine men. Look, Mr. Sinclair, I don't know all that has happened, and I'm very grateful for whatever you men did. But I'm under no illusions. If one goes to the forward wall of the cabin—where the mast comes down to the hull—and the people in the cabin amidships leave the door open, one can hear what is said there quite clearly. I know that all of you men are after the gold. I'm just a helpful incident. And I know that you're all planning to play up to me because I know where it is."

"You do? Sure?"

"Maybe so, maybe not," she said craftily. "I also know that you're all what you Americans call racketeers—thieves planning to swindle each other if you can. I know that you're an ex-convict as well. So you will pardon me if I decide to put you in durance vile yourself, and take my chances on getting this boat back to Daru Island alone."

"Good girl," Sinclair said admiringly, and meant it. "I can see now why you are your father's executive and very confidential secretary."

For just a moment she dropped the contemptuous attitude of one talking to the criminal classes.

"I appreciate your consideration for me, even if it was to help make sure you'd find the gold without trouble," she said. "You're really a doctor?"

SINCLAIR'S smooth-working mind, freed of the poisons of fatigue as thoroughly as though he had taken a drug, had quietly ground out some answers to more than one problem.

He said, "You'd better lean against the deckhouse, or sit down, and listen to the truth about yourself and other things. You might take your finger off that trigger, too."

She sat down on the deckhouse, but her finger remained where it was. Sinclair had moved from behind the wheel in a series of almost indistinguishable movements. Suddenly his voice snapped like a whip.

"Take your finger off that trigger, Miss Hope—and this is the captain talking! I'll have no

more damned nonsense out of a woman whose life I've saved, and whose mind may snap again any minute. And point that gun at the deck!"

Her head came back resentfully. She stared at him through blazing eyes that were slitted again. In her preoccupation, the muzzle of the gun had dropped and she was holding it loosely.

His voice was suddenly casual again as he said, "I hate to talk like that to a lady who's been through so much, but—"

One long step took him to her side, and a part of the same movement swept the gun from her hand. She leaped to her feet as the rifle clattered to the deck. He sat her down—hard.

"Ouch!" she said involuntarily.

Sinclair threw back his head and laughed for the first time in months. Her hand made an involuntary movement toward the bruised spot, and then she laughed, too.

"Sorry," she said.

"Sorry I felt I had to do it," Sinclair told her as he swept up the gun and resumed the wheel. "But now and henceforth, I'm the captain and you do what I say—promptly. Now before I bring you even, Miss Hope, tell me about Brandon. What happened to him?"

"We were both just conscious enough to get to shore after the crash in the water," she said. "When we were captured and on the trail, we shouted back and forth that if either of us could escape, we'd try to go downriver and get some tribe to aid in releasing the other—use the white man's magic and all that. It was evident that we were something special—treated with great consideration and so forth. It would have been madness for one to try to release the other without help. It couldn't be done, because they kept us separate. He escaped—"

"—and was killed between here and Lake Murdoch," Sinclair told her. "Instantly. We buried him in the lake."

"I'm not surprised. He was such a nice sort of chap, but he had our typical British air of patronizing contempt for the natives' power to harm. All right, Captain, I'm no longer a mutineer. I shall hang on your every word."

Sinclair began with a description of her rescue on the mountain, then went back to his arrival at Thursday Island on the *Seeker* and his meeting with Johnson. He told of Jumbo's swindling him out of his schooner, his false arrest and period of penal servitude, and of those months of dogged pursuit of Johnson half across the Pacific and back, of the trek from Santa Cruz Island, to that very moment on the *Susan*.

Save for an occasional intelligent question, she listened silently, and almost without movement. When he had finished, she stood up and thrust out her hand.

"Sorry again," she said quietly.

"Not your fault," he said evenly. "Now let me take a look at you."

He took his flashlight from his pocket, braced the wheel with his body, took her chin in his hand and shone the light into her eyes.

"Doing fine," he announced, putting away the flashlight. "And I can use you. I suppose you're a stenographer?"

"For heaven's sake! Yes, but—"

"And actress enough to continue to be a little mad?" he went on serenely, eyes hollow with weariness staring ahead at the silvered river. "All you have to do is dance around the deck a little and supplicate the gods, and sing to yourself, and act a little fey. It'll help keep the Kanakas in line and give them courage when we run into trouble, which I'm afraid we're going to do." Suddenly he found it hard to stand up or speak. "I—wonder if you'd tell—one of the boys to get me some coffee."

She interrupted him decisively. "You're dead on your feet, and I've handled a bigger boat than this since I was ten years old. I've done nothing but rest, and feel marvelous. Get down to bed—"

"Don't know why, but I believe you," he said thickly. "I'll sleep here on deck. Sporting of you. Let the boys sleep—everybody fresh tomorrow—"

She took the wheel, and he lay down on the deck, stretched out and didn't know another thing till the sun awakened him a full seven hours later.

There was a mattress from one of the bunks under him now, a blanket over him, and Bumidai's worried face brooding down at him from above the wheel.

"Coffee," came Sandra's voice, "seems strongly indicated. I'll—"

"Do nothing—be crazy," he snapped. "Sort of caper to the after-cabin. I'll have coffee there."

He watched her weave around in a crooning dance, and go down the hatch with one arm waving. The Kanakas nearby drifted away from her. Suddenly he was aware that the boat was alive with a sort of dread. The blacks were restless, whispering fearfully to each other. And as he turned to Bumidai, he was conscious of the low, faraway throb of a single drum.

"Altogether black fella drum," he said. "Black fella close up?"

"Yes, Taubada. Black fella he want fight. Black fella alonga water, black fella alonga hill, black fella like sand he fight."

"You fella tell Hanaubada fella they all right alonga me."

"Yes, Taubada."

But Bumidai was not happy as Sinclair walked forward. Neither was Sinclair.

LIGHT snores reached Sinclair's ears from the salon. Daubrey and Johnson were really having themselves a sleep. There were no crocodiles visible in the clear waters of the stream, so he yelled a warning to Sandra to

stay below deck. Then he knotted a rope around the mainmast, stripped, and let himself into the water alongside the boat. He held onto the rope and let the *Susan* tow him while he thrashed about for a few seconds in the delightful wet coolness. As crocodiles on the banks slithered into the water, he hauled himself back on deck refreshed.

Ten minutes later he was having coffee, and then he rebandaged Sandra's head. The wound itself was minor and evidently the blow had been as glancing a one as the cut indicated. He probed again for a possible skull fracture, but the bone seemed undamaged.

He dressed the bites of assorted leeches, bugs and insects on her legs and arms, and said finally, "Nothing wrong with you that proper food and exercise won't cure. By the way, do you really know exactly where the plane cracked up?"

"I took bearings," she said. "I'll draw a map for you. There are two peculiar hills right in a line—"

"No maps," he said. "They might fall into the wrong hands. Tell me later. Right now I need your help badly. We're a long way from home yet."

While she dressed her hair with his comb and military brushes so that it almost covered the bandage, they talked as though they had been friendly partners for years. A warm feeling, to which he had been a stranger since R. F. C. days back in '18, suffused him as he started for the saloon. If ever he'd needed a dependable ally, it was now. And feminine or not, he knew he had one.

The noise he made unlocking the door completed the process of awakening his enemies. As Jumbo Johnson felt the shackles, he snapped upright and his feet swung to the floor. He crouched forward on the bunk and said, "What the hell's going on here?"

And for the first and only time, Sinclair thought he saw a gleam of fear, almost panic, in those ice-like eyes. It disappeared instantly —but it had been there.

Daubrey raised his legs to look at the irons, but he did not move otherwise. He gave the effect of a coiling snake as he said quietly, "We seem to be gypped, what?"

"For mutiny," Sinclair explained, patting the six-shooters at his waist. "Your conversation last night, referring to a conspiracy against me, was overheard, gentlemen. After you wash up and have some coffee, we'll talk it over further."

From the aft-cabin rose the wild, long drawn-out shriek which Sinclair had instructed Sandra to give forth at about that time.

"We're taking her home," he said.

Now Daubrey sat up and put his feet on the floor. His mouth was tight; the light in the back of those cavernous eyes cold and baleful.

"That means that the government and the New Guinea Gold Company send their own expedition after the bullion," he said, each word like something metallic clinking on the floor. "We get a thousand pounds apiece reward and a thank-you."

"What you mean is that you can't swindle the government out of anything," Sinclair said. "But even if what you said should be true, which I don't think it is, going back for the gold now is out of the question."

"Why?" barked Johnson. "The girl?"

"Partly. But I don't think we'd come out alive again. We've killed their sorcerers, desecrated their god, stolen their valuable white captive, and also the white head of the Lake Murdoch tribe—Nick Brandon's. If the drums mean a get-together, we'd be sunk in a narrow stream bed, or on the trail. And anyway, not one of the black boys on this boat would go back."

"They went before," Daubrey said.

"My Hanaubada," stated Johnson, "will go where I tell 'em to."

"Not any more they won't. They've been there and don't like it, and you're no longer such a big-shot, Johnson. I'm the Taubada now, and I'm taking them home."

"Hundreds of thousands of dollars, old boy," Daubrey started.

But Sinclair cut in, "Get washed up."

He went to the door and yelled orders. He refused to unlock their handcuffs, so the newly made coffee arrived just as they had finished their clumsy ablutions.

## CHAPTER XV

### CONFESSIONAL

AS THE native went up the hatch, Sinclair ordered him, in an unusually loud tone of voice, to make more coffee but not to bring it until he was told. He went back into the saloon and locked the door behind him. He sat down at the table, helped Daubrey stir sugar in his coffee, and then sat back comfortably. The two men were eyeing him like beasts in a cage looking hungrily at food, which was beyond their reach.

"A complete understanding," Sinclair said mildly, "is necessary before we reach Lake Murdoch and probably trouble within an hour or so. We may not hit it until somewhere along the Heberd, but the drums kept up all night, they tell me."

"If you're crazy enough and yellow enough to run for home," Johnson said contemptuously, "everybody lays flat on deck, shoots at sight and the old tub barges right on through."

"The boys don't think it will be as simple as that," Sinclair said truthfully. "We might get stuck on a sandbar and there are narrows where hundreds of blacks could overwhelm us by sheer force of numbers. Personally, I re-

spect a savage's hunches. I put no limit on their powers of telepathy or the sensitivity of their animal instincts. I know a tribe in South America that sits all around a clearing a hundred yards across, talks in low tones, and everybody hears everything."

Johnson nodded. "Any man who's been around the bush knows that," he acknowledged. "I've seen stuff you wouldn't believe, too."

"So," Sinclair said, "for the first time on this expedition, or during my entire unpleasant acquaintance with you both, individually and collectively, all the cards are going to be laid on the table, exposed to all the players in the game. Just to let you know where you stand, pay careful attention to what I say. If either one of you makes a false move toward me—such as trying to bring your handcuffs down on my head—I will break both that man's arms and his legs. Simple fractures of the femur and humerus. If I'm not too angry, I might anesthetize him before I do it. Is that clear?"

"Sounds a bit on the melodramatic side," Daubrey said. "But I'll admit it's perfectly clear, old boy."

"Very well. I hold all the aces, and I aim to hold on to them.

"All right, here go the cards. Daubrey, when we were starting this trip down on the coast, you thought I was asleep one night when you and Sykes were drunk. I heard you plan to get rid of me after I'd served my purpose, and divide my share between you. At the end, each of you was even afraid that the other would murder him, and do a solo with the gold. So I'd step on you as quickly and with less feeling than I would the head of a snake. The time and place were exactly—"

And he proceeded to confirm his knowledge with the significant details of that scene which had happened an eternity ago.

"So you can see, Johnson, where Daubrey stands with me—or anyone else. He also planned with me to use you until we got to the coast, and then throw you overboard, on legal grounds. Don't dare to tell anything but the truth, Daubrey."

"Drunken talk," Daubrey said carelessly. "Nevertheless, you ought to be an actor."

Sinclair rose, stuck a cigarette in the Britisher's mouth, lit it, and said evenly, "Don't bluff it off. Am I telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—or not?"

"You are," Daubrey said finally.

Sinclair gave Johnson a cigarette, lit it, and proceeded.

"My acquaintance with Johnson, Daubrey, started at Thursday Island."

Methodically, his fleshless face growing a little white beneath the bronze as he relived his prison sentence and the chase, he built up his case against Johnson.

"Now, for once, damn you," he concluded with controlled savagery, "admit the truth."

JOHNSON stared at him a long time. Tiny beads of sweat appeared on his forehead and upper lip.

Finally he shrugged his shoulders and said offhandedly, "Business is business in this part of the world—and the methods are essentially the same as elsewhere but with different routine. I wanted your boat, and I got it because you were sucker enough not to deserve an even break. As for this deal up here, I knew that everybody would doublecross everybody else if they could, and I didn't have a government grant. I was playing my hand according to the rules it turns out you'd made yourselves. I've never trusted anybody, neither have you, and so we all start even again."

"And Daubrey," Sinclair went on remorselessly, "is an accessory after the fact, at least, to the murder of two crewmen, as well as the indirect killing of Captain Atmore. Plus stealing Atmore's money. Don't hold out, Daubrey—I know a lot and have more proof than you think, and more standing in Port Moresby than you think."

For a moment there was silence.

"Your only chance to come out of this physically whole and with some money, is by telling the truth," Sinclair said softly. "Right here, right now."

"So what?" Daubrey said. "I didn't kill them myself. And I have no real proof—just Sykes' word. And I needed Sykes, what? Any bloke would have done the same."

Sinclair got to his feet. "Those two Santa Cruz crewmen had been doped with morphine," he said. "You carry morphine pills in case you get hurt and have any pain."

"But Sykes, my dear fellow, took one now and then to get over a hangover."

"Just what I'd say if I were you. I mention these details to let you know, Daubrey, that I could have nailed you to the cross back in Port Moresby—and can again."

"Why didn't you?" Daubrey asked.

"Because I want my boat back and a hundred thousand dollars," Sinclair said. "I'm not being an accessory to murder, however, for that purpose. Frankly, I've got Sykes' confession, and I haven't anything that would stand in court against you. But I have got enough to make life very unpleasant for you, as I think you can readily understand."

He went to the cabin door, and stood with his back against it as he concluded, "So there we are—a fine gang of doublecrossing thieves, liars and potential if not actual murderers. Johnson would do anything right now to get out of my clutches forever, and dodge the ordeal coming up for him in Port Moresby and on Thursday Island. Daubrey is not only incapable of any gratitude for that new nose of his, but resents me for having given it to him besides. And he figures he'll cut such a dash around the hot

*"If either one of you makes a move," said Sinclair, "I will break that man's arms and legs. Is that clear, gentlemen?"*

spots without that pig-snout he once wore that he's hungrier for money than ever.

"So now that we're under no illusions about each other, gentlemen—"

He unlocked the door and opened it. In walked Sandra Hope, some sheets of paper and a pencil in her hand.

Daubrey and Johnson had their handcuffed hands on the table and were leaning forward. Both men stared silently at the girl who was scarcely recognizable as the filthy and distraught madwoman of the mountain. Without moving, Daubrey and Johnson seemed to be contracting within themselves, as though to spring.

Sandra's face was still thin and haggard, but it lit up with her smile. "The answer," she said to Daubrey, "is no."

Belatedly, Daubrey was on his feet.

"I don't quite understand," he said.

"You were going to do me the honor to ask me to marry you, were you not?" she said coolly. "I mention it to indicate how clearly one can overhear everything that is said in this cabin."

"What's sauce for the grafter is sauce for the goose," Sinclair said. "I having been the goose for both of you in the past, gentlemen, I got wily. Miss Hope has been as sane as you or I for the past many hours. Being her father's confidential secretary, she is also a stenogra-

pher. Her recent screams have been part of an act to throw you off guard. She has been outside the door ever since that last one, taking down your confessions, word for word. Would you mind reading them back, Sandra?"

"The hell with all this," Johnson said coldly. "You're on top. Why all the conversation?"

"This conversation has several objectives," he said. "The first is a bill of sale from Johnson, witnessed by Sandra and Daubrey, for my boat. That done, we might discuss a few things tending toward making it more comfortable for you chaps, having your help in any battle that may be coming up, and making it easier for you on the coast."

SANDRA had settled herself on a bunk and was looking over her notes. Daubrey's attention had shifted to Sinclair, and now he said, a little hesitantly, "Are you hinting, old boy, that you actually want to be fair?"

"Exactly—which is much more than you'd be to me," Sinclair said. "After all, gentlemen, no matter from what selfish motives, you did help save Sandra, and can help save her again and get her to Port Moresby. If she weren't along, I'd let you rot in this cabin and take my chances on getting through alone with the Kanakas."

He held up his hand, and as he talked clocked off the points on his fingers.

"First, if you kill me and don't kill Sandra, her testimony will hang you, no matter how accidental my death may appear. Second, the gold is just far enough away from the river so that it would take years for you to find it, except by a lucky accident. So if you kill both Sandra and me, no gold for you, probably. Third, as Daubrey knows, I've been building character with my blacks from the start. The Hanaubada are now taking orders from me. The natives have been told everything. So if you kill both Sandra and me, you'll be hung on the stories of the Kanakas. Fourth, I'm an unofficial agent of the lieutenant governor. He is a very suspicious man. He is very suspicious of you gentlemen. Either or both of you showing up alone would seem highly suspicious to him. I would, in fact, hate to be in your shoes.

"Gentlemen, I would say that you haven't a prayer, unless you've very good boys from now on."

He got to his feet and motioned to Daubrey. "You're staying in the after-cabin from now on," he said. "There'll be no more private conversations between you two. Sandra and Johnson and I will manage in here.

"Come on—you're going now. Later in the day, after you've both thought things over, we can decide whether or not you want to sign confessions; throw yourselves, as heroes, on the mercy of the courts; have testimony from me as sympathetic as I can conscientiously make it, and help get us past the Lake Murdoch country. If you decide against it, you can stay in irons, and in an emergency I'll have no compunction about trading you to the natives for the safety of Miss Hope and myself.

"Think it over."

As Sinclair hit the deck behind Daubrey and Sandra, however, it appeared that there might not be much time for thought. For the *Susan* was already in sight of the island-dotted entrance to Lake Murdoch, and skimming toward them were two twelve-man canoes.

The Kanakas were in an uproar as Bumidai brought Sinclair the binoculars. First he scanned the two slender cockleshells, and then studied the narrowing, vineclad shorelines.

Sounding clearly across the water from the canoes, came the continuous cry of friendship.

*"Sambio! Sambio!"*

But unless the crewmen's instincts were unanimously wrong, and little signs revealed by the binoculars very deceiving, the jungle was swarming with black men who had warbonnets on, and who were saying nothing at all.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE BATTLE OF LAKE MURDOCH

"GET Johnson on deck," Sinclair told Sandra. "Bumidai! You fella takum wheel! Adla-Bawi—you fella takum engine all time full speed!"

He ordered the entire crew, except for a half dozen riflemen, to help get all mattresses from the bunks on deck, and then bring up all weapons and ammunition. As Johnson joined them, hobbling along in his leg-irons, the four white people stood at the bow and watched the approach of the twenty-four shouting oarsmen.

"They can't reach us with arrows from shore," Sinclair said, "until we start passing the islands. I'll be with you in a minute."

He impressed on the boys that at the first sign of any battle every man must drop behind the shelter of the rail and fire from behind it. Three of the Hanaubadas were assigned to hold three mattresses behind and at each side of Bumidai, to protect the steersman, until others could prop up the protective walls with supply cases.

When he rejoined the trio at the bow, Johnson took the binoculars from his eyes and said, "Plenty of warriors on shore—both sides. But only a small part are Kanakas that live close to this lake. Thousands of 'em. There may be spears in the bottoms of those canoes."

"They're at least fifty feet long," Sinclair said. "They're still yelling *Sambio!*"

"They want to get close enough, or to come aboard, and see how we're fixed," Johnson said. "Don't stop the boat—"

"Think I'm crazy?" Sinclair asked. "They'll

try to ambush us from those islands, probably."

"I don't think so," Johnson said thoughtfully. "They'd have a lot of canoes around if they did, and I can't spot a sign of one around the islands. There are one or two back of us, and perhaps a few more I couldn't pick up. But there can't be many."

They all fell silent as the canoes came close. The *Susan* was making seven knots, her top speed in comparatively still water, and it was apparent that the canoes could not keep up with her in a chase.

Both craft had slim clipper bows and thin, finely hollowed-out sterns. The lakemen were not as adept as the coast tribes at paddling their boats, nor were the canoes as fast as those used by the Kanakas who lived by the sea. Nevertheless, the lakemen were an impressive sight, upright in their narrow craft, paddling with long oars which, like the canoes, represented hundreds of hours of labor with crude stone adzes.

The lakemen signaled that they wanted to trade, the chief simulating the use of an axe and waving some of the shells which had been left in exchange for Brandon's head. Sinclair held up an axe and a piece of cloth to signify his willingness to do business, and then pointed at the lake.

Two of the paddles stooped down and brought into view two stuffed heads, ornamented with an unusual number and variety of colored seeds.

"That settles it," Johnson said. "Heads are everything to these birds—honor, wealth, proof of the prowess of themselves and their ancestors."

"Meaning that they suddenly love us?" Daubrey asked sardonically.

"Meaning that they're doing everything to tempt us to stop, and they wouldn't offer heads if they weren't sure they'd get them back," Sinclair said.

The canoes turned as the *Susan* chugged past them, and the paddlers worked frantically to stay close to the schooner.

"Rather stay on deck?" Sinclair asked Sandra.

"Of course," she said. "I'm a fair shot."

She was a little pale beneath her tan, but if there was a nerve in her body she gave no indication of it. And she was keeping quiet, which was a blessing.

Sinclair gripped her shoulder lightly. "Good girl," he said.

The four went back to the stern, Sandra and Sinclair carrying rifles and ammunition. The mattresses, except for the three protecting Bumidai, were piled on deck now, ready to serve as shields whenever and wherever they might be needed. All hands, except Bumidai and Adla-Bawi, on duty beside the engine, were prone on deck, peering alertly over the railing. Sinclair used his binoculars to study the two dozen head-hunters who were making their canoes fairly fly down the stream toward the now visible entrance to the lake.

They were not black but rather a deep bronze. Only one, probably the chief, wore a headdress. It was a glorious one, in the shape of a crown, made of the plumes of the Paradise bird—most beautiful thing that flies.

He was a barrel-chested, sturdy-legged native with a broad, intelligent brow, fine eyes and an aquiline nose. Like their chief, the features of the other lakemen were so Semitic that, save for their color, they might have belonged to one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Fully half of them, seen through the binoculars, had hideous skin, covered with healed scars and unhealed sores. Their hair, cut short in front, was allowed to grow long behind, where it was braided around fiber to make pigtails a foot or more long. Some had thin, scraggly beards. They were naked save for the sketchiest of loin cloths, and in action they were savages. But their features showed intelligence—undeveloped, perhaps, but far above the gorilla-like impression given by the flat-nosed, blubber-lipped faces of the Negrito hillmen.

THE *Susan* was approaching the first of the three islets which dotted the entrance to Lake Murdoch, and Daubrey's voice sounded coolly amused as he said, "Do Jumbo and I get arms, Captain? We'd scarcely pick this time to become gay, old boy."

Sinclair pointed at spare rifles and ammunition piled beside the after-deckhouse.

"If and when we're attacked," he said, "you do. My trust in you is touching, isn't it? All right—quiet, everybody. This may be it."

But it wasn't. There was an electric effect of hidden, swarming life behind the towering vineclad trees of the lagoon, and in the monotony and cadence of the never-ceasing "*Sambios!*" coming from the canoemen behind them there was some of the hypnotic effect of beating drums. But the *Susan* emerged into the open water of Lake Murdoch without being fired at, and Sinclair did not like it.

He turned to Johnson and said, as he wiped the sweat from his face, "If they were going to attack, why not there?"

Johnson's eyes were as bright as huge diamonds, and as hard. Sandra was a little pale beneath her deep tan, but Daubrey appeared to be as cool as the atmosphere was hot. Johnson shifted his manacled legs.

"Remember that narrow spot in the Heberd," he asked, "about a quarter of a mile below the entrance? Where the land juts out into the stream from both sides?" Sinclair nodded. "That's probably where they got my boat—it was moored just above—and, nativelike, they'll probably try to repeat their victory. The current will help us get through."

"You said there were a lot of tribes around

this lake," Daubrey said quietly, barely opening his lips.

"Talked to a fellow on the last expedition," Johnson said, nodding. "There are at least a dozen *dubus* scattered in the jungle around the shore—"

"*Dubu?*" Sinclair repeated.

"The communal house," Johnson explained. "They don't have villages—each tribe lives in a *dubu*. A *ravi* is a clubhouse for men only—*dubu* is a village. Anyhow, they could raise probably a thousand warriors from around this lake, if they declared an armistice between the tribes to combine against us, and how many there are in the back country, no one knows. Furthermore—" He paused and squinted at Sandra, then went on calmly, "I understand that their favorite method of killing is for the warriors who have distinguished themselves capturing a prisoner to have the privilege of spearing him to death." He shifted his position a little, and added deliberately, "Or her."

Sandra gave a little gasp.

Daubrey said, "I say, old boy, let's not go too hard on the horror—what?"

Sinclair eyed Johnson as he got to his feet. He was thinking of the many-pointed spears he had seen, as he said, "You wouldn't be trying to scare us into giving you arms right away, would you?"

"Once in a while," Johnson said, "I tell the truth. Times like this, for instance."

"We don't stop to trade," Sinclair said. "I was going to spend the night in the middle of the lake, but a storm might come up, or it could be so dark the canoes could sneak up on us. Watch these birds closely, Sandra, while I'm gone."

"We wouldn't touch a pinfeather of the goose that still has a golden egg to lay," Johnson said.

"Besides," Daubrey added with his thin smile, "I'm in love with her. Really."

"I'm aware of that," Sinclair said, half-seriously. "And if an accident happened to me, I know you'd both be kind to her. But I wouldn't put it past either of you to try to go back upcountry with her after the gold. Back in a minute, Sandra."

He gave orders to keep the *Susan* full speed ahead for the Heberd, four miles across the lake. The smell of lotus was overwhelming as the huge blossoms exhaled extra fragrance at the approach of evening.

The uneasy, frightened Kanakas abroad the *Susan* seemed to hate the idea of Sinclair going below decks. It was as though they needed to see him to believe that they would survive. He went to the medical kit, put some pills in a small envelope, and smiled a little at the relief in the crew's black faces as he emerged from the hatch.

He walked to the bow and gave Sandra the envelope.

"An overdose of morphine that should be fatal," he said. "Just in case."

A LITTLE less than half an hour later, Sinclair was glad that he had given Sandra the drug. For as it became apparent to the savages in the canoes, and to countless concealed eyes, that the *Susan* had no intention of stopping to trade, a single drum commenced to beat from the closest headland. Then a second, and a third were throbbing in ever-increasing tempo, until finally it seemed that the entire shoreline of the hundred-mile-square lake was alive with the savage instruments. The cadence and power of them increased until a sort of primitive delirium, straight out of the stone age, appeared to be expressing itself in the thunderous rhythm that rolled and crashed across the water from every point of the compass. It started a thousand crocodiles from their lairs, battered madly against the eardrums, and sent the blacks aboard the *Susan* into a panic which would have left the whites to their fate if the black men had had anywhere to go.

And from hidden lagoons—almost, it seemed, from behind every clump of giant reeds and out of the very swamps—came canoes. One at a time, they sped into view from all around the more distant reaches of the lake, until more than two dozens of them were leaving their wakes across the water.

Every canoe was pointed toward the two-hundred-yard-wide entrance to the Heberd, and on every black head, nodding to the thunder of the drums, was the feathered headdress of the warrior on the warpath.

"They're keeping their distance, too," Johnson pointed out. "They've learned plenty from other whites and, for savages, they're smart."

"Smart enough to wait until they've got us in close enough for arrows and spears to have a chance against firesticks," Sinclair said. "Look—those birds that wanted to trade have put on their war bonnets."

Then he went into action. He shouted his orders as he unlocked the manacles on Daubrey and Johnson, and the half-hysterical crew leaped to obey them. Two more mattresses were set up at the stern. Every weapon on the boat was on deck, including axes and all the ammunition, before the *Susan* was cleaving into the entrance to the Heberd. Johnson was in command at the stern, Daubrey at the bow. Sinclair would operate from amidships.

While all this was going on, Sandra had been sitting on the foc'sle deckhouse where the dinghy atop it would provide additional protection from stray arrows. Sinclair looked over the disposition of his men around the railing, and then walked up to Daubrey and the girl. Two mattresses were piled at the bow.

"Daubrey, cut a hole about a foot wide in one of them," he ordered. "Set that up against the railing. You lie down and shoot through it, Sandra. Put the second mattress on top of

you. That will give you some protection from arrows or spears falling at a steep angle."

"Aye, aye, sir," Daubrey said quietly, and fell to work.

There was a curious shyness in Sinclair's smile as he said to the girl, "How about having dinner with me in Port Moresby the night after we get there?"

"I haven't my engagement book with me," she laughed, "but I think the date is open."

Then the forced lightness disappeared, and they merely stared at each other.

"You'll get us through," she said, breaking the spell finally. "I know you will."

She started to add something more, but Sinclair was dropping down the after-hatch. He put the irons in the sea chest, and went into the tiny engine room below the after-cabin.

"Full speed altogether time," he told Adla-Bawi. "You fella stay alonga engine until me fella say no. Savvy?"

The black man's rolling eyes were full of fear, but he nodded his head rapidly.

"You fella safe. No spears arrows alonga here," Sinclair reminded him, and went on deck.

Now they were speeding down the swift-flowing Heberd at a good nine knots. Johnson was pacing the stern, two pistols at his side and a rifle under his arm. A shotgun and a spare rifle were close at hand on the deck. The six men assigned to the stern were lying on deck, guns ready.

"As soon as those canoes start bunching up at the lake entrance, we'll let 'em have it," Johnson said. "Take your hands off your guns, fellow."

Sinclair seemed not to notice Jumbo's words. "We can try to founder the canoes," he said, as though thinking aloud. "But they may have a way of plugging small holes. There'll be plenty of crocs around—"

"There'll be more after we get a little blood spilt in the water," Johnson told him. "If we get by that narrow place down there, everybody can come to the stern and blast those canoes—they'll have to get pretty close together to get through the narrows. Savvy?"

Sinclair nodded. Both men had binoculars strung around their necks. As the *Susan* came within a few hundred feet of the jutting headlands which narrowed the Heberd down to less than two hundred feet wide, Johnson scrutinized the riverbank on the port side, Sinclair the starboard.

"Oh-oh," Johnson said finally. "Some canoes hidden in the reeds—"

"My side, too," Sinclair said. "We've got to let 'em have it."

## CHAPTER XVII

### MEN OVERBOARD!

A FEW seconds later, every gun on the *Susan* was raking the shores, shooting low in an effort to puncture the canoes hidden in the reeds and below the overhanging foliage. There were shouts and screams from unseen warriors, and suddenly the splashing of crocodiles was continuous as they slid into the water after bodies which the white men could rarely see.

And now the first of the canoes off the lake were speeding down the Heberd. They were still too far away for effective shooting, but the paddlers were working frantically now, trying to overtake the *Susan* instead of keeping their distance.

Sinclair, stooping low, shouted to Johnson, "Why don't they return our fire? Why are they following us? If we don't stick on a sandbar, they'll never catch us!"

"They've got some plan!" Johnson shouted back. "I'll say they have! Look at 'em come!"

From points a hundred yards astern of the schooner, canoe after canoe sped out from the shelter of the reeds and ferns of the riverbank, and started to pursue the *Susan*. Johnson and his men started picking off the savages, and now the crocodiles were in such profusion that gaping jaws sometimes closed on a body before it reached the water.

Sinclair ran forward. The *Susan* was making almost ten knots now, aided by the swift current. It was as nerve-racking as being a passenger in a speeding automobile, roaring, without lights, through a dark night and over an unknown road. A sandbar, formed since they had sounded the stream on the upward trip, would mean their doom.

And still the savages held their fire from canoe and jungle. The mounting tension became almost unendurable to the crew. The Kanakas were starting to caper hysterically, shooting wildly into the jungle and even into the air instead of keeping cover and making their bullets count.

Sinclair eyed them calmly, and then walked upright among them. He ordered them to lie down, speaking soothingly and with an air of untroubled confidence. Most of the crew reacted as he hoped but one frenzied Hanaubada warrior continued to leap up and down, thrusting with an imaginary spear and howling defiance to the enemy. Sinclair hit him with a left to the jaw. As the black went down, Sinclair caught him, stooped a little, and then lifted the unconscious body over his head. Every Kanaka was absolutely silent as the captain walked to the rail, and seemed about to throw the Hanaubada overboard.

Instead, he lowered the body to the deck.

"Me fella say do, black fella do. Black fella no do, black fella finish."

Back on the stern, Johnson got his six blacks under control, and was taking a terrific toll of the pursuing canoemen, but they did not falter. Even the swarming crocodiles which dragged their fallen fellows beneath the water, and which they dreaded as nothing else on earth save the wrath of their gods, seemed not to exist in the minds of the warriors hypnotized by the far-off thunder of the drums.

When a small number of natives was beyond the effective range of their arrows, the white men's firesticks could hold them off all day. But in those narrows the *Susan* would be within arrow range of both banks of the stream, and no power on earth could hold off hundreds of black men, willing to sacrifice many of their number to overwhelm the whites, if the *Susan* was stopped there.

Now the schooner was coming opposite the two heavily wooded peninsulas jutting from either shore of the Heberd. In just a moment, she would be passing the narrowest place in the river.

Sinclair dashed forward. Sandra was firing methodically, to port, and Daubrey to starboard, both aiming low into the overhanging foliage. Still that eerie silence from the hidden warriors, except for the screams of wounded men and the shrieks, dying away to horrible gurgles, as a crocodile dragged its prey beneath the water.

Then it happened. Sinclair was prone, looking over the port side of the very apex of the bow. The *Susan* slowed so suddenly that he was thrown forward against the railing. Sandra was rolled several feet forward, and Daubrey's gun fell from his hands.

And down in the water there rose into sight, until it was less than two feet below the surface, a cable of woven vines, at least three inches thick. The shock of the *Susan* hitting it raised the shore ends of the cable until they were visible above the water, disappearing into the depths of the jungle on either side where the ends must be weighted with stones and tied to trees on each bank. The *Susan* was as helpless against it as a fly caught in a spider web.

SUDDENLY it seemed as though all that part of the world had reached the crescendo of violence toward which it had been rising. And, in inverse proportion to that diapason of triumphant savagery, in which there were now no missing notes, Sinclair became more methodical in thought and deliberate in action.

The crew of the *Susan*, thrown higgledy-piggledy around the deck by the abrupt stop in the forward progress of the boat, almost unanimously leaped to their feet instead of keeping cover behind the rail. They were beside themselves with fear, excitement and blood-lust. From both banks came showers of arrows. Three of them found their marks in that many Hanaubada boys, and the unseen archers were now screaming hysterically from excitement or wounds, or both. From upriver came the shouts of the frantically paddling canoemen, now less than five hundred yards away. Every few seconds one of them was hit—but on they came relentlessly.

Working out his strategy, Sinclair gazed at the methodically firing Sanda, comparatively safe behind and beneath her mattresses; and then absorbed with admiration the progress of Jumbo Johnson.

The blond giant was coming forward in a series of zigzags which took him from port to starboard and back again, in a sequence of racing starts. Crouched low, he would give a mighty leap forward, landing on feet and hands

in another crouch. Always semi-protected by the railing, he swept the capering, wild-firing Kanakas to the deck with a series of scythe-like sweeps of one mighty arm. Shouting orders for them to stay prone and fire carefully, he left behind him a wake of sanity as tangible as the path of a reaper through a field of grain.

"Sandbar?" he yelled as he came close to Sinclair.

"Rope of vines," Sinclair answered as he crawled toward the three axes piled beside the after deckhouse. "Somebody's got to hold me while I go overside and cut it."

Daubrey, entirely self-possessed in the middle of that madhouse, had been firing his automatic rifle low into the jungle, emptying each clip with short sweeps of the muzzle.

"We've got about a minute or less before those canoes get here, what?" he shouted now. "Two heads better than one and all that. One may get an arrow in the gizzard, old boy, and I always did like to show off in front of a woman!"

Sinclair slid an axe across the deck to the Britisher. Sandra had not even turned from her work. Now, in back of them, the three wounded Hanaubada boys were screaming, a fourth had fallen overside, and back of the Susan's threshing propeller the canoes were slowing a little, as though waiting for something that was to happen. The rail of the boat was dotted with quivering arrows impaled in the wood, and each mast had one of the sharp-pointed weapons sticking into it. Mostly, however, the maddened warriors on the banks were shooting too high. The distance was too great for spears.

"Somebody among those headhunters is a strategist," Sinclair said as an unoccupied canoe suddenly floated out from the undergrowth and started downriver. "The men on shore are not going to break cover until the boats upstream get here, and those lads are waiting for most of us to get picked off with arrows."

Sandra stopped shooting as the three white men crouched in the tip of the bow.

"I can hold you both!" Johnson roared, so loudly that the din from shore and boat and speeding canoes was only a background for his voice.

"Drop either one," came Sandra's cool voice, "and I'll shoot *you*."

"Thanks for including me," Daubrey smiled.

Johnson, as over-stimulated in his way as were the savages, threw back his great head and laughed.

"There's a woman for you!" he bellowed. "All right—over the side you go!"

He grasped Sinclair's left ankle and Daubrey's right. The two men flung themselves, bent double, over the railing. Sinclair was on the starboard side of the bow, Daubrey a few inches to port. An arrow missed Sinclair by a few inches, and another thudded into the side of the boat just beneath where Sandra crouched.

He heard her shouting something, and Johnson's voice took it up, but he paid no heed as he stared down into the clear water. His left arm and Daubrey's right were separated only by the forward joint of the boat's hull. The distance from rail to waterline was about eight feet, and the rope of vines half a yard or so beneath the surface. The water was dotted with crocodiles, and he could see two of them below the surface tugging a limp black body.

Johnson's grasp on his ankle was so powerful that it hurt. Another shower of arrows only missed him because the *Susan* had hit the rope again and bounced back a little.

SINCLAIR grasped the axe with both hands. His mind was in a state of suspended animation, as though it were merely a blank surface for the reception of impressions and had no power of original thought. He glanced upward. Johnson was crouched low over the rail as he supported more than a hundred and sixty pounds with each hand and arm and mighty shoulder. Sinclair tried not to think of being dropped into the water. The crocodiles were steadily increasing in number and boldness.

Both men were raising their axes when there came a thud next to the intent Sinclair. He looked around and saw that a mattress had been lowered overside and was now protecting him. He looked over at Daubrey, and another was descending on that side.

The Englishman twisted a little and looked upward. These blue-gray eyes seemed not to be buried so deeply now, and they glinted with a light Sinclair had never seen in them, as he said, "Sandra's mattresses. She's holding yours, and a Kanaka's handling mine."

That meant that Sandra was bent double over the rail without protection against the arrows from shore.

"Haste is indicated, what?" came Daubrey's voice.

"Definitely," said Sinclair, and his axe clove the water. It didn't sever the vine, but did notch three-quarters of the way through it.

"Missed!" Daubrey said with an oath.

The *Susan* was again straining against its leash. Sinclair, so concentrated on the job that he was temporarily unaware of the hell of noise coming from boat and canoes and jungle, saw the remaining strands of the rope parting before the combined power of the current and motor.

He put the blade of the axe against the cut and started sawing with it. Two arrows hit the mattress, and the point of one protruded through it. Just as the twisted vines were about to part completely, he heard Sandra's wild scream from above.

"Andrew! The crocodile—"

Instinctively he twisted his body sideways

and upward as he dropped the axe and drew his arms from the water. Less than five feet to his left, he was staring into the opening jaws of a crocodile hurtling toward him. Its fetid breath hit him like a poisonous miasma.

And that same instant, Daubrey's axe darted downward and the edge buried itself at the junction of the two jaws. When they snapped shut the horrid front teeth closed only two inches from Sinclair's arm. The handle of the axe snapped in two, and the great reptile began thrashing with the pain of the edged tool in its throat.

"That was for my new nose," Daubrey panted.

Just then the last strands of the rope parted and the *Susan* fairly leaped ahead. Sinclair grasped the prow of the boat and looked over at Daubrey. The Englishman was twisting toward him as the *Susan* sped for a veritable fleet of crocodiles coming upstream.

Above, a mighty oath seemed to tear itself loose from Johnson's throat. Sinclair looked up, and saw an arrow impaled in the big fellow's left forearm. He saw, and almost felt, Johnson's titanic effort to maintain his grasp on Daubrey's ankle. In that bedlam of frenzied voices Johnson was yelling for help. His face was wet with sweat and contorted with the pain of muscles which could not do his will.

The fingers of his left hand loosened, and Daubrey started to slide into the water. Sinclair twisted his body, and reached for him. His right arm got Daubrey beneath the shoulders, his left at the knees. Sinclair felt a second grip on his ankle, just as he, too, was about to drop. Then a third grip, two-handed this time, fastened around his calf.

With a slow effort, so mighty that he felt that something in his body must crack, Sinclair bent his body at the waist and raised Daubrey two feet above the water. Finally Daubrey got a grip on Sinclair's legs.

Sinclair's face and eyes were suffused with blood as he gasped thickly, "If I—drop you—it—it will be because—I—can't help it."

"I know it, old boy," Daubrey said, face and lips bloodless but voice cool. "I hope you hold out, because the water's alive with crocs right below us."

Sinclair could not look up. When Daubrey said, "Here's a rope!" Sinclair almost did drop him in a wave of relief which left him limp and weak.

Daubrey grasped the rope and pulled himself upward. Sinclair clung to him, and slowly Daubrey dragged him further above the swirling water.

The jaw of an ambitious crocodile missed Sinclair by inches as he hung there with his body bent double.

As he followed Daubrey up the rope Sandra was nowhere in sight. Johnson, his forearm bleeding freely, had let go of Sinclair's ankle and was helping two Kanakas handle the rope. When Sinclair grasped the rail, the laughing giant roared, "Made it, by God!"

WITH kangaroo-like leaps, Jumbo dashed for the stern. The arrows were coming cater-cornered toward them now as the *Susan*, sped by the current, foamed downriver out of the danger zone. Canoes were coming from the two headlands, but there was no pursuit in the real sense. A half dozen crewmen, in a seventh heaven of relief, happiness and battle frenzy, were now taking terrible toll of the paddlers. There were apparently no savages below the scene of the ambush, and the warriors knew that they could never overtake the *Susan* and would be at the mercy of the white men's firesticks if they tried. Johnson was again firing carefully from the stern and each shot meant a dead or badly wounded headhunter.

Daubrey was lying prone, breathing in great gasps. Scattered around the deck were six wounded blacks and one who lay very still.

Sinclair had been aware that Sandra was sitting with her back against the rail. Now he realized that she was sobbing wildly in the throes of a splendid case of hysterics.

He leaned over and slapped her face, hard.

"Shut up!" he roared.

Her convulsive weeping stopped as though he had clapped his hand over her mouth. Her head came back in that old proud gesture, but all she could do for the moment was whimper. Daubrey was getting to his feet as Sinclair patted her shoulder and said, "Scaring people often cures hysterics." He turned around to face Daubrey. "Thanks for the axe. I hate to do this, but—"

The left which had once won him an intercollegiate boxing championship, exploded against Daubrey's jaw. The Duke fell forward. Sinclair caught him and lowered him gently to the deck.

Sandra was on her feet. "Why did you do that?" she faltered.

"Because I haven't got my boat back yet," he said. "I really love him, and that hurt me worse than it did him. Now listen: get a Kanaka, and go down and get the medical kit and a lot of bandages. Hurry."

"Aye, sir," she said.

The *Susan* was rounding a bend in the Heberd, and as he walked aft to the stern, Sinclair had what was to be his last view of the men of Lake Murdoch. The crews of several canoes were now battling one another, and all signs indicated that multiple civil wars were going on between maddened and disappointed warriors of several different villages.

Johnson was up on his feet, wiping the sweat from his shining face with his right hand and holding his bleeding left one just above his belt line.

"Now I can use a doctor," he said, grinning.

"Here's your anesthetic." Sinclair smiled, and again that left darted forth like a striking snake.

Jumbo collapsed like an empty sack folding up. Sinclair lowered him to the deck, and bellowed orders for all the capering, grinning, celebrating Kanakas to gather round him.

His voice was calm and deliberate as he repeated his promises of riches plus the probable status of native constables for those who wanted to qualify. By the time Sandra and her native bearer came back on deck, he had soothed them into a semblance of sanity and they were happily obeying his orders to make the deck shipshape, clean the guns and keep a steady watch. At the wheel, Bumidai's countenance split from ear to rear in a black-toothed grin. Sinclair answered it with one equally wide and sunny.

"You fella great fella, Taubada," Bumidai said.

"You're not so bad yourself," Sinclair said, forgetting to use pidgin. "The white folks got together for a while, but I don't mind saying that I'd have felt more comfortable if you'd been holding me instead of Johnson, a while back."

Bumidai grinned with polite bewilderment, and Sinclair went to meet Sandra at the afterhatch.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### "HOME IS THE SAILOR—"

A HALF hour later, the quartet of whites was in the saloon working on one of the last three bottles of brandy. Sinclair had cleaned the various wounds, doused them with iodine, and bandaged them. All but two of the spent arrows he had inspected had been made of cassowary bone, which probably meant that they had not been poisoned.

Two of the weapons which had not found any living mark were tipped with human bone, and the smell of them was like a distillation of the foulness of all the world.

Some of that deadly odor would be left in any wound made by such an arrow tip, but there was no trace of it in any of the hurts he had dressed. If that were true, Johnson and the blacks had little to worry about. The *Susan* had lost six men altogether, and another five were wounded, none seriously if the arrows were non-poisonous.

It was characteristic of both Daubrey and the trader that they took their leg irons for granted and seemed rather to admire than resent the methods Sinclair had used in forcing them to don them again.

Johnson made the only indirect reference to his knockout after he had tossed off his second drink.

"I certainly outsmarted myself when I *didn't* pick you out as a partner, Cap'n," he stated. "You're a prissy so-and-so, and I hate that. But you're tough and don't know when you're licked, and that suits me."

"I'm satisfied," Sinclair said. "And you stay in irons until I let you walk ashore at Port Moresby—if I'm feeling good. People don't sprout wings easily after the age of twenty-five. Which brings up a little matter of business before I get slightly tight. Maybe plenty tight."

"Me, too," Sandra said. "If you want to talk privately, it won't be long before I retire to the after-cabin with my usual dignity, but perhaps a little difficulty."

All three men smiled at the sketchily clad young woman whose sudden radiance made her emaciated face look ten years younger.

"You know it already," Sinclair said. "In books, people who are thrown together and go through some tough times are supposed to become closer than brothers. In real life, they often get on each other's nerves so much they hate each other, for a while at least. So I just want to tell you lads what I'm going to tell the Lieutenant-Governor in Port Moresby. Strangely enough, I'm going to tell him the exact truth, including all the creditable details."

"Remarkable, what?" Daubrey said sardonically.

"And I rather think that you won't come out too badly," Sinclair went on. "In addition to being important in her own right as a white woman, Sandra's father is a very important man and your services to her ought to make Government decide that it hasn't enough evidence to do more than perhaps give you your share of the gold, Daubrey, and ask you to go home."

"My dear fellow," Daubrey said, "with my share of the gold, I'll be rather happy to toddle off home."

"And what with the bill of sale for my boat and Sandra's notes as evidence, I think the government will merely confiscate Johnson's boat—the one he used in the pearl-fishing affair—and they've already got the price Johnson paid for the *Seeker* in the treasury. Ought to satisfy them, after I tell 'em how much help he's been. The police will want to bring a few of those lakemen down to jail for a few months as a lesson to 'em, and I have no doubt Government will send an expedition up here and get out that ton and a half or so of bullion at the same time. They shouldn't begrudge us the three hundred thousand or so that's coming to us.

"I certainly hope so," Sinclair finished. "That would add up to the hundred thousand I determined to go home with. And here"—as he poured himself another slug of brandy—"is the drink that's going to make me tight. If there's going to be any blood poison, it won't show up until I've had myself a little sleep, and I don't think we'll have any more trouble with the natives."

THEIR eight-knot progress back down the Skirton and the Florel, except for short rations, was like a restful pleasure cruise. All wounds were healing satisfactorily, and the blacks were happy and cooperative.

As the *Susan* sailed across the great estuary of the Florel and eastward along the coast toward Port Moresby, even the mud-covered river tribes crawling over their rotting platforms seemed like old friends to the lean master of the *Susan* when he landed to trade.

The last night out of Port Moresby was one of brilliant moonlight and a wind that was a sailor's dream. With staysail, jib, fore and mainsails taut before the steady blow, the schooner was skimming a level sea a half mile out from the breakerline. Sinclair was at the wheel with Sandra beside him, and Daubrey and Johnson were lounging against the rail. Northward, dark and vast, New Guinea seemed to be breathing like some unconquerable monster, resting for a moment before it stirred itself anew. Even at that distance, the sense of dark and secret life in its brooding depths was as tangible as the whisper of the water swishing past the stern of the *Susan*.

"So you're going back to school, are you, old boy?" Daubrey was saying. "I don't contemplate a return to the halls of learning, but I might look in at the ancestral halls and see whether several thousand pounds makes me any more welcome."

"Why not?" Sinclair said. "A country house, a red-cheeked English girl, a modest fortune—"

"Pleasant outlook for a black sheep, my dear fellow, but unfortunately, I doubt whether my color will change. Rum thing—back during the war when I was lying in a shell hole outside of Ypres one night holding my wounded tummy together with my hands, I ought to have been regretting all the bad things I'd done. Instead, I regretted every dollar I'd never spent, and all the women I never made love to."

"Now you're talking," stated Johnson. "I'll never have those regrets if I can help it. It being my next trick at the wheel, I'll leave you intellectuals and get some sleep."

He minced forward in his leg irons, and after a little period of silence, Daubrey said, "I doubt whether I'll ever come back out here, and I know you won't, Andy. Look at that steaming mass of land over there. Think of all those blacks in their stinking hovels, and all that's going on in that jungle right now—"

Sandra shivered. "Let's not," she said.

"Makes me wonder a little at our temerity, old boy, going so gaily into the interior," Daubrey said. "Well out of it, I'd say." He gestured a good-by and went down the after-hatch.

Sandra linked her arm in Sinclair's and said, "You really think you'll settle down?"

"For a long time—several years or so—and then I'll be too old for anything else."

"Home, wife, and all the fixings?"

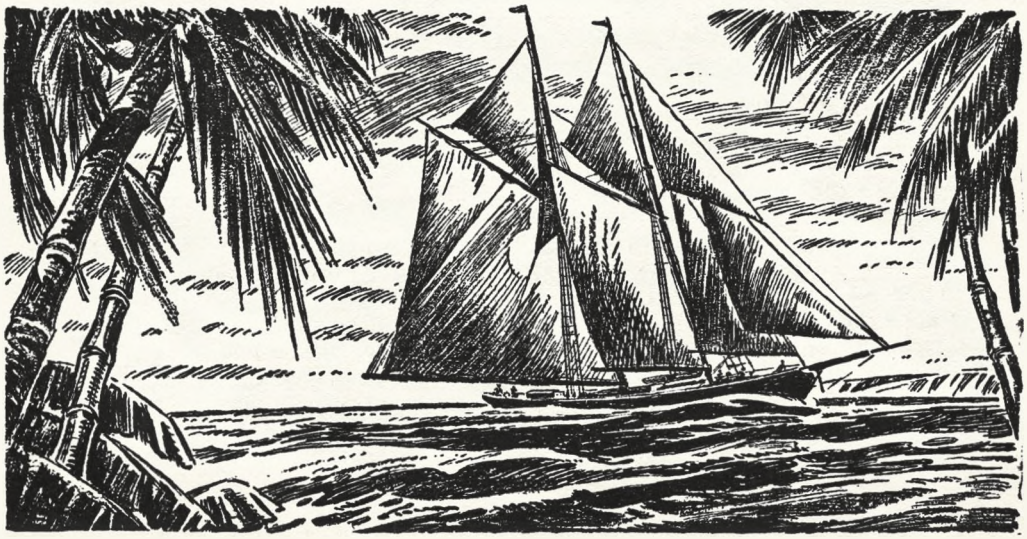
"It sounds—sort of wonderful."

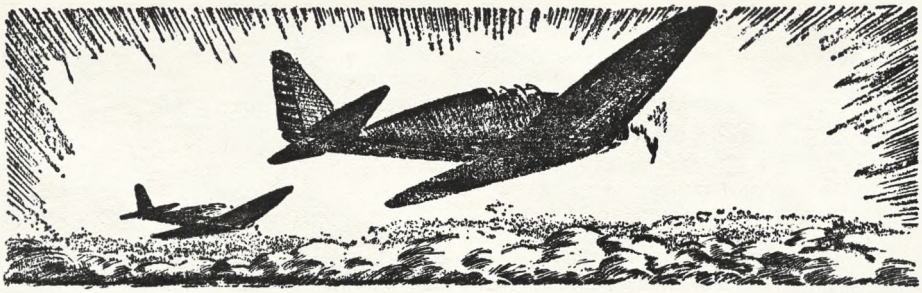
There was an interval of silence, and presently he continued, "You see, I'm pretty serious about what I want to do, and I won't have any time to make any money, if I do it right. So if I'm fortunate enough to get the kind of wife I have in mind, I'll have to postpone going home a while, and stay out here with the *Seeker* and get some more capital."

"I've got some capital of my own," she said. "And I've always dreamed of a honeymoon on a boat."

The glow in his eyes grew deeper and brighter as he put his arm around her and breathed softly, "And what a boat!"

*The End*





# WINGS TO THE SUN

## By NARD JONES

SURE, I can explain why I'm looking for a job.

The Army won't have me, and the reason I'm out of a job is because the job I had was bodyguard and stand-in for Ames Coles.

I thought that would explain it to you, all right. A guy can't be stand-in and bodyguard for a guy who's dead, can he? A guy who's dead don't need a bodyguard any more, and I can't take Coles' place in pictures. I don't even look like him, except we were the same build and I got the same coloring he had. But even if I looked like him, I can't act.

Oh, you liked that last picture of his, *Wings to the Sun?* Well, I wish he'd never made it. Because if he hadn't made that picture he might be here now, and I'm not wishing he was here now just because I would have a job if he was

here now. Ames Coles was always all right with me.

It was a long time before I knew why Ames Coles didn't want to go overseas to entertain the boys. What he said made sense to me. He said that a lot of stars were doing it, but what the hell, what did it mean? They could only reach a few thousand soldiers and sailors at a time, but if they stayed home and made pictures those pictures could get to millions of the boys. Another thing he said was that the boys didn't particularly want to see him. He wasn't young any more, like they were, and he couldn't sing a ballad or tell funny stories like Bob Hope, or anything like that. Of course he could take a couple of good-looking babes along, he said, but that would make him feel funny, too, he said. "There I'd be just a guy in his forties, taking it easy, riding around with a couple of luscious dames, and those poor guys without any dames at all." That was what he said.

That all made sense to me; but then one day Jerry McGuire, the comedian, got sick just before he was to go to the Aleutians to entertain the boys up there. The studio asked Ames Coles if he wouldn't go, because we were in Seattle at the time—on location for a lumberjack picture—and they figured that the Aleutians were just a hop and skip from Seattle. Sure!

I was in Coles' hotel room when they telephoned him. "Aleutians?" he says. "That's up in Alaska, isn't it? O.K., I'll do it." Then he hangs up the telephone and tells me what gives. "Call up Army Public Relations here and tell them we're here and ready to go, but tell them I got to be back in Hollywood by the tenth to start on *Wings to the Sun*."

I got hold of the Army Public Relations officer, and he came right up. He was a nice guy, a captain, and Ames Coles was one of his favorites. If it hadn't been he was feeling the dignity of his uniform he would have asked for an autograph. I can tell 'em a mile off. He brought a chaplain with him who had something to do with entertainment in the Aleutians.

"It's mighty nice of you to help us out, Mr. Coles," the chaplain said. "It's hard to get entertainment for the boys in the Aleutians. The Japs are gone and there isn't any fighting. It's sure lonesome now, and the boys in the Pacific get most of the stars. I was disappointed when McGuire couldn't come, but they'll be even more glad to see you."

"I doubt that," Ames Coles said, and he really meant it. I knew the guy.

The captain was kind of embarrassed in the presence of the great man and kept repeating what the chaplain said. "Yes, sure is lonesome up there. Hard to get entertainers there—airfields shut in for days at a time with fog, you know."

Ames Coles looked up then. "Airfields?" he said.

"Yeah," the captain said. "Sometimes even weeks at a time. But I've been in touch with Boeing Field. They say it looks good for a flight tomorrow morning. Still, it can change within a couple of hours."

"I thought we went to Alaska by boat," Ames Coles said, and from the look on his face I knew then why he hadn't wanted to go overseas. It came to me all of a sudden. He was one of these guys who are afraid to fly. I know, it strikes you as funny. But it isn't funny, and there are still a lot of guys who are afraid to fly. If you don't believe it, ask the airlines in peace time.

The captain said it wasn't Alaska, exactly, but the Aleutians. "They stretch 'way out from there a couple of thousand miles or more. The only boat we could get would be a transport, Mr. Coles, and it's about twelve or thirteen days just to Kodiak. You say you have to be in Hollywood by the tenth."

Ames said maybe he would be less delayed if he took a boat, if the flying was so uncertain. Then the chaplain said yes, could be. "I been on flights when we had to come back to Seattle less than two hours after we started. One flight I was on came back three times. We didn't really get away for twelve days. Another time, Kodiak and Dutch Harbor were closed in, and we had to go right on to Adak. We were low on gas and almost didn't make it."

The chaplain was one of those who liked to show how rough and tough he was. He laughed loud and slapped his knee. "Usually we make it in a couple of hops—or we just don't make it at all! Isn't that right, Captain? And the captain said it sure was, flying in the Aleutians was no picnic and that was why they appreciated so much Mr. Coles doing it.

Coles had me telephone Hollywood to see if they couldn't delay his starting scenes in *Wings to the Sun* and then he told the captain not to figure on the flight in the morning. He said he needed a rest, anyhow, and maybe we could go by boat.

But right away as soon as I got Cal Swift on the phone I knew there wouldn't be any ocean voyage.

Right off, he wants to know how come we aren't already in the Aleutians, and he says that there will not be any postponement of the start on *Wings to the Sun*.

THE plane didn't take off in the morning. The captain telephoned about four o'clock and said we could go right on sleeping. The same thing happened next morning. It wouldn't have been so bad, I guess, if we could have just walked out to the plane and hopped off. Maybe Coles could have got in without thinking too much, and be off before he knew it, and then maybe liked it. But I don't know. A guy who's afraid to fly dies three

times every time the ship hits a pocket, and I know because I don't like to fly, either. I'm not as scared as Coles, but it's enough.

One minute we're going, and the next we aren't. We must have made half a dozen trips to Boeing Field to wait, only to get the news we might as well go back to the hotel. It was getting on Coles' nerves plenty. Then came that minute at the airfield lunch counter—that minute I'll never forget. Ames Coles jumps up all of a sudden, cutting right into the chaplain's laugh, and says he can't wait any longer. He's got to be in Hollywood. He doesn't even know that he's upset coffee right on the captain's pinks.

Brother, that news traveled so fast that I had a telephone call from Cal Swift before we could get to the station. "What's this about Coles kicking out on the Aleutian deal?" he asked. I said he had it straight and that Coles was already at the train and I was steering the baggage down.

All the way south, Coles stayed in his compartment and I kept clear. He didn't ask for me, and I think most of his nourishment was Scotch. He was no different when we got to Hollywood, and when work began on *Wings to the Sun* he was worse. You saw the picture, so you know what it's about. Coles is a flying lieutenant in the Navy. He'd done hero parts before—that was what he was good at. Not the regular type, but the rough, quiet guy who probably not only loses the girl, but maybe his life, too. He did a good job on those kind of guys. Ames Coles was a great actor. One of the best Hollywood will ever see.

You said you liked the picture? The critics think he loused it up, although they aren't saying so on account of it's his last one. I kind of agree with them. He acted like he wished he could hide in that uniform, and it's lucky the picture wasn't in technicolor because every time he'd speak a line that made him a hero he'd color right up to his ears.

I don't blame the captain and the chaplain for not keeping their yaps shut. To them, Ames Coles was a hero and they couldn't help talking about what they had seen. Anyhow, gossip is a part of the Army, just like it's part of Hollywood, so that's all right. The story went north to the Aleutians and south to Hollywood, and it would be a cold day before Coles ever got a chance at entertaining the boys again. The Army and Navy just hasn't got time to fool with anybody who doesn't want to go along. Of course, Coles had a lot of enemies in Hollywood, not so successful. They liked the story plenty. The flying hero of *Wings to the Sun* was scared of the top rung of a kitchen ladder.

But the real flyers on the set were swell. They just seemed to figure that flying was their business, and acting was Coles' business, and let it go at that. They never said anything about the fact that there was a double for Coles when the plane got off the ground. The studio doesn't take chances on any star that way.

The young lieutenant commander who showed Coles how to act natural in the cockpit of a fighter was an especially good guy. One day I heard him say to Coles, "You could take her right off and keep her up now, Mr. Coles. Maybe you couldn't put her down yet—but you could take her up."

Well, you know the rest, if you read the papers. On the last day of the shooting, that's just what Ames Coles did. He got into the fighter and took her off, and up, out over Santa Monica and the ocean, right into the sun. I guess he had about three hours to go on the gas that was in the tank. No, they never found the plane, but the studio paid the government.

It may seem crazy to you. But Ames Coles was always all right with me. I guess he got over that fear of flying, and I guess he fixed it so that the picture is all right to show in the Aleutians or anywhere else, even if he did louse it up a little.

Only I wish he'd stuck to acting. We can't all be heroes.

# ASK ADVENTURE

*Information You Can't Get Elsewhere*

## HONK! Honk!

Query:—What can you tell me about the Canada goose? I especially want to know how old they are before they begin to mate.

—M. Donaldson,
Route 3,
Lake City, Ark.

Reply by Davis Quinn:—It is not known for certain how old Canada geese are before breeding in the wild, probably three or four years, since it is a long-lived bird and does not seem to reach full maturity till that time. Adults in captivity do not breed till three or four years old.

This species is the largest of our wild geese and the most popular game bird in its family. Its migrations mark the beginning of winter and commencement of spring. Its wedgeshaped flying formation is well known to outdoorsmen as is its familiar honk. It is supposed to mate for life. It breeds chiefly, as its name indicates, in Canada, up there in the wilds from Labrador to James Bay and west, and also in north western U.S.

Nest may be a mere depression in ground, sometimes built of twigs, reeds, grasses, etc. Lays 5 to 9 pale dull greenish yellow-white or buffy eggs, in U.S. late Apr. to July 19. Incubation period about 29 days; one brood yearly. A large fast and powerful flier, and most wary and difficult to hunt.

The bird is 34 to 43 inches long, wing spread from 59 to 65.5 inches and may weigh 8 to 12½ pounds. It is altogether a very remarkable and wonderful creature, a typically American species and we are thankful it has not reached the danger point through hunting that a number of our other fine waterfowl species have come to.

## FORMS of worship among the Maoris.

Query:—What can you tell me regarding the religious beliefs of the aborigines of New Zealand?

—M. A. Laird
Carnegie,
Victoria,
Australia

Reply by Tom L. Mills:—Nowadays the Maoris for the main part conform to the popular forms of religion such as Presbyterian, Anglican, Roman Catholic. The Mormons and the Seventh Day Adventists have also been successful proselytizers. There are tribes who are followers of leaders who have adapted ancient and modern forms and ceremonies.

The ancient religion of the Maori and his first cousins of Polynesia may be said to have consisted of a belief in and reverence for the powers of Nature with a worship or propitiation of the spirits of dead ancestors. In their cannibal days—up till the settlement of our country by Britons only a century ago—Maori warriors believed that in eating the heart of his bravest foes he was absorbing more bravery-blood. A belief in the animation of all Nature pervaded and influenced the whole life of the native; and equally strong was his faith in the divinity of his great Ariki forefathers, ancestors who had long passed to the Reinga-land, yet whose spirits still hold dominion over their descendants and were powerful to bless or curse.

My friend, James Cowan, with whom I was associated in my reporting days and nights in Wellington forty years ago and who is still one of New Zealand's foremost authorities on the Maori, ancient and modern, has gone amongst the tribes taking shorthand and gramophone records of songs, incantations and legends. The result is that this Pakeha-Maori—one who knows English and Maori languages—has been and still is a prolific writer rapidly filling a bookshelf. In order to answer your question I looked up his book "The Maoris of New Zealand," published in 1910. In his chapter on "Maori Cosmogony and Religion" he states that the universal primitive religion which takes the form of Animism is nowhere to be found more copiously embodied in priestly ritual and in sacred legend than amongst the native people of New Zealand and Polynesian islands, and nowhere are ancestral spirits so revered, their names held so sacred that their repetition is in itself a prayer. Nowhere are genealogies more carefully preserved—so carefully, that their recitation forms a large proportion of many a *karakia* (prayer); and any mistake made in repeating them destroys their efficacy—and is even fatal to suppliants. There are still men, the *kaumatuas* of the tribes, who are able to recite much of the old Nature-mythology and explain the successive æons of Po (Darkness) and Kore (the Void) which preceded the giving of form to the Universe, the coming of Light and the birth of the Heavens and the Earth.

I agree with the summing up of my friend James Cowan: "There is something very grand in the ancient Maori cosmogonies."

Kia Ora,
(which is good Maori for Good Luck)

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**Baseball**—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

**Basketball**—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

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**Health-Building Activities. Hiking** — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

**Motor Boating**—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

**Motorcycling:** *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure.*

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**Old Songs**—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

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**Track**—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

**Woodcraft**—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

**Wrestling**—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

**Yachting**—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

### SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

**Anthropology:** *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

**Entomology:** *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

**Forestry, North American:** *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

**Forestry, Tropical:** *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

**Herpetology:** *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

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**Ornithology:** *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

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★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 88 Sidney Rd., Manley N. S. W., Australia.

**Madagascar**—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

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**Eastern U. S., Part 1** *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C.; S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.* **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

# THE TRAIL AHEAD

Next month our Writers' Brigade musters on a dozen far-flung adventure fronts—from the bomb-pitted tea plantations of Nippon where Llewelyn Davies—masquerading as the pariah Ainu, Koropok—wrings another drop of red vengeance from the Jap in a smashing new novelette—

## "THE BLEEDING SUN"

**By**

## SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL

—to the Spanish-moss-hung hammocks of the Florida 'glades where William Du Bois takes us in another gripping tale of Brevet-Captain Carter and his irrepressible Irish sergeant, Grady, as they bring an extra portion of law and order to America's newly acquired key-domain.

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**On Sale September 7th**

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found that his guess was good. Hoe-Handle Charlie come pussy-footin' through the woods, stoppin' every now an' then to look around, an' when he got near the Narrows he hunched on his hunkers for another fifteen minutes before goin' near the water. Horse fairly hugged hisself, he was that happy. The old vi'lator was carryin' his fish spear, an' of course there ain't no law against carryin' a spear through the woods. But Hoe-Handle didn't carry spears on account he liked to tote things. Horse couldn't wipe the smile off his face when the old ridge-runner clumb down the bank to the ledge an' stretched out. Only the tip of his hat could be saw, an' in a couple of minutes that disappeared. But it come in sight again.

Horse hugged the ground under his evergreen, hardly movin' a muscle an' makin' no noise. This waitin' game was one he could play. Hoe-Handle Charlie's hat rose so he could see the crown, an' Horse got ready. But whatever the old wolf had saw must have went, because he settled back down. Waitin' for the splash that would tell of a speared wall-eye, Horse never took his eyes off the hat. It rose so he could see the crown again, an' then settled down. But the wall-eyes would be along any minute now. Horse smiled.

It wasn't until he had waited six hours, an' saw Hoe-Handle Charlie raise an' lower hisself five times, that Horse begun to think everythin' wasn't as it should be. He slid out from under his tree an' ran over to the Narrows. His face got blood-red, an' at first he could only sputter. Plain on the ledge was the scuffed trail where Hoe-Handle Charlie had crawled up it, draggin' his spear behind, for six hours' peaceful spearin' somewhere else. Fastened to a low hangin' branch of the sycamore, that rose every time a high wave rolled in, was the old Injun's hat. As soon as he could get a little control over hisself, Horse read the note that was pinned to the hat:

Dere game warner:
I figgered you would come here, when you see me pick up my spear this mornin'. I didn't want to stop your plans so I waited back in the woods for ten minutes after I see you crawl under that little hemlock. Nex' time you want to hang around my shanty two days come on down an' sleep in a bunk.

Yours,
Hoe-Handle Charlie

PS. The kioots on Haystack has howlt every night all winter excep' the last two. What do you think could of scaret 'em? Shucks, nex' time send me one of them there postel cards.

Regards,
HHC

*(Continued from page 89)*

isn't any such thing as a sea serpent. Besides, fishermen are great ones for tall stories anyway. Personally, I haven't any patience with people who tell tall stories, and I think a man's a fool to believe them.

I did think about what the fisherman said, though, just so I wouldn't leave any stone unturned, but after mulling it over in my mind, I just forgot about it. I can see how Laurie might have worked up enough momentum to carry him two or three miles out to sea if he had run right off the edge of the cliff before he could stop himself. But fourteen miles! Personally I doubt he was going that fast. Somehow fourteen miles seems a little far, even for Laurie.

So a few days went by and I became too tired to care any more. I received a wire from the AAU officials, saying CAN'T CLOCK WHAT WE CAN'T SEE. TO GIVE YOU BENEFIT OF DOUBT, WE ARE JUDGING YOU PRACTICAL JOKER INSTEAD OF CRAZY. HAVE RETURNED TO RESPECTIVE HOMES. TRAVELING BILLS BEING SENT TO BOOKER ATHLETIC CLUB. I read the telegram twice, then I tore it up slowly into bits, and dropped the pieces one by one into the wastebasket. I ordered a drink from the bar, and when it came, I walked to the hotel window and looked out over San Francisco Bay. I held up the glass, and choking with emotion, I said, "Here's to you Laurie, boy. Here's to the greatest of them all." I tossed off the drink and threw the glass out the hotel window, watching it disappear into the mist creeping slowly in from the bay.

And that just about ends my experiences with Laurie Cochran. I stayed around Frisco for about two weeks more, and then I went back to Cincinnati with my head down like a beaten dog. Everybody was sympathetic and nice enough, all in all, and nobody said much about it one way or another, knowing how I felt. They still kept me on at the Booker Club, paying the AAU officials' expenses without any complaints, and that's about all any man could ask. Lately I've dug up a couple of new runners. One's a sprint man who can do a 9.6 hundred. He's pretty good, if I do say so myself. But not as good as Laurie. Every time I see him run I think of Laurie, and, well I get a faraway look in my eyes and something begins to hurt me deep inside. I don't know. I guess I'll have to look a long time before I find another runner as good as that kid. I guess anybody would.

*(Continued from page 95)*

strained ears of the crew. But the sound man caught something that was definitely disconcerting—the whirr of a torpedo, not the sub's own, boiling past them.

Instantly the American ship started going deeper. Again the sound gear picked up the harrowing news that another enemy torpedo had passed—right at the spot where the sub had been a brief moment before.

She struck back. Fired another fish. Missed.

For a long while, they listened, trying to get on a steady bearing. At last, Fenno decided they had what they wanted and took a third poke at the Jap ship.

"That time," he recorded with satisfaction, "we made aviators out of those Japs on the patrol boat. Blew it all to splinters!"

His submarine, however, had done more than sink another Nipponese craft. She had destroyed the "bait" of an enemy booby trap. The trick was to have one patrol boat shine a fixed light as a lure for a submarine to attack, while a second patrol boat lay in wait at one side to torpedo any unwary victim.

During all her adventures in the South China Sea, Fenno's sub had been ballasted by the millions of dollars in gold and silver she'd taken on at Corregidor. There's quite a pile of potential ballast at Fort Knox and West Point. Fenno's submarine has supplied a possible answer to that often asked question: What are we going to do with it?

The time for the American adventurers to return home arrived not long after the enemy patrol boat was blown apart; they were due back in Pearl Harbor on a certain date. So they headed for home.

"On the way," Fenno said, "I figured out a good joke. When we pulled into Pearl Harbor, I was going to put a group of the boys around the mess table and have them playing poker. They were going to use big stacks of silver coins and gold bars as chips. Then I was going to call in some of my friends and watch their eyes pop out when they saw it."

He shook his head sadly. "It was a good gag—but it didn't work out. We had to proceed to the mainland as fast as we could and there was no time to pull it."

The daring and fantastic voyage of Mike Fenno's submarine to Corregidor with sixty tons of shells, and back, by way of Taiwan, with a ballast of bullion and a couple of Jap ships sunk, received official recognition. Admiral Withers gave letters of commendation to all the officers and men. The Army awarded the Distinguished Service Cross to Fenno and the Silver Star to all the other officers and the members of the crew. The Navy pinned the Navy Cross on Fenno. For his later exploits against the Japs, he received a gold star, representing the award of a second Navy Cross.

# 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.

Blake Page, A.M.M. 2/c, 1115 N. Main St., Hutchinson, Kans. would like to get in touch with either "Pop" Miller or his buddy "Tex" who were formerly in the third division of the French Foreign Legion at Agadir, French Morocco.

L. Ptmn. J. L. March, V25183, Royal Canadian Navy, 20 St. Anne St., La Providence, P. Q., Canada wants information about his father, Sydney Wilford March, whom he hasn't seen in 17 yrs. He was born in Portsmouth, England, came to North America in his youth, last heard of in Rochester, N. Y.

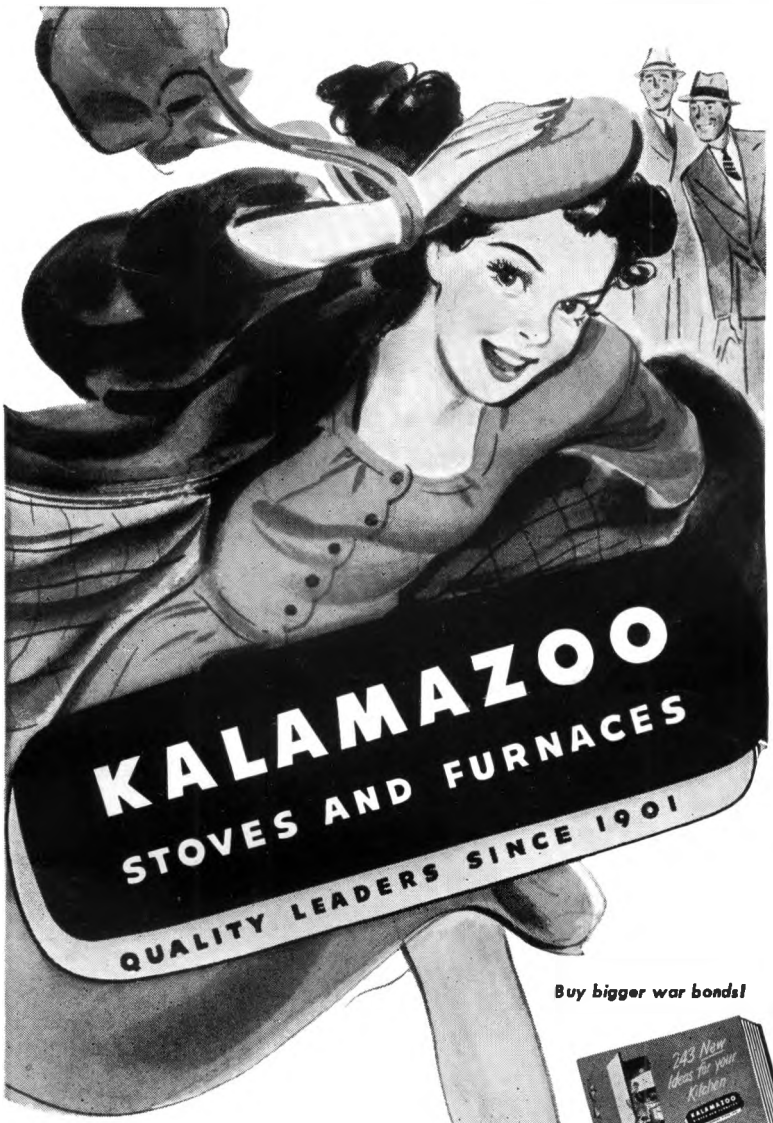
E. E. Bloom, W. B. Morgan, A. J. Nelson, M. J. Rowan, C. Van Encan and "Tex"—old buddies of Co. D, 109th Eng., 34th Div., 1918-19 in France—write J. R. Cuddihy, 32 Osborn Ave., Staten Island 8, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Leonard Jewel Bolton, reared in McLoud, Calif. by foster parents and a World War I veteran, please notify George Burr, Jr., Rockport, Wash.

I wonder if anyone can help locate a buddy of mine, Sidney A. Levinson, whose home before the war was Yonkers, N. Y. He enlisted on Nov. 14, 1941 and served with me in Australia. He was sent back to the States and from what I can gather was discharged because of disability. I do not have his home address in Yonkers but since he expressed a desire to see the U.S., he may be traveling anywhere in the country. Please write Pvt. George N. Raybin, 12035917, Co. A-62 MTB, Camp Crowder, Mo.

Anyone knowing the children or grandchildren or other kin of my father, Orlando Gregory, please write Ira Gregory, 1715 L St., Bakersfield, Calif.

Anyone knowing anything of the whereabouts of Pvt. Robert William Anderson, 28th Bombardment Squadron, Fort Stotensburg, Manila. Last heard of at Bataan. Please write William J. Sponsler, 18136 Parkmount Ave., Cleveland 11, Ohio.

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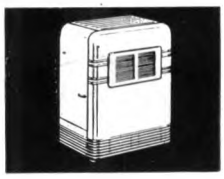

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